

A List of Birds of Prey from Rajshahi District of Bangladesh.

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Abstract: The present investigation was carried out to prepare a list of birds of prey in Rajshahi District. Total 34 species of birds of prey were recorded from Rajshahi District which are 50.0% of the total species (68) present in Bangladesh. Among the 34 species, 20.59% are members of the family Strigidae, 67.65% are members of the family Accipitridae and the rest 11.76% are members of the family Falconidae. The family Accipitridae included 14 genera; the number of species is highest (5) under the genus *Circus* (the harriers). All the falcons observed are of genus *Falcon* of the family Falconidae.

Key words: Birds of prey, raptorial birds, Accipitridae, Falconidae, Rajshahi

Introduction

Bangladesh has a rich avian diversity because of its diversified habitats and geographical location between the South and the South-east Asia (Thompson *et al.*, 1993). Regarding this context Bangladesh is considered to be a region of ornithological interest, but unfortunately, this sector of the country remains as one of the least inventoried in Asia (Lees *et al.*, 2011). Published reports reveal that works on bird diversity of Bangladesh had been carrying out since before its liberation in 1971, and presently many of these earlier works are difficult to obtain. The national list of birds published in the *Encyclopedia of Flora and Fauna of Bangladesh* from those reports, which mentioned the presence of total 650 species in the country (Siddiqi *et al.*, 2008); though the number slightly differed in the reports of different workers at different times. The species diversity of birds from different areas of Bangladesh were reported by the workers like Asmat *et al.* (1985), Haque (1976), Hari (1989), Hussain (1967,

1968, 1979, 2003), Hussain *et al.* (1974, 1983), Hussain and Haque (1976, 1977), Hussain and Sarker (1971, 1972, 1973, 1979), Khan (2008, 2010), Khan *et al.* (1998), Khan (1973, 1981, 1983, 2008, 2015), Rahman and Khan (1982), Rashid (1967), Reza *et al.* (2012), Sarker and Sarker (1985a,b), Simmons (1948), Simpson (1882), Thompson and Johnson (2003) and Thompson *et al.* (1993).

Among the non-passerine birds, the birds of prey consist of a quite large number of species. It is reported that there are 14 species of these birds under the family Strigidae and 52 species of these birds in Bangladesh (Siddiqi, 2008), under two families viz., Accipitridae and Falconidae of the order Ciconiiformes. These two families include the eagles, vultures, kites, hobbies, buzzards, falcons, etc. Worldwide total number of species under the family Accipitridae is 238 and that in Bangladesh is 43 (18.07%); and worldwide species number of Falconidae is 63 and that reported from Bangladesh is 9 (14.28%) (Siddiqi *et al.*, 2008).

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Harvey (1990) and Khan (1983) reported total 48 and 56 species of birds of prey respectively from Bangladesh. Hussain *et al.* (1974) reported 11 species of birds of prey from Dhaka. Sarker (1982), Sarker and Sarker (1985a,b) provided lists of raptorial birds of the Sunderban and migratory birds (including the birds of prey) of Bangladesh respectively.

There are some scattered reports on the birds of prey from different areas of the country. This article is a list of birds of prey from Rajshahi District, the north-west region of Bangladesh.

Materials and Methods

Study period: This list is prepared on the data recorded from June 2005 to June 2019.

Study area: Rajshahi District is located in between 24°07' and 24°43' north latitudes and 88°17' and 88°58' east longitudes, with an area of 2407.01 Sq. Km. The district is bounded by Naogaon District on the north, West Bengal State of India, Kustia District and the Ganges River (the Padma) on the south, Natore District on the east and Chapai Nawabganj District on the west. This District consists of the Barind tract, plain lands, the river charlands and the low lying beel areas.

Rajshahi District consists of 10 upazilas, viz., Tanore, Godagari, Paba, Mohonpur, Rajshahi Sadar (Metropolitan City), Puthia, Durgapur, Charchat, Bagha and Bagmara. Part of Tanore and Godagari upazilas are situated in the Barind tract. At South from Godagari to Bagha including the Rajshahi City, the Padma River is flowing. A number of beels are present in the upazilas of Mohonpur, Durgapur, Bagmara and Puthia.

