

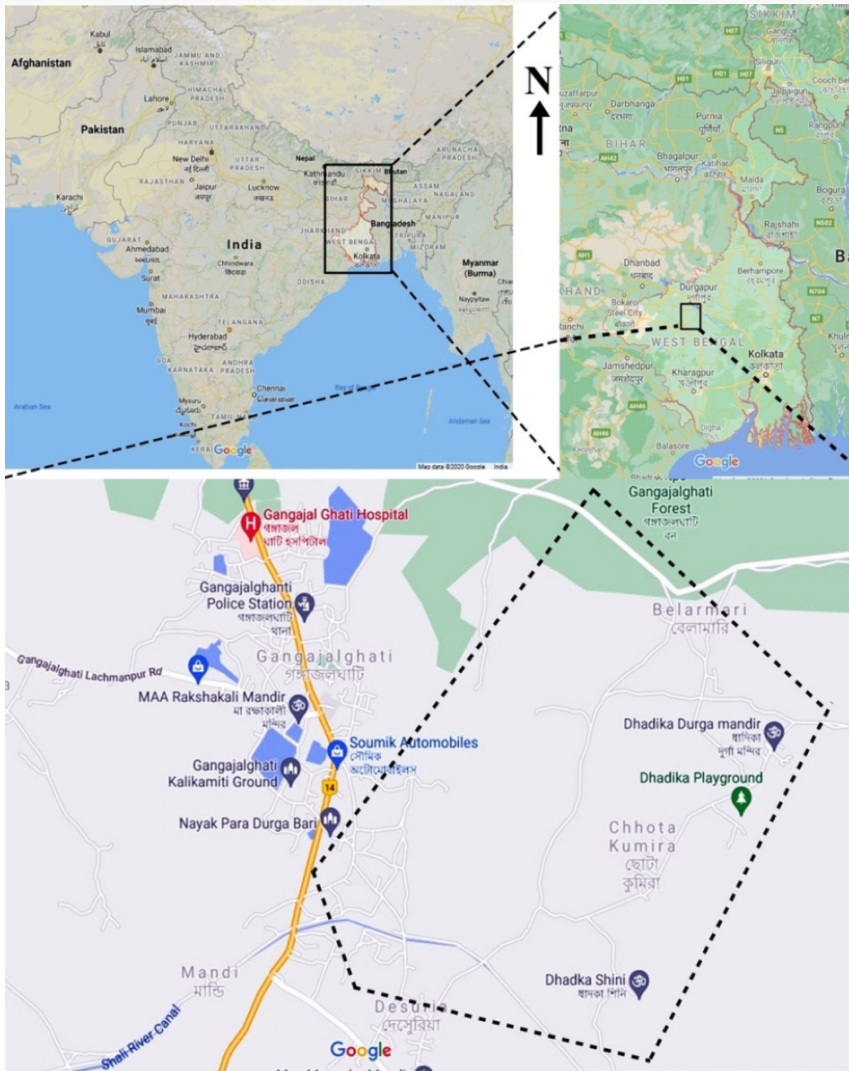
First photographic report of Bonelli's Eagle from Bankura District, West Bengal, India

Bonelli's Eagle *Aquila fasciata* (Vieillot, 1822) is a bird of prey belonging to the Accipitridae family. According to the available literature, it is a widespread resident throughout the Indian subcontinent (Grimmett et al. 2011; Ali 2012; Arlott 2015), but unrecorded in most of northeastern and eastern subcontinent (Grimmett et al. 2011). However, there is some recent distributional record of the species from some parts of northeastern and eastern India (eBird 2021).

Grewal (2016) also described its range all over India and scattered distribution in the Himalaya. Bonelli's Eagle is a medium-sized eagle (65–72 cm) powerful and bold predator and active hunter of mammals and birds, sometimes larger than their size (Grimmett et al. 2011). It has long and broad wings, with distinctly projected head on a fairly long neck, a strong bill, a long square-ended tail and exceptionally long, well-feathered legs (Grimmett et al. 2011).

Normally, they hunt by making a surprise attack on its prey and most of the time takes its food on the ground (Grimmett et al. 2011). It prefers well wooded habitat in plains and hills although it can be seen in edges of deserts and around lakes (Grimmett et al. 2011). In West Bengal, the species is recorded from Bakreswar Dam of Birbhum District and forest in Ajodhya Hills of Purulia District (eBird 2021). However, Gauntlett (1986) reported

Bonelli's Eagle (juvenile).



Study site under present investigation (surrounded by black dotted lines) in Bankura District, West Bengal, India. Source – Google Maps.

and adjacent forested area situated in Bankura Sadar Sub-Division, Bankura District, West Bengal. This area is a penepplain part of the Bankura Uplands in the west, gradually merging with the Bankura-Bishnupur Rarh Plains in the northeast. The western portions are characterized by undulating terrain with many hills and ridges. The present study site is having a gradual descent from the Chota Nagpur Plateau. The soil is laterite red and hard beds are covered with scrub and the forest patch is dominated by *Shorea robusta* (sal tree). An irrigation canal from the Shali River (a tributary of the Damodar River) passes through the present study area.

one adult Bonelli's Eagle from Rondhia, Durgapur in 1969. It has been reviewed that this bird has no previous photographic record from Bankura District using online citizen science platforms (eBird 2021; Oriental Bird Images 2021) from India. Author also found reports of the species from Assam, Jharkhand, and Odisha,

northeast and eastern states of India (eBird 2021). In this communication, the author claims the first photographic report of the species from Bankura District, West Bengal.

