



## Eight new records of birds from Great Nicobar Island, Andaman & Nicobar Islands

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### Abstract

Great Nicobar Island is the largest island in the Nicobar group and this is the southernmost islands of this archipelago. The regular field surveys have been carried out as the major ecological studies on bird communities of this island. Recently, eight birds were sighted from this island which is first report to the Nicobar group of Islands.

**Keywords:** Avifauna, Distribution, Great Nicobar, New Record

The Great Nicobar Island is the southernmost Island of Andaman & Nicobar archipelago and lies between 6° 45' and 7° 15' N latitudes and 93° 38' and 93° 55' E longitudes. The Great Nicobar Island includes, Great Nicobar Biosphere Reserve, Campbell Bay National Park, Galathea National Park, Galathea Bay Wildlife Sanctuary and Megapode Island Wildlife Sanctuary. The total geographical area of this island is approximately 1044.54 km<sup>2</sup> of which the Biosphere Reserve consists of 1038.70 km<sup>2</sup> (UNESCO, 2013). The island is represented by tropical evergreen forest ecosystem including a host of forest system, ranging from seasonal rain forests in the low hills, tropical mountain forests and moist deciduous to dry deciduous forest. The Great Nicobar Island is located about 482 km south of Port Blair, the capital of the Union Territory. The length of this island is 55 km from Murray Point in the North to Indira Point in the South. This island has a rich heritage of faunal diversity and this area also inhabits one of the most endangered avian species Nicobar Megapode *Megapodius nicobariensis* (Sankaran, 1998).

The scientific studies on the birds in the Andaman and Nicobar islands have been initiated by Blyth (1845, 1846, 1863 and 1866) followed by Beavan (1867), Hume (1873, 1874a, 1874b, 1876), Butler (1899a, 1899b, 1899c, 1900). Followed by Abdulali, (1964, 1965, 1967, 1971, 1976, 1979, and 1981); Das, (1971); Tikader, (1984); Chandra and Rajan, (1996); Pande *et al.* (2007); Sankaran, 1995a, 1995b, 1995c, 1998), Sankaran, 2001. Recently, a number

of research studies have been carried out on different aspects on the avifauna of these islands (Sivakumar, 2003, Yahya and Zaarri, 2003, Sivakumar and Sankaran, 2005a,b, Vijayan, 2007, Rasmussen and Anderton, 2012). Sivaperuman *et al.* (2010) reported 284 species of birds from the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and since then sixteen species of birds have been reported by him and co-workers for the first time from this archipelago (Sivaperuman *et al.*, 2012; 2013; 2014a,b; 2015a-c). As a part of survey programme of faunal communities of Nicobar groups of Islands, we have carried out field survey in Great Nicobar Island, during the exploration eight species of birds were sighted from Great Nicobar Island which is first report to Nicobar group of Islands.

### *Vanellus cinereus*

Grey-headed Lapwing (Linnaeus, 1758)

On 10<sup>th</sup> October 2015, three adults Grey-headed Lapwing *Vanellus cinereus* were recorded from the marshland at Govind Nagar, Great Nicobar Island (Lat. 07° 00.242' N; Long. 93° 54.571' E) (Figure 1). This species is characterized by grey head, yellow bill with black tip, yellow legs, blackish breast and red eyes. They generally prefer marshland for foraging. Grey-headed Lapwing are regular winter visitors to the Andaman group of Islands, however there is no reports from Great Nicobar Island. This species has not been reported from Nicobar group of Islands by previous researchers (Ali and Ripley, 1983;

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Tikader, 1984; Kumar *et al.*, 2005; Grimmett *et al.*, 2008; Rasmussen and Anderton, 2012). This is the first sighting of *Vanellus cinereus* from Great Nicobar Island.



**Figure 1.** Grey-headed Lapwing *Vanellus cinereus* (Linnaeus, 1758).

***Dendronanthus indicus***

Forest Wagtail (Gmelin, 1789)

On 12<sup>th</sup> October 2015, a single individual of Forest Wagtail *Dendronanthus indicus* was recorded from East-West Road of Great Nicobar Biosphere Reserve (Lat. 06° 59.923' N; Long. 93° 52.676' E) (Figure 2). This species is a typical evergreen forest dweller is characterized by pink legs, black breast, olive upper plumage and white under parts. This is the first sighting from the Great Nicobar Island and this has not been reported from Nicobar group of Islands (Ali and Ripley, 1983; Kumar *et al.*, 2005; Grimmett *et al.*, 2008; Rasmussen and Anderton, 2012).