Bird watching sites and frequencies: The main bird observation sites at

different upazillas and frequency of visits are described in the following:

i) Tanore: Tanore upazilla is situated in the Barind area. Yearly two visits were done to the remote village areas during the winter (November/December and January/February), mostly in the afternoon until the sun sets.

ii) Godagari: (a) The rice terrace, adjacent kandor (beel) areas and the 'bird village' Jhikrapara were visited every three months in the afternoon till the sun sets. The bird village was the main site for bird observation.

(b) The Padma charlands were visited at Premtali of Godagari. The area covered during each visit was 3-4 km long (East-West) and approximately one kilometer inside the char. At least three visits were regularly done during the winter period of each year. A whole day bird watching was carried in the charlands and the riverside.

iii) Paba: Yearly one or two visits were made at the village orchards and bamboo groves of this upazilla. Charland of the Padma River under the Haripur union was visited frequently from October to March/April every year (at least once a month).

iv) Mohonpur: Random visits (at least once in a month from the last of October up to March) were carried at the beels areas of Mohonpur. Moreover, random weekly visits to the adjacent villages were made by two members of the bird watching team during April to September.

v) Puthia: The bird village of Puthia is at Pachamaria village which was visited regularly for one or two times in the winter months. Normally bird watching was carried from afternoon till the sun sets.



Plate 1. Map of Rajshahi District

vi) Charghat: Mainly the riverine areas of the Charghat were visited during the winter season of each year. Occasional visits to the riverside mainland were carried. The study site inside the the Padma River charlands was covered about two kilometers from East to West and half kilometer inside the char.

vii) Rajshahi Sadar: The extensively covered visiting sites of Rajshahi City were, (a) the campuses of Rajshahi University (RU) and Rajshahi University of Engineering and Technology (RUET), (b) campus of Bangladesh Council of Science and Industrial Research

(BCSIR), (c) Meherchandi, (d)Naohata, (e) riverside from Old Post Office to Policeline and (f) the Padma charlands. The total char areas for bird sighting covered, was 6-7 kilometers in East-West and 3-5 kilometers inside the char. The main points visited were: Shyampur, Kazla, Shaheed Minar, Alupatti, Old Post Office, Central Park and Bulonpur.

Except in the rainy days, the RU campus was daily visited. For bird watching the study area of the campus was divided into four sections: (i) west part: the residential area including the female students' halls, and the adjacent areas;

(ii) the administration building, library and the faculty area up to the rail line in the north; (iii) around the male students' halls, the Shaheed Minar and the Central Mosque; (iv) eastern part of the campus. Every day the study area was covered an area about 1 sq kilometer. Mostly bird watching was started at early morning till 7.00 am. In the holidays 2-3 hours afternoon visits were performed.

The IBSc. research field and Agriculture faculty campuses were visited in the holiday mornings for 2-3 hours. One campus was visited in a single day. Naohata and Meherchandi areas were mainly visited during the winter.

vii) Durgapur: Few beels of Durgapur upazila were visited two to three times during the post-monsoon to post-winter months.

ix) Bagmara: Daylong bird watching at this upazila was conducted during October-January, once in two months.

x) Bagha: A daylong random bird watching was conducted at Bagha upazila, once in each year.

Bird watching schedule at Rajshahi city area: Except in rainy morning, a regular visit was made to different areas for 2-4 hours. In summer days bird watching started around 5.30 am and in winter it was started from 6.30 am. Sometimes short visits were made at 5 pm. While walking, keen observation was made for every movement of branches and leaves of trees, moving objects nearby the water bodies and birds' call. Every section of the habitats was screened in search of bird by keen watching. The study areas were extensively surveyed.

Data recording: Digital still camera (Nikon D3000 DSLR, 70-300 mm Nikon lens), video camera (Sony DCR SR 68)

was used for bird photographing. Field records of plumage colour and shape of bills, feet character and foraging nature were noted. Flight character and call were recorded in video camera.

