

Egret chick was observed on a nest. Another nest had a brooding adult, but the nest contents could not be seen. Black-crowned Night Herons *Nycticorax nycticorax* were also nesting all around. On 22 October 2005 (08h30–11h00), c.50–60 Little Egrets were observed, of which 19 were sitting on nests and 5 were seen building nests. One Little Egret was observed adding materials to a nest that had only recently been vacated by Black-crowned Night Herons (fledgling night herons were observed in the same nest on the previous visit), and two pairs were observed mating on their nests. Three nests were examined, two of which contained two eggs each, and one contained three eggs. According to Hancock and Kushlan (1984), three eggs is typical in tropical areas (five is the usual number in temperate zones and sometimes as many as eight are found). No chicks were observed. All Little Egrets were in breeding plumage, having plumes on their heads, backs and neck and with the characteristic yellow feet of the subspecies *E. g. garzetta*. On 26 March 2006 c.40 Little Egrets were observed, including c.10 juveniles. Sixteen active nests at various stages were observed, some with eggs, some with juveniles. One adult was observed feeding three juveniles.

Rawang II

On 26 March 2006, another heronry was found c.2 km from the Rawang I heronry. This second location had been visited in October 2005 when no Little Egrets or Black-crowned Night Herons were seen. On the second visit c.100 Little Egrets and 37 nests at various stages were counted, including nests containing eggs, young chicks and juveniles. Three pairs of adults were observed mating.

DISCUSSION

Wells (1999) reviewed the status of Little Egrets in the Thai-Malay Peninsula, and concluded that there was no breeding population in peninsular Malaysia. Since 2002, four heronries have been discovered in peninsular Malaysia, which together support a total of c.60 active

nests. Three of these four heronries are well known and had been surveyed prior to 2002; hence, the Little Egret can be considered a 'new' breeding resident (rather than having been overlooked as a breeder in the past). All of the Little Egrets observed breeding in peninsular Malaysia are of the subspecies *E. g. garzetta*. The nearest breeding colonies in the north appear to be those in West Thailand (800 km to Perak), and those further south in Pulau Dua, West Java (1,100 km to Selangor). To monitor the expansion of the Little Egret into peninsular Malaysia, the four known nesting sites must be regularly monitored, and other potential sites surveyed for the presence and nesting of this species.

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Chris R. Shepherd, TRAFFIC Southeast Asia, Unit 9-3A, 3rd floor, Jl SS23/11, Taman SEA, Petaling Jaya, Selangor, Malaysia; and Zoological Museum, University of Amsterdam, PO Box 94766 1090 GT Amsterdam, The Netherlands.
Email: cstsea@po.jaring.my

New and significant records of birds in Arunachal Pradesh, north-east India

HARKIRAT SINGH SANGHA and RISHAD NAOROJI

The state of Arunachal Pradesh, in north-east India, is a biodiversity hotspot and supports a rich and diverse birdlife. Several accounts of the avifauna of Arunachal Pradesh have been published during the last decade, including Athreya *et al.* (1997), Birand and Pawar (2004),

Choudhury (1998, 2003), Datta (2001), Datta *et al.* (1998), King and Donahue (2006), Kumar and Singh (2000), Newton (2002), Sangha and Naoroji (2005), Sangha *et al.* (2007) and Singh (1994, 1999, 2003). Despite this, the avifauna of Arunachal Pradesh is poorly

understood: new bird records continue to be published, including that of an entirely new species of *Liocichla* in Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary (Athreya 2006).

In 2004 and 2005, we carried out fieldwork in the northern areas of Arunachal Pradesh at Dibang and Siang Valleys (17–27 February 2004) and Siang Valley and Tawang area (9–26 December 2005). Over the course of our fieldwork, we observed birds from vehicles or during foot transects. At Tuting and Gelling we mist-netted birds for a total of 15 hours. The fieldwork covered tropical low to snow-bound high elevation montane areas (500–4,331 m). In this note we report new (*) and significant records arising from our work.

