

Short Communication

A short note on birds of Bajhang district, far-western Nepal

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Nepal harbours nearly 9% of global bird diversity out of which 40 species have been assessed as globally threatened while 168 as nationally threatened species (BCN and DNPWC 2016, Inskipp et al. 2016). This diversity is remarkably high considering Nepal's area which is only 0.1% of the world's landmass. However, many regions of the country are relatively unexplored for avifaunal surveys. Bajhang district of far-Western region of Nepal is one of the less explored areas despite its high potential birding hotspots.

Bajhang district lies within 29° 29' to 30° 09' N and 80° 46' to 81° 34' E and covers an area of 3,422 km² with altitude ranging from 915 m to 7,031 m. Mountains and high hills in the district remains covered by snow for over five months every year. The variation in elevation resulting in different habitat types is one of the reasons for high biodiversity in the region.

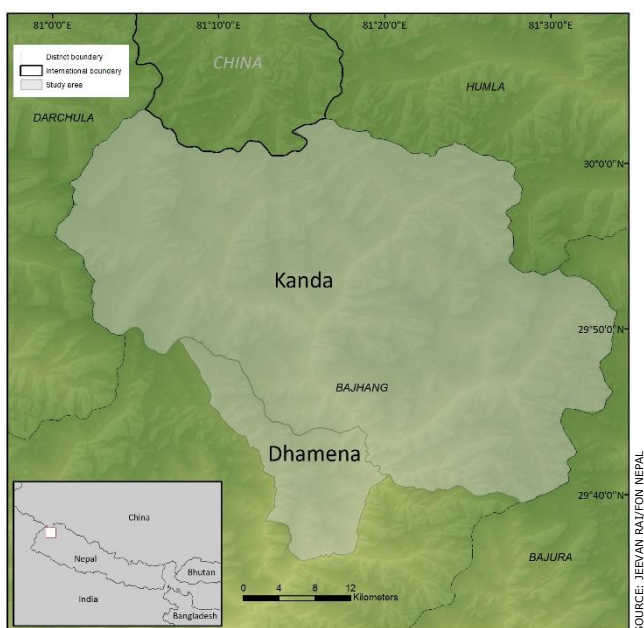


FIG. 1: Map of study area showing the surveyed sites (Kanda and Dhamena) in Bajhang district.

Forests occupy 30% of Bajhang district. Wildlife reported from Bajhang include snow leopard *Panthera uncia*, common leopard *Panthera pardus*, grey wolf *Canis lupus*, golden jackal *Canis aureus*, Asiatic wild dog *Cuon alpinus*, Himalayan black bear *Ursus thibetanus*, blue sheep *Pseudois nayaur*, Himalayan tahr *Hemitragus*

jemlahicus, wild boar *Sus scrofa*, and musk deer *Moschus* spp. (DDC 2014).

An opportunistic avifaunal survey was carried out in two former Village Development Committees namely Dhamena and Kanda in April 2014 (FIG. 1). Birds were observed near 11 settlements – Chainpur, Khara, Kanda, Laphare (Dhuli), Buko Odar, Emeldour, Majha, Dhamena, Daulichour, Bichada and Aagada. The opportunistic survey was carried out over a period of 24 days using transects.

Transect surveys were carried out following the local trails on foot. The researchers walked at an approximate speed of 2 km/hour looking for birds on either side of the trail. Binoculars and field guide were used for bird identification. Unidentified birds were photographed and identified later with experts' consultation after completion of survey.



PHOTO 1: Crested kingfisher in Bajhang district.

A total of 67 species of birds were recorded. The birds were classified under 9 orders and 27 families (ANNEX I). Birds from the order Passeriformes topped the list with 35 species.

The survey provided evidence of presence of rare and threatened bird species in the district. They include, Critically Endangered – red-headed vulture *Sarcogyps calvus*, Endangered – Egyptian vulture *Neophron percnopterus* and steppe eagle *Aquila nipalensis*, Near Threatened – Himalayan vulture *Gyps himalayensis*, and bearded vulture *Gypaetus barbatus* and nationally protected – danphe *Lophophorus impejanus* and satyr tragopan *Tragopan satyra*.



