

ISSN 0972- 1800

BIONOTES

VOLUME 21, NO. 4

QUARTERLY OCTOBER-DECEMBER, 2019



Date of Publication: 28th December, 2019

BIONOTES

A Quarterly Newsletter for Research Notes and News
On Any Aspect Related with Life Forms

BIONOTES articles are abstracted/indexed/available in the Indian Science Abstracts, INSDOC; Zoological Record; **Thomson Reuters (U.S.A); CAB International (U.K.); The Natural History Museum Library & Archives, London; Library Naturkundemuseum, Erfurt (Germany)** etc. and online databases.

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India: Individuals: Rs. 150/- Institutions: Rs. 700/- . Abroad: US \$ 20/- (by sea mail).
Back volumes are available @ Rs. 800/- in India.

Published by Dr. R.K. Varshney, A Biologists
Conferrie, Raj Bhawan, Manik Chowk,
Aligarh (up to volume 20 (2018)) R.N.I.
Registration No. 71669/99.

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From Volume 21

Published by the Entomological Society of India (ESI), New Delhi (Nodal Officer: V.V. Ramamurthy, ESI, New Delhi)

And

Butterfly Research Centre, Bhimtal

Executive Editor: Peter Smetacek

Assistant Editor: Shristee Panthee

Butterfly Research Trust, Bhimtal

Cover Photo by Peter Smetacek of a *Salassa mizorama* Moth

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FIRST RECORD OF LAUGHING DOVE (*SPILOPELIA SENEGALENSIS* LINNAEUS, 1766) (COLUMBIFORMES) IN SIKKIM, EASTERN HIMALAYA

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Reviewer: Bikram Grewal

Key words

New records; Laughing Dove; Sikkim; Eastern Himalaya

Abstract

Laughing Dove *Spilopelia senegalensis* Linnaeus, 1766 is a widely distributed bird in India. However, the species is unrecorded in most of the Himalayan region. An adult Laughing Dove was recorded in Singhik Reserved Forest, Sikkim Himalaya. The species is a first record in the state of the Eastern Himalayas.

Introduction

The Laughing Dove has a broad distributional range in Africa and Asia (Brahmia et al., 2015), native to most of sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and southern Asia; India and Bangladesh (Baptista et al., 1997). However, this species is unrecorded in most of the Himalayas, northeast India and Sri Lanka; they are found in dry cultivation and scrub-covered hills (Grimmett et al., 2016). In India, the species was recorded from Western Ghats (Aravind et al. 2001), Tamil Nadu (Samson et al., 2016) and Ladakh (Pfister, 2001). The species is a slim small bird, long fairly tail, brownish-pink head and

underparts (Grimmett et al., 2016). The species easily distinguished from a similar species Spotted Dove *Spilopelia chinensis* Scopoli, 1786 due to lack of the black and white-collar, instead of having a black and copper-brown patch on the base of the throat (Birdlife Australia, 2019). This article will add a new species, *S. senegalensis* in the checklist of the bird of the Sikkim Himalayas which extends its distribution range towards the Eastern Himalayas.

Methods

Our opportunistically observation took place during the usual birding in the Singhik Reserved Forest, North Sikkim. The species were identified based on Grimmett et al. (2016) and Baptista et al. (2019).

Results

We encountered an adult Laughing Dove in the temperate forest of Singhik Reserved Forest, North Sikkim (Figure 1). The bird was sitting on the branch of a tree with the two Spotted Doves (Figure 2). The dominant forest tree was *Alnus nepalensis* D. Don, 1825,

Macaranga denticulata Blume Mull.Arg., 1866, *Juglans regia* L., 1753 and *Engelhardia spicata* Blume, 1982, etc. The species stayed in the landscape for about 15 days.

New record

Spilopelia senegalensis, Figure 2: India, North Sikkim, Singhik Reserved Forest (27°30' 56"N & 88° 33'15"E, 1500m), observed and took photographs by Thinlay Namgyal Lepcha on dated 09th August 2019 (one adult).

Identification

Laughing Dove is similar in size and appearance to the Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur* Linnaeus, 1758 (Faria, 2019). However, *S. senegalensis* is differing from the Turtle Dove due to lack of black colouration on the scapulars and inner wing coverts and the different pattern of the neck feathers (Jonsson, 1994). *S. senegalensis* easily distinguished from a similar species *S. chinensis* due to lack of the black and white-collar, instead of having a black and copper-brown patch on the base of the throat (Birdlife Australia, 2019).

Discussion

Sikkim Himalaya is a part of Eastern Hindu-Kush Himalayas contiguous with one of 34 global biodiversity hotspots (Mittermeier et al., 2004). In a total of 550 species of bird has been reported from the landscape (Acharya & Vijyan, 2011). Our new record of Laughing Dove further adds a new species in the checklist of the bird of the Sikkim Himalayas. The Laughing Dove is commonly found in India except most of the Himalayas region and northeast India (Grimmett et al., 2016). The elevation range of the species is recorded up to 2416 m.a.sl (above sea level) [The Internet IBC Bird Collection, 2019]. However, the species recorded in Ladakh (Pfister, 2001) at 4350 m.a.sl, claimed the highest elevation record. Our record of the species was at 1500 m.a.sl in the temperate forest of Sikkim Himalaya. The major threats of the species in India are habitat fragmentation causes a number of the species killed on the road, are reported from Western Ghats (Samson, 2016)

and Rajasthan (Chhangani, 2004). The species was recorded in India with associated species viz. Hill Pigeons *Columba rupestris* Pallas, 1811 (Pfister, 2001) and Eurasian-collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto* Frivaldszky, 1838 (Samson, 2016 & Chhangani, 2004). But, we encountered the species with the Spotted Dove as an associated species in the forest. Based on the literature, the species might come under anthropogenic pressure and climate change, which may they are searching for new suitable habitat in the Himalayas. Therefore, we recommend long-term monitoring of the sensitive species of the bird in respect to climate change.

Acknowledgement

We are grateful to the Forest Environment and Wildlife Department, Govt. of Sikkim and Barapathing Rage (T) for the support during the field study. Thank goes to the Director of BNHS for support. Lastly, field suggestion and encouragement by Dr. B.K. Acharya, Dr. Bharat Kumar Pradhan, Nischal Gautam (Joint Director Forest) and friends are highly appreciated. Our thanks go to the reviewer for his input in our article.

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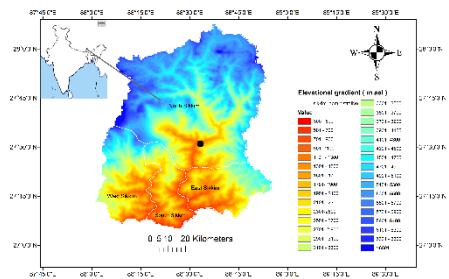


Fig.1: (A) Digital elevation model of the study area in the Sikkim Himalayas with a point location of Laughing Dove.



Fig.2: Photographic record of Laughing Dove (middle position) in Singhik Reserved Forest of the Sikkim Himalayas.