Bird identification: All the bird species presented in this report were photographed during the study period. Images of the birds were then identified with the help of published literature, *viz.*, Ali (2002), Ali and Ripley (1968-1974), Baker (1922-30), Grewal *et al.* (1993), Halder (2010), Khan (2008), Khan (2008, 2015), Siddiqui *et al.* (2008), and also using the pictorial documents from the internet. Common birds were identified easily. Moreover, some experienced Bird Watchers and Bird Experts of different regions of the world confirmed the identification of a number of birds when bird photographs were uploaded in the flicker.

Results and Discussion

In the present study total 34 species of birds of prey were recorded from Rajshahi District which is 50.0% of the total species (68) present in Bangladesh. The species recorded during this study are presented in Table 1. Among the total 34 species, 7 (20.59%) are members of the family Strigidae, 23 (67.69%) are members of the family Accipitridae and the rest 4 (11.76%) are members of the family Falconidae. The family Accipitridae included 14 genera; the number of species is highest (5) under the genus *Circus* (the harriers). All the falcons observed are of genus *Falcon* of the family Falconidae.

The status of these birds in Bangladesh is: 10 common residents (29.41%), 1 uncommon resident (2.94%), 6 rare residents (17.65%), 1 common winter Migrant (2.94%), 1 uncommon winter Migrant (2.86%), 14 rare winter Migrants

(40.0%) and 1 winter vagrant (2.94%) (Fig. 1). The species *Buteo burmanicus* (Himalayan Buzzard) and *Falco peregrinator* are not reported from Bangladesh (Siddiqui *et al.*, 2008). Hence among these species 17 (50.0%) are residents, 15 (44.12%) are migratory

and 1 (2.94%) is vagrant birds of the country. According to the national list of Bangladeshi birds (Siddiqui *et al.* 2008), there are 68 species of birds of prey in the country of which 37 are residents and 31 are migratory.

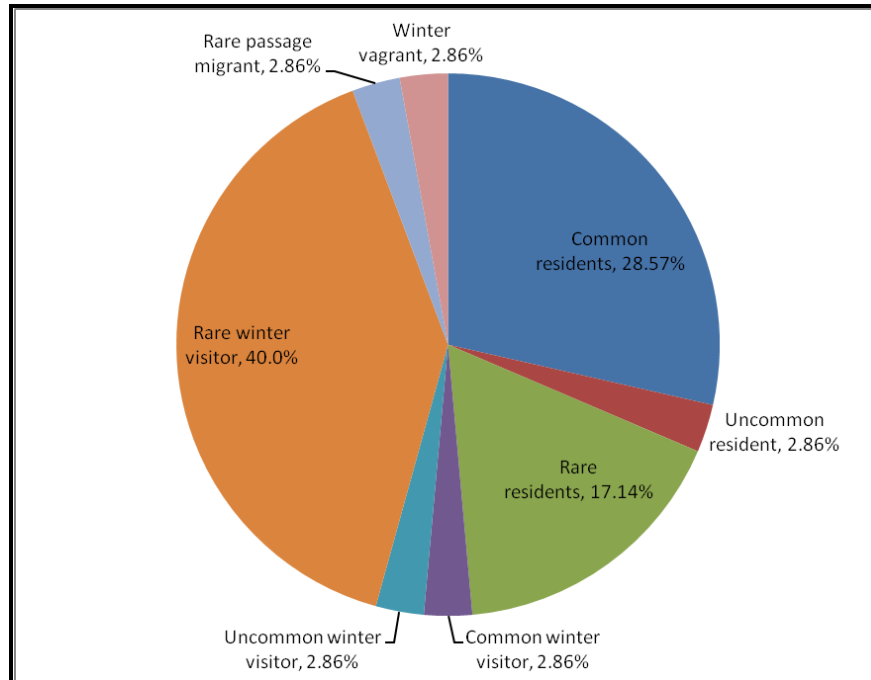


Fig. 1. Status of birds of prey in Rajshahi District.

