

First Record of Knob-Billed Duck *Sarkidiornis melanotos* (Pennant, 1769) from the Andaman Islands, India

S. Rajeshkumar^{1*}, C. Raghunathan¹ and Kailash Chandra²

¹Zoological Survey of India, Andaman and Nicobar Regional Centre, Horticulture Road, Haddo, Port Blair 744 102, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, India

²Zoological Survey of India, M-Block, New Alipore, Kolkata 700 053, West Bengal, India

KEYWORDS Andaman Island. Birds. Knob-billed Duck. New Record

ABSTRACT Many migratory birds frequently visit Andaman and Nicobar Islands during the winter season, as these islands are rich in tropical biodiversity. The knob-billed duck (*Sarkidiornis melanotos*) is one of the larger ducks in the family *Anatidae* recorded for the first time from South Andaman. This recent sighting provides a new distribution of this species in the Indian province.

INTRODUCTION

The Knob-billed duck *Sarkidiornis melanotos* (Pennant 1769) is the only known species (monotypic) from genus *Sarkidiornis* distributed across the tropics. Globally two subspecies have been recognized (*S. m. melanotos* and *S. m. sylvicola*) sometimes treated as conspecific, but *S. sylvicola* has been elevated as separate species (Collar and Andrew 1988). Noticeably, *S. melanotos* is a resident bird found in the tropics of Old World such as sub-Saharan Africa, Madagascar, Pakistan (Prob. extinct), Bangladesh, South Peninsular and vagrant to Sri Lanka, South Asia and South China. *S. sylvicola* occurs only in the New world tropics (South America, Colombia, Venezuela, Eastern Paraguay, SE Brazil, NE Argentina, vagrant to Trinidad, Uruguay and also rarely found breeding in E Panama) (Carboneras and Kirwan 2016; del Hoyo et al. 2016). This species has been included in the Indian checklist but the taxonomic relationships of races are unknown or undefined (Praveen et al. 2016). This note describes the first record of this species from Andaman and Nicobar Islands at Tarmugli Island, Mahatma Gandhi Marine National Park (MGMNP).

OBSERVATIONS

On 5th November 2016 at 1200 hours from Tarmugli Island, MGMNP (Lat: 11° 35.192' N;

Long: 092° 32.237' E), Wandoor, South Andaman, SR observed and photographed (Fig. 1) an unusual size (larger than Cotton Teal and Andaman Teal) of three individuals of duck, resting on the submerged plant found in the swamped, undisturbed wetland. When it was disturbed, the birds were seen flying over the same area. Also, noticed a predator, White Bellied Sea Eagle *Haliaeetus leucogaster* (Gmelin 1788) chasing these ducks at mid-day. One individual was observed feeding and circling with a flock of Lesser Whistling-Duck *Dendrocygna javanica* (Horsfield 1821) in the same area.

The bird was identified as the Knob-billed duck *Sarkidiornis melanotos* (Pennant 1769) with the help of field guides (Grimmett et al. 2011; Rasmussen and Anderton 2012). Further confirmation of species identification and its records are based on available literatures. This bird with heavy bill, huge size, white buffy under parts differ from other known species of family Anatidae found in Andaman Islands, size of this bird is much larger than Cotton Teal, *Nettapus coromandelianus* (Gmelin 1789), Lesser Whistling-Duck *Dendrocygna javanica* (Horsfield 1821) and Andaman Teal *Anas albogularis* (Muller 1842). White plumage somewhat similar to Cotton teal (*N. coromandelianus*) but differs in their massive size, black heavy bill (rather than pale small triangular bill) without comb as in female, black freckles on head and neck, dark heavy legs, dark upper parts with complete dark black wings with glossy bluish green faded (rather than white trailing edge to secondaries

*Address for correspondence:

E-mail: rajeshkumar0802@gmail.com



Fig. 1. Knob-billed duck *Sarkidiornis melanotos* (Pennant 1769) at South Andaman

and inner primaries), white buffy under parts showing the distinct morphological characters for identification of this species.

