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# A Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus roseus* rescued from Godda district of Jharkhand, India

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## Correspondence

### The Woolly-necked Stork *Ciconia episcopus* re-using an old Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* nest

A pair of Woolly-necked Stork *Ciconia episcopus* was seen nesting in July 2016 on a *Eucalyptus* sp. tree at Bhindawas Wildlife Sanctuary (28.532°N, 76.551°E; 212 m asl; [225]), the largest wetland of Haryana, India. The nest was 11 m above the ground, and was an abandoned, two-year-old nest of a Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*. The nest was built in the fork of the lower branches of the tree. The pair occupied the nest in the second week of July and by third week the birds were incubating eggs. The eggs hatched in the last week of August and three nestlings were first observed on 01 September 2016. An incubation period of about 40 days was recorded. Both adults participated in all the nidification activities, like nest building, incubation, and feeding the nestlings. The nestlings fledged during the second week of October.

In India, only a few species of birds have been recorded nesting on eucalyptus trees: Darter *Anhinga melanogaster* (Niangthianhoi & Khudsar 2015), and the Indian Spotted Eagle *Clanga hastata* (Sharma *et al.* 2010)—because of its pattern of branching. Therefore, it was quite interesting to see a big bird like the Woolly-necked Stork selecting the eucalyptus tree as a nesting site, and nest successfully. The species is known to breed in large leafy trees like *Salmalia* sp. (Ali & Ripley 1987), *Mitragyna parvifolia*, and *Dalbergia sissoo* (Ishtiaq *et al.* 2004), which have strong branches and forks that provide a stable nesting platform. Some nesting records of the species are also on mobile phone towers (Vaghela *et al.* 2015), and on rock cliffs (Rahmani *et al.* 1996), which are also strong and sturdy nesting sites. The observations of its nesting on an eucalyptus tree appears very interesting as it is very different from the strong and sturdy nesting sites of tall and strong native trees, mobile towers and rocky cliffs. Agricultural fields surround the Bhindawas Wildlife Sanctuary and the peripheral embankment of the wetland is demarcated by *Eucalyptus* sp., *Acacia* sp., *Azadirachta* sp., and *Zizyphus* sp. Thus, may be the absence of tall leafy native trees in this area forced the bird to select the eucalyptus tree as nesting site.

Although, the reuse of its own nests has been recorded (Ali & Ripley 1987), this pair had occupied an abandoned nest of the Grey Heron. I have not come across any reference in the literature, of this species re-using the nest of another species. However, quite a few large birds are known to occupy the nests of smaller species, especially amongst raptors (Newton 1979;

Collias *et al.* 1984; Fernández *et al.* 1991). The re-using of the nest was, perhaps, an opportunistic behavioral strategy of the Woolly-necked Stork pair, as it was a readily available, and suitable to their purpose, in a habitat that was otherwise not conducive to nesting.

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— Purbasha Banerjee

Bombay Natural History Society, Hornbill House,  
Shaheed Bhagat Singh Road, Mumbai 400001, Maharashtra, India.  
E-mail: [p.banerjee@bnhs.org](mailto:p.banerjee@bnhs.org)

### A Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus roseus* rescued from Godda district of Jharkhand, India

On 01 April 2017, a few people of Chanda village captured a Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus roseus* [226] from a waterbody (25.15°N, 87.45°E) in Godda District, Jharkhand (India). The waterbody is adjacent to agricultural land, and its water is less than five meters deep, with partial algal growth. The highway patrol police registered a case of poaching and seized the bird, later handing it to the Boarjior range officer of Godda forest division. We visited all surrounding waterbodies to check for flamingos, but did not find any. The captive bird was taken to Bhagawan Birsa Biological Park (Ranchi Zoo) on 02 April 2017, where it died the next day. A post mortem showed the cause of death due to an internal injury.