FIG. 2: Number of bird species of different orders. *GA: Galliformes, PI: Piciformes, CO: Coraciiformes, CU: Cuculiformes, PSI: Psittaciformes, ST: Strigiformes, COL: Columbiformes, CI: Ciconiiformes, PA: Passeriformes

During the survey, the main threat observed was illegal hunting for bushmeat, especially of the ground dwelling birds. Use of snares for trapping birds was very high. We also observed many cases of people keeping different species of birds including chukar partridge *Alectoris chukar*, satyr tragopan, and slaty-headed parakeet *Psittacula himalayana* as pets.



PHOTO 2: Chukar partridge kept in captivity in Chainpur.

This survey, though brief, shows the avifaunal richness of Bajhang district. With more exploration, status of birds of Bajhang district can be better understood both in terms of species richness as well as their distribution. It is also vital to come up with initiatives to conserve species that are already threatened.



PHOTO 3: Satyr tragopan kept in captivity in Chainpur.

Acknowledgements

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Biosketch

RISHI BARAL is working with Annapurna Conservation Area Project and is particularly interested in participatory wildlife conservation.

ANNEX I: List of birds of Bajhang district recorded during the opportunistic survey

Count	ORDER/Family/Common Name	Scientific Name	Nepali Name
	GALLIFORMES		
	Phasianidae		
1	Chukar Partridge	<i>Alectoris chukar</i>	च्याखुरा
2	Hill Partridge	<i>Arborophila torqueola</i>	पिउरा
3	Satyr Tragopan	<i>Tragopan satyra</i>	मुनाल
4	Koklass Pheasant	<i>Pucrasia macrolopha</i>	फोक्राँस
5	Himalayan Monal	<i>Lophophorus impejanus</i>	डाँफे
6	Kalij Pheasant	<i>Lophura leucomelanos</i>	कालिज
	PICIFORMES		
	Picidae		
7	Himalayan Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos himalayensis</i>	हिमाली काष्ठकूट
	Megalaimidae		
8	Great Barbet	<i>Megalaima virens</i>	न्याउली
9	Blue-throated Barbet	<i>Megalaima asiatica</i>	कुथुके
	CORACIIFORMES		
	Dacelonidae		
10	White-throated Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon smyrnensis</i>	सेतोकण्ठे माटीकोरे
	Cerylidae		
11	Crested Kingfisher	<i>Megaceryle lugubris</i>	ठूलो छिरबिरे माटीकोरे
	Meropidae		
12	Green Bee-eater	<i>Merops orientalis</i>	मुरलीचरा
	CUCULIFORMES		
	Cuculidae		
13	Eurasian Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>	कुक्कु कोइली
	PSITTACIFORMES		
	Psittacidae		
14	Slaty-headed Parakeet	<i>Psittacula himalayana</i>	मदना सुगा
	STRIGIFORMES		
	Strigidae		
15	Brown Fish Owl	<i>Ketupa zeylonensis</i>	मलाहा हुचील
16	Jungle Owlet	<i>Glaucidium radiatum</i>	डुन्दुल
	Caprimulgidae		
17	Grey Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus indicus</i>	फुस्रो चैतेचरा
	COLUMBIFORMES		
	Columbidae		
18	Common Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>	मलेवा
19	Snow Pigeon	<i>Columba leuconota</i>	हिमाली मलेवा
20	Speckled Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba hodgsonii</i>	छिरबिरे वनपरेवा
21	Oriental Turtle Dove	<i>Streptopelia orientalis</i>	तामे दुकुर
22	Spotted Dove	<i>Streptopelia chinensis</i>	कुर्ले दुकुर
	CICONIIFORMES		
	Scolopacidae		
23	Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	पानी चाहा