According to IUCN (2008) *Ichthyophaga ichthyaetus* is Nearly Threatened and *Aquila clanga* is Vulnerable globally; among the two Data Deficient species of Bangladesh, one is *Pernis ptilorhynchus* and another one is *Falco chiquera* (Siddiqui *et al.* 2008).

Habitats of the recorded birds are also presented in Table 1. Among the owls Barn Owl, Brown Hawk Owl and Spotted Owlet are seen all over the study area. Indian Scops Owl is a rare resident and recorded from Rajshahi University (RU) campus and Rajshahi Simla park. Short-eared Owl is a rare winter migrant and is recorded from Padma charland. Among these species 30 were found in the charlands of the Padma River, of which 10 were also recorded from the RU

campus. *E. caeruleus* and *I. ichthyaetus* were frequently seen in the beel areas. *Pandion haliaetus*, *Accipiter nisus*, *Nisaetus nipalensis* and *F. chiquera* were seen in the plain lands.

A pair of Grey-headed Fish Eagle built nest on the top of a large tree in the RU botanical garden using it year after year by repairing. Unfortunately, the nest was broken in 2013 and the eagle shifted its nest site at the North-west corner of the campus south of the railway tract and became a permanent resident of the RU campus. Among the kites, the Black Kite (*M. m. migrans*) were seen all the study area. The Black-eared Kite was seen regularly at the charlands during the winter season. The Greater Spotted Eagle was first recorded from the open

area adjacent to the RU stadium during the winter of 2014. But at the charlands it was seen every year. The Peregrine falcon (*F. peregrines*) is recorded from RU campus and the Padma River during the winter, every year.

Haque (1976) reported four species of Accipitridae (*viz.*, *E. caeruleus*, *Milvus milvus*, *H. indus* and *Circus a. aeuginosus*) and a single species of falcon (*F. tinnunculus*) from the RU campus. The Common Kestrel, *F. tinnunculus* is common in the Chittagong Hill-Tracts (Husain and Haque 1976) and Dhaka (Husain *et al.* 1974). This falcon is available at the Padma River char in the winter season. Husain *et al.* (1974) recorded total 11 species of Accipitridae including *E. caeruleus*, *H. indus*, *A. nisus* and *I. ichthyaetus*, which were recorded from different sites of Rajshahi District. Except Khan (2010) and Khan (2015) no report is available on the presence of the Mountain Hawk eagle (*N. nipalensis*) in Bangladesh. Khan (2010) first reported on the occurrence of this eagle from the Banderban in the month of November. Two sub-species of *M. migrans* were reported from the Chittagong University (CU) campus along with the Crested Serpent Eagle by Ahsan and Khanom (2005). Though the avifauna of Chittagong University campus is quite rich but the only three species of raptorial birds have been reported by the author.

Among the 34 species three species (*Ichthyophaga ichthyaetus*, *Circus macrourus* and *Falco chicquera*) are globally Near Threatened, two species (*Aquila clanga* and *Aquila heliaca*) are Vulnerable and *Aquila nipalensis* is Endangered. Rest 29 species are globally Least Concern.

The present records showed that only 50.0% of the total number of species of

birds of prey is available in Rajshahi District. However, from the field observation it was revealed that both the number of species and population of birds of prey are decreasing because of habitat restoration. The beels of Durgapur and Mohanpur are rapidly converting as fish culture ponds, which destructed the natural aquatic habitat and food chain of those areas. Fortunately, the Padma River charland and the RU campus provide safe habitat to the avifauna. Presence of migratory birds including the families, implies that Rajshahi District has a rich bird fauna

Restoration of wild vegetation has been started recently at Rajshahi University campus, and as a result the campus is providing food and shelter for the birds. Department of Zoology has taken conservation program for the wild habitat around the water bodies and that of the experimental fields, which is playing an important role in establishing the campus as a bird sanctuary. Some necessary conservation steps should be taken to keep the natural habitat of the riverside and the charlands, beels and other wetlands for the protection of not only the birds of prey but also for total wildlife fauna.

