

This is the first time a brahmīnī kite nest has been located on the ground. Menon (1989, unpubl. report submitted to BNHS) located 48 nests during his brief study at Point Calimere and all were on trees. It is interesting to note that the pair chose to nest on the ground although there are plenty of regular nesting trees around the area (though not in

the immediate vicinity of the site), and there seems to be hardly any competition for nest sites among the kites.

WILLIAM MORRISON
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March 29, 1990

6. GREAT STONE PLOVER *ESACUS MAGNIROSTRIS* (VIEILLOT) IN KERALA

On 14 January 1990 at 1030 hrs while doing the mid winter waterfowl count at Pudukkottai Mangrove Forest, Kerala, a great stone plover *Esacus magnirostris* (Vieillot) was sighted. The Pudukkottai Mangrove Forest comes under Elangapuzha panchayat of Cochin taluk in Ernakulam district. The altitude of the area is 1.7 m above mean sea level. This forest is located approximately 6 km from Ernakulam city and it covers

an area of about 100 ha.

The bird was feeding in the tidal mudflats, along with other waders like sandpipers, sand plovers, Kentish plovers, roof herons and egrets. Thousands of gulls and terns were also present.

November 26, 1990

P.O. NAMEER

7. POSSIBLE OCCURRENCE OF FOUR SUBSPECIES OF LESSER SAND PLOVER *CHARADRIUS MONGOLUS* AT PT. CALIMERE WILDLIFE SANCTUARY, TAMIL NADU

Cramp and Simmons (1983) recognised five subspecies of lesser sand plover *Charadrius mongolus* under two groups. The *mongolus* group comprising *Charadrius mongolus mongolus* and *C.m. stegmanni*, and the *atrifrons* group containing *pamirensis*, *C.m. atrifrons* and *C.m. schaeferi*. The two groups are separated on measurements and the extent and spread of black on the head in their breeding plumage. The lesser sand plover wintering in western India is mostly *atrifrons* group, *pamirensis* wintering in western India and *atrifrons* wintering in the Bay of Bengal area and Indian subcontinent west to Pakistan (Cramp and Simmons 1983). While handling lesser sand plover for ringing at Point Calimere Sanctuary, Thanjavur district, Tamil Nadu, three individuals which varied in measurements and plumage were noticed. They were carefully examined and the measurements analysed to determine their race. It was apparent that the three individuals belonged to races different from the subspecies *atrifrons* (Himalayan race) commonly wintering in India. One (Specimen no. 1) had very short tarsus (27.5 mm), another (no. 2) had a longer bill (21 mm) and the third (no. 3) differed in the absence of black on the forehead in its breeding plumage. These three

birds, on the basis of analysis of key characters were identified as *Charadrius mongolus stegmanni*, *C.m. schaeferi* and *C.m. pamirensis* respectively (Table 1).

Charadrius mongolus stegmanni: This race is of east Siberian origin and winters mainly along the Chinese seaboard, Philippines, Eastern Indonesia, Melanesian islands and Australia. The tarsus measurement (27.5 mm) does not fall within the range of the five races given by Cramp and Simmons (1983). However, it falls within the range of the tarsus measurements (27–34 mm) of the *mongolus* group given by Prater *et al.* (1977). Moreover the bill length/bill depth ratio and wing/tarsus ratio tallies with *stegmanni*. So far it was assumed that only the *atrifrons* group winters in India. This record of *stegmanni* from Point Calimere indicates that stray individuals of the *mongolus* group also visit India along with members of the *atrifrons* group.

Charadrius mongolus schaeferi: The west Chinese race *schaeferi* winters along the gulf of Siam, Malaysia and Western Indonesia (Greater Sunda). The race has also been recorded from western Australia (Lane 1986). The maximum range of the bill length (21 mm) is noted only in *schaeferi* by Cramp and Simmons (Table 1). The wing/tarsus

TABLE 1
MORPHOMETRIC DATA FOR THE THREE RACES OF LESSER SAND PLOVER CAUGHT AT PT. CALIMERE

Specimen no., species, sex	Wing	Bill	Tarsus	Tail	Wt. (g)	Wing/ Bill ratio	Wing/ Tarsus ratio	Bill length/ Bill depth ratio	Date of capture
1. <i>Charadrius mongolus stegmanni</i> , F	125	17.7	27.5	49.5	47	7.1	4.5 *(4.20-4.78)	3.76 *(< 3.00 <i>mongolus</i> group)	15.3.90
2. <i>Charadrius mongolus schaeferi</i> , M*	130 (127-134)	21 (17-21)	34 (33-36)	51	53	6.19	3.82 *(3.50-4.06)	4.4 *(> 3.80 <i>atrifrons</i> group)	12.4.90
3. <i>Charadrius mongolus pamirensis</i> , F*	128 (128-134)	17.2 (16-18)	33 (32-34)	49	57	7.4	3.9	3.6 *(3.57-4.07) (From Ladakh and Kashmir)	28.4.90

* Measurement ranges given by Cramp and Simmons (1983). M = Male, F = Female.

ratio also tallies with *schaeferi*. Though *schaeferi* comes under the *atrifrons* group its occurrence in India has not been definitely stated by Ali and Ripley (1983) as it is mentioned as *atrifrons*. It is not clear whether they meant the *atrifrons* group or the race.

***Charadrius mongolus pamirensis*:** The western race winters in western India, Pakistan, the Arabian Sea, Persian Gulf, Seychelles and East Africa, south to Cape Province and Namibia (Cramp and Simmons 1983). The female specimen collected in breeding plumage had mottled white patches on sides of forehead, and dark brown tinge on ear coverts, which tallies with the colour pattern of *pamirensis*. As this

race has been known so far to winter only in western India, its occurrence in south-east India is noteworthy.

It is possible that all four subspecies of both groups winter in India as in Australia, where the three subspecies of both groups of lesser sand plover have been reported by Lane (1986). More data are being analysed to determine the races of lesser sand plover wintering in south India.

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8. OCCURRENCE OF *LARUS MINUTUS* PALLAS IN KUTCH

NNB saw what he thought was a little gull *Larus minutus* at Rudramata dam on 27 November 1987. On a subsequent visit to the dam by H, Shantilal Varu and others, the bird was not found to be present there. It appears that Dr. Salim Ali came

across a number of these gulls in the Rann of Kutch which he watched from a distance (*JBNHS* 71: 3), but withheld definite identification of them.

NNB along with the other members of the Pelican Nature Club of Kutch saw three *L. minutus*



Balachandran, S. and Natarajan, V. 1992. "Possible occurrence of four subspecies of lesser sand plover *Charadrius mongolus* at Pt. Calimere Wildlife Sanctuary, Tamil Nadu." *The journal of the Bombay Natural History Society* 89, 118–119.

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