Count	ORDER/Family/Common Name	Scientific Name	Nepali Name
	Accipitridae		
24	Black Kite	<i>Milvus migrans</i>	कालो चील
25	Bearded Vulture	<i>Gypaetus barbatus</i>	हाडफोर
26	Egyptian Vulture * EN	<i>Neophron percnopterus</i>	सेतो गिद्ध
27	Himalayan Vulture	<i>Gyps himalayensis</i>	हिमाली गिद्ध
28	Red-headed Vulture * CR	<i>Sarcogyps calvus</i>	सुन गिद्ध
29	Crested Serpent Eagle	<i>Spilornis cheela</i>	काकाकुल
30	Hen Harrier	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>	चल्लाचोर भुईँचील
31	Steppe Eagle	<i>Aquila nipalensis</i>	गोमायु महाचील
	Falconidae		
32	Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	बौडाइ
	PASSERIFORMES		
	Laniidae		
33	Long-tailed Shrike	<i>Lanius schach</i>	भद्राई
	Corvidae		
34	Yellow-billed Blue Magpie	<i>Urocissa flavirostris</i>	सुनठूडे लामपुच्छे
35	Grey Treepie	<i>Dendrocitta formosae</i>	पहाडी कोकले
36	Alpine Chough	<i>Pyrrhocorax graculus</i>	टेमु
37	House Crow	<i>Corvus splendens</i>	घर काग
38	Large-billed Crow	<i>Corvus macrorhynchos</i>	कालो काग
39	Long-tailed Minivet	<i>Pericrocotus ethologus</i>	लामपुछे रानीचरी
40	Black Drongo	<i>Dicrurus macrocercus</i>	कालो चिबे
	Muscicapidae		
41	Blue Whistling Thrush	<i>Myophonus caeruleus</i>	कलचौडे
42	Verditer Flycatcher	<i>Eumyias thalassinus</i>	नीलतुथो अर्जुनक
43	Rufous-bellied Niltava	<i>Niltava sundara</i>	सुन्दर नीलतभा
44	Blue-throated Blue Flycatcher	<i>Cyornis rubeculoides</i>	नीलकण्ठे अर्जुनक
45	Oriental Magpie Robin	<i>Copsychus saularis</i>	धोबिनी चरा
46	Grandala	<i>Grandala coelicolor</i>	हिमाली ग्राण्डला
47	Common Myna	<i>Acridotheres tristis</i>	डाङ्ग्रे रुपी
	Sittidae		
48	Kashmir Nuthatch	<i>Sitta cashmirensis</i>	काश्मीरी मट्टा
49	White-tailed Nuthatch	<i>Sitta himalayensis</i>	पहाडी मट्टा
	Paridae		
50	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	चिचिलकोटे
51	Black-lored Tit	<i>Parus xanthogenys</i>	पाण्डु चिचिलकोटे
	Aegithalidae		
52	White-throated Tit	<i>Aegithalos niveogularis</i>	सेतोकण्ठे राजचिचिलकोटे
	Hirundinidae		
53	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	घर गौथली
	Pycnonotidae		
54	Himalayan Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus leucogenys</i>	जुल्फे जुरेली
55	Red-vented Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus cafer</i>	जुरेली
	Cisticolidae		
56	Grey-breasted Prinia	<i>Prinia hodgsonii</i>	फुस्रोछाती घाँसेफिस्टो
	Sylviidae		
57	Common Tailorbird	<i>Orthotomus sutorius</i>	पातसिउने फिस्टो

Count	ORDER/Family/Common Name	Scientific Name	Nepali Name
58	Lemon-rumped Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus chloronotus</i>	पीतकटी फिस्टो
59	White-throated Laughingthrush	<i>Garrulax albogularis</i>	सोइरने तोरीगाँडा
60	Jungle Babbler	<i>Turdoides striatus</i>	बगाले भ्याकुर
61	Bar-throated Siva	<i>Siva strigula</i>	शिव मिन्ला
	Nectariniidae		
62	Black-throated Sunbird	<i>Aethopyga saturata</i>	कालीकण्ठ बुङ्गेचरा
	Passeridae		
63	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	घर भँगेरा
64	Eurasian Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>	रुख भँगेरा
65	Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>	फुस्रो टिकटिके
66	Upland Pipit	<i>Anthus sylvanus</i>	पहाडी चुइयाँ
	Fringillidae		
67	Common Rosefinch	<i>Carpodacus erythrinus</i>	अमोंगा तितु