

Re-sighting of Mongolian tagged Bar-headed Geese *Anser indicus* in India

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A Bar-headed Goose *Anser indicus* caught and marked with a yellow neck collar (no. E6) was photographed by M. Niranjana at Kaggalipura lake near Somnathpur, Karnataka, India (Latitude: 12° 16' 29'' N, Longitude: 76° 53'40'' E) (Ref. 1, 2). The goose was photographed on 15th December 2007 amongst a flock of geese wintering at Somnathpur.



M. Niranjana realized that the one of the Geese had a yellow neck collar only on returning home and after seeing the photos on his computer. His email stirred the interest of many including Mr. Taej Mundkar. He followed up the matter and found out the details, which follow in this article.

Another Bar-headed Goose with the yellow neck collar (no. C6) was photographed by Adesh Shivkar at Veer Dam (Near "Tondal" village side), about 55km south to Pune, in Maharashtra. This goose was amongst approx. 44 Bar-headed Geese that were observed on 13th Jan'08 at the Veer dam. On this birding trip Ms. Pallavi Joshi, Mr. Mandar Khadilkar, Mr. Animish Mandrekar and Mr. Abhijeet Narvekar accompanied him.

Bar Headed Geese , Veer Dam (Near Pune)



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Bar-headed Geese

© Pallavi Joshi

Third Bar-headed Goose with a yellow neck collar was photographed on 13th December 2007 by Aditya Joshi in cultivation near Paradgaon reservoir in Nagpur district of Maharashtra. He was accompanied by birder friends Sushant Bhusari and Raju Kasambe. This reservoir is 20km north-east of Nagpur city (Longitude: 20°56'00 N, Latitude: 79°14'54 E). This goose was amongst a flock of approximately 200 geese wintering at the reservoir. The presence of neck collar was realized only after observing the photos on computer. Unfortunately the photos are not clear enough to read the collar number.



This reservoir regularly gets the wintering geese from last 15 years (pers. com. Dr. Anil Pimlapure). Last winter on 3rd December 2006 Raju Kasambe, Dr. Anil Pimlapure and Mr. Gopal Thoasr (Honorary Wildlife Warden, Nagpur) had seen approximately Bar-headed Geese at this reservoir. Also Raju Kasambe, Dr. Anil Pimlapure and Mr. Parag Sawji had seen nearly 200 geese on 2nd December 2007 at this reservoir.

The website (Ref. 4) has message from Mr. Martin Gilbert announcing the successful capture and marking of several waterfowl species while sampling for avian influenza in wild waterbirds in Mongolia during July 2007. It says during the course of fieldwork this summer, a subsample of 30 **Whooper Swans** *Cygnus cygnus*, 50 **Bar-headed Geese** and 21 **Bean Geese** *Anser fabalis* have been fitted with coloured neck collars in **Hovsgol (Khuvsgul) aimag** (province) in northern Mongolia. Details of collars fitted are given below:

- * 30 **Whooper Swans** *Cygnus cygnus* fitted with red collars with white lettering (A01 to A30)
- * 50 **Bar-headed Geese** *Anser indicus* fitted with yellow collars with black lettering (A0 to A9, B0 to B9, C0 to C9, D0 to D9 and E0 to E9).
- * 21 **Bean Geese** *Anser fabalis* fitted with yellow collars with black lettering (P51 to P71), also fitted with numbered metal leg rings, with bands on right leg indicating females and left leg indicating males (based on cloacal sexing).



