

# An annotated list of the endemic avifauna of the Nicobar islands

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All species and subspecies of birds endemic to the Nicobar Islands (or the Andaman and Nicobar Islands) are listed, with information on taxonomy, historical status, a summary of sight records based on recent field surveys by the author, and threat categories (based on new IUCN criteria).

## INTRODUCTION

Geographically isolated island groups are of particular importance in the conservation of avifauna, because the substantial numbers of endemic species present make a significant contribution to the nation's avian diversity. The Andaman and Nicobar group of islands is no exception. Of the 142 species that are endemic to the zoogeographic subregion of the Indian peninsula and its environs (Ali and Ripley 1983), 17 are endemic to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Thus, while the Andaman and Nicobar Islands account for only 0.2% of the landmass of South Asia, they have 12% of the endemic avifauna of the region, thus making the islands a high priority area in the conservation of India's avifauna. This paper lists the endemic avifauna of the Nicobar Islands (and also includes taxa that are endemic to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands), documenting their status and highlighting the specific threats that are affecting individual species and subspecies.

## THE NICOBAR ISLANDS

The Andaman and Nicobar islands in the Bay of Bengal are peaks of a submerged mountain range, arching from Myanmar to Sumatra, between latitudes 6°45' and 13°41' N and longitudes 92°12' and 93°57' E. The group comprises over 560 islands and rocks, with a total coastline of about 1,962 km. The entire island group covers 8,249 km<sup>2</sup>: the Andaman group with over 300 islands (21 inhabited) covering 6,408 km<sup>2</sup>, and the Nicobar group with 23 islands (12 inhabited) with an area of 1,841 km<sup>2</sup>.

The Nicobar group of islands can be divided into three distinct subgroups (Fig. 1). The southernmost is the Great Nicobar subgroup consisting of 11 islands and islets, four of which are inhabited. About 58 km north, is the Nancowry subgroup, which consists of 10 islands and islets, of which one island and two islets are uninhabited. The northernmost subgroup comprised of Car Nicobar and Batti Malv, is 88 km north of the Nancowry subgroup. Batti Malv is uninhabited (Fig. 1).

The forest type of the Nicobar Islands can be broadly classified as tropical evergreen, with inland areas being either forest or grasslands and a significant proportion of the coast being mangroves (Balakrishnan 1989). The habitat characteristics of the islands vary. In the Great Nicobar subgroup, all islands are densely forested. In the Nancowry subgroup, the central portion of all islands, excepting Katchall and Tillanchong, are grasslands. In the Car Nicobar

subgroup, Batti Malv is forested, while most of Car Nicobar is either coconut plantation or forest, with a small area under grasslands.

## METHODS

**Data:** The checklist of the avifauna of the Nicobar islands is based on all confirmed sightings in the field and from a literature review that incorporated information in Abdulali (1964, 1965, 1967a, 1967b, 1971, 1976, 1979); Das (1971), Dasgupta (1976), Ripley (1982), and Ali and Ripley (1983).

