

Project Update: January 2010

A comprehensive survey of the birdlife of the poorly known mid and high altitudes (1000 to 3800 m ASL) of Namdapha National Park and surrounding areas was conducted between early November 2008 and mid-January 2009 by Umesh Srinivasan and Shashank Dalvi. The survey covered areas both within the park as well as community forests lying to the east of the park. A variety of methods, including taped call/song playback, interviews with local people, and opportunistic recording was used over roughly 55 field days to document bird species. The survey recorded 58 bird species hitherto unrecorded from the area, including a large number of species of high tourism value. These include species such as Ward's trogon, black-necked crane, gold-crested myna and black-tailed crake. The survey team, with information from the resident people, also discovered the 'white-headed' black bulbul wintering in India for the first time (<http://www.indianbirds.in/pdfs/White-headed%20Black%20Bulbul.pdf>). In all, 290 species were recorded during this field survey, while in total, Namdapha and its surrounding forests are home to at least 487 bird species. Most of the areas suitable for birdwatching tours are located in areas to the east of the national park in community-owned forest land. A comprehensive list documenting the *Lisu* names of over 200 bird species has been compiled based on interviews with several people from the resident *Lisu* community. A detailed report on the findings of the survey, together with a comprehensive checklist of the birds of Namdapha is ready and will shortly be submitted to a journal.



The white-headed Black Bulbul (*Hypsipetes leucocephalus stresemanni*), discovered wintering in forests near Namdapha, recorded for the first time in India during the 2008-

2009 bird survey.

To stimulate interest in Namdapha as a tourism destination, a website (www.namdapha.in) providing detailed information on all aspects of Namdapha and the surrounding areas, including wildlife, local communities, climate and history has been created. The website also includes a comprehensive image gallery with over 500 photographs providing a visual representation of a substantial proportion of Namdapha's mammals and birds. A 'visitor guide' section provides in-depth information on the logistics of visiting, staying in and exploring Namdapha. As of now, all the first-level pages and a large proportion of the second-level pages have been completed and uploaded. Write-ups and photographs have been contributed by several authors and photographers, all of whom are acknowledged on the website.



White-winged Wood Duck (*Asarcornis scutulata*), photographed at 1700 m ASL in Namdapha National Park, the highest known record of this species worldwide.

Future work:

- Training of members of the *Lisu* community in bird identification, English bird names, and bird guiding. One member of the *Lisu* community, who accompanied the survey team, has already received training in bird identification. However, a systematic and formal training programme with more *Lisu* youth will be carried out this year.
- Bird species descriptions. During the field survey, the team encountered two bird

species that appear to be very different from species known to occur in the area. Correspondence with taxonomists and bird experts indicates that these might be hitherto unknown to science. We plan to carry out a follow-up field visit to collect specimens for a full morphological and genetic description to establish the identity of these species; we have sought permits for collection of genetic material for study.



Left: A view of sub-alpine and rhododendron habitats at 3200 m ASL, Mugaphi peak, in community forests east of Namdapha National Park. Right: A large lake that is visited by waterfowl set in sub-tropical forest at 1700 m ASL in Namdapha National Park.