

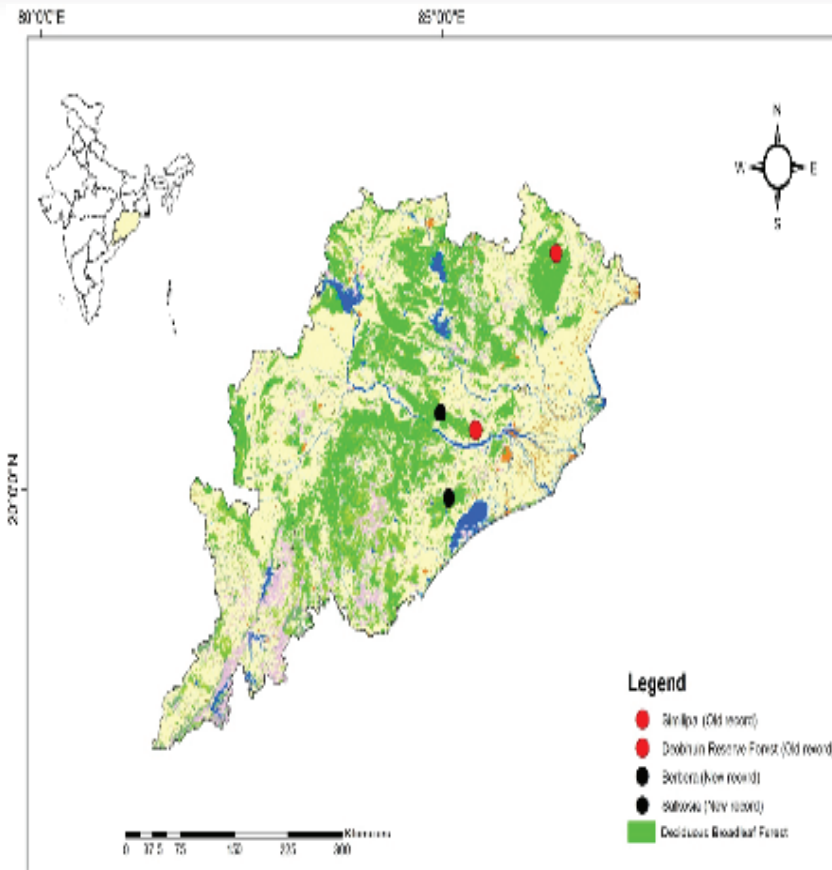
Further records and update of range extension of Spot-bellied Eagle-Owl in Odisha, India

Around 275 species of owl have been recorded worldwide (Mikkola 2012), with 12 species belonging to the genus *Ketupa*, of which five are found in India: *Ketupa zeylonensis*, *Ketupa flavipes*, *Ketupa ketupu*, *Ketupa coromanda*, and *Ketupa nipalensis*. In Odisha, two species are present, namely *Ketupa zeylonensis* and *Ketupa nipalensis* (Gill et al. 2024). *Ketupa nipalensis*, is considered a rare species in Odisha and is classified as 'Least Concern' on the IUCN Red List (BirdLife International 2018) and is listed under Schedule I in the Wildlife (Protection) Amendment Act, 2022.

The Spot-bellied Eagle-Owl, a formidable raptor, inhabits various regions of southeastern Asia including the Indian subcontinent. Its range extends through sub-montane areas and the lower Himalaya, typically up to approximately 2,100 m. It mostly inhabits in the evergreen and moist deciduous forests and it prefers riparian



Spot-bellied Eagle-Owl recorded in Tamana Reserve Forest (Top) and Satkosia Tiger Reserve (Bottom), Odisha. © Prabhat Kumar Das & Anil Kumar Jena.



New observations of *Ketupa nipalensis* in Odisha, India.

gallery forests, montane wet temperate forests, and moist deciduous forests. This owl is considered as a resident species, though its sightings are sparse in different parts of India (Jayapal et al. 2005; Deshmukh 2008; Majumder et al. 2011) and reported from Madhya Pradesh (Choudhury 2001), Nagaland (Sharma et al. 2020), Uttarakhand (Whistler & Kinnear 1936), and Andhra Pradesh (Srinivasan 2013).

This species has been documented in Odisha only

from two localities such as Deobhuin Reserve Forest in Athagarh Forest Division (Palei et al. 2018) and the Similipal Tiger Reserve (Nayak & Naik 2014). Despite subsequent avifaunal surveys, there have been no further reports of its occurrence in the state of Odisha.

During the inventory and assessment of biodiversity conducted in various biologically rich sites across Odisha from 2019 to 2022, two different individuals of

Spot-bellied Eagle-Owls were observed in two new and separate locations. These owls were identified by their distinctive features, including their large size, prominent black-and-white horizontal ear-tufts, large yellow beaks, fully feathered tarsi, and notable V-shaped black markings on their underparts. An individual of this species was observed at Satkosia Tiger Reserve, Odisha (20.6392 N, 84.9871 E) on 13 July 2020 at 1818 h, perched on a *Shorea robusta* tree and another sighting occurred on 26 October 2021 at Tamana Reserve Forest, Odisha (19.9256 N, 85.1046 E) at 1701 h, where the owl was roosting on a *Terminalia bellirica* tree. Both Satkosia Tiger Reserve and Tamana Reserve Forest are characterized by similar habitat types, specifically moist riverine forests.

The recent sightings and observations of the Spot-bellied Eagle-Owl *Ketupa nipalensis* in two more new localities of Odisha marked a significant observation within the state. The extension of its range further south not only enhances our understanding of the species habitat preferences

but also underscores the importance of continued monitoring and conservation efforts. As additional data is collected, it is anticipated that further populations of this owl species will be identified, underscoring the necessity for the development of revised conservation strategies to safeguard its increasingly diverse and expanding habitats in Odisha.

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Acknowledgements

I would like to convey my deepest appreciation to the chairman and member secretary of Odisha Biodiversity Board for their invaluable support and guidance during this research. Their insights and encouragement have significantly influenced the direction of this study. I also extend my sincere thanks to the divisional forest officer of the Angul Forest Division for his cooperation and assistance in facilitating my research activities, as well as to Dr. Swaroop Ranjan Mohanty for his help in preparation of the map.

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Citation: Jena, A.K., P.K. Dash, R.S. Sahoo, S.N. Ray, P. Swain & P.K. Das (2025). Further records and update of range extension of Spot-bellied Eagle-Owl in Odisha, India. *Bird-o-soar* #259, In: *Zoo's Print* 40(3): 16–18.