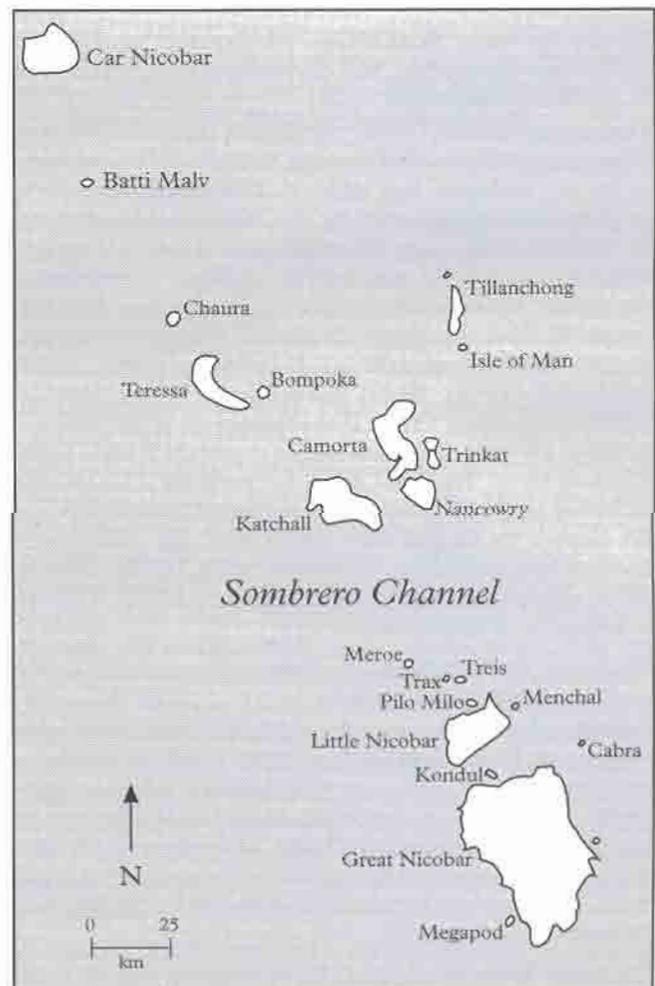


Figure 1. The Nicobar group of islands

**Taxonomy:** The recognition of species or subspecies as endemic is based mainly on Abdulali (*op. cit.*), despite the fact that many of the subspecies are not confirmed or accepted as valid. Disputes about the taxonomy of the avifauna in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands can be attributed to the paucity of adequate collections of skins in museums. Until this is accomplished it is necessary to list all species/subspecies that have been identified as endemic. Subspecies, which were not accepted by Ripley (1982), are noted.

**The historical status** of each species has been taken from Hume (1873, 1874), Butler (1899-1900), Richmond (1903), and Abdulali (1967b, 1979).

**Sight records** of each species, divided according to island groups, are based on the number of times a species was sighted or heard during these surveys. Field data were collected over 274 days between 1992 and 1995 in three field surveys (Sankaran 1995a, 1995b, 1995c). A flock was considered as a single sighting. Details of the sightings on individual islands are given in Sankaran (1997), which discusses development of a protected area network.

**Status:** The new IUCN criteria for assigning threat status, as outlined in Collar *et al.* (1994), have been applied to each species and subspecies endemic to the Nicobar Islands.

## ANNOTATED LIST OF THE ENDEMIC AVIFAUNA OF THE NICOBAR ISLANDS

**NORTH NICOBAR SCRUBFOWL** *Megapodius nicobariensis nicobariensis* Blyth 1846, and **SOUTH NICOBAR SCRUBFOWL** *M. n. abbotti* Oberholser 1919

**Taxonomy:** Ripley (1982) considered these two forms as subspecies of *Megapodius freycinet*, but it is now considered to be an endemic full species. **Distribution:** *M. n. nicobariensis* is endemic to the Nancowry subgroup (Bompoka, Camorta, Katchall, Nancowry, Teresa, Tillanchong, and Trinkat) and *M. n. abbotti* is endemic to the Great Nicobar subgroup (Great Nicobar, Kondul, Little Nicobar, Megapod, Menchal, Meroe, Trax, and Treis). **Historical status:** Common (Hume 1874, Richmond (1903)). **Sight records:** *M. n. nicobariensis* >150; *M. n. abbotti* 45-50. **Population:** *M. n. nicobariensis* at 600-2,100 breeding birds and *M. n. abbotti* 3,400 - 6,000 breeding birds. **Threats:** *M. n. nicobariensis* is threatened by habitat loss, particularly of coastal forests. Both subspecies are hunted by airguns and snares, but egg collection is apparently not a problem (Sankaran 1995a, 1995b). **Status:** *M. n. nicobariensis* Vulnerable/Endangered [B2c, C1]. *M. n. abbotti* Near-threatened.

**NICOBAR BLUE-BREASTED QUAIL** *Coturnix chinensis trinkutensis* (Richmond 1903)

**Distribution:** Endemic to the Nancowry and Car Nicobar subgroups. **Historical status:** Fairly common on one or two small grassy plains on Car Nicobar (Butler 1899-1900). Found on Trinkat by Abdulali (1979), but not on Camorta or Car Nicobar. **Sight records:** 12-15. Not sighted on Teresa and Bompoka, but is said to be present there. The grassland habitat was not visited on Car Nicobar. **Status:** Of less concern.