* BOOTED EAGLE *Hieraaetus pennatus*

An individual was seen on 23 February 2004 near 65 Mile (28°42'N 95°08'E) en route from Pasighat to Jengging in the Siang Valley. Another was observed 5 km further along the road, soaring over the degraded hill slopes with scattered cultivation. The small size, long wings, square-ended tail, strong contrast between white underwing-coverts and dark flight-feathers and secondaries, with contrasting pale wedge in the inner primaries and dusky tail-tip, were clearly visible. This is the first record of Booted Eagle from Arunachal Pradesh; there are few records from adjoining Bhutan and Bangladesh (Kazmierczak and van Perlo 2000). In Bhutan, it is an uncommon passage migrant and winter visitor, recorded in five of eight years following 1995 (Spiereburg 2005). Both authors have regularly observed the species in Assam and Meghalaya.

BLACK BAZA *Aviceda leuphotus*

An individual was seen flying at dusk over a harvested paddyfield at the edge of forest near Gelling (29°07'N 94°59'E) on 13 December 2005. It was easily identified by the distinctive black (underwing-coverts and undertail-coverts) and silver-grey (primaries and tail) pattern from below. There is one winter record from Arunachal Pradesh, at Namdapha (Birand and Pawar 2004). Described as scarce and local, especially on migration and in winter (Rasmussen and Anderton 2005) and as uncommon in the north-east (Grimmett *et al.* 1998), it occurs mainly in the Himalayan foothills in Uttaranchal and from central and east Nepal east to north-east India and Bangladesh; it also occurs in Kerala and Sri Lanka (Grimmett *et al.* 1998).

SLENDER-BILLED VULTURE *Gyps tenuirostris*

Critically Endangered (BirdLife International 2001). At least 24 were observed soaring on 21 February 2004 above the extensive grassland that forms the floodplain of the Dibang river en route to Nizamghat (28°27'N 95°73'E). We observed mostly adults, with a few juveniles and immatures. We had clear views, and adults were easily identified by the dark neck, streaked breast, mostly white ruff, long compressed slender bill and cere, white thigh-patches and dark undertail-coverts.

HIMALAYAN GRIFFON *Gyps himalayensis*

A soaring juvenile was seen over Kepang La (c.1,450 m) near Gelling on 15 December 2005. It circled over the pass for about two minutes and then drifted across the McMahon Line into Tibetan territory. Clearly a large vulture, the bird was identified by its small pale head and

dark underbody, pale bands through underwing-coverts contrasting with dark, pale streaked underparts, and its heavy-bodied appearance with broad wings. The species has been earlier reported only from Thingbu (Singh 1994) and Namsai and Kornu (Singh 1999) although it is a common scavenger in some parts of the Himalayas and the Tibetan plateau (MacKinnon and Phillipps 2000).

SLENDER-BILLED BABBLER *Turdoides longirostris*

Vulnerable (BirdLife International 2001). A flock of at least six birds was seen in the grassland c.2 km south-east of Nizamghat on 21 February, 2004. Although listed as resident from 'Oudh, the Nepal and Sikkim terai, northern Bengal, Bhutan duars, Arunachal Pradesh (Dafla duars), Assam to east Lakhimpur near Sadiya, Meghalaya and Manipur south to the Chittagong region' (Ripley 1982) its current status in India is uncertain and the very few recent records are all from Assam and one site in West Bengal (BirdLife International 2001). This elusive species is inferred to have a small, rapidly declining population because of extensive destruction and degradation of its tall grassland habitats.

BLACK-HEADED SHRIKE BABBLER *Pteruthius rufiventer*

Near Threatened (Collar *et al.* 1994), but Least Concern in BirdLife International (2001). About seven birds were observed near Moying as they foraged in a small mixed-species flock that included three *Cutia nipalensis* and 7–8 Chestnut-bellied Nuthatch *Sitta castanea* on 25 February 2004. The species was at an exceptionally low altitude of c.600 m. According to Grimmett *et al.* (1998), it has been recorded 1,100–2,200 m in India and 2,135–2,500 m in Nepal. Ali and Ripley (1996) describe it as sparse resident between c.1,500 m and 2,500 m.

