First Record of Common Babbler *Turdoides caudata* (Timaliidae) from Burdwan District, West Bengal and Range Extension to Eastern India

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Common Babbler *Turdoides caudata* (Passeriformes: Timaliidae) is a widespread resident bird of Indian subcontinent but has not been recorded from Odisha (Ali & Ripley 1983), parts of North-East and Eastern India, Sri Lanka and West Pakistan (Grimmett *et al*. 2012). There are no previous records of this bird from Durgapur, an industrial city of West Bengal, India.

Babblers are known for living in groups and Common Babblers generally are in group, consisting of six to twenty members. Vociferous in nature they move on the ground often with other members keeping watch from the top of bushes and feed on insects, grains and berries (Gaston 1978). They produce a series of pleasant, rapid whistles and a louder, more drawn-out *pieuu-u-u pie-u-u pi-e-u-u-u* call (Grimmett *et al*. 2012).

A project has been undertaken to survey the birds of Durgapur, Burdwan district, West Bengal from January 2012 to December 2013. The habitat of this study area consists of cultivation, scrubland, grassland and open airfield (Fig.1). Historically, this area was used during the British Empire, a landing site for the military aircrafts especially during the II World War. After independence this site mostly remained undisturbed except for some sporadic cultivation activities. In absence of anthropogenic interventions and suitable geographic and climatic conditions a diversity of flora and fauna flourished in the area.

Olympus field Binocular (8X40) and Canon Power Shot SX 40HS digital camera were used for observation and photography of birds respectively. During the bird

![Fig 1. View of the study area. Photos: A.K. Nayak](image1)

![Fig 2. Common Babbler (*Turdoides caudata*) from the present study area](image2)

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survey more than 150 bird species were recorded in this area including Yellow-wattled Lapwing, Tricoloured Munia, Black-winged Kite, Common Kestrel, Ashy-crowned Sparrow-Lark, Bengal Bushlark, Jungle Babbler and Yellow-eyed Babbler.

We sighted a Common Babbler (Fig. 2 & 3) for the first time on 28th January, 2013 at 09:30 hrs at Tamla village (23°35'50.1"N, 87°14'01.5"E) near Kaji Nazarul Islam Airport, Andal block of Durgapur sub-division during regular survey. The bird was identified by their long tail like a babbler, smaller and slimmer in size than Jungle Babbler, streaked on nape and mantle, whitish throat and central breast, buffish-grey underparts, pale brown beak, yellow legs, darker orange brown iris and their typical call and behaviour. The bird was identified in the field following Grimmett et al. (2012). Thereafter, these birds were recorded throughout the year in the study area (Table 1). Common Babbler belongs to the Least Concern category (IUCN 2013) and the global population of this species is stable (IUCN 2013; Birdlife International 2014).

The present study revealed that, Common Babblers have become residents of this area. The present sighting of Common Babbler Turdoides caudata is the first record from Burdwan district, West Bengal and constitutes a range extension to Eastern India.

References


Table 1. Month wise data showing total number of Common Babbler (*Turdoides caudata*) recorded during the year 2013 from Andal block of Durgapur sub-division.

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<th>Month</th>
<th>January</th>
<th>February</th>
<th>March</th>
<th>April</th>
<th>May</th>
<th>June</th>
<th>July</th>
<th>August</th>
<th>September</th>
<th>October</th>
<th>November</th>
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<tr>
<td>Total number of birds</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
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Fig 3. Common Babbler (*Turdoides caudata*) from the present study area