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**Journal of
Threatened
Taxa**

10.11609/jott.2026.18.2.28262-28454
www.threatenedtaxa.org

26 February 2026 (Online & Print)
18(2): 28262-28454
ISSN 0974-7907 (Online)
ISSN 0974-7893 (Print)



ISSN 0974-7907 (Online); ISSN 0974-7893 (Print)

Publisher
Wildlife Information Liaison Development Society
www.wild.zooreach.org

Host
Zoo Outreach Organization
www.zooreach.org

Srivari Illam, No. 61, Karthik Nagar, 10th Street, Saravanampatti, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu 641035, India
Registered Office: 3A2 Varadarajulu Nagar, FCI Road, Ganapathy, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu 641006, India
Ph: +91 9385339863 | www.threatenedtaxa.org
Email: sanjay@threatenedtaxa.org

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continued on the back inside cover

Cover: Digital illustration of *Impatiens chamchumroonii* in Krita by Dupati Poojitha.



First record of the Diamond Dove *Geopelia cuneata*, an Australian endemic, in Sikhna Jwhlwao National Park, Assam, India

Bibhash Sarkar¹ , Bijay Basfore² , Leons Mathew Abraham³ & Anjana Singha Naorem⁴

¹Department of Zoology, Pandu College, Pandu, Guwahati, Assam 781012, India.

^{2,4}Department of Zoology, Cotton University, Panbazar, Guwahati, Assam 781001, India.

³Pygmy Hog Research & Breeding Centre, Indira Nagar, Basistha, Guwahati, Assam 781029, India.

¹bibhashsarkar2810@gmail.com, ²zoo2491005_bijay@cottonuniversity.ac.in (corresponding author),

³leonsreptar@gmail.com, ⁴anjanasingha@cottonuniversity.ac.in (corresponding author)

The Diamond Dove *Geopelia cuneata* (Latham, 1801) is an Australian endemic and among the smallest species of the Columbidae family, inhabiting the arid and semi-arid regions of central, western, and northern Australia (Schleucher et al. 1991). This delicate dove is characterized by a long, pointed tail and sexually dimorphic plumage. Males are pale blue-grey with spotted scapulars, a chestnut wing panel, white underparts, black-and-white tail, scarlet iris, and pink legs, while females are browner with a duller orbital ring, and juveniles are overall duller with fine barring, fewer spots, a lighter bill, and paler eyes and legs (Gibbs et al. 2001; Baptista et al. 2017).

Globally, the Diamond Dove is assessed as ‘Least Concern’ on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species (IUCN 2025). However, it was listed as threatened on the 2013 advisory list of threatened vertebrate fauna in Victoria, Australia, under the provisions of part 3 of the Victorian Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988 (FFG Act) (DSE 2013). On eBird, 31,891 observations are documented from: Oceania, North America, Europe, Asia, and South America. Among these, 214 records are categorized

as escapees, denoting birds observed outside their natural range (eBird 2026). This distribution highlights the species’ restriction to Oceania and suggests that most extra-limital records represent escapees, captive releases, or vagrants rather than natural dispersal.

On 4 April 2025, around 1115 h, we documented two individuals of Diamond Dove (Image 1) in the Runikhata Range of the recently declared Sikhna Jwhlwao National Park (26.835° N, 90.413° E), located in the Kokrajhar District of Assam, India. Two birds were observed foraging on the ground approximately 200 m from a dried-up stream. Given that the Diamond Dove is strictly resident in Australia and does not naturally occur in southern Asia, its presence in Assam is best explained as a human-mediated introduction. The species is extensively bred and traded in the global cage-bird industry due to its small size, ease of maintenance, and ornamental plumage. Thus, the most plausible explanation for our record is that these individuals were escapees or intentional releases from captivity.

To further understand the context of this record, we searched major citizen science platforms, including

Editor: Ashutosh Singh, Salim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History, Coimbatore, India.

