

## Photographic evidence of Amur Falcon from Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve, Tamil Nadu, India

The Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve is one of the largest tiger reserves in Tamil Nadu, located at the junction of the Western and Eastern Ghats (Vishnu & Ramesh 2021). The southwestern part of the Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve (STR) is situated within the Moyar River Valley, which is a dry tropical landscape that supports a rich diversity of biota and provides a habitat for various endangered species (Thirumurugan et al. 2021). The reserve is positioned at an altitude ranging from 352–412 m and receives a mean annual rainfall of 850 mm. The mean minimum and maximum temperatures are observed between 21°C and 28°C, respectively.

The words Amur and *amurensis* originated from Amuria or Amurland, the drainage area of the Amur River adjoining China and Russia, from where the first specimen was described (Naoroji 2011). Amur Falcon

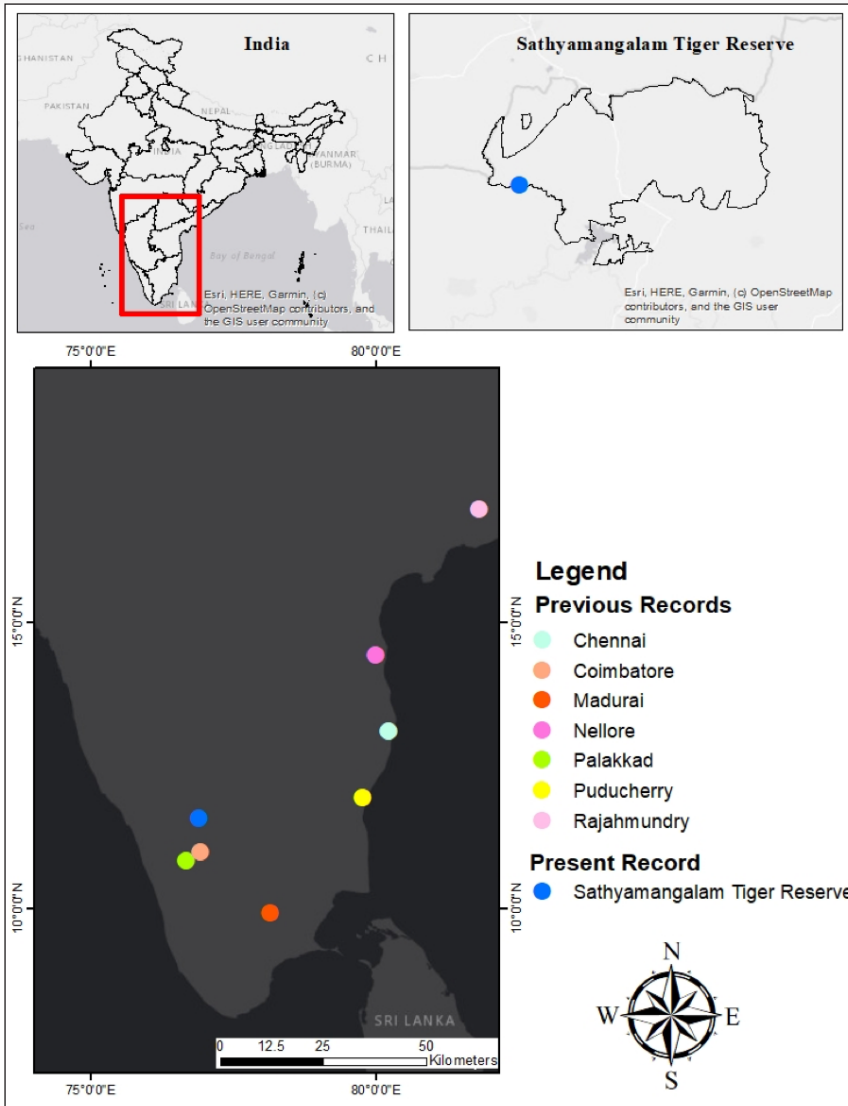


A female Amur falcon *Falco amurensis* photographed in the Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve, Tamil Nadu. © Vishnu, C.S.

*Falco amurensis* is known to be a long-distance migrant distributed in a vast area, and the extent of occurrence is greater than 20,000 km<sup>2</sup> (Skerrett 2008; BirdLife International 2016). They are distributed from the African continent to Asia through the Middle East region (BirdLife International 2016). It is a passage migrant in east and southeast Asia. It breeds from central Siberia to the Amur land in eastern Asia, particularly from Transbaikalia to Amurland, and winters in eastern and southern Africa

(Naoroji 2007; Poonia et al. 2019). The estimated global population of this species is valued at a number greater than c. 1,000,000 individuals (Ferguson-Lees et al. 2001). The species has been listed as Least Concern in the IUCN Red List category (BirdLife International 2016).

This note reports the first photographic record of an Amur Falcon *Falco amurensis* in the STR. On 04 December 2020, at 1229 h, while going to the field survey for tracking the radio-tagged pythons in



**Sighting records of *Falco amurensis* in southern India.**

the STR, we sighted a female *F. amurensis* (11.5764 N; 76.9161 E), perched atop a wild moringa tree *Moringa cocanesis* at the height of c. 10–12 m from the ground, the individual was identified with the help of a field guide by Grimmett et al. (2016). During the observation, the atmospheric weather was very cloudy due to the cyclonic storm Burevi with a wind speed

of 80–90 kmph gusting to 100 kmph (IMD 2020); the falcon’s travel was perhaps hampered by this drastic weather.

Cyclones can have a significant impact on the movement of birds, especially during migration. According to a study by La Sorte et al. (2018), cyclones can disrupt normal weather patterns with strong winds, heavy rain, and

thunderstorms, which can make it difficult for birds to fly and navigate. *F. amurensis* cross the Indian Ocean to reach east Africa via the Indian sub-continent, continuing south through Kenya during winter (Ferguson-Lees & Christie 2001).

*F. amurensis* has been reported from many parts of southern India, including Nellore, Rajahmundry, Chennai, Puducherry, Coimbatore, Palakkad, and Madurai (Francis 2017; Jeshi 2017; Frederick 2020; Ghani 2020). Moreover, this species has been facing severe poaching threats. Reports reveal that within a span of two weeks, an estimated 100,000 Amur Falcons were poached in Nagaland (Patton & Bhaskar 2014; Sinha 2014). This note highlights the urgent need for community awareness to safeguard this species on a global and local scale. Overall, the new distribution observation of a passage migrant bird species in a protected area is significant as it contributes to our knowledge of the species and helps guide conservation efforts to ensure its survival.

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C.S. Vishnu<sup>1</sup>, Vedagiri Thirumurugan<sup>2</sup>, Paul Alljo<sup>3</sup> & Chinnasamy Ramesh<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1-4</sup> Wildlife Institute of India, Chandrabani, Dehradun, Uttarakhand 248001, India.

Email: <sup>1</sup>vishnusreedharannair@gmail.com (corresponding author)

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