**NICOBAR YELLOW-LEGGED BUTTONQUAIL** *Turnix tanki albiventris* Hume 1873

**Taxonomy:** Ripley (1982) treated it as synonymous with

*T. t. tanki*. **Distribution:** Endemic to the Nancowry and Car Nicobar groups. **Historical status:** Common on islands with grasslands (Butler 1899-1900). **Sight records:** Not specifically identified but quail were flushed several times. **Status:** Of less concern.

**NICOBAR DWARF KINGFISHER** *Ceyx erithacus macrocarus* Oberholser 1917

**Distribution:** Recorded from the Great Nicobar subgroup. **Historical status:** Not recorded by Hume (1874) or Butler (1899-1900). Richmond (1903) recorded it as common on Great and Little Nicobar. **Sight records:** 1. **Status:** Data deficient.

**NICOBAR STORK-BILLED KINGFISHER** *Halcyon capensis intermedia* (Hume 1874)

**Distribution:** Restricted to the Great Nicobar subgroup. **Historical status:** Not recorded by Butler (1899-1900) but Richmond (1903) found it to be common on Great and Little Nicobar. The distribution of this species is curious as another subspecies is present in the Andaman group. **Sight records:** >75 **Status:** Of less concern.

**NICOBAR COLLARED KINGFISHER** *Todiramphus chloris occipitalis* Blyth 1846

**Taxonomy:** Ripley (1982) called it *Halcyon chloris occipitalis*. **Distribution:** Present on all three subgroups. **Historical status:** Hume (1874) found it to be rare, but Butler (1899-1900) stated that it was 'Extremely common throughout the Nicobars'. Richmond (1903) noted it as commonest in the northern and central groups, less plentiful in Great and Little Nicobar. Abdulali (1967b) found it to be one of the commonest birds on Car and Central Nicobars. **Sight records:** >100. More common in the Nancowry and Car Nicobar group than in the Great Nicobar group. **Status:** Of less concern. **Additional notes:** Seen nesting in termite (ant?) nests on trees.

**ANDAMAN KOEL** *Eudynamis scolopacea dolosa* Ripley 1946

**Distribution:** Present on virtually all Nicobar Islands; also in the Andaman Islands. **Historical status:** Common (Butler 1899-1900). **Sight records:** 300-350. **Status:** Of less concern.

**NICOBAR PARAKEET** *Psittacula caniceps* (Blyth 1846)

**Distribution:** Present on Great Nicobar, Little Nicobar, Kondul, and Menchal. **Historical status:** Hume (1874) 'saw numbers, but mostly only for a moment as they dashed past through the trees.' Richmond (1903) noted it as common on Great and Little Nicobar. **Sight records:** 150-200. **Status:** Of less concern. **Threats:** There are reports of this species occasionally appearing in the pet bird trade. I, however, have not come across trapping or trade of the species in the Nicobar Islands.

**NICOBAR LONG-TAILED PARAKEET** *Psittacula longicauda nicobarica* (Gould 1857)

**Distribution:** Present on virtually all Nicobar Islands. **Historical status:** Extremely common (Butler 1899-1900). **Sight records:** >500. **Status:** Of less concern.

**ANDAMAN EDIBLE-NEST SWIFTLET** *Collocalia fuciphaga inexpectata* Hume 1873

**Distribution:** Present on all three subgroups and in the Andaman Islands. **Historical status:** Hume (1874) did not find it in the Nicobars. Butler (1899-1900) noted that 'it also occurs more rarely in the Nicobars'. Richmond (1903) noted that it was 'shot at Kamorta, seen occasionally on the other islands. **Sight records:** The population is

estimated to be between 2,500 – 3,600 breeding pairs (Sankaran, 1995). **Threats:** Excessive nest collection. **Status:** Endangered [A1c]. **Additional notes:** This species, belongs to the 'white nest swiftlet' group, whose nests are made entirely of agglutinated saliva, and are of a very high commercial value in the international market. At Port Blair a kg of nests (one kg normally consists of between 70 – 125 nests) fetches between Rs 15,000 and Rs 20,000 or more. Virtually all colonies are exploited, and nests are collected irrespective of whether there are eggs or chicks in them, with serious effects on the species. Declines in population as evidenced from diminishing nest yields can be as high as 80% in the last 10-15 years (Sankaran, 1995c).

