

Occurrence of the Malabar Lark on Kulang Fort in Maharashtra, India



The Malabar Lark spotted in Kulang Fort in Maharashtra, India. © Rohan Bhagat.

Habitat and ecology are the two important factors that play a major role in the occurrence of a bird in a particular area. The Malabar Lark *Galerida malabarica* (Aves: Passeriformes: Alaudidae) (IUCN status: Least Concern), also known as the Malabar Crested Lark, is a resident bird of southeastern Gujarat and the Western Ghats which virtually breeds year-round (del Hoyo et al. 2004). It is a medium-sized, fairly sturdy lark with a prominent spiky crest, reddish-brown plumage, medium-long bill, and a fairly short tail. It is locally common in stony and grassy hillsides, forest clearings, scrublands, and fields. It is gregarious and sings either from perch or in high prolonged song flight with slow flapping wings (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012).

It is smaller than the Crested Lark *Galerida cristata* and larger than the Skye's Lark *G.*

deva as well as the Oriental Skylark *Alauda arvensis*, with a stouter bill, darker and more rufescent upperparts with much stronger blackish streaking, heavily spotted breast (washed with buff or rufous-buff), and pale rufous outer tail feathers (Grimmet et al. 2011).

This note describes the photographic record of the Malabar Lark in the hilly terrain on top of Kulang Fort in Kurungwadi, Ahmednagar, Maharashtra, India (19.591° N & 73.642° E), on 08 November 2018 at an altitude of 1,470m. While wandering among the fascinating spots and remains of the fort at around 11.30h, I spotted a bird at the topmost point of the fort. The upper part of the fort is completely rocky with no trees or shrubs. It only comprises of short grass which starts drying at the end of the monsoon season. I did not expect a small

bird such as a lark to be there at that altitude and that time of the day and hence took an image of it. I identified it as the Malabar Lark by comparing it with Grimmett et al. (2011).

Grimmett et al. (2011) and Rasmussen & Anderton (2012) did not record the species from Kurungwadi in Ahmednagar. Additionally, the distribution of the Malabar Lark in del Hoyo et al. (2004) does not include sightings from the mentioned area. The species, however, was recorded in the nearby area of Harishchandragad Kalsubai Wildlife Sanctuary by Kurhade (2010) with no notes on elevation. The Malabar Lark can be found till elevations of 1,828m according to Rasmussen & Anderton (2012) and Grimmett et al. (2011).

References

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