



New Distributional Records of Bird Species to Andaman and Nicobar Islands, India

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(Received 25 February 2018, Accepted 18 April, 2018)

(Published by Research Trend, Website: www.researchtrend.net)

ABSTRACT: In this paper we report ten species of birds which are new additions to the avifauna of Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

Keywords: Andaman, Distribution, Migratory Birds, Nicobar

INTRODUCTION

The Andaman and Nicobar archipelago comprises of 572 islands, islets and rocky outcrops and located in the Bay of Bengal. These islands are scattered and distributed within a range of about 800 km in between 6°45 to 13°41 N and 92°12 to 93°57 E with total area of 8249 km², of which Andaman group of islands covers 6408 km² while Nicobar group covers 1841 km². The Saddle Peak is the highest mountain (732m) in Andaman group of islands, whereas Mount Thullier (650m) is the highest peak in Nicobar group of islands. The Andaman and Nicobar islands is one of the important endemic bird Areas identified by the BirdLife International (Stattersfield *et al.*, 1998; BirdLife International, 2001). These islands are close to the “Indo-Malayan region” which is considered to be a “faunistic centre” from which other subdivisions of the Indo-west Pacific Region recruited their fauna (Ekman, 1953). During the recent years, several new sightings of birds have been reported from Andaman and Nicobar Islands by the authors (Sivaperuman *et al.*, 2012, 2013, 2014a, 2014b, 2015a, 2015b, 2016a, b, 2017). This paper provides insight into the new distribution records to the birds in Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

METHODS

As a part of major ecological studies on bird communities in Andaman and Nicobar Islands, we have been surveying entire Andaman and Nicobar islands on a regular basis since 2013. Birds were identified based on physical features using identification manuals/field guides (Ali and Ripley, 1983; Grimmett *et al.* 2008; Kazmierczak and Perlo, 2000; Kumar *et al.* 2005; Robson, 2008; Rasmussen and Anderton, 2012). During the recent field survey we have recorded 10 species of birds new distribution to this archipelago.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax* (Linnaeus, 1758)

On 10th September, 2016 while conducting our shore birds survey, GK sighted and photographed an individual of Ruff at Garacharma (11°37.117'N; 92°42.414'E). This bird was again sighted at Chouldhari (11°37.350' N; 92°40.108'E). It was a medium sized wader, differs from other waders of our regular sightings (Fig. a). The bird was initially observed foraging in small patches of grassy meadows and had a partial breeding plumage. This bird configuration from the accompanying *Charadrius mongolus* Pallas, 1776; *Pluvialis fulva* (Gmelin, 1789); *Tringa glareola* Linnaeus, 1758, *Ereunetes ruficollis* (Pallas, 1776), *Ereunetes subminutarr* (Middendorff, 1853), *Erolia ferruginea* (Pontoppidan, 1813) and *Actitis hypoleucos* Linnaeus, 1758. This is a noted vagrant to archipelagos, with a north-south migration broadly from Siberia to Australia (Van Giles *et al.*, 2014) and this is a first record from Andaman Islands.

Grey-tailed Tattler *Tringa brevipes* (Vieillot, 1816)

On 10th November 2016, SD sighted and photographed the Grey-tailed Tattler from Katchal, Nancowry group of Islands (07°58.218' N; 93°24.068' E) (Fig. b). The bird was observed feeding on tidal mudflat. This species have not been reported previously from this archipelago by earlier researchers (Ali and Ripley, 1983; Grimmett *et al.*, 2008; (Kumar *et al.*, 2005; Rasmussen and Anderton, 2012).

Eurasian wryneck *Jynx torquilla* Linnaeus, 1758

A single individual of Eurasian wryneck sighted on 17th December 2016 and 10th March 2017 at Ograbraj, South Andaman (Lat: 11°39'598'N; Long: 92°39'532'E) (Fig. c). The Eurasian wryneck was again sighted on 01st January 2018 from the same location.



Plate-I.

It is a common winter visitor to the neighboring South-East Asia (Robson, 2008). This species might be regular winter visitor to Andaman and Nicobar Islands and needs further study. There is no information available on the distribution of Eurasian Wryneck from Andaman Islands and this is the first sighting with photographic evidence from Andaman Islands.