**ANDAMAN GLOSSY SWIFTLET** *Collocalia esculenta affinis* Beavan 1867

**Distribution:** Present on all three subgroups and in the Andaman Islands. **Historical status:** Far more common in the Andamans than in the Nicobars (Richmond 1903). Butler (1899-1900) noted that it was 'extremely abundant in both groups'. **Sight records:** >100. A common species in most islands, far more numerous than the Edible-nest Swiftlet. **Status:** Of less concern. **Sight records:** 300-350. **Status:** Of less concern.

**NICOBAR SCOPS OWL** *Otus sunia nicobaricus* (Hume 1876)

**Distribution:** Recorded only on Camorta. **Historical status:** One specimen was collected by Hume (1876) but there have been no further records. **Status:** Data deficient.

**?MOLUCCAN SCOPS OWL** *Otus magicus* subspecies

Abdulali (1967b, 1979) collected two long-winged specimens of *Otus* on Great Nicobar which Dr J. Marshall was 'sure that it is an undescribed form but cannot decide of what species'. Abdulali (1979) listed the specimens under this species.

**HUME'S BROWN HAWK OWL** *Ninox scutulata obscura* Hume 1873

**Distribution:** Recorded from the Nancowry and Car Nicobar subgroups and the Andaman Islands. **Historical status:** Davison, in Hume (1874), was sure it was common, based on calls that he heard. Richmond (1903) referred to two specimens – one from Car Nicobar, the other from Katchall. Abdulali (1967b) did not meet with it in the Nicobars. **Status:** Data deficient.

**NICOBAR HAWK OWL** *Ninox affinis isolata* Baker 1926, and **GREAT NICOBAR HAWK OWL** *N. a. rexpimenta* Abdulali 1979

**Taxonomy:** Ripley (1982) omitted *N. a. rexpimenta*. **Distribution:** *N. affinis* is endemic to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. *N. a. isolata* is present in the Nicobar Islands, excepting Great Nicobar, where *N. a. rexpimenta* is present. **Historical status:** Hume (1874) referred to one specimen only from the Nicobars. Butler (1899-1900) did not hear *isolata* during a short visit to Car Nicobar and thought that the species was less common than it was in the Andamans. **Status:** Data deficient/of less concern. **Additional Notes:** This species (?) was frequently sighted between January and March 1996 at the southern tip of Great Nicobar. It appears to be very parochial, and a pair (?) regularly occupied a particular perch at dusk.

**NICOBAR WOOD PIGEON** *Columba palumboides nicobarica* (Walden 1874)

**Taxonomy:** Ripley (1982) treated this as a monotypic species *C. palumboides* in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, despite Abdulali's (1967b) arguments for the resuscitation

of *nicobarica*. **Distribution:** Present in all three subgroups. **Historical status:** Hume (1874) referred to only one specimen that was collected. Butler (1899-1903) noted that it was 'comparatively scarce'. Richmond (1903) noted that no specimens were obtained, 'but Mr. Kloss had a shot at one in the Nicobars.' Abdulali (1967b) noted that it 'was found in forest along with *Ducula aenea*, though much rarer. **Sight records:** I found this species almost impossible to differentiate in the field from the Green Imperial Pigeon. **Threats:** Hunting with airguns. **Status:** Near-threatened.

**NORTH NICOBAR CUCKOO DOVE** *Macropygia rufipennis rufipennis* Blyth 1846, and **GREAT NICOBAR CUCKOO DOVE** *M. r. tiwarii* Abdulali 1967

**Taxonomy:** Ripley (1982) treated *Macropygia rufipennis* as *M. r. rufipennis* endemic to the Nicobar islands and *M. r. andamanica* as endemic to the Andaman islands. **Distribution:** *M. r. rufipennis* is endemic to the Nancowry subgroup, and *M. r. tiwarii* is endemic to Great Nicobar. **Historical status:** Common (Butler 1899-1900). 'Less abundant than in the Andamans' (Hume 1874). **Sight records:** Great Nicobar group 10-15, Nancowry group 20-25. Mostly seen in pairs and apparently a naturally scarce species. **Status:** *M. r. rufipennis* Vulnerable [B2c]. *M. r. tiwarii* Of less concern.

