

First time sighting of a large flock of Bar-headed Geese along the shore of West Bengal

The Bar-headed Goose *Anser indicus* has a pale grey and black bars on its head that is easily distinguished from other geese, native to northern, eastern and southern Asia, but escapes from waterfowl collections are occasionally seen free-flying elsewhere in the world (eBird 2022). This species has been renowned for its high-altitudinal migration because of various unique physiological adaptation, some satellite-controlled studies confirmed that the Bar-headed Goose can fly over the Himalaya at altitudes greater than 9000 m, making it one of the highest-flying birds with physiological traits adapted for sustaining flight at high altitudes (Hawkes et al. 2011; Zhang et al. 2011).

Bar-headed Geese start arriving in October–November, reaching their highest concentrations in December, and start returning in March (Siddiqui & Balachandran 2009). This species migrates within the Central Asia Flyway (CAF), breeds in Ladakh (India),

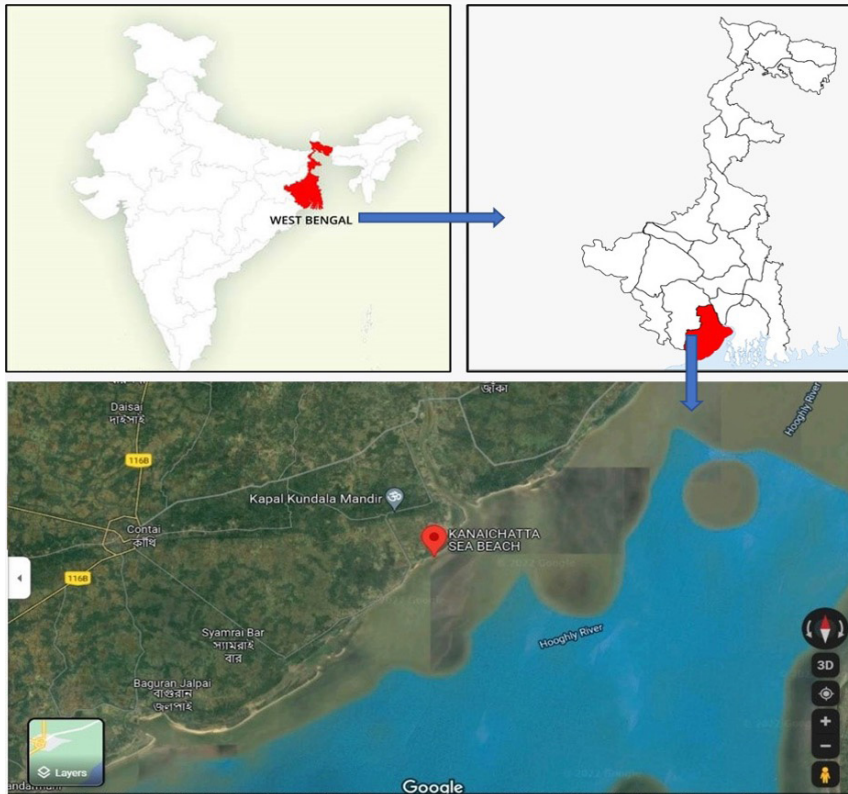


Bar-headed Geese in West Bengal. © Pulak Kanti Kar.

Tibet (China), Mongolia, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan (Rahmani & Islam 2008) and winters in tropical and subtropical regions in the Indian subcontinent and along the Yarlung Zangbo River, Lhasa River, Penbo River, and Niang River valleys in southern Tibet

(Bishop et al. 1997; Takekawa et al. 2009; Zhang et al. 2013).

According to Grimmett et al. (2011), the wintering habitat of Bar-headed Geese, is near large rivers, lakes, and reservoirs, also coastal islands in the Sundarban, Bangladesh.



Study area.

Previous several records also show that this bird was sighted rarely along the shore of West Bengal and the number of these birds sighted was very less in number (maximum 4 individuals). Patra (2015) reported one individual of this bird from the Sundarban area was sighted by Roy in the year 2009; one individual was sighted by Gharami in the year 2014; four individuals observed by Subrata Kool & team from Panchamukhani, Sundarban, South 24 Parganas in the year 2015 and in the same year Patra sighted one individual from Sundarban area. Further

Patra (2020) reported one individual of this bird from Henry's Island, South 24 Parganas sighted by Sannidhya De & team on 15 December 2020.

On 10 February 2022 at 0820 h, the first author observed about 122 individuals (counted individually) of Bar-headed Geese sitting along the shore of Kanai Chatta, East Medinipur (21.7805 N, 87.8847 E). There were low tides and the water level was approximately 600 away from the coast. A few images were taken using the Nikon Coolpix

P900 camera. The birds were identified using the field guide book of Grimmett et al. (2011).

Previous records revealed that a large flock (>40) of these birds was sighted many times along the coastal region from many states in India. Parmar (2020) recorded about 1,000 individuals of Bar-headed Goose from Bhitarkanika National Park of Odisha during January (eBird 2022). Thiagarajan (2013) recorded 250 individuals of these bird from Ramanathapuram county of Tamil Nadu during March (eBird 2022). Pandya and Rajendrasinh (2022) recorded 270 individuals of this bird from Gorad, Gujarat (eBird 2022). Pandya & Sidat (2022) recorded 300 individuals of this bird from Kumbharwada wetland southern part, Bhavnagar, Gujarat (eBird 2022). Mistry (2020) recorded 250 individuals of this bird from Gujarat during November (eBird 2022).

