

Record of Pallas's Gull in Buxa Tiger Reserve, West Bengal

Pallas's Gull *Ichthyaetus ichthyaeus* is a well-known winter visitor to the Indian subcontinent. The species is associated with coasts, rivers, and large water bodies (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012).

On 2 April 2010, a Pallas's Gull was rescued from Atiabari Tea Garden (26.64 N, 89.50 E), Alipurduar District in the northern West Bengal. The tea garden is located on the border of Buxa Tiger Reserve (BTR).

The previous night, there was a thunder storm and the bird probably got disoriented and was exhausted. The villagers rescued the bird that was in moribund condition and it died on reaching the forest office. The bird was handed over to the forest staff of BTR and they preserved it at the Nature Interpretation Centre at Rajabhatkhawa.

The bird was an adult and in summer plumage as its head



Rescued Pallas's Gull © Sachin Ranade



Pallas's Gull specimen at Nature Interpretation Centre, Buxa Tiger Reserve © Sachin Ranade

and neck were black with two white crescentic patches below and above the eyes (Ali & Ripley 1983).

The records of the species from Sikkim (Sharma & Bhat 2016) and Assam (Muzaffar et al. 2008; Guo-Gang et al. 2014) impelled the necessity to report this find as the BTR lies in northern Bengal situated between the two states. There was

no record of this species from BTR earlier, although it has been regularly sighted at Gajoldoba, Teesta River which is about 100 km away from BTR. In 2013, the species was reported in the check list for BTR in the eBird (Shome 2013). The rivers Torsha, Jaldhaka, and Sankosh flow close by BTR, which could be a suitable habitat for the species. The study of Pallas's Gull's migration between the Qinghai Lake, China (breeding ground) and Bangladesh (wintering ground) showed its regular passage through northern Bengal. Although the global population of Pallas's Gull appears to be stable or increasing, its population has declined at the Qinghai Lake, China (Muzaffar et al. 2008; Guo-Gang et al. 2014). This is one of the important species which is considered as the victim and reservoir of the bird flu virus H5N1 and hence it is necessary to put emphasis on its records and monitoring in India.

References

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