**NICOBAR EMERALD DOVE** *Chalcophaps indica augusta* Bonaparte 1855

**Taxonomy:** Abdulali (1979) treated this as a synonym of *C. i. maxima* from the Andamans, pointing out that the revival of this race by Mukherjee and Dasgupta (1978) had ignored variation in the species due to sex and age. **Distribution:** Present on all three subgroups. **Historical status:** Common (Butler 1899-1900). **Sight records:** 70-75. **Status:** Of less concern/Near-threatened.

**ANDAMAN POMPADOUR GREEN PIGEON** *Treron pompadora chloroptera* Blyth 1845

**Distribution:** Present on all three subgroups and in the Andaman Islands. **Historical status:** Abundant (Butler 1899-1900). **Sight records:** Great Nicobar group 35-40. Nancowry group 30-35. Car Nicobar 10-12. A common species on many of the Nicobar Islands. **Threats:** Extensively hunted by airguns. **Status:** Near-threatened.

**NICOBAR GREEN IMPERIAL PIGEON** *Ducula aenea nicobarica* (Pelzeln 1865)

**Historical status:** Very common. On some islands 'simply swarming' (Butler 1899-1900). **Sight records:** Great Nicobar group >250, Nancowry group 150-200. Car Nicobar 10-15. An exceedingly common pigeon in the Nicobar islands, with islands like Tillanchong simply teeming with them. **Threats:** Extensively hunted with airguns. On some islands (e.g. Car Nicobar) there has apparently been a severe decline in numbers due to hunting pressures. **Status:** Near-threatened. **Additional notes:** The Pied Imperial Pigeon *Ducula bicolor* nests in large numbers on Meroe, Treis and Trax, moving to neighbouring islands to feed. On islands where it nests, it is hunted in very large numbers by the Nicobaris who also collect the squabs, which are raised and eaten at a later date. The Nicobar Pigeon *Caloenas nicobarica* nests in very large numbers on Batti Malv.

**NICOBAR SLATY-BREASTED RAIL** *Gallirallus striatus nicobarensis* (Abdulali 1967)

**Taxonomy:** Ripley (1982) treated the Andaman and Nicobar races as *Rallus striatus obscurior*. **Distribution:** Endemic to

the Nancowry and Car Nicobar subgroups. **Historical status:** Common (Butler 1899-1900). **Sight records:** An unidentified rail, perhaps this species, was seen once on Camorta and once on Tillanchong. The marshland habitat was not surveyed by me. **Status:** Data deficient.

**CAR NICOBAR WHITE-BREASTED WATERHEN** *Amaurornis phoeniceurus leucocephalus* Abdulali 1964, and **GREAT NICOBAR WHITE-BREASTED WATERHEN** *A. p. midnicobariensis* Abdulali 1979

**Taxonomy:** Ripley (1982) treated these subspecies as synonyms of *A. p. insularis*. However, there is merit in Abdulali's segregation of birds from Car Nicobar as *A. p. leucocephalus*, as the birds there have the head down to the nape entirely white, though a few individuals have some dark blotches on the hind neck. **Distribution:** *A. p. leucocephalus* is endemic to Car Nicobar and *A. p. midnicobariensis* is endemic to the Nancowry and Great Nicobar subgroups. **Historical status:** Extremely common (Butler 1899-1900). **Sight records:** Great Nicobar >50, Nancowry group 30-35, Car Nicobar 40-50. **Status:** Of less concern.

