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Address for Correspondence

Jatishwor Irungbam, Institute of
Microbiology, CAS, Centrum
ALGATECH, Novohradská 237 -
Opatovický mlýn 379 01 Třeboň,
Czech Republic
jatishworirungbam@gmail.com

Butterfly Research Centre, Bhimtal,
Uttarakhand 263 136, India. Phone: +91
8938896403.
Email: editorbionotes@gmail.com

Devanshu Gupta, Zoological Survey of India,
Kolkata, India devanshuguptagb4102@gmail.com

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HANUMAN PLOVER *CHARADRIUS SEEBOHMI* (AVES: CHARADRIIFORMES: CHARADRIIDAE): AN ADDITION TO THE FAUNA OF KERALA, INDIA

ABDULLA PALERI¹ & AMAL E.V.²

¹Department of Zoology, Silver College, Perambra, Kozhikode, Kerala, India 673508

²Edivettiyil House, Paleri Town P.O. Kuttiady via Kozhikode, Kerala, India 673508

Corresponding author: abdullapaleri@yahoo.com

Reviewer: Bikram Grewal

ABSTRACT

Hanuman Plover, *Charadrius seebohmi* was recently raised to species rank. As a subspecies, the taxon *seebohmi* has been mentioned in some books, but its presence in Kerala has not been confirmed so far. The Hanuman Plover spotted in Kerala is very relevant as an additional species to the avifauna of the state and would help plan strategies for the conservation of this species.

Key Words: Hanuman Plover, Kadalundy, Kappadu, conservation.

The Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus* Linnaeus, 1758 is a winter visitor to Kerala and common about the coast and backwaters (Ali, 1969). The nominate race *C. a. alexandrinus* Linnaeus, 1758 breeds in the western Palearctic to eastern China, southern Japan, and Ryukyu islands; Winters to Africa, Southern Asia, the Philippines, Indonesia and Borneo (del Hoyo *et al.*, 2023). *C. a. seebohmi* E. Hartert & A.C. Jackson, 1915 had been considered as a subspecies. It is resident and breeds in Sri

Lanka, Tamil Nadu, and southern Andhra Pradesh (Ali, 1969). The *seebohmi* taxon has recently been elevated to species rank based on phenotypical features and DNA analysis (Niroshan *et al.*, 2023). *A. seebohmi* is smaller with shorter wings, dull brown upper parts, and a dull brown cap in breeding males whereas *A. alexandrinus* is larger with longer wings, dark brown upperparts, and a rufous cap in breeding males. *A. seebohmi* has grey legs whereas *A. alexandrinus* has black legs (Niroshan *et al.*, 2023). This is a resident species in some parts of south India and Sri Lanka (Byju *et al.*, 2023). The distribution of the taxon *seebohmi* in Kerala has not been confirmed so far (Ali, 1969; Grimmett *et al.*, 1998; Rasmussen & Anderton, 2012). Neither are there any records or reports of sightings of this species from Kerala (e Bird accessed on 22.v.24).

On 2 February 2019, the first author observed and photographed a Hanuman Plover (Figure 1) from Kadalundy Bird Sanctuary (11.136 N;75.827E)(Fig.3) situated 21 km south of Kozhikode City, Kerala, India. The photo was uploaded to

the eBird forum. On 20 January 2024, the first author spotted and photographed a flock of Kentish Plovers on the shore of the Arabian Sea at Kappadu (11.38N,75.72E)(Fig.3) which is situated 18 kms north of Kozhikode City, Kerala, India. There were more than a hundred Kentish Plovers in their non-breeding plumage. Among the flock, there was only one bird which was different in its size and plumage. It was presumed to be a Hanuman Plover (Figure 2) but it was uploaded in the 'I Love Shorebirds' group for confirmation. Mr. Andrew Baksh, a shorebird expert from the USA, commented: "I can't rule out Hanuman Plover". Then the identification of the bird was confirmed as Hanuman Plover by Dr. Taej Mundkur (Wetlands International) and Dr. Sampath Seneviratne (Colombo University) (Personal communication).

The confirmed photographic record of this species is an addition to the avifauna of Kerala. Even though the species' northern range has not been assessed, the bird is considered a restricted-range species. Additional breeding of this species has recently been reported from Mannar and Point Calimer (Byju *et al.*, 2023). The observations from Kerala are relevant to chalk out an effective conservation plan for this restricted range species.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We are thankful to Dr. Taej Mundkur (Wetlands International), Dr. Sampath Seneviratne (Colombo University) and Mr. Andrew Baksh, a shorebird expert from the USA for helping us to confirm the identification. We also extend our gratitude to Ms. Kamila, Research Scholar at Z.S.I., Kozhikode, for creating the location map.

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Figure 1. Hanuman Plover *Charadrius seebohmi*, left bird (Kadalundy)



Figure 2. Hanuman Plover *Charadrius seebohmi* (Kapaadu)

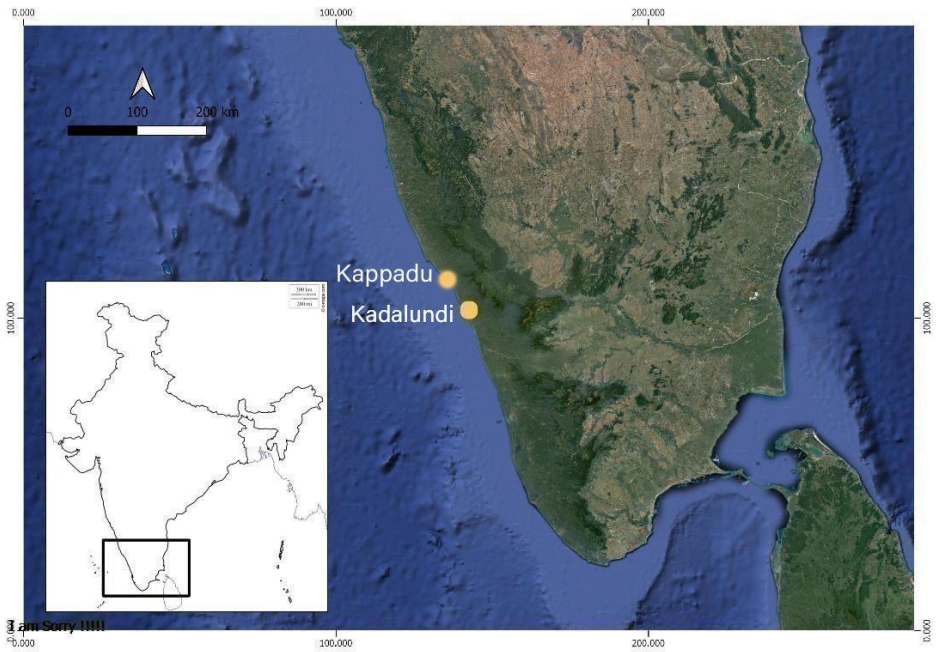


Fig 3. Map showing the locations of sightings in Kerala.