A REVIEW OF THE NORTHERN DISTRIBUTION RANGE OF NEAR-THREATENED BLACK-AND-ORANGE FLYCATCHER *FECIDULA NIGRORUFA* IN THE WESTERN GHATS

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Black-and-Orange Flycatcher (*Fecidula nigrorufa*) is considered to be a Western Ghat endemic bird species having a wide-spread distribution in the high hills of southern Western Ghats limited to tropical montane evergreen forests (sholas). The limited distribution range and the strict habitat preference has resulted in a Near Threatened status for this species in the 2006 IUCN Red Data List (BirdLife FactSheet, 2006). Ali and Ripley (2001) indicated the distribution as "The southern section of the Western Ghats and associated hills - Nilgiris, Palanis, Anaimalais, and others - from Wynaad and the Biligirirangans south to the Ashambu hills...". The recent field guides of Grimmet *et al.* (1999) or Kazmierczak (2000) does not add anything to this information and gives a distribution map entirely limiting to the southern Western Ghats. The Important Bird Areas (IBA) programme which identified numerous sites all over India for conservation priority includes Brahmagiri WLS ($12^0$16'30"N-$75^0$45'12"E) and Pushpagiri WLS ($12^0$35'30"N-$75^0$40'00"E) in the range of this species (Islam & Rahmani, 2004); however, this species is not listed under any of the IBA sites north of Pushpagiri WLS. This note details sightings of this species from Kudremukh National Park ($13^0$21'02"N- $75^0$18'27"E) and Kemmengundi hill station in the Bababudan hills ($13^0$28'60"N-$75^0$44'00"E) and also reviews a few sight reports from central and northern Karnataka which have appeared recently in internet discussion groups.

The species was first observed from Kudermukh National Park at the base of Kudremukh peak (c.1150m) by one of us (GK) on 26.iv.2006 while on a floral diversity survey. Another sighting was made four days later almost at the top of the Kudremukh Peak (c.1650m) on 29.iv.2006. The habitat at both the locations was montane tropical evergreen forest mixed with grasslands. On both the occasions, the bird was observed for a long time while the floristic/vegetation study was going on. The current checklist of birds of Kudremukh National Park (maintained by the Karnataka Forest Department) does not list this species. However, a recent field survey coordinated by Mr. Vijay Ranjan Singh, Deputy Conservator of Forests (DCF) of the National Park, could locate this species at the same locality (Vasudevan *et al*. 2006). Hence, these reports confirm the presence of this species at suitable habitats in Kudremukh N.P. The highest elevation point inside this protected area is Kudremukh Peak with an altitude of 1892m (Islam & Rahmani, 2004).

On 22.vii.2006, while on a field trip to Kemmengundi and Bhadra WLS in the Bababudan Hills, we (PJ & GK) observed a male bird at Shankara Shola near the Kemmengundi hill station (c.1400m). The bird was quite vocal but shy and kept inside the bushes and did not come out in the open for photography or further observations. Thejaswi Shivanand, who did a survey for a week in the Kemmengundi area, did not come across this species (Thejaswi, 2004). However, there are two recent reports from these regions made by birdwatchers who frequent these hills. Yathin S.K. and others reported this species from Shankara Shola on 28.viii.2005 but failed to photograph the bird (Yathin, 2005). A subsequent discussion in the bngbirds (Bangalore Birds) internet group revealed an earlier undated sighting by Kalyan Verma and others from a shola at almost the same elevation between Kemmengundi and Chikmagalur at a place called Athugundi (Verma, 2005). Hence, these reports confirm the presence of this species in the sholas of Bababudan hills. The highest point in the Bababudan Hills is Mulaianagri Peak with an altitude of 1925m (Islam & Rahmani, 2004).