**NICOBAR SERPENT EAGLE** *Spilornis minimus minimus* Hume 1873, and **GREAT NICOBAR SERPENT EAGLE** *S. m. klossi* Richmond 1903

**Taxonomy:** *S. m. minimus* was treated by Ripley (1982) as a subspecies of *Spilornis cheela*, while *S. m. klossi* was considered to be a monotypic species, *S. klossi* endemic to Great Nicobar. **Distribution:** Both are now considered to be subspecies of the endemic *S. minimus*, *S. m. minimus* from the Nancowry subgroup (Camorta, Katchall, Nancowry, Teressa and Trinkat), and *S. m. klossi* from the Great Nicobar subgroup (Great Nicobar, Little Nicobar, Menchal). There is one record of the Andaman Serpent Eagle *S. elgini* from the Nicobars, but this may be a case of mislabelling (Abdulali 1967b). **Historical status:** Not numerous (Butler 1899-1900). Richmond (1903) noted that *klossi* was common on Great Nicobar, and that *minimus* was common on Katchall. **Sight records:** *S. m. klossi* 30-35 times, *S. m. minimus* no sightings. **Status:** *S. m. klossi* Near-threatened. *S. m. minimus* Vulnerable [B2c].

In addition, Abdulali (1979) referred to specimens of *Spilornis* from Great Nicobar, Kondul and Menchal, which were too large for *S. minimus* but too small and pale for *S. cheela davisoni*; in addition, they had finely barred rather than spotted thigh coverts. Saha and Dasgupta (1980) described one of the same specimens as *S. cheela malayensis* but this is a dark race with spotted thigh coverts. These birds represent either an undescribed subspecies of *S. cheela*, or possibly an undescribed endemic species.

**CAR NICOBAR SPARROWHAWK** *Accipiter butleri butleri* (Gurney 1898) and **KATCHALL SPARROWHAWK** *A. b. obsoletus* (Richmond 1903)

**Taxonomy:** Considered by Ripley (1982) to be subspecies of Shikra *Accipiter badius*. **Distribution:** *A. butleri butleri* is endemic to Car Nicobar, and *A. b. obsoletus* is endemic to the Nancowry subgroup (Camorta and Katchall) and ?Great Nicobar. **Historical status:** Butler found *A. b. butleri* to be not 'uncommon' on Car Nicobar and Richmond (1903) noted it as common there. Richmond (1903) also stated that Abbott obtained one specimen of *A. b. obsoletus* and saw five or six others. Abdulali (1967b) collected one on Camorta but failed to find it on Car Nicobar. Abdulali (1979) noted that a specimen had been collected on Great

Nicobar by Osmaison and that the subspecies involved required confirmation. The immature specimen referred to (in the collection of the Natural History Museum, Tring, U.K.) is much darker than immature *A. b. butleri* and may relate to an undescribed subspecies. **Sight records:** 20-25 of *obsoletus*. Not sighted on Car Nicobar. **Threats:** *A. b. butleri* is threatened due to habitat loss on Car Nicobar. **Status:** *A. b. butleri* Endangered [B2c]. *A. b. obsoletus* Near-threatened.

**ANDAMAN LITTLE HERON** *Butorides striatus spodiogaster* Sharpe 1894

**Distribution:** Present on all Nicobar Islands and occurs in the Andaman Islands. **Historical status:** Very common (Hume 1874), and extremely common (Butler 1899-1900). **Sight records:** 40-50. **Status:** Of less concern.

**NICOBAR NIGHT HERON** *Gorsachius melanolophus minor* Hachisuka 1926

**Taxonomy:** The subspecies is separated because of its smaller size compared with *G. m. melanolophus*. **Distribution:** Present in the Nancowry and Great Nicobar subgroups. **Historical status:** Apparently rare (Hume 1874), with only three specimens procured. Not reported by Butler (1899-1900), Richmond (1903) or Abdulali (1967b). **Sight records:** No confirmed sighting, but possibly seen on Tillanchong. **Status:** Data deficient.

**NICOBAR HOODED PITTA** *Pitta sordida abbotti* Richmond 1903

**Distribution:** Endemic to the Great Nicobar subgroup. **Historical status:** Common on Great and Little Nicobar (Richmond 1903). **Sight records:** 25-30. Not common, more often heard than seen. Apparently naturally scarce. **Status:** Of less concern.

**NICOBAR BLACK-NAPED ORIOLE** *Oriolus chinensis macrourus* Blyth 1846

**Distribution:** Present on virtually all Nicobar Islands. **Historical status:** Very common (Butler 1899-1900). **Sight records:** >125. Common in the Nicobars, exceedingly so on Car Nicobar. **Status:** Of less concern.