**Figure 2.** Forest Wagtail *Dendronanthus indicus* (Gmelin, 1789).

***Tringa glareola***

Wood Sandpiper Linnaeus, 1758

Two individuals of *Tringa glareola* were sighted on 08<sup>th</sup> October 2015 from INS Baaz Airport, Campbell Bay (Lat.

07° 00.850' N; Long. 93° 52.435' E). This species generally prefers mudflats and shallow water and common winter visitor of Andaman group of islands. It is characterized by a long and straight bill, broad whitish supercilium, pale brown with white spots, white belly, greenish legs and a bold black tail (Figure 3). This is a new distributional record to the Nicobar group of Islands (Ali and Ripley, 1983; Kumar *et al.*, 2005; Grimmett *et al.*, 2008; Rasmussen and Anderton, 2012).



**Figure 3.** Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola* Linnaeus.

***Egretta alba***

Great Egret (Linnaeus, 1758)

Four individuals of Large Egret *Egretta alba* were sighted at Gandhi Nagar in Great Nicobar Island (Lat. 06° 50.334' N; Long. 93° 53.656' E) on 21<sup>st</sup> June 2015 (Figure 4). These are resident birds of the Andaman Islands with local migration but this has not been reported from the Nicobar group of Islands. These birds are characterized by their typical white plumage, long yellow bill, blue lores, flat forehead and long, black legs. Ali and Ripley (1983); Kumar *et al.*, (2005), Grimmett *et al.* (2008), Rasmussen and Anderton (2012) have not reported this species from Nicobar group of Islands.



**Figure 4.** Great Egret *Egretta alba* (Linnaeus).

***Gallirallus striatus nicobariensis***

Blue-breasted Rail Abdulali, 1967

One individual of Blue-Breasted Rail was recorded from Campbell Bay in Great Nicobar Island (Lat. 07°00.850' N; Long. 93°52.435 E) on 27<sup>th</sup> March 2016 from the flooded grasslands (Figure 5). These are resident birds of the Central Nicobar group of Islands this has not been sighted in the Southern group of Nicobar Islands. These birds are characterized by their darker, broader whitish bar, iris are greyish brown; blackish bill, legs and feet dark brown and larger. Ali and Ripley (1983), Grimmett *et al.* (2008), Rasmussen and Anderton (2012) not reported this species from this Island.



**Figure 5.** Nicobar Blue-Breasted Rail *Gallirallus striatus nicobariensis* Abdulali.

***Eurystomus orientalis gigas***

Dollar Bird Stesemann, 1913

On 24<sup>th</sup> March 2016 one individual of Broad-billed Roller perched on top of tree branch was sighted at East West Road, Great Nicobar Biosphere Reserve (06°59.468 N; 93°52.310 E) (Figure 6). This species has not been reported from the Great Nicobar Islands by previous workers Ali & Ripley (1983), Grimmett *et al.* (2008), Rasmussen & Anderton (2012).



**Figure 6.** Broad-billed Roller *Eurystomus orientalis gigas* Stesemann.

***Saxicola stejnegeri***

Common Stonechat (Linnaeus, 1766)

On 20<sup>th</sup> February 2016, while we were surveying INS BAAZ, Airport, Campbell Bay (07°00.850'N, 93°52.435'E), one individual of Common Stonechat was sighted. This is a regular winter visitor to Andaman Islands. However this species not reported by the previous researchers (Ali & Ripley, 1983; Grimmett *et al.*, 2008; Rasmussen & Anderton, 2012).



**Figure 7.** Common Stonechat *Saxicola stejnegeri* (Linnaeus, 1766).

***Sturnus roseus***

Rosy Starling (Linnaeus, 1758)

Single individual of Rosy Starling was sighted on 07 February 2016 on the Sastri Nagar of Great Nicobar Island (06°51.582'N, 93°53.318'E). This individual was resting on electric wire and characterized by head, throat and tail glossy black tail, yellowish beak, and pink legs (Figure 8). This species is a new distribution record to the Nicobar group of Islands (Ali and Ripley 1983; Grimmett *et al.*, 2008; Rasmussen and Anderton, 2012).



**Figure 8.** Rosy Starling *Sturnus roseus* (Linnaeus 1758).



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