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**Butterfly Research Centre, Bhimtal
Executive Editor: Peter Smetacek
Assistant Editor: Shristee Panthee
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Cover Photo by Peter Smetacek of a *Salassa mizorama* Moth

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ADDITIONS TO THE AVIFAUNA OF ATHGARH FOREST DIVISION, CUTTACK, ODISHA, EASTERN INDIA

ARAJUSH PAYRA^{1*}, SURAJ KUMAR DASH¹, HIMANSHU SHEKHAR PALEI², ARUN KUMAR MISHRA³

^{1*}Department of Wildlife and Biodiversity Conservation, North Orissa University, Mayurbhanj, Odisha, India

arajushpayra@gmail.com

²Aranya Foundation, Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India

³Divisional Forest Officer, Athgarh Forest Division, Cuttack, Odisha, India;

Reviewer: Bikram Grewal

Abstract

Eleven species of birds White-rumped Spinetailed Swift *Zoonavena sylvatica*, Green-billed Malkoha *Phaenicophaeus tristis*, Changeable Hawk Eagle *Nisaetus cirrhatus*. Lesser Yellow-naped Woodpecker *Picus chlorolophus*, Small Minivet *Picrocotus cinnamomeus*, Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrike *Hemipus picatus*, Hair-crested Drongo *Dicrurus hottentottus*, Indian Scimitar Babbler *Pomatorhinus horsfieldii*, Brown-cheeked Nun Babbler *Alcippe poioicephala*, Asian Verditer Flycatcher *Eumyias thalassinus* and Orange-headed Thrush *Geokichla citrina* are reported for the first time from Athgarh Forest Division of Odisha. Eastern India.

Introduction

Athgarh Forest Division (20°21'19.2" N - 20°40'27.6" N; 85°52'0.72" E - 84°55'42.8" E) with an area of about 1500 km², is situated on the left bank of river Mahanadi in Cuttack district, Odisha. The AFD (Athgarh Forest Division) comprises of five ranges including 37 reserve forests. This Forest Division is surrounded by Cuttack Forest Division in the East and in the West by Satkosia Tiger Reserve (STR). Besides, Dhenkanal Forest Division and Chandaka Wildlife Sanctuary along with Nayagarh Forest Division also share their boundaries to the North and South respectively. Forest types are mainly Peninsular Sal forest, Dry Mixed-deciduous

Forest, patches of Thorny Scrub forest, etc. (Champion & Seth, 1968).

In AFD, the first report on avifauna was published by Pradhan *et al.* (2013), who listed 61 species of birds from Ansupa Lake. After then Palei *et al.* (2014) reported 122 birds under 49 families from the entire Athgarh Forest division. Recently Palei *et al.* (2018) reported Spot-bellied Eagle-owl *Bubo nipalensis* from Deobhin Reserve Forest of AFD. Most recently Payra *et al.* (2019), with the compilation of Pradhan *et al.* (2013) reported 147 species of birds from Ansupa and its adjoining areas. Here, in this present paper we report noteworthy records of 11 species of birds, for the first time from Athgarh Forest Division.

Materials and Methods

In between March to September 2015, several opportunistic surveys were carried out in Balikiari Reserve Forest (20.552°N, 85.038°E, 233 m a.s.l.), Tersing (20.582°N, 85.047°E, 435 m a.s.l.) and Barasingha (20.543°N, 85.048° E, 209 m a.s.l.) of Athgarh Forest Division. All these areas are situated in Narsingpur West Range, where Balikiari Reserve Forest and Barasingha characterised by undulating terrain with many seasonal streams, dams and dry deciduous forest. But Tersing, a small compartment under Kholo beat located on the border line between AFD and STR, is characterised by Dry deciduous forest along with patches of moist deciduous forest, hill streams and a pond. Forest

transects, reservoirs, hill streams, seasonal streams, ponds, village woodlands were surveyed between 6.00 a.m to 4.00 p.m and night surveys were also conducted for the nocturnal species. During the survey we took photographs with the help of digital camera (Nikon D3200 with 70-300 Tele-Macro lens) and then the species were identified with the help of photographic guide books of Grimmett *et al.* (2011); Arlott (2015) and Grewal *et al.* (2016).