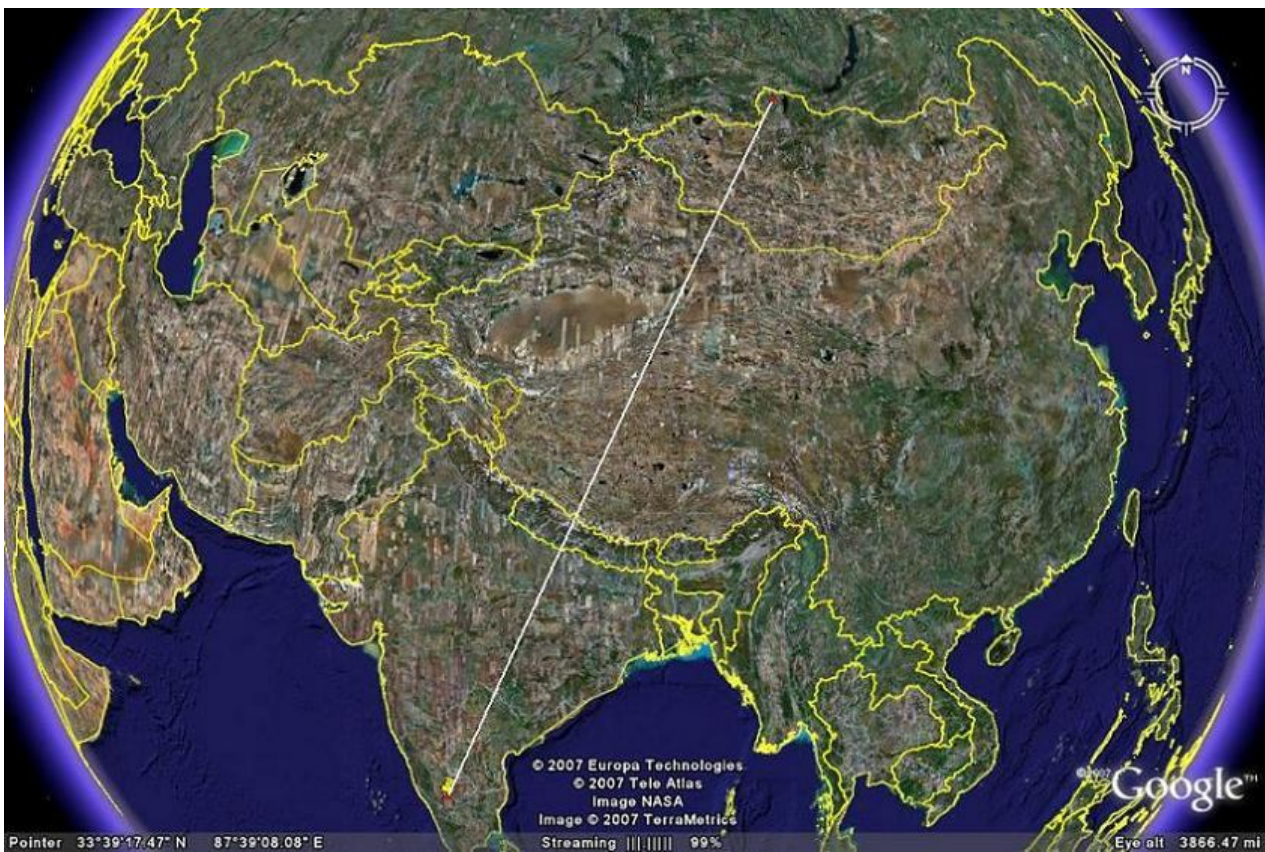


This work has been carried out as part of the **USAID-supported Global Avian Influenza Network for Surveillance (GAINS)**. The primary objectives of GAINS are to expand operational field capabilities, improve the understanding of viral strains and transmission of all strains of influenza viruses in wild birds, and to disseminate information to all levels of governments, international organizations, the private sector and the general public. Through this work the Wildlife Conservation Society seeks to contribute to our understanding of migratory movements, distribution and population status of wild birds. **The website also carries** further alert to wader marking in northern and central Mongolia.



Discussion:

A team led by Mr. Martin Gilbert of the Wildlife Conservation Society of Mongolia had marked the Bar-headed Goose (Ref. 5). In an e-mail to the authors he has conveyed that, the first goose with collar E6 photographed by M. Niranjan is a male and it was tagged. It was caught on 19th July 2007 in the Darkhad Valley in the northern Mongolian aimag (province) of Hovsgol (N: 99°41'078, E: 51°19'736). It was one of the 50 Bar-headed Geese fitted with collars in July 2007, and is the first for which he had received resighting information. Based on this information given, the goose had travelled a direct line distance of approximately **4,780 km!** (Please see map).



The goose with collar C6 is a female and was tagged on 18th July 2007 in the Darkhad valley. Unfortunately the collar number of the third goose is not readable and further attempts by authors (AJ, RK, SB) to read it using a spot-scope also failed.



These are the first scientific evidences of the migration of Bar-headed Geese from Mongolia to India. Previous ringing and satellite telemetry work demonstrated migration between disconnected breeding populations in Qinghai Lake in northwest China and southern Tibet as well as in Kyrgyzstan (Ref.4).

According to Rasmussen & Anderton (2005) Bar-headed Geese are summer visitors to Wakhan (Extreme North-eastern Afghanistan) and Ladakh. They are winter visitor from Indus Valley (Pakistan), lower parts of South Assam hills, Bangladesh, and north-east Peninsula; locally also in South India. (They are) Passage migrant through North Pakistan, Kashmir, Nepal and Bhutan. Breeds very locally on high-altitude lakes and marshes; locally common in winter in North subcontinent, rarer in south and lowland rivers, lakes, marshes and coastal islands. It breeds in Central Asia, winters to Myanmar. Thus, we had no knowledge on migration of particular population to definite wintering grounds.



In the light of the re-sighting information described above, it has become evident that at least these three flocks of Bar-headed Geese wintering in India are from Northern Mongolia. The information has greatly enhanced our knowledge of migration of Bar-headed Geese in Asia.

References:

Rasmussen, P.C. & Anderton, J.C. (2005): Birds of South Asia. The Ripley Guide. Vol.1. Smithsonian Institution and Lynx Edicions, Washington, D.C.

Internet resources:

(All as accessed on 20th January, 2008)

1. <http://www.indianaturewatch.net/displayimage.php?id=34158>
2. <http://www.indianaturewatch.net/displayimage.php?id=34412>
3. <http://www.indianaturewatch.net/displayimage.php?id=36234>
4. <http://birdsmongolia.blogspot.com/2007/08/alert-colour-marking-of-swans-and-geese.html>

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