



Range extension of Sri Lankan Frogmouth (*Batrachostomus moniliger*) upto Mumbai

Raju Kasambe, A-205, Trimurti Apartment, Tilak Nagar, Dombivli (East)-421201, Dist. Thane, Maharashtra, E-mail: kasambe.raju@gmail.com

Dr. Vaihav Deshmukh, a birder from Alibaug, had seen and taken excellent photographs of Sri Lankan Frogmouth (*Batrachostomus moniliger*) in Phansad Wildlife Sanctuary (18°25'47"N and 72°56'20"E) and near Alibaug in Raigadh district of Maharashtra in 2009 (pers. comm.). Hence, I decided to search the bird which is endemic to the Western Ghats, in the forests of Sanjay Gandhi National Park (SGNP) in Mumbai, Maharashtra as it has a similar habitat. The geographical location of SGNP is (19°18'35"N and 72°57'48"E).

The Sri Lankan Frogmouth is best located at night by its calls, which is a loud descending cackly and frog-like series of *Klock-klock-klock-klock-klock* calls, which is similar to the sound produced by rattling pebbles. This call of the male is often answered by the female, whose call is low long harsh *Krrshhhh* (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sri_Lanka_Frogmouth as accessed on 15th April, 2011).

On 12th March 2011, I used the playback-call method in the Yeoor Range of SGNP in Mumbai, Maharashtra to check for responses from the forest. I started playing the call of the male Sri Lankan Frogmouth from 0630 hrs from Patonapada village towards the west along the trail available in the forest. I stopped every 200m and played the call and waited for any response for five minutes.

At 1015 hrs, I got a response to the playback-call. A male bird replied at least 20 to 22 times, so I got enough time to record its call. I tried to locate the bird, but failed to locate it presumably due to its excellent camouflage.

In the evening, we (Pradnyawant Mane, Harishchandra Mhatre and Prathamesh Desai and me) returned to the same location and tried the playback-call. We saw a bird flying after sunset, yet we could not locate it!

On the next day, (13th March 2011), Prathamesh Desai and I used the same method and the frogmouth responded at three different locations close to the first location. Also we observed that a Racket-tailed Drongo (*Dicrurus paradiseus*) mimicked the Sri Lankan Frogmouth's calls very well (albeit more loudly and in our full view), responding to our call-back within seconds. Sri Lankan Frogmouth, however, took more time to respond to the playback-call and never responded so fast.

On 19th March 2011, Rajesh Sachdev and I again played the recorded call along the same trail in Yeoor range. At 0825 hrs we got a reply from a frogmouth near a hillock which was approximately 3 km away from the first location. However, on all occasions we failed to locate or photograph the frogmouth.

The Ceylon Frogmouth was reported from the southern Western Ghats (Ali 1935; Vijayan 1979; Sugathan 1981; Kannan 1994 and Kumara and Singh 2006). Borges (1986) recorded it from Kanara, North Karnataka and later Giri (2002) further extended its northern range upto Radhanagari WLS.

Dr. Deshmukh's records near Alibaug and in Phansad Wildlife Sanctuary had extended its range farther north. The above records of the frogmouth have extended the distributional range of the species farther north upto Mumbai and raising speculation whether it could be found in the Dang district in Gujarat where the Western Ghats culminate.

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