The present study was conducted in November 2020 in Gangajalghati village (23.4200°N; 87.1200°E)

On 28 November 2020 (around 1000 h) direct search and opportunistic survey of birds and other fauna in the study site was started. At 1057 h, a long call was heard and three birds were found hovering in the sky above a playground through the camera. Several photographs of the three birds were taken of which

two of them were identified as Bonelli's Eagle (juvenile) and the other one was later identified as Oriental Honey Buzzard *Pernis ptilorhynchus* (Temminck, 1821), with the standard field guide Grimmett et al. (2011). According to Grimmett et al. (2011), call of the species are rarely heard since they are usually silent. So, the call heard may be the call of the other bird. Nikon D5300, Nikkor Af-P 70–300 mm lens was used for observation and photography during the present study.

Bonelli's Eagle is categorised as a species of 'Least Concern' on the IUCN Red List (Global) of Threatened Species (BirdLife International 2021). However, the population trend is gradually decreasing (BirdLife International 2021). Major threats to the species are increasing anthropogenic activities inside the forests and hills, agricultural intensification, urbanization, deforestation and declining prey availability (Carrete et al. 2002; Ferguson-Lees & Christie 2006).

Bonelli's Eagle has been known to prey upon variety of small or medium-sized birds and mammals, including some reptiles and some instances on carrion (Ferguson-Lees & Christie 2006). Orta (2020) also describes diets of Bonelli's Eagle in different regions. Pande et al. (2018) discussed about diet and habitat affinities of six raptors including Bonelli's Eagle in India. Kumawat et al. (2018) studied predation of Bonelli's Eagle in Jodhpur, Rajasthan, India. The present study area is surrounded by forest, open grassland,

agricultural field and the 122 m high Koro hill near Amarkanan which is just 10 km away from the study area. The availability of prey likes rodents, lizards and skinks, snakes, Black-naped Hare and birds attracts many birds of prey. Hence the location may be an ideal place of breeding population of Bonelli's Eagle and findings of these two juvenile birds has significance in this regard. For conservation and protection of the species, a study in different patches of Bankura District specially in forested and hilly region is recommended in this communication.

References

- Ali, S. (2002).** *The Book of Indian Birds*. 13th Edition. Bombay Natural History Society. Oxford University Press, 326 pp.
- Arlott, N. (2015).** *Birds of India: Collins Field Guide*. Collins, London, 400 pp.
- BirdLife International (2021).** Species factsheet: *Aquila fasciata*. Downloaded from <http://www.birdlife.org> on 15 May 2021.
- Carrete, M., J.A. Sánchez-Zapata, J.E. Martínez, M.A. Sánchez & J.F. Calvo (2002).** Factors influencing the decline of a Bonelli's Eagle *Hieraaetus fasciatus* population in southeastern Spain: demography, habitat or competition? *Biodiversity and Conservation* 11(6): 975–985. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1015856924451>

eBird (2021). eBird: An online database of bird distribution and abundance [web application]. eBird, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Ithaca, New York. <http://www.ebird.org>. Accessed on 15 May 2021.

Freguson-Lees, J. & D.A. Christie (2006). *Raptors of The World*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, 320 pp.

Gauntlett, F.M. (1986). The birds of Durgapur and the Damodar Valley. *Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society* 82(3): 501–539.

Grewal, B., S. Sen, S. Singh, N. Devasar & G. Bhatia (2016). *A pictorial guide to birds of India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh*. Om Books International, India, New Delhi, 791 pp.

Grimmett, R., C. Inskipp & T. Inskipp (2011). *Birds of the Indian Subcontinent*. 2nd Edition. Oxford University Press & Christopher Helm, London, 528 pp.

Kumawat, R., R.P. Saran & A. Purohit (2018). Bonelli's Eagle: Records of predation on *Varanus griseus* and *Ptyonoprogne concolor* by *Aquila fasciata* in Agolai, Jodhpur, India. Bird-o-soar#17. In: *Zoo's Print* 33(5): 17–20.

Oriental Bird Images (2021). A database of the Oriental Bird Club. <http://orientalbirdimages.org>. Accessed on 15 May 2021.

Orta, J., G.M. Kirwan, D.A. Christie, P.F.D. Boesman, J.S. Marks & E.F.J. Garcia (2020). Bonelli's Eagle *Aquila fasciata*, version 1.0. In: del Hoyo, J., A. Elliott, J. Sargatal, D.A. Christie, & E. de Juana (Eds.). *Birds of the World*. Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Ithaca, NY, USA. <https://doi.org/10.2173/bow.boneag2.01>

Pande, S., R. Yosef, F. Morelli, R. Pawar & R. Mone (2018). Diet and habitat affinities in six raptor species in India. *Avian Research* 9(36): 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40657-018-0129-2>

Acknowledgements: The author thankfully acknowledges the co-operation and support in field by Mr. Pratyay Bhattacharya. Author also acknowledges Mr. Arijit Mondal, Mr. Subhajit Roy, Mr. Sagar Adhurya, Mr. Debayan Gayen, and Mr. Sankha Mishra for their help in modification of this manuscript.

Amar Kumar Nayak

Searsole Junior Basic School, Searsole Rajbari, Paschim Bardhaman, West Bengal 713358, India.
Email: amarnayak.stat@gmail.com

Citation: Nayak, A.K. (2021). First photographic report of Bonelli's Eagle from Bankura District, West Bengal, India. Bird-o-soar #98, In: *Zoo's Print* 36(8): 33–36.