

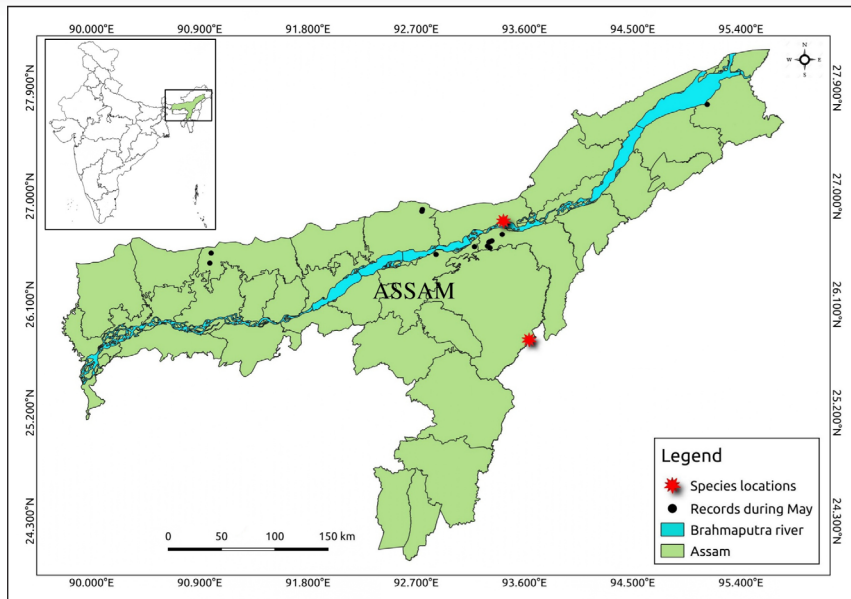
A note on the summer record of Ruddy Shelduck in Assam indicating possible breeding extension



Tadorna ferruginea pair from the agricultural land of Sonitpur district, Assam. © Rahul Sarma.

The Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea* exhibits an extensive distribution range across Asia, the Middle East, Europe, northwestern Africa, and Ethiopia (Salvador & Amat 2022). Breeding seasons vary geographically, with southern populations commencing laying in January, while their northern counterparts initiate the process around mid-April (Salvador & Amat 2022). Notably, the species' breeding records in India were initially reported in Ladakh (Ali & Ripley 1983; Pfister 2004), followed by sightings in Sikkim (Ganguli-Lachungpa 1990), Arunachal Pradesh (Choudhury 2000), and Himachal Pradesh (Thakur & Mehta 2016).

A pair of *T. ferruginea* were observed in the outskirts of Gohpur town, Sonitpur District, Assam, at coordinates 26.8004 N & 93.5348 E. On 1 July 2023, at 0719 h, a pair was observed foraging in an agricultural field near Dipara village, amidst congregations of Asian Openbills and Cattle Egrets. Dipara village, situated on the northern bank of the Brahmaputra River, adjoins the northern boundary of Kaziranga National Park (Biswanath Division). Another pair of *T. ferruginea* was sighted in the vicinity of Dhonsbri Nagachang area, Karbi Anglong, on 15 July 2023 at 1030 h with the geographical coordinates 25.8278 N & 93.6498 E. This



Map showing the sighting records of *Tadorna ferruginea* pairs in summer.

pair was spotted flying over agricultural fields near railway tracks. Dhonsiri Nagachang, located on the northern bank of Dhansiri River, is in Karbi Anglong district of Assam, and features a nearby lake called Dhimaraja Kharnai where the birds were observed.

The migration of *T. ferruginea* in India typically occurs between early September and mid-October, with breeding activities taking place from mid-March to early May (eBird 2021). The preferred breeding habitat comprises lakes and marshes with a minimum depth of one meter. Nesting sites, as described by Madge & Burn (1988), are often small depressions, located away

from water bodies, and can be naturally formed or created by other animals. Suitable nesting locations may include vacant dwellings, barns, hollow trees up to ten meters tall, crevices in cliffs and rocks, and even nest boxes (Madge & Burn 1988). European populations breed predominantly in southern and eastern Europe, as well as southern and western Asia, with a significant population in Asia, where abundant suitable habitat is present, although precise quantitative data remain limited (BirdLife International 2023).

The floodplain areas of Assam are highly attractive to water birds due to the abundance

of food resources, favourable climatic conditions, and the presence of suitable breeding grounds for various wetland avian species. The first-ever sighting from Dipara, Gohpur, and multiple observations from central Assam (including Kaziranga National Park and surrounding areas) indicate that Kaziranga National Park might serve as a potential breeding habitat for the *T. ferruginea*.

However, it is crucial to emphasize that further comprehensive studies are necessary to thoroughly evaluate and confirm the suitability of Kaziranga National Park as a breeding site for the *T. ferruginea*. Such studies should include detailed assessments of the nesting behaviours, reproductive success, and overall breeding ecology of the species within the park's ecosystem. Additionally, factors such as human disturbance, habitat availability, and potential impacts of climate change should be considered to gain a comprehensive understanding of the species' breeding prospects in the region.

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Rahul Sarma¹, Jaydev Mandal², Ranjit Kakati³, Pratiksha Buragohain⁴ & Leons Mathew Abraham⁵

¹⁻⁵ Assam Bird Monitoring Network, Bhetapara, Guwahati, Assam 781028, India.

¹ The Wildheart Foundation, Sonitpur, Assam 784172, India.

² Department of Zoology, Madhab Choudhury College, Barpeta, Assam 781301, India.

³ Department of Zoology, Gauhati University, Guwahati, Assam 781013, India.

⁴ Nahargurihat H.S. School, Kamrup (M), Assam 782403, India.

⁵Pygmy Hog Research and Breeding Centre, Basistha, Guwahati, Assam 781029, India.

Email: ²jaywithdev@gmail.com (corresponding author)

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