

## Sighting of a threatened greater spotted eagle in the disappearing Lamphelpat wetland of Manipur, North East India

*Clanga clanga* (Pallas), commonly known as Greater spotted eagle or spotted eagle belonging to the family Accipitridae, has been classified as a Vulnerable species under the IUCN Red List of Threatened species<sup>1</sup>. It is a migratory species that leaves its breeding grounds in October–November to winter in southern Europe, southern Asia and northeast Africa<sup>2</sup>. Its habitat includes wetlands, open wet forests, forest edges, adjoining marshes and swampy patches, and it is often observed in solitary or small groups<sup>3</sup>. Species feed on slow-moving prey such as frogs as well as faster-moving waterbirds<sup>4</sup>. Its distribution ranges include the Palearctic and Indomalayan regions<sup>2</sup>. According to a report of BirdLife International, this species has been rapidly declining due to extensive habitat loss and its current global population ranges from 3900 to 10,000.

Lamphelpat is a rapidly disappearing wetland located in the heart of Imphal West (24°49'24"N and 93°54'39"E), Manipur,

North East India. It is a riverine wetland formed between the Nambul River and the eastern adjacent low-lying valley of the Langol reserve forest range. The disappearance and degradation of the wetland could be linked to anthropogenic stresses like over-exploitation, encroachment, waste dumping, habitation, urbanization and construction in and around it. Similarly, Langol Reserve Forest has been continuously in threat due to illegal human habitations, man-made forest fire, earth removal, hunting, etc. within the reserve forest.

In and around Lamphelpat wetland, a solitary *C. clanga* has been sighted every winter since 2018 (Figure 1). It is a medium-sized bird with relatively short and broad wings, a stocky head and a short tail. The juveniles have bands of white spots across the upper wing<sup>4,5</sup>. The bird was sighted in late November and left in later January. Nesting in the vicinity of the wetland or elsewhere needs to be clarified. The spe-

cies was frequently observed perching over the shrubs within the wetland. Ferguson-Lees and Christie<sup>3</sup> have reported its distribution in North India, including Manipur. However, there have been no further recent records of the sighting of this species elsewhere in Manipur. Therefore, this observation could be the resighting of this threatened species after a long gap.

The Lamphelpat wetland has been neglected and exploited for a long time. Consequently, the presence of such vulnerable species has gone unnoticed. However, the occurrence of such species in this highly disturbed wetland could prove it is an important habitat for various threatened migratory and resident avian species.



**Figure 1.** *Clanga clanga* during winter in Lamphelpat wetland, Manipur, North East India.

1. BirdLife International, *Clanga clanga*. The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, 2021, pp. 1–15; e.T22696027A203868747.
2. del Hoyo, J., Elliott, A. and Sargatal, J., *Handbook of the Birds of the World, New World Vultures to Guinea-fowl*, Lynx Edicions, Barcelona, Spain, 1994, vol. 2, pp. 1–638.
3. Ferguson-Lees, J. and Christie, D. A., *Raptors of the World*, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, United Kingdom, 2001, pp. 6–981.
4. Grimmett, R. E. R., Inskipp, C. and Inskipp, T., *Birds of the Indian Subcontinent*, Christopher Helm, London, UK, 2011, pp. 6–505.
5. BirdLife International, Species factsheet: *Clanga clanga*, 2023.

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