

Short Communication

Sighting of Barred cuckoo dove *Macropygia unchall* in Kokrajhar Town, Bodoland Territorial Region, Assam, India

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Abstract: Barred cuckoo-dove is a species of bird which is native to South and Southeast Asia. It belongs to the family Columbidae and is listed under Least Concern category in the IUCN Red List. This species is sexually dimorphic. Males have unbarred head and neck with extensive purple and green gloss. Females are heavily barred on head, neck and underparts with gloss which are restricted to nape and side of neck. We recorded Barred cuckoo-dove *Macropygia unchall* in a commercial area of district head quarter town, Kokrajhar incidentally as part of a routine survey. Generally a forest bird species, a total of nine individuals were seen perching on the tin roof of an old concrete house, covered under the moderately dense canopy of Eucalyptus tree *Eucalyptus globules*. As birds are regarded as the biological indicator which signifies the health of the ecosystem, it is important to preserve the existence of any species of wild birds that are present around us.

Keywords: Commercial, dove, forest, habitat, monsoon season, Urban.

Introduction

Barred cuckoo-dove *Macropygia unchall* (Wagler, 1831) is distributed globally in India, Nepal, Bhutan, China, Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, Malaysia and Indonesia. In India, Barred cuckoo-dove is distributed in the states of North-East and West-Bengal. The species belongs to the family Columbidae and is listed under Least Concern category of the IUCN Red List. The identifying features of the species includes medium-sized dove of 37 to 41 cm in measurement. It has dark pinkish brown wings and tail on the upperparts and green or purplish pink on the hinderneck. They feed on small fruits, berries, figs, shoots, buds, seeds, grains and cereals. It is a forest species inhabiting dense evergreen forest and secondary jungles (Baptista *et al.*, 2020).

The breeding season of the species starts from March to July in India and Nepal and December to March in

Malaysia. Incubation period takes 15-20 days and 19 days for fledging (Baptista *et al.*, 2020)

Generally, birds are regarded as the good biological indicators of ecosystem (Buckland *et al.*, 2008; Catterall, 2004). Bhatt and Joshi (2011) found higher number of bird diversity, abundance and species richness in forest habitat compared to urban habitats; however, some species of birds dominated in the urban avian communities.

The main aim of the study was to determine the diversity of urban birds in BTR district headquarter towns of Assam. However, during one of our surveys, we observed Barred cuckoo-dove for the first time in Kokrajhar town and there was no record of the species in Kokrajhar town earlier.

Materials and methods

Study area

The original survey was for the study of diversity of urban birds in all the District Headquarters towns (Kokrajhar, Kajalgaon, Mushalpur, Tamulpur and Udalguri) of BTR, Assam. Kokrajhar town (26.4°N 90.27°E) is the Head Quarters of BTR and was also an intensive study area of our survey. It is situated along the bank of Gaurang River. The railway track of North East Indian Railways traverses through the town. The town has altogether of 10 wards under Kokrajhar Municipality Board.

Methods

We applied Point Count method of 5 minutes duration within 30 metre radius (Nath *et al.*, 2019). The study area was laid by grids of 500 × 500 square metre. The total of 24 grids was selected by Stratified random sampling. The towns were segregated into three different habitats as Commercial, Residential and Suburban habitat (Fig. 1). The data were

collected seasonally during Pre-Monsoon, Monsoon to Post-Monsoon seasons. We used to survey from 0600 hrs to 0800 hrs.

Results

As part of our routine survey on diversity of urban birds in the intensive study area (Kokrajhar town) on 4th of August, 2022, we saw nine individuals of Barred cuckoo-dove (*Macropygia unchall*) (Fig. 2) at 0600 hrs on 4th August 2022 near Aie Hotel, Gwjwnpuri (N 26°25.020, E 90°16.639). All the nine individuals were perching together on the tin roof of old concrete house. The roof of the house was covered by a moderately dense canopy of Eucalyptus tree (*Eucalyptus globules*).

