

clearly visible due to dense foliage and the movement of birds within the colony. Consequently, the subsequent condition of the immature bird could not be confirmed.

Aggressive interactions among individuals are commonly observed in colonial breeding birds, particularly in dense nesting colonies where adults defend nesting territories and compete for space (Gopi & Pandav 2007; Urfi 2011). Such behaviour may occur when immature or non-breeding individuals approach active nesting areas. Although infanticide has been documented in several bird species, confirmed reports in Painted Storks remain limited. The present observation therefore highlights an instance of intense intraspecific aggression by adults directed towards an immature individual within a breeding colony. Further observations may help clarify the ecological factors influencing such behaviour in colonial waterbirds.

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## The Common Swift *Apus apus* from Phansad Wildlife Sanctuary: An addition to the Maharashtra avifauna

The Common Swift *Apus apus* is a long-distance migrant that breeds across Europe and Asia and winters in sub-Saharan Africa (Chantler & Driessens 2000; Kirwan et al. 2025). In South Asia, it is mainly a passage migrant, particularly during post-breeding movements from August to September (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012a). In India, the species breeds in Gilgit, Ladakh, Kashmir, and Himachal Pradesh in the western Himalaya. During passage, it is widespread across the southern peninsula and the Lakshadweep Islands (Praveen 2025).

On 04 August 2024, during a preliminary survey for the “Biodiversity Counts” programme under the “Sustainable Phansad” project by Green Works Trust (in partnership with SBI Foundation and Maharashtra Forest Department’s Thane Wildlife Division), NB and AS found a dead swift in Phansad Wildlife Sanctuary, near Supegaon village in Murud Taluka, Raigad District, Maharashtra (18.424°N, 72.944°E). The specimen was photographed and examined with permission from the Forest Range Officer. It was identified by NB as a juvenile Common Swift, based on its blackish-brown plumage, scaly back, deeply forked tail, whitish chin and throat, and whiter forehead with extensive pale scaling on the underparts (Grimmett et al. 2011; Manakadan et al. 2011) [58, 59]. Similar looking Blyth’s Swift *A. leuconyx* was excluded due to the clearly demarcated pale throat patch contrasting with darker surrounding plumage and lack of white rump (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012b; Chantler & Driessens 2000). The biometric data of the specimen are provided in Table 1.



58. Dead specimen of juvenile Common Swift from Phansad Wildlife Sanctuary, Maharashtra. Whitish chin and throat, whiter forehead can be seen.



59. Common Swift having whitish brown body, deeply forked tail, and scaly back.

Both photos: Aditya Soman

**Table 1.** Biometrics of the specimen recovered from Phansad Wildlife Sanctuary, Maharashtra

Body part	Handbook (Ali & Ripley 1983)	Specimen from Thaikadappuram, Kerela (Karuthedathu et al. 2014)	Current Specimen
Wings	160–180 mm	165 mm	174 mm
Wingspan	-	370 mm	372 mm
Tail	66–77 mm	70.5 mm	68 mm
Tarsus	10 mm	10.17 mm	12 mm

There is one unconfirmed report of this species from Lonavala, Pune District, Maharashtra on 10 November 2002 (Prasad 2006). The present note documents the first confirmed record of the species from Maharashtra. The previous confirmed records of Common Swift from Peninsular India are from the states of Gujarat, Goa, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and Lakshadweep (Karuthedathu et al. 2014; Aju et al. 2019; eBird 2025). Given previous unconfirmed report from Maharashtra, the species may have been overlooked in the region. This record raises the possibility of an under-reported migration route along the northern Western Ghats and adjacent coastal plains.

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## The Chinese Pond-Heron *Ardeola bacchus*: Addition to the avifauna of Maharashtra and Jammu & Kashmir

The Chinese Pond-Heron *Ardeola bacchus* closely resembles the more widespread Indian Pond-Heron *A. grayii*, particularly in non-breeding and immature plumages. However, it is slightly larger by 8–10 cm, and the distinctive breeding plumage allows for reliable separation from the Indian Pond-Heron only during the breeding period. Chinese Pond-Heron breeds in eastern Asia, including north-eastern India, China, Russia, Japan, and Myanmar (Martínez-Vilalta et al. 2020). Northern populations migrate southward post-breeding, while southern populations (Indian and Indochinese) are largely sedentary (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). The species is known for a certain degree of vagrancy as it has been recorded

from distant regions such as Alaska, Norway, Australia, and Sri Lanka (Martínez-Vilalta et al. 2020). In India, it is rare outside its north-eastern stronghold, with isolated reports from Bhavnagar, Gujarat (Parasharya, 1983), Tal Chhappar Wildlife Sanctuary, Rajasthan (Poonia et al. 2013), Pauri Garhwal, Uttarakhand (Bisht et al. 2024) and multiple records from West Bengal, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala (eBird 2025). In north-western India, the species has been reported from Qurumber National Park, Gilgit-Baltistan (Khan et al. 2015). Here we report two incidences of its sighting outside of its usual range.

## Nandur Madhmeshwar Bird Sanctuary, Nasik, Maharashtra

On 27 April 2025 at 0900 h, during a return migration bird-watch at Nandur Madhmeshwar Bird Sanctuary, first Ramsar site of the state (19.983°N, 74.030°E), in Nasik District Maharashtra, AM and other birders photographed an unfamiliar pond-heron. After scanning the images of bird by the authors it was confirmed as a Chinese Pond-Heron [60]. The bird was in full breeding plumage, with maroon-chestnut head, long lanceolate plumes from the nape, a dark slaty back, and white under parts. The bird was seen again on the following two mornings in the same area. This constitutes the first record of Chinese Pond-Heron, with photographic evidence from the state of Maharashtra, India.

## Wular Lake, Jammu & Kashmir

On 06 May 2025, while birding near Wular Lake (34.363°N, 74.650°E; 1680 m asl) in Jammu & Kashmir, SM observed a pond-heron foraging near a reed patch at 1350 h. The bird appeared slightly larger and noticeably different from the more common Indian Pond-Heron in the area. Upon photographing the individual, SM was excited to confirm its identity as an adult Chinese Pond-Heron. The bird was in full breeding plumage, characterized by a maroon-chestnut head, slaty-black mantle, white underparts, a black-tipped bill, and a prominent yellow orbital patch [61]. There were no previous records of this species from Jammu & Kashmir before this sighting and it is included in the bird checklist of Jammu & Kashmir (Kichloo et al. 2024; Kichloo 2025) based on this observation.

These observations suggest that the species may be more widespread in western and north-western India than previously thought and highlight the importance of continued bird monitoring in the region. Birders in these areas are encouraged to be vigilant for further occurrences of this species.



60. Chinese Pond-Heron photographed at Nandur Madhmeshwar Bird Sanctuary, Maharashtra on 27 April 2025.