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Table 1. Birds of prey in Rajshahi District with their habitat and status

| Serial No. | Scientific Name | English Name | Bangla Name | Habitat | Observed months | Status in Bangladesh* | IUCN status |
|--------------------------|--|--------------------|---------------------|--|-----------------|--|---------------|
| Family: Strigidae | | | | | | | |
| 1. | <i>Tyto alba</i> (Scopoli, 1769) | Barn Owl | Laxmi Pencha | All over the study area except charland | Jan. – Dec. | Vagrant, Common Resident | Least concern |
| 2. | <i>Ketupa Zeylonensis</i> (Gmelin, 1788) | Brown Fish Owl | Khoira Mecho Pencha | RU campus, Mohanpur | Jan. – Dec. | Common Resident | Least concern |
| 3. | <i>Ninox scutulata</i> Raffles, 1822 | Brown Hawk Owl | Kalo Pencha | All over the study area except charland | Jan. – Dec. | Vagrant, Common Resident | Least concern |
| 4. | <i>Athene brama</i> (Temminck, 1821) | Spotted Owlet | Koture Pencha | All over the study area | Jan. – Dec. | Vagrant, Common Resident | Least concern |
| 5. | <i>Otus lettia</i> Hodgson, 1836 | Collared Scops Owl | Konchi Nim Pencha | RU campus, Rajshahi Simla Park, Mohanpur | Jan. – Dec. | Common Resident | Least concern |
| 6. | <i>Otus bakkamoena</i> (Pennant, 1769) | Indian Scops Owl | Deshi Nim Pencha | RU campus, Rajshahi Simla Park | Jan. – Dec. | Rare Resident (Data deficient Species in Bangladesh) | Least concern |
| 7. | <i>Asio flammeus</i> (Pontoppidan, 1763) | Short-eared Owl | Chotokan Pencha | Padma charland | Nov. – Feb. | Rare Winter Migrant | Least concern |

| Serial No. | Scientific Name | English Name | Bangla Name | Habitat | Observed months | Status in Bangladesh* | IUCN status |
|-----------------------------|--|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------|--|-----------------|
| Family: Accipitridae | | | | | | | |
| 8. | <i>Pandion haliaetus</i> (Linnaeus, 1758) | Osprey | Mechobaj | Padma charland, Beel areas | Oct. - March | Rare Winter Migrant | Least concern |
| 9. | <i>Pernis ptilorhynchus</i> (Temminck, 1821) | Oriental Honey Buzzard | Udoi Modhubaj | Large trees, | March - Oct. | Rare Resident (Data deficient in Bangladesh) | Least concern |
| 10. | <i>Elanus caeruleus</i> (Desfontaines, 1789) | Black-winged Kite | Sada Chil | All over the study area | Jan. - Dec. | Uncommon Resident | Least concern |
| 11. | <i>Milvus migrans migrans</i> (Boddaert, 1783) | Blak Kite | Bhuban Chil | All over the study area | Jan. - Dec. | Common Resident | Least concern |
| 12. | <i>Milvus lineatus lineatus</i> | Blak-eared Kite | Kalo-kan Chil | Padma charland | Nov. – Feb. | Winter Migrant | Least concern |
| 13. | <i>Haliaastur indus</i> Boddaert, 1783 | Brahminy Kite | Sonkho Chil | All over the study area | Jan. - Dec. | Common Resident | Least concern |
| 14. | <i>Ichthyophaga ichthyaetus</i> (Horsfield 1821) | Grey-headed Fish Eagle | Chhoto Mach Mural | RU campus, Beel areas | Jan. – Dec. | Rare Resident | Near Threatened |
| 15. | <i>Circaetus gallicus</i> (Gmelin 1788) | Short-toed Snake Eagle | Khato Angul Sap Igol/ Sapmaril | Padma charland | Jan. | Rare Resident | Least concern |
| 16. | <i>Circus cyaneus cyaneus</i> Linnaeus, 1766 | Northern Harrier/ Hen Harrier | Murgi Kapashi | Padma charland | Dec. – Jan. | Rare Winter Migrant | Least concern |
| 17. | <i>Circus macrourus</i> (Gmelin, 1770) | Pallied Harrier | Dhola Kapasi | Padma charland | Dec. – Jan. | Winter Vagrant | Near Threatened |

