

First record of the Short-eared Owl from Raimona National Park, Assam, India

Raimona National Park (Ripu Reserve Forest) is categorized as an Important Bird Area IBA (Rahmani et al. 2016; BirdLife International 2024) and holds a suitable habitat for critically threatened avifauna (Mahanta et al. 2022). Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus* (Pontoppidan, 1763) is a winter migrant seen from September/October to March/April seen in undulating grasslands with scattered scrub, sparsely scrubbed hillsides, tall grasslands on the margins of *jheels*, and in semi-desert, in the Indian Subcontinent (Ali & Ripley 1987).

On 30 January 2024, at 1215 h while surveying in Raimona National Park (RNP) on the dry riverbed of the Hel River in Bamba Forest Block (i.e., Athiabari Range), which comprises of patchy grasslands interspersed within the dry riverbed. We inadvertently flushed out a Short-eared Owl (26.706 N, 90.181 E) which had been probably resting. The bird took a 15 m brief flight,

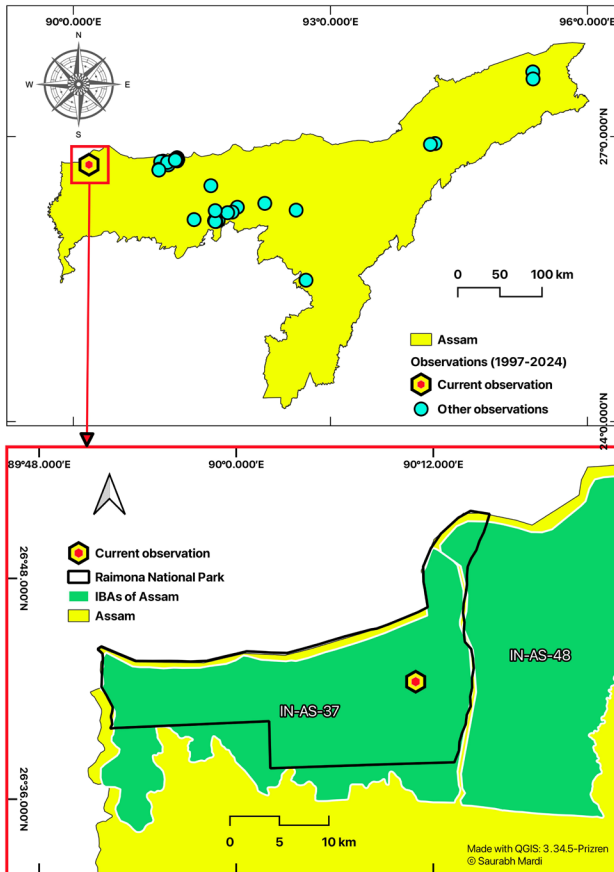


Short-eared Owl in RNP. © Bishal Basumatary.

skimming close to the ground, and settled on a grass patch. Upon our approach, it took a short low glide, perching on a piece of driftwood. It remained there even after we moved on.

In Assam, they are uncommon (Choudhury 2000) and some observations have been made

about this owl elsewhere in Assam (Das 2006; Brahma & Lakhar 2011; eBird 2021) but it was not recorded from Raimona National Park (Mahanta et al. 2022). So this is the first record from Raimona National Park and additional record to Assam.



Observational records of *Asio flammeus* in Assam.

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Citation: Basumatary, B., S. Mardi, K. Kaushik, P. Basumatary, H. Singha & K. Choudhury (2024). First record of the Short-eared Owl from Raimona National Park, Assam, India. *Bird-o-soar* #251, In: *Zoo's Print* 39(11): 16–17.