

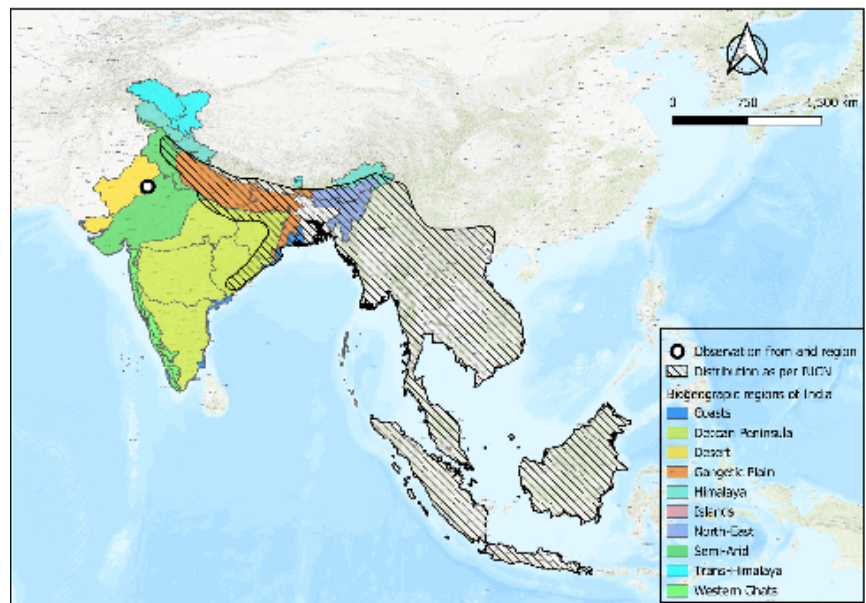
Sighting of Oriental Pied-Hornbills from arid region of Rajasthan, India

The Oriental Pied-Hornbill *Anthracoceros albirostris* is a distinctive and primarily southeastern Asian avian species, commonly found in secondary growth and river-margin forests of countries such as Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, and certain parts of India (Datta 1998). In India, its habitat extends from the Himalayan foothills, spanning from Arunachal Pradesh to Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram, and Manipur (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). However, the recent observations from semi-arid (Bhardwaj & Sangha 2022) and arid regions (present observation) of Rajasthan, far from their recognized native range, necessitates a closer examination for their geographic distribution.

The sighting was recorded during a field survey conducted on 8 March 2023 in the eastern arid region of Thar Desert in Didwana-Kuchaman District of Rajasthan, India. The presence of the Oriental Pied-Hornbill was documented through direct visual encounter



Oriental Pied-Hornbill roosting in Thar Desert, Rajasthan. © Pawan Singh.



Observation point and distribution of Oriental Pied-Hornbill as per BirdLife International (2020).

and even has photographic evidence of the same. Geographic coordinates and habitat characteristics were recorded to contextualize the

sighting.

The Oriental Pied-Hornbill pair was sighted within the arid region (27.0928 N & 74.7085 E), an area primarily

characterized by thorn scrub and dry deciduous forests, an environment vastly different from their native habitats. The pair was observed feeding on figs of *Ficus benghalensis* and photographed while roosting on *Azadirachta indica*.

The observed pair may be part of a pioneering population dispersing over considerable distances, possibly exploring unique food sources within the arid region (Kinnaird & O'Brien 2007) or could be influenced by competition for resources or changes in their native habitat (Lenz et al. 2015). The presence of Oriental Pied-Hornbills in the arid region of Rajasthan, far from their documented native range (BirdLife International 2020) emphasizes the need for further research to explain the factors behind this range expansion and its ecological implications. This sighting draws attention to the dynamic nature of wildlife distribution and adaptation in response to environmental changes.

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