| Serial No. | Scientific Name | English Name | Bangla Name | Habitat | Observed months | Status in Bangladesh* | IUCN status |
|------------|--|--|---------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|---------------|
| 18. | <i>Circus melanoleucos</i> (Pennant, 1769) | Pied Harrier | Pakra Kapashi | Padma charland | Jan. – Feb. | Common Winter Migrant | Least concern |
| 19. | <i>Circus spilonotus</i> Kaup 1847 | Eastern Marsh Harrier | Puber Pan Kapasi | Padma charland | Dec. – Jan. | | Least concern |
| 20. | <i>Circus aeruginosus</i> (Linnaeus 1758) | Western Marsh Harrier/Eurasian Marsh Harrier | - | Padma charland | Jan. | Rare Winter Migrant | Least concern |
| 21. | <i>Accipiter badius</i> (Gmelin, 1758) | Shikra | Shikre | All over the study area areas | Jan. – Dec. | Common Resident | Least concern |
| 22. | <i>Buteo buteo</i> (Linnaeus, 1758) | Common Buzzard | Pati Tishabaj | River side, Padma charland | Dec. – Jan. | Rare Winter Migrant | Least concern |
| 23. | <i>Buteo rufinus</i> (Cretzschmar, 1826) | Long-legged Buzzard | Lombapa Tishabaj | RU campus, Padma charland | Nov. –Feb. | Rare Winter Migrant | Least concern |
| 24. | <i>Buteo japonicas</i> (Temminck & Schlegel, 1844) | Japanese Buzzard | Japanese Tishabaj | Padma charland | Dec. – Jan. | Rare Winter Migrant | Least concern |
| 25. | <i>Buteo burmanicus</i> (Hume 1875) | Himalayan Buzzard | - | Padma charland | Jan. –Feb. | Rare Winter Migrant | Least concern |
| 26. | <i>Butastur teesa</i> (Franklin 1832) | White-eyed Buzzard | Dholachokh Tishabaj | River side, Padma charland | Jan. – Dec. | Rare Resident | Least concern |

| Serial No. | Scientific Name | English Name | Bangla Name | Habitat | Observed months | Status in Bangladesh* | IUCN status |
|---------------------------|---|------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------|--|-----------------|
| 27. | <i>Aquila clanga</i> Pallas 1811 | Greater Spotted Eagle | Boro Gutimar | RU campus, Padma charland | Dec. – Jan. | Rare Winter Migrant | Vulnerable |
| 28. | <i>Aquila heliaca</i> Savigny 1809 | Eastern Imperial Eagle | Asio Shahi Igol/ Frus | Padma charland | Jan. | Rare Winter Migrant | Vulnerable |
| 29. | <i>Aquila nipalensis</i> Hodgson 1833 | Steppe Eagle | Nepali Igol | Padma charland | Dec. – Jan. | Rare Winter Migrant | Endangered |
| 30. | <i>Hieraaetus pennatus</i> (Gmelin, 1788) | Booted Eagle | Bootpa Igol/ Katua Chil | Padma charland | Dec. – Jan. | Rare Winter Migrant | Least concern |
| Family: Falconidae | | | | | | | |
| 31. | <i>Falco chicquera</i> Daudin 1800 | Red-necked Falcon | Toormati | Padma charland (edge of water body) | Feb. | Rare Resident (Data deficient Species in Bangladesh) | Near Threatened |
| 32. | <i>Falco tinnunculus</i> Linnaeus, 1758 | Common Kestrel | Pati Shikrebaj | Padma charland, Beel areas | Sept. - April | Uncommon Winter Migrant | Least concern |
| 33. | <i>Falco peregrines</i> Tunstall, 1771 | Peregrine Falcon | Peregrine Shaheen | RU campus, Padma charland | Nov. -April | Rare Winter Migrant | Least concern |
| 34. | <i>Falco p. peregrinator</i> | Shaheen Falcon | Shaheen | Padma charland | October | Rare Winter Migrant | Least concern |

* Siddiqui et al. (2008)

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