

went down. After a couple of seconds I saw his head bob up and he started swimming steadily till he reached the opposite shore. He shrugged and sneezed a few times and bounded off out of sight. I am not aware whether Blackbuck have been observed swimming before.

BOMBAY NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY'S

S. A. HUSSAIN

BIRD MIGRATION STUDY CAMP,

POINT CALIMERE SANCTUARY,

TAMIL NADU,

January 4, 1970.

5. A RECORD OF THE TIGER BITTERN, *GORSACHIUS MELANOLOPHUS* (RAFFLES) FROM KARAIKUDI, RAMANATHAPURAM DISTRICT, TAMIL NADU

In December, 1968, Prof. J. Samuel Raj, Head of the Department of Zoology, Alagappa College, Karaikudi, brought to the Museum a mounted specimen of a medium-sized bird more or less resembling a Black Bittern. Since the species was not represented in the Museum collection and as we were doubtful about its correct identity, we had it sent to the Bombay Natural History Society, where it was identified as the Tiger Bittern or Malay Bittern, *Gorsachius melanolophus* (Raffles). This is quite an unusual record for this species since it had not been apparently recorded earlier from eastern India, although there was one record from the Nilgiris in the report of the Eastern Ghats Survey by Whistler and Kinnear. The occurrence of this species in Tamil Nadu is therefore quite unique and is worth reporting.

Prof. Samuel Raj who secured the specimen reports that the bird was caught on the Alagappa College campus, Karaikudi, Ramanathapuram District, on 7 November, 1967, which was a rainy day. Due to heavy rains, the bird is reported to have dropped down from a tree. It was kept alive for a week and stuffed and mounted later on and finally brought to the Madras Museum in December, 1968. Prof. Samuel Raj reports that specimens of the Tiger Bittern are seen occasionally in and around Karaikudi during November and December. The distribution of this species is cited in Stuart Baker's (1929) FAUNA OF BRITISH INDIA 6: 362 as "Ceylon, the Malabar Coast to the Southern Bombay Presidency, Assam, Manipur, Burma, South through the Malay States to Sumatra, Java, Borneo and Formosa."

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am grateful to Prof. J. Samuel Raj for having kindly donated the specimen of this Bittern to the Madras Government Museum, where it

was hitherto unrepresented, and for furnishing the necessary information on its locality, date of collection and the circumstances under which the specimen was collected.

GOVERNMENT MUSEUM,
EGMORE, MADRAS-8,
December 1, 1969.

S. T. SATYAMURTI
Director of Museums, Madras

6. ON THE OCCURRENCE OF SWINHOE'S SNIPE, *CAP-ELLA MEGALA* (SWINHOE) NEAR BOMBAY, AND A NOTE ON ITS IDENTIFICATION

On 7th December 1947, while shooting with Dr. Sálím Ali on the lower portion (c. 300') of Cathedral Rock, near Kalyan, Bombay, we put up two snipe out of tall rushes on the edge of terrace paddy. In flight they appeared much heavier and darker than either Pintail (*C. stenura*) or Fantail (*C. gallinago*). We preserved the less damaged one, believing it to be Swinhoe's [*C. megala* (Swinhoe)] which has been recorded in eastern and southern India but not so far north-west. It was sent to the British Museum, but was identified by Sir Norman Kinnear as a Pintail (*C. stenura*).

In the course of cataloguing the collection recently, I found this specimen (No. 14938) listed among *C. gallinago*. The notes on the label prompted me to re-compare this with the Pintails and, as the tail (originally noted to have 22 feathers with the central pair in moult, and a part of which is preserved) definitely lacked the more pin-like feathers on the outside, I sent the skin to Dr. Dillon Ripley who agrees that it is Swinhoe's Snipe (*C. megala*).

This extends the accepted winter range of the species north-west of Madras, Mysore, and Kerala.

In 1934, La Personne (*JBNHS* 37 : 734) stated that Swinhoe's Snipe could be distinguished from the Pintail by its bastard wing being 20 mm. or longer as against 17 or less in the latter. Stuart Baker confirmed the difference and suggested diagnostic limits of over 19 mm. for Swinhoe's and under 19 mm. for the Pintail. This is repeated in subsequent literature including *IND. HANDBOOK* (2 : 285), but the spike-like and longest feather in the bastard wing only measures 15-18 mm. in this and six other specimens in the Society's collection and does not appear to be any longer than in the Pintail.

This species resembles the Pintail in the shape of the bill tip, the barring on the underwing, and the absence of the broad white tips to the secondaries, and the only consistent differences appear to be :

- (a) the absence of the pinfeathers at the side of the tail,



Satyamurti, S. T. 1970. "A Record of the Tiger Bittern, *Gorsachius Melanolophus* (Raffles) from Karaikudi, Ramanathapuram District, Tamil Nadu." *The journal of the Bombay Natural History Society* 67, 107–108.

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