

TWO NEW ADDITIONS TO THE AVIFAUNA OF PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

Namaqua dove (*Oena capensis* Linnaeus, 1766) and Tristram's starling (*Onychognathus tristramii* Sclaters, 1858) are reported for the first time from coastal waters of Pakistan. Range of both the species is now extended beyond Oman into Pakistan.

Keywords: Namaqua dove, *Oena capensis*, Tristram's starling, *Onychognathus tristramii*, Pakistan, avifauna

INTRODUCTION

Bird fauna of Pakistan has been studied by a number of scientists (Roberts, 1991, 1992). In the recent years a number of publications have been made on the birds of coastal areas of Pakistan (Azam, 2004; Begum *et al.*, 2016; Ghalib and Hasnain, 1994, 1997; Ghalib *et al.*, 2004, 2006, 2008, 2009; Grimmett *et al.*, 1988, 2008; Hasan and Khan, 2005; Hasnain and Ghalib, 1995; Khan *et al.*, 2004, 2010a, 2010b; Khan and Ghalib, 2006; Khanum *et al.*, 1980; Mirza, 2007; Pandrani *et al.*, 2005; Rasool and Hasnain, 2008; Ward, 1999), however, only Moazzam and Ziaullah (2001) have studied the bird fauna of the offshore waters of Pakistan. As part of the observer programme initiated to monitor tuna fisheries of Pakistan (Moazzam and Nawaz, 2017), two species of birds were recorded for the first time from the coastal waters of Pakistan.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Details of the observer programme have been documented in Moazzam and Nawaz (2017). In addition to fishes and marine megafauna, the observers deputed on tuna gillnet vessels also collected and photographed bird species especially those that take rest on their fishing boats. The birds reported in this paper are photographed and since they were alive, therefore, safely released. The photographs are archived in the Museum of Marine Fisheries Department, Government of Pakistan, Karachi.

RESULTS

Two bird species i.e. Namaqua dove (*Oena capensis* Linnaeus, 1766) and Tristram's starling (*Onychognathus tristramii* Sclater, 1858) are reported for the first time from Pakistan.

Family: Columbidae

Genus *Oena* Swainson, 1837

Oena capensis Linnaeus 1766

Common Name: Namaqua dove

(Fig. 1)

Material examined:

One specimen photographed at nearshore water off Paradise Point, Karachi (Fig. 3) on 09th October, 2016 (AVIAN-72/2006/MFD (Photograph)).

Description:

It is a small sparrow-sized bird belonging to family Columbidae (pigeons and doves) with a length of about 22 cm and wingspan of 28–33 cm. It has a very long black tapered tail which is graduated. The plumage is mostly grey apart from a white belly, and chestnut primary feathers which are visible in flight. The upper wing shows 4-5 iridescent, purple to dark blue spots. The primaries are chestnut and black-tipped, with edged black. The upper tail-coverts are greyish to brownish-grey, and black-tipped, forming a narrow black bar. The central rectrices are grey and broadly black-tipped. The outer tail feathers are blue-grey and the outermost pair shows white. The adult male

has a yellow and red beak and a black face, throat and breast. The specimen was a male which is evident from very long and graduated tail and conspicuous black face, chin, throat and front of the breast.



Fig. 1. Namaqua dove (*Oena capensis*) photographed off Paradise Point, Karachi.

Remarks:

The Namaqua dove is found mainly in the Sub-Saharan Africa (between Morocco and Egypt) extending its distribution to Arabian Peninsula, southern Israel, Jordan and as far north as Cyprus and Turkey (Birdlife International, 2016). It also occurs across sub-Saharan and southern Africa region (Namibia, Botswana, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and South Africa) but absent from the lowland forests of West Africa (Hockey *et al.* 2005). In the region, it is known from Oman (Gallagher and Woodcock, 1980), Yemen (Yerbury, 1886, 1896), Socotra (Ripley and Bond, 1966), UAE (Jennings, 2000), Qatar (Jennings, 2000), Iraq (Salim, 2008), Kuwait (Jennings, 2000) and Iran (Osaei and Jamadi, 2008). Present paper extends the distribution range of the species to Pakistan, although it may be a straggler.

No attempt was made to feed the bird which was found to be very active. It was not exhausted unlike many birds which take shelter on fishing boats in offshore waters. The bird was released when the fishing boat approach Karachi Port.

Family Sturnidae

Genus: *Onychognathus*

Onychognathus tristratii (Sclater, 1858)

Common name: Tristram's starling or Tristram's grackle

(Fig. 2-3)

Material examined:

One specimen photographed about 203 km southeast of Karachi on 15 November, 2016 (AVIAN-95/2006/MFD (Photograph).

Description:

Fairly large, dark starling which is about 25 cm long that includes a 9 cm tail. Its wingspan is about 44–45 cm. Male plumage is uniformly glossy black, except for reddish-brown primaries. The bill and legs are black. (Mullarney *et al.*, 1999)

This bird landed on the fishing boat in the morning. Being omnivore, it accepted pieces of bread and apples but did not eat rice or wheat. It was quite noisy making whistling sound. It was finally allowed to flee in the afternoon and it flew in the direction of north.

Remarks

Tristram's starling is native to Israel, Jordan, northeastern Egypt (Sinai Peninsula), western Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and Oman (Snow and Perrins, 1998). The present paper extends its distribution to outside Middle East into Pakistan. The specimen was photographed about 45 km southwest of mouth of the River Indus on the southern side of the Indus Canyon (Fig. 3).



Fig. 2 . Tristram's starling (*Onychognathus tristramii*)- Front view.



Fig. 3. Tristram's starling (*Onychognathus tristramii*) –lateral view.



Fig. 4. Map of Coastal and offshore waters of Pakistan showing the locations from where Namaqua dove and Tristram's starling were reported.

DISCUSSION

Namaqua dove (*Oena capensis*) and Tristram's starling (*Onychognathus tristramii*) are resident of Middle East whereas Namaqua dove is also widely distributed on the African continent. The bird fauna of Pakistan has affinity with that of India and south Asian countries and there are a few species found in Pakistan that have affinities with Middle Eastern avifauna (Roberts, 1991, 1992). Addition of two Middle Eastern species in of great interest. A number of straggler birds were reported to be taking rest on fishing vessels in the offshore waters of Pakistan (Moazzam and Ziaullah, 2001). Namaqua dove and Tristram's starling are two additional bird species that were encountered in the offshore waters of Pakistan.

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