

13. BLACK WOODPECKER *DRYOCOPUS* SP. IN JALDAPARA SANCTUARY, WEST BENGAL

On 8 November 1988 we were birdwatching in the Jaldapara sanctuary in West Bengal. At around 1600 hrs, near the Jaldapara rest house about 500 m from the Forest Rest House, we saw a bird fly across towards Jaldapara village. It was distinctly a black-and-red bird with lighter coloured eyes. We both immediately identified it as the black woodpecker *Dryocopus* sp.

On referring to the literature, we realised that the bird was far outside the range mentioned by Ali and Ripley (1983 a, b)*. They mention only two subspecies, namely [1] *Dryocopus javensis hodgsonii*, with a white belly and rump, found in the Western Ghats and in the east up to Bastar (Ali mentions that it possibly may also occur in the Eastern Ghats and Orissa) and [2] *Dryocopus javensis hodgei*, found only in the Andaman islands and which has no white in the plumage. Since we did not see any white in the plumage, we decided to investigate further.

Ripley (1982) gives the possible occurrence of one more subspecies *Dryocopus martius khamensis* in the neighbouring areas of Arunachal Pradesh between 2800 m to 3800 m in the temperate forests, in Tsangpo Valley, Nang Dzong to Gyala (c. 93°15'E) and Tongkyuk valley (c. 95°E). Short (1982) gives the distribution and habitats of *D. martius* as follows: Eurasian bird ranging from Scandinavia, the Pyrennes and France across Europe to Asia Minor through Russia to Siberia, south Caucasus, north Iran, north Mongolia, north China, Sakhalin, Hokkaido, north Honshu with isolated records in Tibet, Yunan and west Szechwan. It is found in mixed coniferous forests and also in parks with large trees. It occurs from sea level to an elevation of 950 m in most of the regions, although found as high as 4300 m in the Tibetan mountains. This

species also does not have any white in the plumage, and several subspecies are known.

Smythies (1953) has three subspecies – *D. javensis javensis* in Tenasserim of south Burma; *D. javensis feddeni* in Arakan and Chin hills of central Burma; and *D. javensis forrestsii* above 1500 m in north-western Burma. All three subspecies have varying amounts of white in their plumage.

Jaldapara lies at approximately 89°E, 28°N, in terai forest consisting of sal forests interspersed with huge areas of elephant grass, at the base of the Bhutan hills on the banks of the river Toorsa. The bird was seen in the sal forest. Since we were there only for a day we could not make any further investigations.

We are still uncertain about the species/subspecies of the woodpecker we saw. Since it had no white in the plumage it could be either *D. javensis hodgei* or *D. martius*. The former is limited to the Andamans, far away from Jaldapara, and also island evolution is very different from that of the mainland. *D. martius* is a widely distributed species, and the longitude of its occurrence in the nearby Tibetan region is much closer than that of any other species. The bird we saw is hence probably *D. martius*. It is not known to be a migrant, hence its occurrence as an accidental migrant or vagrant is ruled out. The bird must therefore be a resident of Jaldapara.

We request naturalists visiting this sanctuary and the nearby regions to look out for this woodpecker.

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June 15, 1989

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14. COMMENTS ON SAP-SUCKING BY WOODPECKERS IN INDIA

Abdulali (1968) discussed the phenomenon of systematic sap-sucking by an unidentified woodpecker in the hills of Kashmir. His photograph of the bark workings of

*There is no mention of *D. martius* in Ali and Ripley (1983b), and *D. javensis hodgsonii* has been incorrectly labelled in the plate as *D.j. hodgei*. For the correct illustration, see Short (1982) p. 616, pl. 78

this woodpecker are remarkably suggestive of work done by species of sapsuckers (*Sphyrapicus* spp.) from North America. To my knowledge, *Picoides major* of Eurasia is the only other species known to drill bark specifically to produce sap (Short 1982). It is remarkable that a single genus in North America, and a single species each in Eurasia and south Asia are the only examples of this un-



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