Northern Pintail *Anas acuta* Linnaeus, 1758

On 20th December, 2016, GK photographed a Northern Pintail at Ograbraj, South Andaman (11°39.598' N; 92°41.927' E) (Fig. d). Three individuals were seen in the tsunami inundated wetlands of South Andaman. Initially, this bird was sighted along with a flock of about 160 individuals of Andaman Teal and 11 individuals of Common Moorhen. Northern Pintail is one of the commonest winter visitors to Southern Asia and breeds in West and Central Siberia (Ali and Ripley, 1983; Kumar *et al.*, 2005; Kazmierczak, 2000; Rasmussen and Anderton 2012). According to the available literature (Kumar *et*

al. 2005 and Grimmett *et al.* 2008) this species has not been reported from the Andaman Islands.

Garganey *Querquedula querquedula* Linnaeus, 1758

Several sightings of Garganey were occurred during the avifaunal surveys. In December 2013, four individuals of Garganey were sighted in the tsunami inundated wetlands at Ograbraj, South Andaman (11° 39.598' N; 92°41.927' E) (Fig. e). Initially these birds were sighted along with a flock of about 260 individuals of Lesser Whistling Teal, 340 individuals of Andaman Teal 26 individuals of Cotton Teal and 112 individuals of Common Moorhen. These are regular winter visitor to Andaman Islands. The Garganey was also sighted between 14th January and 16th February 2014 from the same locations at Ograbraj and Sippighat (11°36.165' N; 92 °41.335 E) (Table 1).

On 19th November 2016, six individuals of Garganey were sighted at Indira Point, Great Nicobar Islands (06°46.603 N, 93°48.782 E). The Garganey is one of the commonest winter visitors to Southern Asia and breeds in West and Central Siberia (Ali and Ripley 1983; Kumar *et al.*, 2005; Clements, 2007).

Table 1: Sightings of Garganey *Anas querquedula* in Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

Year	Location	Arrival	Departure	Count
2013-2014	Ograbraj	18 th Dec '13	29 th April 2014	2
2014-2015	Ograbraj	19 th Nov '14	27 th May 2015	3
2014-2015	Sippighat	4 th Dec '14	19 Apr '15	2
2015-2016	Ograbraj	12 th Nov '15	14 th Apr 2016	4
2016	Ograbraj	06 th Nov 16		5
2016	Great Nicobar Island-Indira Point	19 th Nov 16		6

Comb Duck *Sarkidiornis melanotos* (Pennant, 1769)

A total of 19 species of birds were introduced to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands from mainland India during the first half of the 19th Century (Lever 1987; Sankaran and Vijayan 1993; Mohanraj *et al.*, 1999; Kazmierczak, 2000), among which Comb Duck was introduced in the year of 1961. According to Rajan and Pramod (2013), this bird was brought from Calcutta and released into Neil Island. However, there is no further recent reports of this species. On 11th September 2016 at Mazar Pahad, Ferargunj (11°42.107'N, 92°38.357'E), GK Photographed five individuals of Comb Ducks flying over see (Fig. f). The sighting of the Comb duck from South Andaman after a gap of 55 years and it is new recent site record to Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

Greater Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla* (Leisler, 1814)

On 16th December 2015, GK photographed one individual of Greater Short-toed Lark from Garacharma (Lat: 11°37.079'N; Long: 92°42.408'E), South

Andaman. The bird was seen actively feeding grass seeds on the ground among other flock of birds namely Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus*, Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava thunbergi*, and White Wagtail *Motacilla alba*. Based on the photographs, and field observation, we confirms this species (Fig. g). Later on, this species was also continuously seen over a period of three months from December 2015 to February 2016 and November 2017 from the same location.

