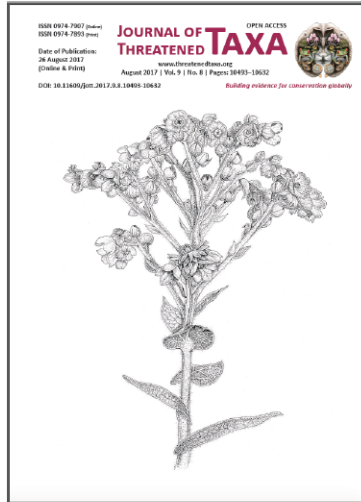


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NOTE

**A RARE SIGHTING OF THE LONG-TAILED DUCK
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ANSERIFORMES: ANATIDAE) OVER A FOUR-WEEK PERIOD
IN NORTHWESTERN INDIA: FIRST DETAILED SCIENTIFIC
DOCUMENTATION IN 73 YEARS**

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**A RARE SIGHTING OF THE LONG-TAILED DUCK
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(AVES: ANSERIFORMES: ANATIDAE) OVER A
FOUR-WEEK PERIOD IN NORTHWESTERN INDIA:
FIRST DETAILED SCIENTIFIC DOCUMENTATION IN
73 YEARS**

**Pushpinder S. Jamwal¹, Pankaj Chandan² &
Rohit Rattan³**

^{1,2,3} Western Himalayas Landscape, WWF-India, 172 B, Block 18,
Lodhi Estate, Lodi Road, Institutional Area, New Delhi 110003, India
¹ pushpindersjamwal@gmail.com (corresponding author),
² pchandan@wwfindia.net, ³ rattan@wwfindia.net

The Long-tailed Duck *Clangula hyemalis* is a circumpolar species, breeding in North America, Europe and Asia; however, its population is declining due to habitat degradation, pollution and hunting (Grishanov 2006). It is currently among the rarest ducks in Asia, and has been assessed as Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List. Conservation actions explicitly include improved monitoring efforts in Asia (BirdLife International 2016).

Praveen et al. (2014) have compiled an exhaustive list of its sightings in India. They report two sightings in northeastern India (Assam-Arunachal Pradesh border in 1935, and West Bengal and Meghalaya in 2013); two sightings in northern India (Dehradun, Uttarakhand in 1991 and Harike, Punjab in 2001), and only three sightings in northwestern India, one of these sightings, however, was a female in winter plumage in Gharana Wetland Reserve (Raj 2014). It could not be verified,

and was therefore unpublished. The first confirmed record from northwestern India was from Hokersar Lake, Kashmir in 1939 (Ludlow 1940). The only other verified account in northwestern India since 1939 was of two females photographed in 2013 (Borse 2013; Hymakar 2013).

We report the second sighting of this species at the Gharana Wetland Reserve (32.541020 N & 74.690843 E; 281m) and have carefully documented our findings over four weeks. This area is a small wetland, irregular in shape and covers approximately 0.75km². It is situated 10km south-east of the town of Ranbir Singh Pura in Jammu District of Jammu & Kashmir, and is well known for its extensive assemblage of wintering migratory birds. Many of the avifauna are of threatened status, and the site has, therefore, resulted in designations as a wetland conservation reserve and also an important bird area (IBA). Nikon Monarch 10×42 binoculars were used during surveys for taking observations and on-the-spot identification.

Documentation: On 07 April 2013, we spotted a dark brown duck with a dark brown back scalloped fulvous, white head with dusky crown, and dusky patches on either side of the upper neck; brownish lower fore neck and upper breast, forming a diffuse pectoral band, and the rest of the underparts white (Image 1). Later it was confirmed to be a Long-tailed Duck *Clangula hyemalis*. Species was identified by using Grimmett et al. (2013) and we used photographs to validate species.

This female or immature duck remained in Gharana



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Figure 1. Female Long-tailed Duck *Clangula hyemalis*, photographed on 07 April, 2013, and documented over four weeks in the Gharana Wetland Reserve.

wetland for a period of four weeks (until 5 May 2013). It preferred foraging in the early morning around 06:00hr near the shore in a mixed flock of other diving duck species. It was seen using a dense cover of alligator weed *Alternanthera philoxeroides* on the wetland side, probably to conceal itself from predators. As the sun became brighter, the duck gradually moved to deeper water.

Context: The long-tailed Duck is a globally Vulnerable species and a vagrant in the Indian subcontinent. This species is wide-spread—it winters at sea further south, as far as the United Kingdom, South Carolina and Washington in the United States, Korea on the Asian Pacific coast, and other areas including the Baltic Sea,

Black Sea and Caspian Sea (del Hoyo et al. 1992)—there are a few sites in India which meet the ‘1% criteria’ necessary for their survival and propagation. This species was first sighted in Arunachal Pradesh in 1935 (Parsons 1935), subsequently, in Kashmir in 1939 (Ludlow 1940), Uttarakhand (Mohan et al. 1992), and Punjab in 2001 (Prasad 2008). This is only the second confirmed and thoroughly documented sighting of this bird from Jammu & Kashmir; other than the two photographs from 2013, the last reported instance in northwestern India was 73 years ago (Ludlow 1940).

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