The sightings listed above clearly indicate a range extension for this species to Kudremukh and Bababudan hills in central Karnataka. However, there are a few other sight reports made from places at lower altitudes; less than 1000m. One of them is a sight report from Bhadra WLS ($13^0$33'52"N-$75^0$35'60"E) by Sandeep Shankara and others at a location between Muthodi (c.700m) and Sigekaan on 23.vii.2006 (Shankara, 2006). We (PJ & GK) did not come across this bird during our field visit to Bhadra WLS in vii.2006. Yet another discussion in bngbirds internet group revealed an undated sighting made by J.C. Uttangi (Mohan Raj, 2005) at Anshi National Park, North Karnataka ($15^0$03'59"N-$74^0$25'20"E). The highest elevation inside Anshi N.P. is 927m (Islam & Rahmani, 2004). A recent trip report by Sangeetha Kadur and others lists one sighting of this species at Ganesh Gudi near Dandeli WLS, northern Karnataka ($15^0$13'27"N-$74^0$37'36"E) on 15.ii.2006 (Kadur, 2006). The highest point inside Dandeli WLS is 970m (Islam & Rahmani, 2004).

Authenticity of all these sightings are debatable; more so since they have all been reported from localities where suitable altitudes for the bird do not exist. Hence, at this time point, it is a mere conjecture that this species could sparingly occur in the hills of northern Karnataka. If some of these reports get validated, it can be taken that the northern limit of this species is as far as Goa. However, we treat the distribution range of this species as no higher than Bababudan hills in central Karnataka ($13^0$28'N) and its status further north is under review.

Conservation of these fragile habitats is a major concern. Sholas of Kudremukh N.P. have a better conservation status as compared to the similar habitats in Bababudan hills. Cattle grazing, indications of regular forest fires and firewood collection were observed in the Bababudan hills during our field visit. An immediate attention is called for to enable the protection to the sholas of Bababudan hills to maintain the habitats of endemic species such as Black-and-Orange Flycatcher. More areas of Bababudan hills should be brought under the Bhadra WLS for better protection of the biodiversity.

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BIRDS OF CHIDIYATAPU BIOLOGICAL PARK, SOUTH ANDAMAN

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The Andaman and Nicobar ($6^0$45'-$13^0$41N & $92^0$12'-$93^0$57'E) is a major group of islands with a total coastal line of about 1962km. The entire islands group cover 8,249 km², and Andaman group has more than 325 islands (21 inhabited) which covers 6,408km² and Nicobar group with over 24 islands (13 inhabited) has an area of 1,841km². The Andaman and Nicobar Islands have a hot, humid, and uniform tropical coastal climate (Saldanha, 1989). They experience a long monsoon season, receiving heavy rainfall of about 3800mm during southwest and northeast monsoons. Temperature fluctuations are between 20^0-32^0C (Dagar *et al.,* 1991). A total of 284 species of birds have been recorded on these islands including 37% endemics (Ali & Ripley, 1987; Sankaran & Vijayan 1993; Vijayan *et al.,* 2000).

Chidiyatapu Biological Park is situated 25km away from Port Blair and located in the southern most tip of the main South Andaman island. This park is about 40ha in area and is composed of littoral forest, moist deciduous forest, and semi-evergreen forest. The major tree species recorded in the study area are *Eugenia jambulance* (Jamun), *Pometia pinnata* (Thitkandu), *Sageraea elliptica* (Chooi), *Bombax insigne* (Didu), *Dipterocarpus* spp. (Gurjan), *Terminalia baliata* (White Chuglum), *Tetrameles nudiflora* (Thitpok).

The birds observed in transects laid in Chidiyatapu Park during intensive survey of the Andaman Crake were catalogued. All identifications were based on Grimmet (2001) and Ali and Ripley (1987). The common names and scientific names are based on Manakadan and Pittie (2001).

A total of 77 bird species belonging to 23 families were recorded that include 11 endemics, 10 Near Threatened and one Data Deficient species. The Nicobar Pigeon (*Caloenas nicobarica*) and Andaman Wood Pigeon (*Columba palumboides*), relatively uncommon in the Andaman islands, were recorded in the park. The conservation status given in the checklist is based on Zafar-ul-Islam and Rahmani (2002).

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