DISCUSSION

In India, this species is mostly resident and rarely local migrants are known to occur from South and East Sind, Mysore, Assam Valley (Ali and Ripley 1978), Kerala of Southern Peninsular regions (Ravindran, 1998; Rasmussen and Anderton 2012), few breeding records are available from Southern-most India in Tamil Nadu (Grubh et al. 2008). No other records from Andaman and Nicobar Islands (Grimmett et al. 2011; Rasmussen and Anderton 2012). So far 10 spe-

cies in the family Anatidae have been reported from the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, in which, the researchers recorded Eurasian Wigeon (*Anas penelope*) from South Andaman (Rajeshkumar and Raghunathan 2014) and also Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea* (Pallas 1764) was observed as regular winter visitor to south, north Andaman but it was known from a single report of storm driven bird recorded earlier at south Andaman by Bayley-de Castro (1933) as quoted in Abdulali (1964).

CONCLUSION

In this connection, it might be possible to expect many migratory species to visit wetlands

particularly in remote islands of south and north Andaman during October to May each year.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To expect many migratory species to visit wetlands, therefore, wetland management program is of utmost importance so as to initiate conservation of avifauna and also take better preventive measures from the risk of avian influenza through migratory birds.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The first author would like to thank Mr. Jaison John, Range Officer, MGMNP, Wandoor, South Andaman and also to the Department of Environment and Forest, South Andaman Division, Port Blair. Also, the researchers thank reviewers and editors for correcting the earlier draft of this manuscript.

REFERENCES

- Abdulali H 1964. The birds of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. *Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society*, 61(3): 483–571.
- Ali S, Ripley SD 1978. *Handbook of the Birds of India and Pakistan together with those of Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan and Sri Lanka. Divers to Hawks*. Volume 1. 2nd Edition. London, New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 192-193.
- Carboneras C, Kirwan GM 2016. African Comb Duck (*Sarkidiornis melanotos*). In: J del Hoyo, A Elliott, J Sargatal, DA Christie, E de Juana (Eds.): *Handbook of the Birds of the World Alive*. Barcelona: Lynx Edicions. From <<http://www.hbw.com/node/467116>> (Retrieved on 9 November 2016).
- Collar NJ, Andrew P 1988. *Birds to Watch. The ICBP World Checklist of Threatened Birds. ICBP Technical Publication No.8*. Cambridge, U.K.: ICBP.
- Del Hoyo J, Collar N, Kirwan GM 2016. American Comb Duck (*Sarkidiornis sylvicola*). In: J del Hoyo, A Elliott, J Sargatal, DA Christie, E de Juana (Eds.): *Handbook of the Birds of the World Alive*. Barcelona: Lynx Edicions. From <<http://www.hbw.com/node/467116>> (Retrieved on 9 November 2016).
- Grimmett R, Inskipp C, Inskipp T 2011. *Birds of the Indian Subcontinent*. 2nd Edition. London: Oxford University Press & Christopher Helm.
- Grubb RB, Pandian P, Rajesh A, Ross M, Grubb S 2008. Southern-most breeding record of the Comb Duck *Sarkidiornis melanotos* from India. *Indian BIRDS*, 4(1): 15.
- Praveen J, Jayapal R, Pittie A 2016. A checklist of the birds of India. *Indian BIRDS*, 11(5&6): 113-172.
- Rajeshkumar S, Raghunathan C 2014. First records of Eurasian Wigeon *Anas penelope* and Great Frigatebird *Fregata minor* in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, India. *Bulletin of the British Ornithologists' Club*, 134(4): 305-307.
- Rasmussen PC, Anderton JC 2012. *Birds of South Asia: the Ripley Guide*. 2 Volumes. 2nd Edition. Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution, Barcelona: Lynx Edicions.
- Ravindran PK 1998. Sighting of the Comb Duck in Kerala. *Newsletter for Birdwatchers*, 38(4): 71.

Paper received for publication on January 2017
Paper accepted for publication on July 2017