A formal state checklist does not exist for Jharkhand (Rahmani *et al.* 2016: 850–851). Avibase (<http://avibase.bsc-eoc.org/checklist.jsp?region=IN&list=howardmoore>) lists 436 species



225. Woolly-necked Stork nesting in an abandoned Grey Heron nest, in an eucalyptus tree.

Sanjay Xaxa



226. The rescued Greater Flamingo in Godda District, Jharkhand.

from the state and credits their source to Delhibird ([www.delhibird.net](http://www.delhibird.net)). Delhibird has one checklist from Jharkhand and that is from Palamau Tiger Reserve (<http://checklists.delhibird.net/internal/jharkhand/palamau.htm>), which is sourced from the official website of the Tiger Reserve; evidently the list is not comprehensive. However, the Greater Flamingo is not listed on any checklist for Jharkhand

State. Neither field guides (Grimmett *et al.* 2011; Rasmussen & Anderton 2012), nor online sources ([www.ebird.org](http://www.ebird.org); [www.orientalbirdimages.org](http://www.orientalbirdimages.org)) show any records from Jharkhand, though some records from adjacent Bihar are depicted. Hence this might be the first formal record of the species for the state. The Greater Flamingo is considered rare in eastern India (Ali & Ripley 1987), and hence this record is of additional interest.

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— Sanjay Xaxa, S. K. Sajan, Ram Bharat,  
M. K. Bakshi, D. S. Srivastava

Sanjay Xaxa, Ph.D Research Scholar,  
Department of Zoology, Ranchi University Ranchi,  
Jharkhand, India.

S. K. Sajan, Junior Research Fellow, Zoological Survey of India  
Prani Vigyan Bhawan, New Alipore, Kolkata 700053,  
West Bengal, India.  
E-mail: [skajan.sajan@gmail.com](mailto:skajan.sajan@gmail.com) [Corresponding author]

Ram Bharat, Divisional Forest Officer, Godda forest division,  
Jharkhand, India.

M. K. Bakshi, Nature Conservation Society, Old ITO Road  
Redma, Daltonganj, Jharkhand, India.

D. S. Srivastava, Nature Conservation Society, Old ITO Road  
Redma, Daltonganj, Jharkhand, India.

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## First photographic record of Chinese Pond Heron *Ardeola bacchus* from West Bengal, India

A Chinese Pond Heron *Ardeola bacchus* was photographed on 05 July 2016 at c. 1600 hrs in the Kotulpur block (23.03°N, 87.60°E) of Bankura District, West Bengal. The bird was foraging in a ploughed paddy field that had remnants of grasses and weeds. Nearby, a small pond, and irrigation canal had patches of tall kans grass *Saccharum spontaneum*.

The bird had a maroon chestnut head and neck, and slate or bluish-black back, and hence it was identified as a Chinese Pond Heron in breeding plumage. The next day I revisited the place and saw the bird. It remained at the site at least till 08 July 2016, after which I did not see it despite many visits. This appears to be the first photographic record of this species from West Bengal.



227. Chinese Pond Heron in West Bengal.

Sovan Gupta

Interestingly enough, again in 2017, an individual of the same species was sighted at the same site. The bird was first noticed on 09 July, but I could not take a photograph then. The next day I revisited the place but the bird could not be found. On 11 July, I found the bird once again and could take some pictures [227]. I visited the spot almost regularly, and after a gap of 15 days I saw the bird again in that area on 27 July. In 2016 the bird stayed there, presumably, for three days, and in 2017 it stayed for 19 days though it remained undetected during most of my visits. It was generally noticed during a drizzle, or just after heavy showers, presumably coming out into the open paddy fields to catch insects. Whenever I saw the bird, it was feeding by itself, despite there being Indian Pond- Herons *A. grayii* in the vicinity.

These repeat sightings of the Chinese Pond Heron from this site, during the same period of the year, and the fact that it remained in the area for 19 days in 2017, is interesting. In the Indian Subcontinent, it is mainly found in north-eastern India, the Andaman Islands, and in Bangladesh (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). Vagrants have been reported from Bhavnagar, Gujarat (Parasharya 1983; Parasharya *et al.* 2004), Tal Chhapar Wildlife Sanctuary, Rajasthan (Poonia *et al.* 2013), the Kelambakkam backwaters of Tamil Nadu (Kaninde 2013), and from Pakistan (Khan *et al.* 2015).

I thank Subhankar Patra for his encouragement, and for confirming it as the first photographic record from West Bengal, and Debansu Paramanik and Anagha Deb for their help and encouragement during fieldwork. I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to Sachin Ranade for guiding me in the preparation of this note.

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— Sovan Gupta

Jhetherbazar, Post Joyrambati 722161, Bankura District,  
West Bengal, India.  
E-mail: [sovangupta10@gmail.com](mailto:sovangupta10@gmail.com)

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