

Sighting of the Lesser Adjutant *Leptoptilos javanicus* at Uppalapadu Heronry, Andhra Pradesh, India

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Lesser Adjutant *Leptoptilos javanicus* belonging to the family Ciconiidae is a less studied vulnerable species in India (Luthin 1987). Its distribution ranges from India, Sri Lanka, south through Myanmar and Thailand to Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam and Peninsular Malaysia to the Greater Sundas, including Sumatra, Kalimantan, Java and Bali (Indonesia), Sabah and Sarawak (Malaysia) and Brunei (Sharma 2006). Species distribution in north east is documented by Baral (2005). In India, it breeds in Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, West Bengal and Orissa and also in Nepal (Baral & Inskipp 2009; Birdlife International 2010; Poudyal & Nepal 2010; Singha *et al.* 2002; Taher 1999; King & Brouwer 1991). It is considered as a vagrant species in south India with scattered records of occurrence (Ali & Ripley 1978, Grimmett *et al.* 1999, Taher 1999, Sreekar *et al.* 2010). This wetland-dependent bird inhabits the riverbeds, floodplains, paddy fields, swamps, lakes and forest pools (Poudyal 2009).

As part of the study on the Spot-billed Pelican at Uppalapadu bird habitat (16°16'N, 80° 21' E) located about 7 km East of Guntur, Andhra Pradesh, India, this site was regularly monitored and counts of other species were taken for abundance. On 29th June 2008, at 7:15 AM, the first author spotted one large stork with glossy black plumage and naked reddish yellow head and neck, standing among the Painted Storks (Fig 1). The broad bill and hair-like feathers on head were distinctly noticed and identified as Lesser Adjutant (Fig 2). The prominent frontal plate on head was observed which is unique to adult character (Grimmett *et al.* 1999). The bird was sighted on two more subsequent days, 30th June and 1st July 2008. When the bird was sighted the pond was almost dry for more than three months (for management activity) to fix artificial nesting iron platforms. Water level was very low about 15 to 30 cm. This species is usually found in mangrove, mudflats, coastal swamps and marshes, flooded grassland (Hoyo *et al.* 1992) although it has also been found in shallow puddles and drying ponds where the fishes including mudskippers were abundant (Ali & Ripley 1978). The Lesser Adjutant preferred to maintain about 60 m distance from the dikes. In the presence of observer or visitors it rushed inside the pond and stayed beside the mounds with *Prosopis juliflora* beyond the reach of human sight. This additional information on the Lesser Adjutant Stork will help to update its earlier sightings from Andhra Pradesh, namely, ICRISAT campus, Medak district, Pulicat lagoon, Srikakulam, Vijayanagaram, Visakhapatnam district and Kawal Wildlife Sanctuary in Adilabad district (Taher 1999, Sreekar *et al.* 2010).

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Fig 1. Lesser Adjutant *Leptoptilos javanicus* standing among Painted Storks



Fig 2. Lesser Adjutant *Leptoptilos javanicus* in flight-noticeable frontal feathers and black underwing with white axillaries

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