

supported by our own observations which were made in tall grassland, where *Saccharum munja* and another species of *Saccharum* were noted. On two occasions, observations were made close to water.

Although its appearance in Nepal was predicted (Inskipp and Inskipp 1985), it remains a little known bird affecting a vulnerable and rapidly diminishing habitat throughout the Indian Subcontinent and possibly in Burma; hence its recent treatment as a threatened species (Collar and Andrew 1988). There are no recent records of the nominate race from Burma and there has been speculation that it may be already extinct (Ali and Ripley 1971), although there seems to be no evidence to support this idea.

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H. S. Baral, *Victoria Travels and Tours (Pvt) Ltd.*, P.O. Box 536, Kamaladi, Kathmandu, Nepal.  
J. C. Eames, *17 Brookside Drive, Oadby, Leicester, LE2 4PB, U.K.*

## Mandarin Duck *Aix galericulata*: a new species for Nepal

SHARIFIN GARDINER

On 21 January 1990 at 11h15 I was walking along the east bank of the Arun River, about 1 km south of the Katike Ghat suspension bridge, which is just north of the village of Betheni in Manakamana Panchayat of Sankhuwasabha District, Nepal (27°20'N 87°11'E); the elevation was about 300 m. To my astonishment I saw a drake Mandarin Duck *Aix galericulata* swimming on the river. I was able to watch it for several minutes through 10×40 binoculars at about 50 m range. After a while it climbed onto a rock to rest alongside a Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*.

The following description was taken: the raised crown was glossy green and purple with a broad white eyestripe and the face was buff. The throat and neck had long extended chestnut feathers, the upper breast was glossy purple

with two white vertical bands and the rest of the upperparts were brown, glossed bronze-green. The unique buff 'sails' were very prominent. The flanks were brown and the rest of the underparts white. The bill and legs were orange. I am familiar with the species, having seen many feral birds in England.

I left the area and returned an hour later with a camera but, when I attempted to photograph it, it flew off upstream. The bird eventually flew back downstream and I was able to get a poor shot of it in flight.

Other duck noted in the area were a few pairs of Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea* and seven Common Mergansers *Mergus merganser*. There were also several Ibisbills *Ibidorhyncha struthersii* on this fast-flowing stretch of the river.

The Mandarin Duck breeds in north-east China (Heilongjiang, east Jilin and perhaps north Hebei), Japan, Korea and far eastern U.S.S.R., and migrates south as far west as south-east Gansu and east Sichuan (Madge and Burn 1988). Vagrants have been recorded in several countries to the south of its range, thus: India: one shot from a flock of six on the River Dibru, Rungagora, Assam, in 1901 or 1902 (Stevens 1915); six seen on the Subansiri River, Assam, in July 1901 (Baker 1902); two pairs shot in Manipur on 3 March 1934 (Gimson 1934); Burma: one (of two) shot in early December 1933 (Smythies 1986); Hong Kong: six records between 1958 and 1984 (Chalmers 1986); Viet Nam: recorded from Lai Chau (Vo Quy 1981); and Thailand (Treesucon and Round 1990).

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- S. C. Gardiner, Koshi Hills Development Programme, c/o BTCO, PO Box 106, Lazimpat, Kathmandu, Nepal.