Result and Discussion

During the study period 11 species belongs to five orders and eleven families are newly recorded for Athgarh Forest Division. Details of all the records are discussed below.

1. White-rumped Spinetailed Swift *Zoonavena sylvatica* (Caprimulgiformes: Apodidae) - Four individuals were observed on 3rd September 2015. They were rapidly hovering over the pond, situated at the hill top of Tersing, surrounded by moist deciduous Forest. The bird can be identified by the characteristics of whitish underparts with greyish brown throat and breast. In Indian region it is distributed in Himalayas (Uttarakhand and Sikkim); in East India (Odisha, South-west West Bengal); Central India (Maharashtra) and in South West India (from Goa to Kerala) (Grimmett *et al.* 2011; Arlott 2015; Chantler & Boesman, 2019). But Grewal *et al.* (2016) does not include its distribution in East and South West India. In Odisha it was first reported during late nineteenth century by Ball (1878) from Sambalpur district. Since then after a long gap of about 95 years it was reported by Abdulali (1972) from Pithabata range of Similipal Biosphere Reserve. Afterwards from Similipal Biosphere Reserve it was reported by Anon (1995) and Nayak & Naik (2014). Except these earlier records, no published records are available on the occurrence of this bird from Odisha. Here we report another locality of this resident bird in Odisha from Tersing of Athgarh Forest Division.

2. Green-billed Malkoha *Phaenicophaeus tristis* (Cuculiformes: Cuculidae) - First was observed one individual on 1st September 2015 from Balikiari Reserve Forest, and then, on 3rd September we observed one individual from Tersing. Both the individuals were recorded under dense vegetation of forest.

3. Changeable Hawk Eagle *Nisaetus cirrhatus* (Accipitriformes: Accipitridae) - One individual was observed on 6th March 2015, in Balikiari Reserve Forest while perching on a branch of Ficus tree at the height of about 25m.

4. Lesser Yellow-naped Woodpecker *Picus chlorolophus* (Piciformes: Picidae) - on 3rd September 2015 one individual was recorded near Tersing, while it was foraging on a tree trunk in an open forest area.

5. Small Minivet *Pericrocotus cinnamomeus* (Passeriformes: Campephagidae) - Two Individuals (one male and one female) were observed on 28th May, 2015 foraging in a Ficus tree near the Village area of Balikiari Reserve Forest

6. Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrike *Hemipus picatus* (Passeriformes: Vangidae) - Single individual was recorded in Balikiari Reserve Forest on 6th March 2015. It was perching on a tree at about 10m height, at the edge of the forest.

7. Hair-crested Drongo *Dicrurus hottentottus* (Passeriformes: Dicruridae) - One pair was observed in the early morning near the Barasingha Beat office, on 8th march 2015. They were perched on a tree branch in the open area of Forest.

8. Indian Scimitar Babbler *Pomatorhinus horsfieldii* (Passeriformes: Timaliidae) - One individual was photographed on 6th March 2015, near the Balikiari Reserve Forest. It was perching under the dense forest, close to the stream.

9. Brown-cheeked Nun Babbler *Alcippe poioicephala* (Passeriformes: Leiothrichidae) - Two individuals were observed on 1st September 2015, near a hill

stream of Balikiari Reserve Forest. The stream was shaded by tree branches.

10. Asian Verditer Flycatcher *Eumyias thalassinus* (Passeriformes: Muscicapidae)

- One individual was observed on 6th March 2015, in Balikiari Reserve Forest. It was perching on a tree branch near the stream.

11. Orange-headed Thrush *Geokichla citrina* (Passeriformes: Turdidae)

- a single individual was recorded near Balikiari Reserve Forest, on 6th March 2015. Initially it was perching under the Bamboo shrubs, but after a few minutes later it came to the open area of forest.

Conclusion

The observations reported in this present study may prove as a valuable reference to continue biodiversity studies and will help to expand the information on avifaunal distribution in Athgarh Forest division, as well as in Odisha. Record of White-rumped Spinetailed Swift *Zoonavena sylvatica* in Athgarh Forest Division as third known locality of this bird in Odisha, indicates the necessity of further systematic surveys in different less explored areas of Odisha, to understand the distribution, habitat requirements of such elusive species in Odisha.

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