

# Sri Lanka Frogmouths *Batrachostomus moniliger* of Kogar: filling in the ‘gaps’

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The Sri Lanka Frogmouth *Batrachostomus moniliger* is a cryptic bird of the Western Ghats, and Sri Lanka (Ali 1970). Little is known about the species’ ecology, demographics, and other life history traits because of its cryptic colouration, nocturnal activity period, and shy nature. Some information does exist on its nesting ecology from Sri Lanka as well as India (Jayarathna 2004; Kannan 1995), and the species is considered partial to wet evergreen forests and cane brakes.

This note confirms the presence of the species in Karnataka, India. On 20 March 2009 a bird was sighted in an evergreen forest patch in the Kogar Ghat (14.09°N 74.68°E; 90 m a.s.l.), an area of hilly terrain with lowland wet evergreen forest on the outskirts of the Sharavathy Wildlife Sanctuary near Bacchodi village in Udupi district. The closest record [Do you have a reference for this info? If so, please cite here.] of the species is from Anshi National Park, situated in the northern tip of the North Kannara district, and is situated 125 km to the north.

The species was attracted with a “call play-back” technique in which a previously recorded call of the species was played on a loudspeaker. The recorded calls consisted of calls of both sexes. Response calls were heard around 0100 hrs and also between 1730 and 2030 hrs. The frequency of reply calls increased as the ambient light waned. The first replies were heard at the above-mentioned point along the road, which is a state highway. Then this exercise was repeated at five locations approximately 300 m apart along the same road where it passes through degraded wet evergreen forest. At least two males, and one female replied at every playback station, so a minimum of 17 birds were detected, but the individuals were not sighted on every occasion. Unlike males, females did not reply to calls before sunset but responded intensively after dark. The habitat where the birds were seen was lowland wet evergreen forest. The forest, although degraded to some extent due to firewood extraction, had large trees of *Hopea parviflora*, and *Alstonia scholaris*. Some trees were more than 30 m tall. The under storey consisted of *Calamus* spp., *Cassia mimosoides*, and small trees like *Saraca asoca*, and *Ixora* spp.

Ali (1970) describes the range of the species as from northern Kanara to the southern tip of India. Although the range has been extended to Maharashtra (Giri 2002) in the north, no recent records of populations have been known between the state of Kerala, and the district of North Kanara in the state Karnataka. This has led popular field guides to show a gap in distribution between the southern and northern populations (Inskip *et al.* 1999; Rasmussen & Anderton 2005). The present sighting confirms a population within this area, and suggests a continuous population of the Sri Lanka Frogmouth in habitat patches through the western-central, and south-western regions of Karnataka. The fact that the birds were detected in fairly good numbers further strengthens the argument set forth by Sugathan (1981) after his survey in Kerala, and that of Borges (1986) from North Kanara, Karnataka, that

the species is not rare. It is actually locally common wherever favourable habitat exists, even in partially degraded habitats, but evades detection due to its cryptic plumage.

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Sri Lanka Frogmouths *Batrachostomus moniliger* habitat.

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