

11. THE BENGAL FLORICAN *EUPODOTIS BENGALENSIS* GMELIN 1789 IN DIBANG VALLEY DISTRICT OF ARUNACHAL PRADESH

(With one text figure)

On 3 March, 1993, I observed a male and two widely separated females of the rare Bengal florican *Eupodotis bengalensis* near Bomjir, in Dibang Valley dist., Arunachal Pradesh (28° 07' N, 95° 42' E). The habitat type was short grassland with thatch grass (*Saccharum* sp., *Imperata cylindrica*) on a *chapori* (riverine tract and islets) of the Dibang river. The male was flushed at 1605 hrs from near a cattle camp and flew to about 200-250 metres to a fairly tall patch of grass (c. 2 m high). While looking for this male in the tall patch of grass, we flushed two females about 100 m apart. They flew to about 300 m and settled in different areas of the grassland.

In Dibang Valley dist., the floricans are found mostly in Dibang Reserve Forest (RF), especially in the eastern and southern areas where grassland is the dominant vegetation. They are also found in the southern areas of Sirkee (proposed) RF. Stray floricans are reported from the grassland in the western areas of Kerim RF, adjacent to Dibang RF. A few occasionally wander north upto Nizamghat, following the grassy *chaporis* of the Dibang river-bed. Nizamghat is near the spot where the Dibang river debouches onto the plains.

Dibang Valley was not covered by other recent surveys (Rahmani *et al.* 1991). Hume and Marshall (1880) confirmed the occurrence of the species in this area. The hilly areas of Dibang Valley are known as Mishmi Hills.

Dibang RF is threatened by encroachment

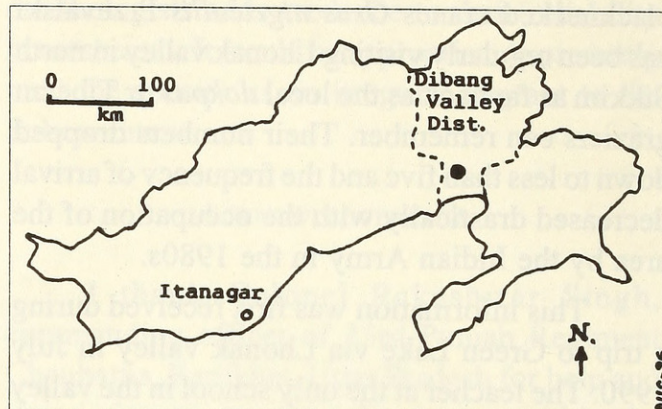


Fig. 1. Map of Arunachal Pradesh showing location of Dibang Valley District and the locality of florican sighting (●).

and subsequent regularisation of such encroachments through de-reservation. Already about 100 sq. km have been de-reserved out of a total area of 303 sq. km. Considering its importance for the Bengal florican, white-winged wood duck *Cairina scutulata*, and a final staging area of the migrating common cranes *Grus grus*, an area of 202 sq. km including parts of Dibang RF, Kerim RF and Sirkee proposed RF have been recommended for a National Park (Choudhury 1996).

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