Date of publication: 26 February 2026 (online & print)

Citation: Sarkar, B., B. Basfore, L.M. Abraham & A.S. Naorem (2026). First record of the Diamond Dove *Geopelia cuneata*, an Australian endemic, in Sikhna Jwhlwao National Park, Assam, India. *Journal of Threatened Taxa* 18(2): 28438–28440. <https://doi.org/10.11609/jott.10119.18.2.28438-28440>

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Funding: None.

Competing interests: The authors declare no competing interests.

Acknowledgements: We sincerely thank the divisional forest officer, Chirang Division, Kajalgaon, for granting us the permit to study the avian diversity and ecology in the Runikhata Range of Sikhna Jwhlwao National Park (Permit No. B/CRD/permission/974-75). Our gratitude also goes to the range officers and frontline staff for their invaluable support in the field and for their unwavering dedication to conservation. BS gratefully acknowledges the Department of Zoology, Pandu College, for providing academic support.



Image 1. Diamond Dove *Geopelia cuneata* observed in Sikhna Jwhlwao National Park, Assam, India.

eBird, iNaturalist, and GBIF, to compile all available Indian records of the Diamond Dove. These data revealed that the Diamond Dove has been previously reported from Delhi, Karnataka, Kerala, and Punjab, all being considered escapee occurrences (Table 1).

Additionally, our review of citizen science databases also revealed that India has reported escapees of several other exotic bird species, including the Blue-bellied Roller *Coracias cyanogaster* from West Bengal, Mute Swan *Cygnus olor* from Gujarat, Japanese Quail *Coturnix japonica* from the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and Black Vulture *Coragyps atratus* from Haryana. In Assam, the only previously documented escapee bird records include Domestic Goose *Anser* sp. and Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*, making the present observation of Diamond Dove particularly noteworthy as the first record of this species in the state.

Although many escapees fail to establish, certain species may adapt and form feral populations under favourable conditions. Factors such as captive origin, availability of urban resources, and reduced predation can facilitate persistence, as exemplified by Monk

Parakeet *Myiopsita monachus* and Ring-necked Parakeet *Psittacula krameri* in Spain, where heavy importation enabled self-sustaining populations despite subsequent import bans (Souviron-Priego et al. 2018). The present observation emphasizes the importance of monitoring escapees, as they may compete with native species (Charter et al. 2016), alter the native plant communities (Menchetti & Mori 2014), facilitate transmission of zoonotic diseases (Ancillotto et al. 2018), potentially establish invasive populations (Souviron-Priego et al. 2018), and negatively impact human economy by damaging crops (Haubrock et al. 2021).

Furthermore, public awareness is crucial, as uninformed bird owners may release captive birds into the wild, inadvertently promoting the spread of zoonotic diseases transmissible to humans and native avifauna (Nair et al. 2022). Continuous documentation of such occurrences in India is essential to evaluate the frequency and ecological impact of non-native introductions. Although many escapees may not survive, repeated introductions heighten the risk of local adaptation, successful breeding, and long-term establishment.

Table 1. Records of Diamond Dove *Geopelia cuneata* from India based on citizen science data.

	Source	Date of observation	Location
1	eBird (Checklist ID S71738406) and GBIF	23 September 2020	South City, Ludhiana, Punjab
2	eBird (Checklist ID S149444154) and GBIF	09 June 2023	Shivakote Kere, Bengaluru Urban, Karnataka
3	eBird (Checklist ID S270286303)	28 April 2025	2 Jasola Metro Road, South-East Delhi, Delhi
4	eBird (Checklist ID S296356343)	26 January 2026	Thrissur, Kerala

Such events could alter community dynamics, increase competition, introduce novel pathogens, and complicate conservation of native bird communities.

We therefore advocate vigilant monitoring and systematic reporting of exotic bird escapees in India to assess their ecological consequences. Where permitted, the exotic bird trade should be strictly licensed and regulated, with safeguards to prevent accidental or deliberate releases. Effective regulatory frameworks will be critical to minimising risks to native biodiversity while balancing avicultural practices.

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Journal of Threatened Taxa is indexed/abstracted in Bibliography of Systematic Mycology, Biological Abstracts, BIOSIS Previews, CAB Abstracts, EBSCO, Google Scholar, Index Copernicus, Index Fungorum, JournalSeek, National Academy of Agricultural Sciences, NewJour, OCLC WorldCat, SCOPUS, Stanford University Libraries, Virtual Library of Biology, Zoological Records.

