

Ashy Wood Pigeon is not listed for Vietnam by King *et al.* (1975), Vo Quy and Nguyen Cu (1995), del Hoyo *et al.* (1997), Robson (2000), Gibbs *et al.* (2001) or in any other literature available to the author. I therefore consider this observation to be a new record for Vietnam. Ashy Wood Pigeon occurs between 1,600 and 2,500 m on Doi Inthanon mountain in Thailand (Round 1988). The species is described as 'fairly common' on Mount Victoria, Burma (Robson *et al.* 1998), and there is a single record from northern Laos (Duckworth *et al.* 1999). The species is also known from Yunnan (China), Taiwan, Bhutan, India and Nepal (del Hoyo *et al.* 1997, Gibbs *et al.* 2001). It is not surprising, therefore, that it should be found in a high-altitude habitat in northern Vietnam. The habitat for Ashy Wood Pigeon has been described as hill evergreen forest and secondary growth (Lekagul and Round 1991), and dense mixed evergreen and deciduous hill forest and secondary growth from 1,100 to 3,200 m (Gibbs *et al.* 2001). The occurrence of this species in scrub is not necessarily anomalous as the bird was observed on a burnt ridge-top that was surrounded on all sides by montane evergreen forest.

Fan Si Pan mountain is a relatively well-studied locality in Vietnam (Delacour 1930, Bangs and van Tyne 1931, Korzun and Kalyakin 1998) so it is perhaps surprising that Ashy Wood Pigeon has not been recorded by previous surveys. However, it is known to wander in response to available food supply (J. C. Eames *in litt.*, Gibbs *et al.* 2001), and it may be that this species is only an infrequent visitor to the area. Alternatively, it may be that the high hunting pressure prevalent in Hoang Lien Nature Reserve has significantly reduced the population of this species. It is to be hoped that future conservation efforts can preserve this newly recorded species and the high avian diversity of this area (Tordoff *et al.* 1999).

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White Tern *Gygis alba* sighted at Narcondam Island, Bay of Bengal, India

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Narcondam Island (13°25'N 94°17'E) lies in the Bay of Bengal between the Andaman Islands and the coast of Burma (Hussain 1984). The island is a part of a submerged line of peaks, which include the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and lies 79 miles north-east of Port Blair in the Andaman islands (Abdulali 1971). Its

area is approximately 6.8 km², and the highest point reaches about 530 m above sea level.

We conducted a short study during March 2000 to assess the status of the endemic Narcondam Hornbill *Rhyticeros narcondami*. During the study we also prepared a bird checklist for comparison with previous records.

On 6 March 2000, while we were surveying the periphery of the island from a boat, we saw a pair of White Terns *Gygis alba* hovering by the seashore near a partially submerged rock. It took us some time to identify the birds, which were new to us, but the species is quite unmistakable, being the only tern with completely white plumage, and with a blue-based black bill (Harrison 1987). On 28 March we saw 11 birds on a different beach, and watched them calling and hovering near shore for some time.

This species has a pantropical distribution, breeding on many islands throughout the subtropical oceans, including Addu Atoll in the Maldives, and further south in the Chagos Archipelago (Harrison 1987). A specimen collected over a hundred years ago by Hume (1878) is the only record in the Bay of Bengal or indeed anywhere within Indian limits (Ali and Ripley 1987). As we observed several birds on two different dates, it is possible that the species is extending its range. We recommend further searches elsewhere in the Bay of Bengal.

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New records of birds from the Andaman and Nicobar Islands

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The Andaman and Nicobar Islands in the Bay of Bengal represent the peaks of a submerged mountain range, arcing from Myanmar to Sumatra, between 6°45'N and 13°41'N, and 92°12'E and 93°57'E. The group comprises over 560 islands and rocks, with a total coastline of about 1,962 km. The main forest type is tropical evergreen, with some grassland areas inland, and mangroves occur on a significant proportion of the coast (Thothathri 1962, Balakrishnan 1989).

We carried out a study on the ecology of the Nicobar Scrubfowl *Megapodius nicobariensis* on Great Nicobar Island between 1995 and 1998. During this period 57 species of birds were recorded out of a total of 128 species known from the islands (Abdulali 1964, 1967, Das 1971, Ali and Ripley 1983, Sankaran 1998). Of the species we recorded, three were new records to the Nicobar group of islands and one was new for both the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

LESSER FRIGATEBIRD *Fregata ariel*

A flock of 28 birds were sighted daily during 3-30 June 1997 off the southern tip of Great Nicobar Island (6°76'N 93°82'E). The flock contained seven adult males, 12 adult females and nine immatures. Another flock of 11 birds was sighted at Wandoor (12°23'-12°30'N, 92°70'-92°72'E) on 3 July 1997. This flock comprised three adult males, five adult females and one immature.

None were seen during subsequent field trips in 1998. These individuals were distinguished from other frigatebird species by the conspicuous white patch extending onto the inner underwing. This species is recorded as a visitor to the coasts of the Indian mainland, Sri Lanka and the Maldives (Ali and Ripley 1983, Grimmett *et al.* 1998), and as a scarce to locally common non-breeding offshore visitor to south Thailand and Peninsular Malaysia (Robson 2000). These records represent the first for the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

LARGE HAWK CUCKOO *Hierococcyx sparverioides*

Singles were seen on 18 dates during Jan-May 1995-1998 on the east coast of Great Nicobar Island (6°76'-6°79'N, 93°81'-93°84'E). All sightings were of single individuals feeding on caterpillars in *Macaranga peltata* trees. This species breeds in the Himalayas from Himachal Pradesh to Arunachal Pradesh, with winter records south to Tamil Nadu (Ali and Ripley 1983, Grimmett *et al.* 1998) and in Thailand, Peninsular Malaysia and the Greater Sundas (Robson 2000).

ASHY DRONGO *Dicrurus leucophaeus*

Pairs were recorded on 23 February, 27 February and 4 May 1997 from the Galathea river, Great Nicobar Island (6°83'N 93°85'E). These records may have referred to the same individuals. They were noted to be