

Lesser White-fronted Goose in Majuli Island, Assam

Lesser White-fronted Goose is a rare winter vagrant to India, mostly recorded from the northwestern regions (Carboneras & Kirwan 2020). In Assam the bird is mostly recorded from Kaziranga National Park, Dibru-Saikhowa National Park, and Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary (Barua & Sharma 1999; Narasimmarajan et al. 2013; eBird 2022). There is no previous published record of this bird from Majuli Island (Choudhury 2000).

Rambolia Beel (wetland) is situated in the Dakshinpat area (26.916N, 94.263E) of Majuli Island in Assam, close to the Brahmaputra River. Every year thousands of winter migrant water birds such as Graylag Goose *Anser anser*, Bar-headed Goose *Anser indicus*, Gadwall *Mareca strepera*, Eurasian Wigeon *Mareca penelope*, Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*, Northern Pintail *Anas acuta*, Green-winged Teal *Anas crecca*, and Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca* congregate in this wetland (Rahmani et al 2016). On 26 December 2021



Lesser White-fronted Goose *Anser erythropus* with flock of Graylag Goose *Anser anser* at Rambolia Beel, Majuli. © Ankur Hazarika.



Map of Dakshinpat area of Majuli Island showing the location of Rambolia Beel and the Lesser White-fronted Goose seen on 26 December 2021 (Google Earth 2022).

at 1500 h, we observed two comparatively smaller geese among the Graylag Goose in a nearby agricultural field of the wetland. These geese had darker body colouration than the Graylags. When observed carefully with the

binoculars, prominent yellow ring around the eyes, black barring on the belly and white forehead were clearly seen (Grimmet et al. 2016; Carboneras & Kirwan 2020). The birds were identified as Lesser White-fronted Goose



Map of India indicating the location of Rambolia Beel of Majuli Island along with a map of Assam showing previous reports of Lesser White-fronted Goose (Google Earth 2023).

Anser erythropus from the photographs taken by the first author.

The Rambolia Beel and the adjoining areas of Dakhinpat is a great bird watching site, which fall under Majuli Island Important Bird and Biodiversity Area (Rahmani et al. 2016). Though, the area does not get much attention, it has potential for bird based tourism if managed properly with support from the local community. Although there are less developmental activities in this area, the wetlands nearby face threats from agricultural

expansion and development of culture ponds nearby.

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