We did not observe Barred cuckoo-dove in other towns in our study area (Kajalgaon, Mushalpur, Tamulpur and Udalguri). However, this was the first sighting of this species, and there was no observation of the species in Pre-Monsoon and Post-Monsoon.

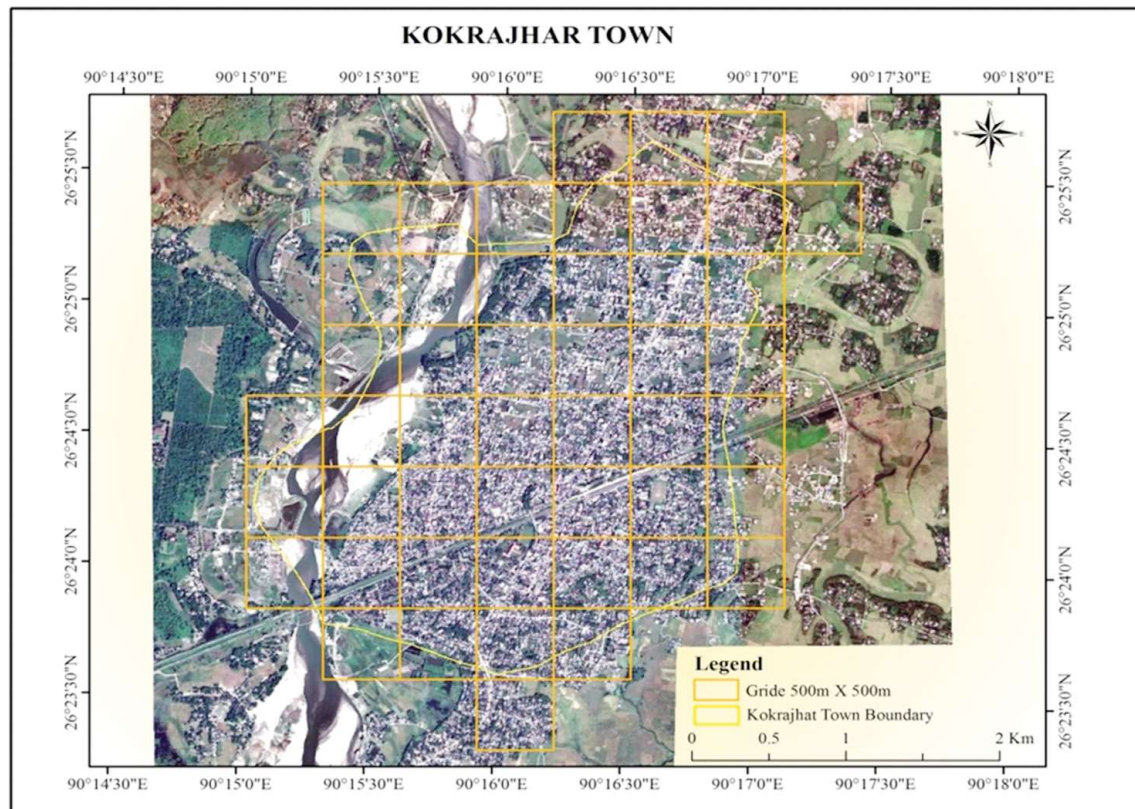


Fig. 1. Map of study area.



Fig. 2. *Macropygia unchall*.

Discussions

The sightings of Barred cuckoo dove in Monsoon season was the first record of sighting of a forest bird species in an urban area of Kokrajhar town. It is not a resident bird species of Kokrajhar town and was never observed earlier. The species was also not seen in Pre-Monsoon and Post-Monsoon seasons. Barred cuckoo dove is a resident bird species of Himalayas and North-Eastern Indian hills. As Barred cuckoo-dove lives in dense broadleaved forest (Grimmet *et al.*, 1998) the reason the species came to an urban area is not known. The sighting of the bird in commercial habitat was also not clearly understood as the species generally prefer natural forest, and there is a difference of landscapes between urban habitats and nonurban habitats (Isaksson, 2018). However, after the first and only sighting of this forest bird species in Kokrajhar town, we have never seen it again till date. Therefore, this might be a stray record of this species.

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