NAAS rating (India) 5.64

Print copies of the Journal are available at cost. Write to:
The Managing Editor, JoTT,
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3A2 Varadarajulu Nagar, FCI Road, Ganapathy, Coimbatore,
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ravi@threatenedtaxa.org & ravi@zooreach.org



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ISSN 0974-7907 (Online) | ISSN 0974-7893 (Print)

February 2026 | Vol. 18 | No. 2 | Pages: 28262–28454

Date of Publication: 26 February 2026 (Online & Print)

DOI: 10.11609/jott.2026.18.2.28262-28454

www.threatenedtaxa.org

Articles

Floristic composition and conservation significance of vascular plants in Kalatop-Khajjiar Wildlife Sanctuary, Himachal Pradesh, India

– Sumit, Gulshan Kumar, Sumit Singh, Kanwaljeet Singh, Taslima Sheikh, P. Vishal Ahuja & Arvind Kumar, Pp. 28263–28274

Assessing the tree diversity along the Dudhganga River in Kolhapur District of Maharashtra, India

– Sachin Chavan & Rajaram Gurav, Pp. 28275–28286

Flower bud growth, mortality rate, and population structure of *Sapria himalayana* Griffith f. *albavinosa* Banziger & Hansen (Rafflesiaceae) in a subtropical forest, northeastern India

– K. Shamran Maring & Athokpam Pinokiyo, Pp. 28287–28295

Comparing three sampling techniques for surveying and monitoring arthropods in Moroccan agroecosystems

– Hanae El Harche, Pp. 28296–28306

Community structure of Lepidoptera in Nantu-Boliohuto Wildlife Reserve, Sulawesi, Indonesia

– Chairunnisah J. Lamangantjo, Marini Susanti Hamidun, Sasmianti & Dewi Wahyuni K. Baderan, Pp. 28307–28316

Foraging niche segregation among woodpeckers in the oak-pine forest of Kumaon Himalaya, Uttarakhand, India

– Rafat Jahan, Satish Kumar & Kaleem Ahmed, Pp. 28317–28328

Local knowledge, attitudes, and perceptions of ecosystem services and disservices provided by the Painted Stork *Mycteria leucocephala* Pennant, 1769 (Aves: Ciconiidae) in northern India: insights for conservation

– Yashmita-Ulman & Manoj Singh, Pp. 28329–28342

Communications

Analysis revealed minuscule DNA sequence data availability for Indian marine macroalgal diversity

– Digvijay Singh Yadav, Aswin Alichen & Vaibhav A. Mantri, Pp. 28343–28349

Checklist of rust fungi of the Nuratau Nature Reserve, Uzbekistan

– I.M. Mustafae, M.M. Iminova, I.Z. Ortiqov, S.A. Teshaboyeva & N.Q. Iskanov, Pp. 28350–28357

Checklist of moths (Lepidoptera: Heterocera) from the campus of University of North Bengal, Siliguri, India

– Abhirup Saha, Ratnadeep Sarkar, Rujas Yonle, Subhajit Das, Prapti Das & Dhiraj Saha, Pp. 28358–28369

Vulture diversity and long-term trends in the Ranikhet region, Kumaon Himalaya, Uttarakhand, India

– Mirza Altaf Baig, Nazneen Zehra & Jamal Ahmad Khan, Pp. 28370–28377

Nesting dynamics of Red-wattled Lapwing *Vanellus indicus* Boddaert, 1783 in urban and rural regions of Indore, India

– Kratika Patidar & Vipul Keerti Sharma, Pp. 28378–28386

Assessing avian diversity and conservation status in Dhamapur Lake World Heritage Irrigation Structure, Sindhudurg, Maharashtra, India

– Yogesh Koli, Pravin Sawant & Mayuri Chavan, Pp. 28387–28398

Population status and habitat use of Indian Grey Wolf *Canis lupus pallipes* in Pench Tiger Reserve, Madhya Pradesh, India