Asian Openbill-Stork *Anastomus oscitans* (Boddaert, 1783)

Asian Openbill-Stork was brought from Calcutta and released into South Andaman for control of African Giant Snail during 1964. However, failed to establish in these Islands (Rajan and Pramod, 2013). During the recent survey in Katchal, Nancowry group of Islands (07°59.957'N, 93°22.768'E) seven individual of this species was sighted roosting on top of the tree branch (Fig. h). This sighting inferred that after many years the population has not slackened to null but has survived in this group of islands.



f. Comb Duck



g. Greater Short-toed Lark



h. Asian openbill Stork



i. Heuglin's Gull



j. Mugimaki Flycatcher

Plate-II.

Heuglin's Gull *Larus fuscus* Linnaeus, 1758

One individual Heuglin's Gull was sighted on 24th December, 2017 from Katchal, Nancowry group of Islands (07°59.957'N, 93°22.768'E) (Fig. i). Heuglin's Gull breeds in the northern latitudes, from northern Siberia, the Kola Peninsula eastwards to the Taymyr Peninsula, and winters from south-western Asia to eastern Africa, through the Indian Subcontinent, with records from South Africa, eastern China, South Korea, and a few scattered records from South-east Asia (Rasmussen and Anderton, 2012; Burger *et al.*, 2016). It has been recorded as a passage migrant in the Indian Peninsula (Rasmussen and Anderton 2012), with most birds wintering all along the Indian coasts. Records exist from the Maldives (Ash and Shafeeg, 1994), Sri Lanka (Lamsfuss, 1996), and the Chagos Archipelago (Carr, 2016).

Mugimaki Flycatcher *Ficedula mugimaki* Temminck, 1835

It is wintering in south-eastern China, South-East Asia, and the islands of Indonesia, and Philippines (Robson 2008). The first sighting of this species during November 2013 from Neil Island of Andaman group (Das, 2014). The second sighting by GK from Kudhirambur, North Andaman (13°90.901'N, 92°58.605'E) on 23 February 2015. Recently, this has been sighted from Galathea, Great Nicobar Island on 27th December 2017, (06°49.450'N; 93°51.569'E). The bird was identified based on the photographs, and field observation as first winter male has a clear white eye-brow and a wing-bar, throat and breast brighter orange-rufous (Fig. j). This has not been reported from Great Nicobar Island (Gokulakrishnan and Sivaperuman, 2017).

A total of 284 species of birds were reported from Andaman and Nicobar Islands, belonging 56 families under 17 orders (Sivaperuman *et al.*, 2010). During the recent year several Southeast Asian migrants have been recorded from the Andaman & Nicobar Islands namely, Pheasant-tailed Jacana from South Andaman (Sivaperuman *et al.*, 2013), Grey-faced Buzzard from Nicobar Islands (Zaibin *et al.*, 2014), Mugimaki Flycatcher from Neil Island (Das, 2014), Blue-winged Pitta from Narcondam Island (Manchi & Kumar, 2014), Blue-and-White Flycatcher from Landfall Island (Rajeshkumar *et al.*, 2014), Grey-bellied Cuckoo from South Andaman (Simon Thompson, 2014). Six new records of birds from South Andaman (Sivaperuman *et al.*, 2014a), Scaly-breasted Munia from South Andaman (Sivaperuman *et al.*, 2014b), Three new records from South Andaman (Sivaperuman *et al.*, 2015a), Ferruginous Pochard from South Andaman (Sivaperuman *et al.*, 2015b), Common black-headed Gull and Wedge-tailed Shearwater from South Andaman (Sivaperuman *et al.*, 2015c), Chinese Egret from South Andaman (Sivaperuman *et al.*, 2016a), Corncrake from Great Nicobar Island

(Sivaperuman *et al.*, 2016b), Jerdon's Baza at Great Nicobar Island (Sivaperuman and Gokulakrishnan, 2017). This present study added new distributional records another 10 species of birds from Andaman and Nicobar Islands which were not reported in the previous study (Ali and Ripley, 1983; Kumar *et al.*, 2005; Grimmett *et al.*, 2008; Rasmussen and Anderton, 2012).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors thank the Director, Zoological Survey of India for his encouragement and support to undertake the survey in different parts Andaman and Nicobar Islands. CS thanks the Science Engineering Research Board (SERB), Department of Science and Technology, Ministry of Science & Technology and INS-Utkrosh, Ministry of Defence, Government of India for financial support.

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