Black-capped Kingfisher *Halcyon pileata*:
a new species for Pakistan

**JUHA KYLANPÄÄ**

On 11 January 1995 at 09h45 I was leisurely scanning a mangrove creek on Sandspit, just outside Karachi, southern Pakistan. On a fallen branch about 80 m away was a kingfisher that I immediately realised was a Black-capped Kingfisher *Halcyon pileata*, a species not included in Roberts (1990) and new for Pakistan.

The shape and size of the bird were very like that of White-throated Kingfisher *Halcyon smyrnensis*. However, the bright red bill was heavier, and the lower mandible was more curved near the tip. The following description was taken: head deep black to below the level of the black eyes and forming a point like a wide V on the back of the neck; collar white; chin and throat white, becoming buffy on lower breast; belly buff; back appeared dark grey in the prevailing light; a white patch at the base of the primaries seen in flight.

During a period of 16 minutes it changed perches several times and eventually disappeared round a bend in the creek about 0.5 km away.

The species is widespread in India, where some birds wander in winter and it is, therefore, not unexpected in Pakistan.

**REFERENCE**


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Notes on winter birds at Shuangtaihekou National Nature Reserve, Liaoning Province, China

**DAVID S. MELVILLE and LI YU-XIANG**

Shuangtaihekou National Nature Reserve, covering some 80,000 ha at the head of Liaodong Bay, Liaoning, China is situated at about 40°52' to 41°03' N and 121°35' to 121°55'E. It experiences cold winters with an average temperature of -7.8°C, the lowest temperature recorded in Panjin being -29.3°C on 3 February 1964. In mid-winter the ground freezes to a depth of more than 1 m, and the sea freezes for up to several km offshore (Lanzhou Institute of Glaciology and Geocryology 1988). It is thus not surprising that few birds are recorded from the Reserve in mid-winter.

Information on the birds of the Shuangtaihekou National Nature Reserve was summarized by Brazil (1992), based on his observations between 20 April and 30 July 1991, and previous literature. Kanai et al. (1993) provide additional information for some species, based on summer observations in the period 1989-1993. Few observations have been made in mid-winter.

The following notes relate to brief observations made on 16, 17 and 20 January 1996 and include northward winter range extensions for a number of species, and one new record for the Reserve. The following list includes all species recorded in January 1996, but should not be considered to be comprehensive because of the very limited amount of time spent in the field.

**JAPANESE QUAIL Coturnix japonica**

Two birds in the West Reserve on 17th and one in the East Reserve on 20th. Cheng (1987) does not record this species wintering north of Shandong. Jin et al. (1989, 1991) previously recorded this species as a passage migrant and summer visitor respectively, while Anon. (1991) recorded it as resident. In Liaoning Province it is recorded as a summer visitor and migrant (Liaoning Ornithological Survey Team 1986, Zhao 1988).

**HEN HARRIER Circus cyaneus**

Single birds in the East Reserve on 16th and 20th, and at least three in the West Reserve on 17th. All birds were 'ringtails'. Cheng (1987) does not record this species north of the Yangtze valley in winter, except in eastern and north-eastern Qinghai. It is recorded only as a migrant in Liaoning (Liaoning Ornithological Survey Team 1986, Zhao 1988). Jin et al. (1989) recorded this species as resident in the Reserve, but this was subsequently revised to summer visitor (Jin et al. 1991), while it was recorded as a passage bird by Anon. (1991). Brazil (1992) noted only three sightings, all in April.

**ROUGH-LEGGED BUZZARD Buteo lagopus**

At least three in the East Reserve on 16th. Although not recorded for the Reserve by Anon. (1991) and Jin et al.
(1988), it was recorded as a passage migrant by Jin et al. (1991). The Liaoning Ornithological Survey Team (1986) recorded it as a migrant in the province, whereas it was noted as a migrant and winter visitor by Zhao (1988).

**COMMON KESTREL Falco tinnunculus**


**ORIENTAL STORK Ciconia boyciana**

Although not seen at this time, a single bird had been present in the East Reserve earlier in January 1986. It frequented the Zhaoquanhe Management Station where an injured stork was kept in an aviary. Reserve staff provided fish for the wild bird. This is the first record of this species wintering at the Reserve (Li Yu-xiang, unpublished observations). It usually winters along the lower/middle Yangtze valley and further south (Cheng 1987).