**NICOBAR PIED TRILLER** *Lalage nigra davisoni* Kloss 1926

**Taxonomy:** Ripley (1982) called it *Coracina nigra davisoni*. **Distribution:** Endemic to the Nancowry group of islands. **Historical status:** Not uncommon (Hume, 1874). **Sight records:** <10. Sighted only on Camorta and Katchall. An uncommon or rare species. **Status:** Vulnerable [B2c].

**NICOBAR GREATER RACKET-TAILED DRONGO** *Dicrurus paradiseus nicobariensis* (Baker 1918)

**Distribution:** Curiously distributed in the Nicobar group. Common on Great and Little Nicobar, Megapod, Kondul, Pilo Milo and Menchal; it is present on Katchall, but on no other island of the Nancowry group, and on Car Nicobar. Uncommon in the last two. **Historical status:** Fairly common (Butler 1899-1900). **Sight records:** Great Nicobar group 125-150, Katchall 4-5. Car Nicobar 1. **Status:** Of less concern.

**NICOBAR PARADISE-FLYCATCHER** *Terpsiphone paradisi nicobarica* Oates 1890

**Distribution:** Present in the Great Nicobar and Nancowry subgroups; also in the Andaman Islands. **Historical status:** Davison, in Hume (1874), found this species rare in both the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, but Butler (1899-1900) found it to be numerous in the Nicobars. Abdulali did not

record it. **Sight records:** 5. **Status:** Near-threatened. **Additional notes:** A 'white' male was incubating on a nest in Camorta in the first week of March.

**CAR NICOBAR BLACK-NAPE MONARCH** *Hypothymis azurea idiochroa* Oberholser 1911, and **NICOBAR BLACK-NAPE MONARCH** *H. a. nicobarica* Bianchi 1907

**Taxonomy:** Ripley (1982) treated this species in the genus *Monarcha*. **Distribution:** *H. a. idiochroa* is present on Car Nicobar and *H. a. nicobarica* in the Nancowry and Great Nicobar subgroups. **Historical status:** Exceedingly common (Butler 1899-1900). **Sight records:** 90-100. **Status:** Of less concern.

**NICOBAR ORANGE-HEADED THRUSH** *Zoothera citrina albogularis* (Blyth 1847)

**Distribution:** Has been recorded from Great Nicobar, Camorta, Nancowry, Trinkat, Katchall, Bompoka and Car Nicobar. **Historical status:** Butler (1899-1900) said they were fairly common throughout the Nicobars, but shy and difficult to procure. **Sight records:** one on Katchall and one on Bompoka. **Status:** Near-threatened.

**NICOBAR BROWN-CHESTED JUNGLE FLYCATCHER** *Rhinomyias brunneata nicobarica* Richmond 1903

**Distribution:** This subspecies has been recorded nowhere else except Great Nicobar and Little Nicobar, but it is thought to be a winter visitor from the north. **Historical status:** Abbott and Kloss found it to be common (Richmond 1903). Abdulali (1967b) saw several on Great Nicobar.

**ANDAMAN GLOSSY STARLING** *Aplonis panayensis tyleri* (Hume 1873) and **GREAT NICOBAR GLOSSY STARLING** *A. p. albiris* Abdulali 1967

**Distribution:** *A. p. tyleri* is present on Car Nicobar and the Andaman islands and *A. p. albiris* is present on the Great Nicobar and Nancowry subgroups. **Historical status:** Abundant (Butler 1899-1900). **Sight records:** >500. **Status:** Abundant.

**NICOBAR WHITE-HEADED STARLING** *Sturnus erythropygius erythropygius* (Blyth 1846) and **KATCHALL WHITE-HEADED STARLING** *S. e. katchalensis* (Richmond 1903)

**Distribution:** *S. e. erythropygius* is endemic to Car Nicobar and *S. e. katchalensis* is endemic to Katchall. **Historical status:** The species was considered to be rare by Hume (1874) on Car Nicobar, but Butler (1899-1900) and Richmond (1903) found it to be common on that island, as I did. It is less common on Katchall. It was introduced onto Camorta in the late 1800s (Ripley 1982), but it has apparently died out now as I did not see any. **Sight records:** Katchall 10-12, Car Nicobar 20-25. Common on Car Nicobar but less so on Katchall. **Status:** Near-threatened.