From the latest research publication (Das et al. 2022) of birds from Purba Medinipur coastal area, it is known that approximately 263 numbers of bird species is recorded till now

from the coastal region of Purba Medinipur. But still the Bar-headed Goose is not reported from the coastal area of Purba Medinipur and no photographic evidence is found from Purba Medinipur district on eBird also.

Hence, it is the first time sighting of a large flock of Bar-headed Geese along the coastal region of West Bengal and the first photographic record of this bird from the district, Purba Medinipur.

References

- Bishop, M.A., S. Yanling, C. Zhouma & G. Binyuan (1997).** Bar-headed Geese *Anser indicus* wintering in south-central Tibet. *Wildfowl* 48: 118–126.
- Das, P., A. Manna & A. Payra (2022).** New species for the avifauna of adjoining coastal areas of Purba Medinipur district, West Bengal, India. *Ornis Hungarica* 30(2): 208–224.
- eBird (2022).** eBird: An online database of bird [web application]. eBird, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Ithaca, New York. Website URL: <http://www.ebird.org/india>. Accessed on 25.iv.2022.
- Grimmett, R., C. Inskipp & T. Inskipp (2011).** *Birds of the Indian Subcontinent*. 2nd ed. Oxford University Press & Christopher Helm, London, 528 pp.
- Hawkes, L.A., S. Balachandran, N. Batbayar, P.L. Butle, P.B. Frappell, W.K. Milso, N. Tseveenmyadag, S.H. Newman, G.R. Scott, P. Sathiyaselvam, J.Y. Takekawa, M. Wikelski & C.M. Bishop (2011).** The trans-Himalayan flights of Bar-headed Geese (*Anser indicus*). *PNAS* 108(23): 9516–9519.
- Mistry, V. (2020).** <https://ebird.org/checklist/S76853203>. Accessed on 25.iv.2022.
- Pandya, J. & A. Sidat (2022).** <https://ebird.org/checklist/S103328572>. Accessed on 25.iv.2022.
- Pandya, J. & J. Rajendrasinh (2022).** <https://ebird.org/checklist/S102670942>. Accessed on 25.iv.2022.
- Parmar, M. (2020).** <https://ebird.org/checklist/S63469550>. Accessed on 25.iv.2022.
- Patra, S. (2015).** <https://www.facebook.com/groups/wildbengal/permalink/1072308842800948/?app=fbl>. Accessed on 25.iv.2022.
- Patra, S. (2020).** <https://www.facebook.com/groups/wildbengal/permalink/3917856624912808/?app=fbl>. Accessed on 25.iv.2022.
- Rahmani, A.R. & M.Z. Islam (2008).** *Ducks, Geese and Swans of India: Their Status and Distribution*, 1st ed. Oxford University Press, Bombay, 364 pp.
- Siddiqui, I. & S. Balachandran (2009).** Further distribution records of Bar-headed Goose *Anser indicus* in southern Tamil Nadu. *Indian Birds* 4(4): 140–141.
- Takekawa, J.Y., S.R. Heath, D.C. Douglas, W.M. Perry, S. Javed, S.H. Newman, R.N. Suwal, A.R. Rahmani, B.C. Choudhury, D.J. Prosser, B. Yan, Y. Hou, N. Batbayar, T. Natsagdorj, C.M. Bishop, P.J. Butler, P.B. Frappell, W.K. Milsom, G.R. Scott, L.A. Hawkes & M. Wikelski (2009).** Geographic variation in Bar-headed Geese *Anser indicus*: connectivity of wintering areas and breeding grounds across a broad front. *Wildfowl* 59: 100–123.
- Thiagarajan, B.N. (2013).** <https://ebird.org/india/checklist/S72718917>. Accessed on 25.iv.2022.
- Zhang, Y., M. Hao, J.Y. Takekawa, F. Lei, B. Yan, D.J. Prosser, D.C. Douglas, Z. Xing & S.H. Newman (2011).** Tracking the autumn migration of the Bar-headed Goose (*Anser indicus*) with satellite telemetry and relationship to environmental conditions. *International Journal of Zoology* 2011: 1–10.
- Zhang, B., Y. Wu, L. Lei, J. Li, L. Liu, D. Chen & J. Wang (2013).** Monitoring changes of snow cover, lake and vegetation phenology in Nam Co Lake Basin (Tibetan Plateau) using remote sensing (2000–2009). *Journal of Great Lakes Research* 39(2): 224–233.

Pulak Kanti Kar¹ & Piklu Das²

¹ Department of Zoology, Midnapore College (Autonomous), West Bengal 721101, India

² Wildlife Biologist, Sarisha Wildlife And Ecology Society (WNE), West Bengal 743368, India.
Email. ¹pulak5325@gmail.com (corresponding author)

Citation: Kar, P.K. & P. Das (2023). First time sighting of a large flock of Bar-headed Geese along the shore of West Bengal. *Bird-o-soar* #217, In: *Zoo's Print* 38(11): 23–25.