



NOTES ON NATURAL HISTORY

Would it not be appropriate to develop Dalpat Sagar, of Bastar, India, as a Conservation Site for Sighting the Spot-billed Pelican (*Pelecanus philippensis*)?

Sushil Kumar Dutta¹, Arun Bebarta²

¹Department of Zoology, Govt PG Collage, Jagdalpur, Distt. Bastar, Chhattisgarh, 494001

²PGT Biology O.A.V. Kosagumuda, Nabarangpur, Odisha

Study Area: Dalpat sagar, Jagdalpur, Chhattisgarh, India
Coordinated: 19.095889E, 82.012184N

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Introduction:

The spot-billed pelican (*Pelecanus philippensis*), also known as the grey pelican, belongs to the pelican family. This species typically inhabits large inland and coastal water bodies, particularly lakes. From a distance, it can be hard to distinguish it from other pelican species in the region, though it is slightly smaller. However, at closer range, it can be identified by the spots on its upper bill, its duller colouration, and its greyish plumage. In certain areas, these birds form large nesting colonies, often located near human settlements. It is found across southern Asia, ranging from southern Iran through India to Indonesia, where it is reported to breed in southern and north-eastern India (Grimmett *et al.*, 2011). In Madhya Pradesh, in central India, it was known only from Shivpuri District (Chandra & Singh, 2004).

The site of the present sightings is Dalpat Sagar Lake, situated in Jagdalpur (19°5'41"N, 82°0'43"E), which is among the largest man-made lakes in Chhattisgarh. Constructed more than 400 years ago by Raja Dalpat Deo Kakatiya, it was designed to collect and store rainwater. There are two Islands in the middle of the water body, approachable only by boat. Large portions of these land areas get submerged during the rainy season but get exposed during the summer. The land mass supports trees like *Ficus bengalensis*, *F. religiosa*, *F. glomerata*, *Mangifera indica* and *Lannea grandis*. One of the islands houses an ancient temple dedicated to a local deity. Since the temple is located on an island, it can be accessed only by paddle boats or fishing boats.

The first recorded sighting of a juvenile Spot-billed Pelican in the Dalpat Sagar area occurred on 10 March 2012. The individual was initially observed landing on the lake, subsequently perching on a nearby tree, and later returning to the water body. Another individual of the species was observed from 9 July to 27 August 2013 (Dutta, 2016), roosting on a small island at the centre of the lake. The most recent sighting occurred on 28 August 2019, when an adult



Plate-1: Various angled views of Dalpat Sagar

bird was recorded and noted to remain in the area for approximately one month.

These recurring observations suggest that Dalpat Sagar may function as a stopover site along the species' migratory route. The availability of suitable habitat conditions, including adequate food resources and favourable climate, likely contributes to this pattern.

Given the increasing threats of habitat loss and the species' conservation status, these findings highlight the ecological significance of Dalpat Sagar as a potential refuge for migratory waterbirds. The study underscores the urgent need for targeted conservation measures to preserve and

*Corresponding Author: dutta.sushil962@gmail.com



Plate-2: Spot-billed Pelican (*Pelecanus philippensis*) in Dalpat Sagar

manage such wetlands, ensuring the protection of critical habitats for the Spot-billed Pelican and other avian species.

Dalpat Sagar is already a developed tourist attraction that draws visitors. Properly handling the conservation issue of Spot-billed Pelican (*Pelecanus philippensis*) will make viewing of it an additional attraction.

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