

New and Noteworthy: First Confirmed Record of the Indian Courser (*Cursorius coromandelicus*) from Jharkhand, India

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ABSTRACT

The Indian Courser (*Cursorius coromandelicus*) is a habitat specialist avian species linked to open dry grassland, stony plain, and agricultural fallow landscapes, with fragmented and poorly documented evidences from the eastern regions of the country. In this document, we report the 1st confirmed record of Indian Courser from Jharkhand, based on the direct observations and photographic evidences obtained from the site of study. The study area spanned approximately 3 km² and majorly comprised of mosaic of dry fallow land, sparsely vegetated grasslands, rocky patched and plateau terrains. The presence of *C. coromandelicus* in the region features the ecological influence of remnant open habitats and grassland in Jharkhand, which is often over-looked in the regional avifaunal assessment which is dominated majorly by forest ecosystem. This record constitutes a notable range extension of the species in the eastern India and also contributes to baseline data on the state's avifaunal diversity. The observation highlights the need for targeted surveys, regular field visits, conservation attention towards the non-forested open habitats that supports grassland dependent species and may contribute majorly as nodal point or refuge area at the edge of their familiar distribution.

Keywords: Indian courser, range extension, 1st record, Jharkhand, Grassland Habitat

I. INTRODUCTION

Planet Earth is the home to wide and vivid varieties of life forms, ranging from minute monerans to substantially large plants and mammals. The diversified life forms originated and survived a diversified blend of environmental

conditions on Earth during the course of evolution. Different classes of organism belonging to different taxa suggests the genetic and ecological diversity present on the earth and the complex interactions of the trophic levels that operate invisibly. To maintain the complex web of life-forms, every organism is dependent on biotic and abiotic factors. According to theories, the more diversified the ecosystem, the more stable it is thought to be. India is home to a variety of diversified life forms. Each and every organism plays an intricate role in the smooth conduct of the ecosystem. Among various diversities, avifaunal diversity is an essential measure for examining and assessing various habitats in a statistical and qualitative manner (Sarkar et al., 2025). With the possible exception of larger mammals, birds' distribution and systematics are better acknowledged than those of any other comparable animal group since they have been a popular subject among professional and amateur naturalists (Furness et al., 1996). Indian Courser is considered a fairly familiar resident and local migrant species of bird of arid and semi-arid regions of the Indian sub-continent (Sangha et al. 2025). Dry stony plains, waste and fallow Land with sparse scrub type vegetation, ploughed fields and grazing grounds of villages in dry stony plains are the main areas where the Indian courser inhabits (Ali & Ripley 2001; Ali 2002). Because of the migratory behaviour, low densities of breeding, and crepuscular behaviours, the Indian Courser is still a little-known species, despite several attempts to study ecological and breeding aspects (Sangha et al. 2025). Studies have highlighted that its distribution is closely correlated to the habitat heterogeneity, seasonal utilisation of land use patterns and the accessibility of undisturbed open

ground, making the species vulnerable to rapid agriculture intensification, infrastructure extension and conversion of traditional fallow land. Consequently, the Indian Courser has been identified as a declining species and considered Near Threatened in some conservation assessments, done regionally. Review of studies suggests that Indian Courser are majorly concentrated in the central, western and southern parts of India, with the eastern parts of the country remaining poorly represented in published scientific literature. In this context, the current study aims to document the **1st confirmed record of the Indian Courser from Jharkhand, India**, based on the photographic evidence and the field observations. This record assumes the ecological importance as it widens the known distribution of species in the Chota Nagpur Plateau and highlights the importance of remnant open habitats in Jharkhand for those avifauna that are directly dependent on the grassland type habitat. In recent years, there has been a substantial decline in the numbers of this species in the country (SoIB 2023). The current study and observation also contribute to baseline avifaunal data for the state and highlight the need for systematic surveys and conservation-based ideologies in the non-forested ecosystems that are

often overlooked in the regional biodiversity assessments.