**ANDAMAN HILL MYNA** *Gracula religiosa andamanensis* Beavan 1867 and **GREAT NICOBAR HILL MYNA** *G. r. halibretha* Oberholser 1926

**Taxonomy:** Ripley (1982) treated the Andaman and Nicobar birds as a single race *G. r. andamanensis*. **Distribution:** *G. r. andamanensis* is present on the Nancowry group and in the Andaman Islands and *G. r. halibretha* is endemic to the Great Nicobar subgroup. **Historical status:** Davison, in Hume (1874) found it to be 'exceedingly common'. Common on Great and Little Nicobar (Richmond 1903). **Sight records:** Great Nicobar group 250-300, Nancowry group 12-15. **Status:** Near-threatened.

**NICOBAR BULBUL** *Hypsipetes nicobariensis* Moore 1854

**Distribution:** Endemic to the Nancowry subgroup (Bompoka, Camorta, Katchall, Nancowry, Teressa, Tillanchong, and Trinkat). **Historical status:** Said to be common in the past (Hume 1874, Richmond 1903, Abdulali 1967b). I believe the sight record from Pilo Milo (Hume 1874) to be erroneous as this species has never been recorded from either of the nearby large islands: Great Nicobar and Little Nicobar. **Sight records:** Camorta 4-5, Nancowry 1, Katchall 15-20 (1 flock > 100 birds) Tillanchong 1, Teressa 15-20. **Threats:** The introduced Andaman Red-whiskered Bulbul *Pycnonotus jocosus whistleri*, which is endemic to the Andaman islands, has spread throughout the Nancowry group; it is very common and has probably resulted in the rarity of the Nicobar Bulbul because of competition for the same ecological niche. **Status:** Vulnerable [A1d, B2c]. **Additional notes:** the British introduced the Andaman Red-whiskered Bulbul to Camorta in the late 1800s. It is now also present on Nancowry, Trinkat, Katchall, Teressa and Car Nicobar where it is common. Its introduction to these islands has been by the Nicobaris who call it *Pench Alok*. In Katchall it was introduced about 80 years ago.

**NICOBAR WHITE-EYE** *Zosterops palpebrosus nicobaricus* Blyth 1845

**Distribution:** Present in the Car Nicobar and Nancowry subgroups and on the Andamans. **Historical status:** Common (Hume, 1874). **Sight records:** >10. **Status:** Of less concern.

In addition, Abdulali (1979) collected two specimens of *Zosterops* from Great Nicobar which were quite distinct from *Z. p. nicobaricus*. However, he was unable to make a decision as to their subspecific identity, in the absence of sufficient specimens from the other islands in the Nicobars.

**NICOBAR OLIVE-BACKED SUNBIRD** *Nectarinia jugularis klossi* (Richmond 1903) and **CAR NICOBAR OLIVE-BACKED SUNBIRD** *N. j. proselia* (Oberholser 1923)

**Distribution:** *N. j. klossi* occurs on virtually all islands of the Nancowry and Great Nicobar subgroups and *N. j. proselia* is restricted to Car Nicobar. **Historical status:** Very plentiful (Butler 1899-1900). **Sight records:** >500. **Status:** Of less concern.

**NICOBAR CRIMSON SUNBIRD** *Aethopyga siparaja nicobarica* Hume 1873

**Distribution:** Endemic to the Great Nicobar subgroup. **Historical status:** Hume (1873) found it to be very numerous on Kondul. Richmond (1903) noted it to be commonest at Pulo Kunyi and other places on the west coast of Great Nicobar. **Sight records:** 70-75. **Status:** Of less concern.

**NICOBAR WHITE-RUMPED MUNIA** *Lonchura striata semistriata* (Hume 1874)

**Distribution:** Present in the Nancowry subgroup and on Car Nicobar. **Historical status:** Common (Butler 1899-1900). **Sight records:** <10. **Status:** Of less concern.

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