**BLACK-BILLED MAGPIE Pica pica**


**DUSKY THRUSH Turdus naumanni**

A thrush heard calling in the West Reserve on 17th may have been this species, as no other thrush is reported to winter this far north (Wild Bird Society of Japan), although Cheng (1987) does not record this species wintering north of the central Provinces (Anhui, Henan, Hubei, Sichuan). The Dusky Thrush is recorded as a passage migrant in the Reserve by Anon. (1991) and Jin et al. 1989, 1991).

**REED PARROTBILL Paradoxornis webbianus**

A flock of about 25, together with a few Eurasian Tree Sparrows, in the West Reserve on 17th. This is the first record of this species from the Reserve, but it is known to be widespread in winter throughout Liaoning (Cheng 1987, Liaoning Ornithological Survey Team 1986).

**EURASIAN SKYLARK Alauda arvensis**


**EURASIAN TREE SPARROW Passer montanus**


**PALLAS’S BUNTING Emberiza pallasi**

‘Reed’ buntings were widespread in both East and West Reserve, with loose flocks of over 60 recorded. The birds frequented both reed beds and more open areas, often feeding on exposed ground where snow had recently melted. Several birds examined in the field were Pallas’s Buntings, which previously has been recorded from the Reserve as a common migrant in spring (Brazil 1992, Jin et al. 1991). Pallas’s Bunting was recorded as a migrant in Liaoning Province (Liaoning Ornithological Survey Team 1986), but there appear to be some wintering records (Cheng 1987, Zhao 1988, Wild Bird Society of Japan 1982).

The Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus* was not observed although previously it has been recorded as a winter visitor at the Reserve (Jin et al. 1989, Anon. 1991). Cheng (1987), however, only records this species wintering in east and southeast China, south of the Yangtze, and Zhao (1988) records it as a passage migrant in Liaoning. Separation of non-breeding plumage Reed and Pallas’s Buntings requires care due to considerable variation in both plumage and structure (Alström and Olsson 1994, Leader 1994) and the identity and status
of reed buntings at the Reserve and elsewhere in eastern China deserves further study.

REFERENCES


The eggs of the Grey-crowned Prinia
Prinia cinereocapilla

MICHAEL WALTERS

The Grey-crowned Prinia Prinia cinereocapilla is said to occur commonly in the eastern Himalayan foothills, but little is known of its habits. Of its nidification almost nothing is known, and the accounts that exist appear to be suspect. Ali and Ripley (1973) merely quote two accounts by Stuart Baker, and nothing seems to have been discovered subsequently. The earlier of the two accounts was from a paper on the birds of Cachar (Baker, 1894, p. 15):

'Very rare indeed. I have taken five nests which were quite indistinguishable from those of Fringilla gracilis and the eggs were all a pure skim-milk blue, rather lighter in shade than those of F. gracilis and also less glossy. In shape they are rather broad regular ovals, one or two being lengthened. My last specimen was taken in July 1890, and since then I have seen no others. Ten eggs average .59 x .42".'

However, Baker does not seem to have had much faith in the authenticity of these eggs for he retained none of them. The only eggs of this species in Baker's collection are the only known eggs of the species, Baker had apparently forgotten the eggs he previously collected and attributed to this species. These earlier eggs were presumably collected in Cachar in 1890, and a single egg which is almost certainly one of them, was received in The Natural History Museum with the collection of J. Davidson: the whereabouts of the remaining eggs does not seem to be known. (The Davidson collection contained one other egg attributed to this species which will be discussed later). The Cachar egg was apparently given by Baker to Lieut. H. E. Barnes. On Barnes's death his entire collection was purchased by Davidson and incorporated with his own. This egg is stated to have been collected in 1890 at Danjunmakh, Gurjong, N. Cachar, and Barnes in his MS catalogue described it as 'pale, unspotted blue in colour. Damaged.' The egg is indeed slightly damaged, and to my eyes very pale blue in colour, paler than the two eggs in Baker's collection.

According to the MS catalogue of Baker's collection, these latter were collected by Mr J. Shillingford in the 'Nepal terai, Bengal, India', but his published account (Baker 1933) stated that they were collected in the 'Bhutan Dooars' in Assam/West Bengal. The eggs were collected with the nest and the bird, Baker commenting, in manuscript, in his catalogue: 'The very tattered remains of the bird were, I think, correctly identified as of the species.' From this it