Classification

Kingdom: Animalia

Phylum: Chordata

Class: Aves

Order: Charadriiformes

Genus: Cursorius

Species: *C. coromandelicus*

Site of study

The study was conducted in the vicinity of Sita-Rampur Dam, near Jamshedpur, in Saraikela Kharsawan district of Jharkhand, in approximately 3 km² radius and length of 7.5 km, near the reservoir edge. The landscape is marked by mosaics of open habitats, including sparsely vegetated grasslands, open fallow lands, dry agricultural lands, exposed rocky patches. The dam in its periphery also influences local microhabitats by maintaining seasonal moisture gradients and modified open spaces controlled anthropogenically. The heterogenous habitat matrix provided ambient foraging and resting ground for the specialist grassland species, therefore enhancing the ecological relevance of the site for documenting rare or range-edge species occurrences.



Image 1- G.P.S. Map showing area of study

II. OBSERVATION AND IDENTIFICATION



Image 2- Indian courser (*C. coromandelicus*) captured during field visit.

The Indian Courser was spotted during the systematic field visit that was conducted in close vicinity of Sita-Rampur dam in the radius of 3km² of the anthropogenically developed water reservoir. The species was encountered in an open, arid fallow land inter-spread within the premises of rocky patched, consistent with documented habitat of the species. A single individual was observed and recorded for brief time period during the daylight hours. The bird exhibited distinct behavioural aspects and traits of the species, including, ground running movements, periodic pause and scan foraging behaviour often seen in terrestrial and cursorial birds. The individual was snapped, providing the unequivocal visual conformation of the characteristic and diagnostic morphological features such as, pronounced supercilium, long yellowish faded coloured legs, black bordered white throat patch and sandy brown upper parts. Siting of the bird species was done in the late weeks of November, 2025. The identification was later established using the comparative study and standard ornithological field guides and internet sources. This observation comprise the 1st conformed sighting and reporting

of the *C. coromandelicus* from Jharkhand. The finding of the species from this area reinforces the ecological importance of open fields and habitats and the further need of targeted surveys, routine visits, coordination of birdwatchers, environmentalist and conservationist with the forest department, to assess the ornithological and related key components in the Eastern parts of India.

Ecological Significance

The Indian Courser is a habitat specialist closely related to open, sparsely vegetated landscapes such as dry grasslands, fallow agricultural fields, and stony plains. Its occurrence is widely regarded as an ecological indicator of an intact open ecosystem that retains a low vegetation structure and less disturbance. Consequently, confirmed records of the species reflect the presence of function grassland type habitats that support a characteristic assemblage of ground-dwelling fauna and related species. Ecologically, the Indian Courser plays a pivotal role as a predator of insects within grassland food webs, contributing to top-down regulation of terrestrial arthropod populations. Its reliance on cursorial foraging and

open visibility makes it particularly susceptible to habitat modifications and to the intensification and encroachment of shrublands. Therefore, their presence or absence can signal broader ecological shifts in open habitats, especially highlighting the reduction of traditional fallow systems and the degradation of marginal lands. The 1st established record of *C. coromandelicus* from Jharkhand is ecologically significant as it draws attention to the persistence of the suitable open habitat within the Chota Nagpur Plateau region, which is predominantly recognised for its forested landscapes. This observation suggests that remnant grasslands, rocky plateaus, and anthropogenically maintained open lands in the state may function as provisional refugia, range edge habitat, and dispersal corridors for grassland-dependent birds. During the course of impact assessment and ecological planning, these landscapes are often overlooked, despite their role in maintaining regional biodiversity. From the biogeographic point of view, this record extends the known ecological envelope of the Indian Courser into eastern India and emphasises the need to reassess the conservation strategies for the non-forested ecosystems in the region. The observation underscores the important roles of targeted surveys, long-term monitoring, regular field visits, and updates of the open habitats in Jharkhand to better understand their role in supporting the specialist species of grassland.

Future scope: After providing the unequivocal proof of the bird species for the 1st time in Jharkhand, authors further tend to conduct other behavioural related assessment, effect of changing environment, planning, and conservation strategies. Author also tend to revisit the site for establishing the community-based reports and other biotic and abiotic related components

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Conflict of Interests: Author claims no conflict of interests.

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