

First breeding record of Jerdon's Baza from Kanger Valley National Park, Chhattisgarh, India



Vigil from the perch. © Ameet Mandavia.

The Jerdon's Baza *Aviceda jerdoni* is found in the eastern Himalaya from Bengal Duars to the Assam Valley, Western Ghats, Eastern Ghats, and northern Odisha (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). It is confined to evergreen foothills biotope between 350 and 1,800 m. Food comprises of mainly lizards, grasshoppers and other insects (Baker 1928; Ali & Ripley 1987).

The breeding season of the species is normally from April to June. Nest is built at the height of 7–20 m. It is a well-made structure, shallow cup of leafy twigs occasionally lined with grass and woods but always with fresh green leaves. The young birds are like the adult females though the young males soon become darker above.

The tail has four or sometimes five distinct bands and the bases of the feathers are much mottled with white (Baker 1928). Birds are sometimes seen in family parties of up to five individuals but normally found in pairs. It spends long periods perched in a tree on the lookout for prey which is captured on the ground. Pairs often soar at height over forest at the onset of the breeding (Grimmett et al. 1998).

The Jerdon's Baza has been recorded from Bastar Division of Chhattisgarh by Chandra & Singh (2004). Past studies from Madhya Pradesh (Central India) were carried out by Osmaston (1922), D'Abreu (1931, 1935), Hewetson (1956),



Alerted due to our approach.
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Chick collected from the nest by a hunter.
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Perched low. © Ameet Mandavia.

Sightings of the species have been reported from Kanger Valley National Park and Machkote Forest Range

	Year	Month	No. of sightings	No. of birds seen
1	2016	March, April	4	6
2	2017	January, February, March, April, May, June	7	11
3	2018	April, May, June	4	6
4	2019	March, April, May, June	4	9

Newton et al. (1986), Nair (2007), and D'Cunha (2001) but they have not recorded its breeding in this region.

This species has been recorded in Kanger Valley National Park (KVNP) and adjoining Machkote Forest Range (MFR) of Bastar District. Both these forests have been classified as moist peninsular Sal (3C/C2e), southern moist mixed deciduous forest (3B/C2) and slightly moist teak forest (3B/C1c) categories by Champion & Seth (1968). The area is drained by the Indravati and Kolab /Sabri rivers, which are the major tributaries of river Godavari.

KVNP with an area 200 km² has an altitude of 338–781 m, is situated in Jagdalpur-Bastar districts of Chhattisgarh and came into existence in 1982. The Machkote range adjoins KVNP with similar landscape.

Although previous studies have documented the presence of species in KVNP, none has reported its breeding in the area. On 17 May 2018, we observed a pair soaring at Nagalsar (compartment 84) and alighted and perched on a branch of a Saja *Terminalia elliptica* tree at a height of approximately 18 m in a habitat with 60–70% canopy cover. Male mounted the female for a while, but actual copulation was not observed, subsequently the birds flew away.

On 22 June 2019, during the annual traditional hunting festival (*Paradh*) conducted in KVNP and MFR, local hunters obtained a juvenile of Jerdon's Baza collected from a nest in the Chinta Dongri Hills (18.762° N, 82.046° E, 650–720 m) of the Koleng range of KVNP. An

adult was observed feeding the chick at the nest which was situated approximately 16 m above ground in a mixed Sal Forest. The chick was characterized by a heavily streaked head and breast, darker spottier bands on the underparts and tail with four darker bands matched with description by Ali & Ripley (1987). The identification was confirmed by Dr Asad R. Rahmani.

The finding of a dead juvenile and a chick at a nest site in June 2019, confirms the first report on breeding by this species from Bastar Division, Chhattisgarh and central India as no previous studies have reported it. Breeding of the species has previously been reported from Kerala (Vishnudas 2007).

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