– Iqra Rabbani & Sharad Kumar, Pp. 28399–28405

Activity budgets of a zoo-housed Mishmi Takin *Budorcas taxicolor taxicolor* (Mammalia: Artiodactyla: Bovidae) herd

– Nabanita Ghosh, Pranita Gupta, Joy Dey & Basavaraj S. Holeyachi, Pp. 28406–28412

Extended distribution of *Nymphoides peltata* (S.G.Gmel.) Kuntze (Menyanthaceae) in Manipur, India

– Aahen Chanu Waikhom & Bimolkumar Singh Sadokpam, Pp. 28413–28418

Short Communications

***Impatiens chamchumroonii* (Balsaminaceae), a new record for the flora of Vietnam**

– Cuong Huu Nguyen, Diep Quang Dinh, Dinh Duc Nguyen & Keooudone Souvannakhommane, Pp. 28419–28423

Occurrence of the wood fern *Arachniodes sledgei* Fraser-Jenk. (Pteridophyta: Dryopteridaceae) in the northern Western Ghats, India

– Sachin Patil & Jagannath Patil, Pp. 28424–28427

Notes

A note on the Petal-less Caper *Maerua apetala* (B. Heyne ex Roth) Jacobs (Capparaceae)

– Shamsudheen Abdul Kader & Bagavathy Parthipan, Pp. 28428–28429

Record of *Euploea mulciber* (Cramer, [1777]) (Lepidoptera: Nymphalidae) in Delhi, India: evidence of range extension in a restored urban ecosystem

– Aisha Sultana, Mohammad Shah Hussain & Balwinder Kaur, Pp. 28430–28432

Hump-nosed Pit Viper *Hypnale hypnale* feeding on an Allapalli Skink *Eutropis allapallensis* in Karwar, India

– Nonita Rana, Karthy Shivapushanam, S.J.D. Frank & Govindan Veeraswami Gopi, Pp. 28433–28435

Sighting of vagrant Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio* in the coastal areas of Thoothukudi, Tamil Nadu, India

– Kishore Muthu, Anand Shibu & Santhanakrishnan Babu, Pp. 28436–28437

First record of the Diamond Dove *Geopelia cuneata*, an Australian endemic, in Sikhna Jwhlwao National Park, Assam, India

– Bibhash Sarkar, Bijay Basfore, Leons Mathew Abraham & Anjana Singha Naorem, Pp. 28438–28440

First photographic record of the Rusty-spotted Cat *Prionailurus rubiginosus* (I. Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, 1831) (Mammalia: Carnivora: Felidae) in Kuldiha Wildlife Sanctuary, Odisha, India

– Tarun Singh, Harshvardhan Singh Rathore, N. Abhin, Subhalaxmi Muduli, Yash Deshpande, Vivek Sarkar, Diganta Sovan Chand, Samrat Gowda, Prakash C. Gogineni, Manoj V. Nair, Bivash Pandav & Samrat Mondol, Pp. 28441–28443

First photographic evidence of the Rusty-spotted Cat *Prionailurus rubiginosus* (I. Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, 1831) (Mammalia: Carnivora: Felidae) in Kapilash Wildlife Sanctuary, Odisha, India

– Alok Kumar Naik, Sumit Kumar Kar, Shyama Bharati, Ashit Chakraborty & Ashis Kumar Das, Pp. 28444–28446

Record of a Tiger *Panthera tigris* (Linnaeus, 1758) (Mammalia: Carnivora: Felidae) in Saptari District of eastern Nepal: implications for conservation and habitat connectivity

– Gobinda Prasad Pokharel, Chiranjibi Prasad Pokharel, Ashish Gurung, Bishnu Singh Thakuri, Ambika Prasad Khatiwada, Aastha Joshi, Birendra Gautam, Mithilesh Mahato, Naresh Subedi & Madhu Chetri, Pp. 28447–28450

Book Review

At the Point of No Return? – Reading Pankaj Sekhsaria's Island on Edge: The Great Nicobar Crisis

– Himangshu Kalita, Pp. 28451–28454

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