

previously been recorded at higher elevations on the Eastern Ghats having been obtained on 26th April at Sankrametta, Vizag Hills, apparently on the return migration from its winter quarters in Ceylon to its northern breeding grounds. Its capture at Calimere gives an indication of its migratory movement through the Peninsula. The other records given by Kinnear & Whistler (1932) are evidently also of birds on the northward migration.

Zoothera citrina citrina (Latham)

22 birds of this species were ringed during October/November 1969. This is another record of a passage migrant whose status was not clear as far as Tamil Nadu is concerned.

CAMP,
B.N.H.S. BIRD MIGRATION STUDY
PROJECT,
POINT CALIMERE,
TAMIL NADU,
March 22, 1971.

K. S. R. KRISHNA RAJU
P. B. SHEKAR

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14. NEW RECORDS OF BIRDS FROM THE ANDAMAN AND NICOBAR ISLANDS

While working on a collection of birds from the Andaman and Nicobar Islands present in the Zoological Survey of India, I came across four examples of birds belonging to two forms, which according to standard ornithological literature (Baker 1924, 1929; Abdulali 1965, 1967; Ripley 1961; Ali & Ripley 1969) does not occur in this area. They are as follows:—

(1) *Porphyrio porphyrio poliocephalus* (Latham). Indian Purple Moorhen.

Three unsexed specimens bearing Z. S. I. Regd. Nos. 13680, 13681 and 13682, collected from Trinkut Island, Nicobars; donated by late E. H. May to the Asiatic Society of Bengal on 4 March, 1886.

MEASUREMENTS (in mm.)

3 unsexed: Wing 225, 228, 239; tail 78, 81, 83; bill from skull 42, 45, 46; bill from anterior margin of nostril 26(2), 27; length of casque 24, 25, 26.5; width of casque 26, 27(2); tarsus 82, 83, 85, middle toe without claw 88, 90, 93.

All these specimens appear to be young birds after their first moult. They resemble the adult, but are not so brilliant in colour (Sharpe 1894, p. 198). Sides of head, chin, throat and neck are tinged with a little cobalt-blue. One of the specimens has a growth on the left ramus of the lower mandible near the gape.

The Indian Purple Moorhen is known to occur in southern Baluchistan (West Pakistan) north to Kashmir east to East Pakistan and Burma, south to peninsular India and Ceylon. This appears to be the first record of its occurrence in the Nicobar Islands.

(2) *Lalage nigra* ? subsp. Pied Cuckoo-Shrike or Pied Triller.

One male specimen bearing Z. S. I. Regd. No. 28377, collected by Mr. R. V. Sherard of the Zoological Survey of India from Port Blair, South Andaman Island, on 18 March 1952.

MEASUREMENTS (in mm.)

1 ♂: Wing 95+; Tail—; Bill 16.

Since this is a young specimen having a brownish wash on the upper parts (Baker 1924, p 342) and badly damaged tail-feathers, it cannot be identified subspecifically.

Lalage nigra (Forster) is an Indo-Malayan species having four subspecies, three of which are distributed in different islands of this subregion. *Lalage nigra davisoni* Kloss, the fourth subspecies occurs in the Nicobar Islands (Mayr 1960, pp. 197-198), which show closer avifaunal affinities with this subregion. This is the first authentic record of the occurrence of this species from the Andamans which group of islands are included in the Indo-Chinese subregion (Ali in Thomson, 1964, pp. 556-559). In view of the longer wing (Baker, op. cit., p. 341 gives wing measurements of Nicobar birds as 86 to 89 mm.) and immature condition, it can, perhaps, be safely said that it does not belong to the Nicobar population. Until more material is examined, it cannot be determined whether it is a straggler of a known population, or represents an unknown one.

ZOOLOGICAL SURVEY OF INDIA,
CALCUTTA,

P. K. DAS

March 15, 1971.

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15. NOTES ON INDIAN SNAKES—1

(With two plates)

Albinism in Russell's Sand Boa (*Eryx conicus*)

In October 1969 an unusual specimen of *Eryx conicus* was collected near Madras and given to me. Its length at that time was 275 mm. It was a uniform light cream in colour, the underside being slightly lighter in shade. The only deviation from albinism were the eyes, which were black.

Since capture the snake has lived well on mice and measures about 500 mm. It began to show brown speckled markings on its dorsal scales, and we supposed that the snake was darkening as it approached maturity and some true pigment came through; this action appears to have ceased.

Albinism in snakes is not common but has been observed in a large number of genera including the American rattlesnakes (*Crotalus*), King snakes (*Lampropeltis*), boa constrictors and in India the python (*P. molurus*) and probably others.

Two-headed Snake (*Cerberus rhynchops*)

The Dog-faced Watersnake (*Cerberus rhynchops*) is a rear-fanged estuarine snake common along coastal India. Madras City and environs have many inland waterways where this snake abounds. The specimen in the photo was collected near Madras in 1969 and brought to the office of Mr. Harry Miller, a photographer-naturalist residing in Madras. The specimen was alive and healthy and about 350 mm. long. Unfortunately the owner of the snake was unwilling to part with it and so no observations could be made how it feeds etc. Two-headed snakes usually don't survive long after birth, generally being anatomically defective. It is a rare phenomenon as in other animals. In the United States are records of two-



Das, P K. 1971. "New Records of Birds from the Andaman and Nicobar Islands." *The journal of the Bombay Natural History Society* 68(2), 459–461.

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