The Black-breasted Parrotbill *Paradoxornis flavirostris* is a globally threatened bird and is listed as ‘Vulnerable’ owing to a small population, inferred to be declining rapidly as a result of extensive loss and degradation of grasslands (BirdLife International 2009). It is also a ‘restricted range’ species (Stattersfield et al. 1998). Its known historic range was restricted to the plains of the Brahmaputra and Barak Rivers in Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and northern West Bengal in India and north-eastern Bangladesh (BirdLife International 2001). Recent records come from a handful of sites only: Jaldapara Wildlife Sanctuary, northern West Bengal (BirdLife International 2001), Dibru-Saikhowa National Park, Assam (Choudhury 1994), D’Ering Memorial Wildlife Sanctuary, Arunachal Pradesh (Singh 1999) and Kaziranga National Park, Assam (BirdLife International 2001).

The occurrence of Black-breasted Parrotbill in Manas National Park was not reported in BirdLife International (2001, 2009). However, Choudhury (2006) reported a secondary record of two birds seen in 1997, south of Mathanguri (Bibhuti Lahkar, pers. comm.). I here report recent observations on the species from Manas National Park in western Assam (Figure 1).

On 26 May 2007, while negotiating tall elephant grass jungle on the banks of a shallow river formed by the Doimari and Rabang nullahs, in the Bhuyanpara Range area of Manas National Park, I heard the call of Black-breasted Parrotbill at 16h55 (c. 26°45’N 91°04’E). The site was west of Kanchanbari Forest Camp and southwest of Makhibaha Forest Camp. Since I was familiar with its distinctive call (heard in Dibru-Saikhowa National Park), it took no

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**Records of Black-breasted Parrotbill *Paradoxornis flavirostris* from Manas National Park, Assam, in north-east India**

**ANWARUDDIN CHOUDHURY**

**Figure 1.** Map of Manas National Park showing the sites of observation of Black-breasted Parrotbill (marked A, B, C, D, E, F).
Acrobatic copulatory display in the Black-crowned Barwing Actinodura sodangorum

The Black-crowned Barwing Actinodura sodangorum is a recently described species of babbler from the highlands of central Annam, Vietnam (Eames et al. 1999), and is currently listed as IUCN Vulnerable (BirdLife International 2011). On 27 April 2008 JdH, Uthai Treesucon and a local Vietnamese guide tape-lured a pair of Black-crowned Barwings at Loxo Pass, Annam, Vietnam, 15.187175ºN 107.74601ºE, elevation c.150 m from the first group. With the help of a pair of binoculars, I could see two birds and a lot of grass movement, indicating the presence of more birds. While returning after these observations, one more group was encountered c.1 km south of the first group, on the right bank of the river at around 17h30. This group could not be seen as they stopped calling when we were close and possible rain forced us to rush for the range headquarters. These sites are marked respectively A, B and C on the map (Fig. 1). That particular day was extraordinary for grassland birds, as on a three-hour elephant ride I observed six (possibly seven) threatened and two Near Threatened birds in the area (Choudhury 2007).

On 15 November 2009, while mist-netting for the elusive Manipur Bush Quail Perdicula manipuresis, also in the Bhuyanpara Range area of Manas National Park but in a easterly location near Kanchanbari Forest Camp, I heard calls to the east at around 09h30 (c.26°45´N 91°06´E). There were several birds (at least three as surmised from their calls). After a short while, another group started calling from the south. These sites are marked D and E on the map (Figure 1).

On 3 April 2010, I again visited the site on the banks of the same river (formed by the Doimari and Rabang nullahs). To my utter surprise I found that the habitat had changed: the Arundo donax has been replaced by Saccharum spontaneum and the riverbed had become dry. This was because of a natural diversion of the river towards the east. At Kanchanbari Forest Camp there was no sign of the parrotbills as the entire grassland had been burnt as part of the park’s management. There was no suitable habitat in the form of tall grass at that time in the area. However, while returning to Bhuyanpara, I heard a call from a small patch of tall grass at 17h15 (c.26°44´N 91°06´E) (marked F on the map; Figure 1).

The sites where the parrotbills were seen and heard were dominated by Arundo donax grass. During January–February every year, the bulk of the grassland is burnt as part of the park’s management, and the parrotbills vanish temporarily from these sites. This must be a major limiting factor for the species and I have requested that the local ranger burns the grass in patches so that areas dominated by such reeds may be left out.

Acknowledgements

During the field visits, I was given considerable support and assistance from many government officials, NGOs and villagers, relatives and friends, and I thank them all collectively. For their assistance in the field, I thank L. K. Ramchiary (Range Officer, Bhuyanpara) and his staff. Desmond Allen supplied a recording of the call.

References


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