

Report of complete leucism in Fulvous Whistling-Duck from Assam, India

The Fulvous Whistling-Duck *Dendrocygna bicolor* (Family: Anatidae) is one of the most widely distributed species of waterfowl in the world, occurring mostly in tropical and subtropical regions along with temperate areas of the Americas, Africa, and Asia. In India it has a moderate distribution occurring from southern and southeastern towards northeastern India (SolB 2020). It is a medium sized duck, about 48–53 cm in body length. It has a long, grey bill, long legs and a head, buff under parts with reddish undertones on the flanks, a dark crown, and dark grey back and wings. The basic distinguishing features being: tawny-coloured, dark cinnamon crown, dark rear neck-stripe, and prominent white flanks (Grimmett et al. 2011; Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). It is a gregarious duck found in shallow water bodies with abundant vegetation. It is listed as Least Concern in the IUCN Red List (BirdLife International 2016).



Leucistic Fulvous Whistling-Duck *Dendrocygna bicolor* in Deepor Beel Wildlife Sanctuary, Assam, India.. © Jayaditya Purkayastha.



Map of Deepor Beel Wildlife Sanctuary, Assam, India.

On 23 January 2023, while observing birds at the Deepor Beel Wildlife Sanctuary (26.1243 N & 91.6336 E), Assam, a white duck caught our sight among the flock of Fulvous Whistling-Ducks. On

observing closely, the bird looked similar to Fulvous Whistling-Duck in size. However, the whole body of the duck was off white in colour, with pink bill having black patches, and dark eyes.

On flight, the legs and feet were observed to be pink colored. These characters observed clearly suggested that the bird is a leucistic Fulvous Whistling-Duck. Our observation was also supported by the photographs of the bird.

Leucism is a condition where an individual lacks its melanin pigments, giving it a partial or complete white appearance. In India, leucism have been reported in several species. Previously, albinism has been reported in Lesser Whistling-Duck (Chatterjee 1995) and partial leucism has been reported from India (Gayen et al 2021). However, there are no reports of complete leucism of whistling-ducks in India, and thus we herein provide the first report of its leucistic morph from Assam. More studies could help unravel different information regarding the behavior of the flock towards an abnormal colored individual.

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