WHITE-NAPED YUHINA *Yuhina bakeri*

This scarce species is restricted to the Himalayas from east Nepal to south-east Arunachal Pradesh and the south Assam hills (Rasmussen and Anderton 2005). The Gelling area holds an important population of White-naped Yuhina, and we saw it almost every day in single-species flocks of c.15–20 individuals in broadleaved forest at 1,000–1,500 m from 13 to 14 December 2005.

WHITE-THROATED REDSTART *Phoenicurus schisticeps*

About 10 km north of Tawang around Ptso at 3,600–4,000 m, at least ten birds including two striking males were seen on 25 December 2005. Five more birds were recorded on 26 December 2005 at Se La (27°31'N 92°36'E, 4,152 m). The species was listed for Arunachal Pradesh (Ripley 1982) on the basis of Ludlow and Kinnear (1944). White-throated Redstart occurs mainly in the Himalayas from west Nepal to east Bhutan (Grimmett *et al.* 1998).

DUSKY WARBLER *Phylloscopus fuscatus*

Two birds were mist-netted on 17 and 18 December 2005 from the scrub area around the Inspection Bungalow at Gelling. Although a fairly common winter visitor to north-east India, it has been recorded only once from Itanagar (Singh 1994).

COMMON ROSEFINCH *Carpodacus erythrinus*

Small flocks of 5–6 birds were seen on 19 and 20 December 2005 in the scrub/jhumed area around the Inspection

Bungalow at Gelling (1,100 m). The species (*roseatus* group) breeds in the Himalayas from Ladakh east to probably Arunachal Pradesh and winters mostly in southern India (Rasmussen and Anderton 2005) but it has been reported only from Hotspring and Hunli-Etalin in Arunachal Pradesh (Singh 1994).

SPOT-WINGED ROSEFINCH *Carpodacus rodopeplus*

Four birds including one male were observed well in rhododendron scrub and bushes on slopes of the Se La on 26 December 2005. The male was identified by brownish upperparts, longish pink supercilium, pink rump and faint pink spots on wing-bars and tertials. The species is resident from Uttaranchal to east Nepal and southern Tibet (Rasmussen and Anderton 2005). Ripley (1982) says that the species is 'not recorded from Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh' but it has since been recorded once from Mayodia, eastern Arunachal Pradesh (Singh 1994). Rasmussen and Anderton (2005) have commented that the sight record from eastern Arunachal Pradesh may pertain to Sharpe's Rosefinch *Carpodacus verreauxii* rather than the Spot-winged Rosefinch on geographical grounds. Sharpe's Rosefinch, usually treated as conspecific with *C. rodopeplus*, is a winter visitor to northern Myanmar (Clement *et al.* 1993) and is likely to occur in eastern Arunachal Pradesh.

PLAIN MOUNTAIN FINCH *Leucosticte nemoricola*

A flock of about 50 birds was observed foraging on snow-covered alpine scrub and pasture near Bum La (4,331 m) on the McMahon Line (Indo-Tibetan border) on 25 December 2005. This species was recorded in 1997 from Yak Farm (Singh 1999) and previously by Ludlow and Kinnear (1944) and Ghosh (1987). Plain Mountain Finch is resident in the mountains of north-east Afghanistan and the Himalayas of north Pakistan to at least east Bhutan (Rasmussen and Anderton 2005).

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Harkirat Singh Sangha, B-27, Gautam Marg, Hanuman Nagar, Jaipur 302021 India. Email: sangha@datainfosys.net
Rishad Naoroji, Godrej Bhavan, 5th Floor, 4A Home Street, Fort, Mumbai 400001 India. Email: rnaoroji@bom3.vsnl.net.in.