

First sighting of the Red-crested Pochard in Satajan Wetland of Lakhimpur, Assam, India

The Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina* is naturally found in a wide range extending from southern and central Europe across central Asia, as far west as Mongolia. They are migratory, flying between breeding grounds and wintering sites. Red-crested pochards that migrate from central Asia disperse to India, Pakistan, and Myanmar.



Male and female Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina*. © Lakhijoti Saikia.

Satajan is a small perennial wetland, located between 27.2115–27.2068 N & 94.0520–94.0523 E and at an altitude of 94 m. The area of the protected part of the wetland is 39 acres and the maximum depth of water remain in winter is around 6.5 m (Mohammed 2013; Boruah & Riba 2015). Satajan is home to many flora and fauna including seasonal, migratory and resident birds.

In Assam, the Red-crested Pochard has been reported from Maguri beel (Dibru-Saikhowa NP) and Deepor beel (Guwahati) before. From Parbatipur No. 1 of Lakhimpur

district, it was first spotted in 17 January 2021 (eBird 2021).

We were on a birding expedition on 5 February 2024 in Satajan wetland. At 0825 h, we saw eight unfamiliar ducks swimming in the north-west part of the wetland. We photographed the ducks and also took a video of them for record. We observed the birds with binoculars for almost an hour. The bird had large, square-shaped head, red bill, and rusty-orange head. It also had white flanks with black breast and ventral region. Another one had pale cheeks with brown cap and brown bill with pink towards tip.

We identified the birds using available literature (Grimmett et al. 2011; Grewal et al. 2016). After careful observation and study, the birds were identified as male (with large, square-shaped head, red bill, and rusty-orange head) and female (pale cheeks with brown cap and brown bill with pink towards tip) Red-crested Pochard.

The Red-crested Pochard has not been recorded before in Satajan wetland. This is the first citation of this species from Satajan wetland, Lakhimpur, Assam.

References

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