

## **Re-restricting the type locality of *Burhinus* [= *Oedicnemus*] *indicus* Salvadori, 1866**

Authors: J., Praveen, and Aimassi, Giorgio

Source: Bulletin of the British Ornithologists' Club, 144(1) : 74-75

Published By: British Ornithologists' Club

URL: <https://doi.org/10.25226/bboc.v144i1.2024.a8>

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## Re-restricting the type locality of *Burhinus* [= *Oedicnemus*] *indicus* Salvadori, 1866

by Praveen J.  & Giorgio Aimassi

Received 11 November 2023; revised 22 December 2023; published 4 March 2024

<http://zoobank.org/urn:lsid:zoobank.org:pub:C9E1D4D6-DED9-4BFE-8747-22AEF337DE0A>

**SUMMARY.**—The type locality of Indian Thick-knee *Burhinus indicus* is currently restricted to the surroundings of Mussoorie, Uttarakhand, India. We provide evidence for revising this to the environs of Sardhana, Uttar Pradesh, which is c.150 km south-southwest of Mussoorie.

The Museo Regionale di Scienze Naturali di Torino houses numerous specimens of birds from India, donated in 1841 by Paolo Solaroli (Elter 1986). Among these are the two syntypes of Indian Thick-knee *Burhinus* [= *Oedicnemus*] *indicus* Salvadori, 1866, with the registration numbers MZUT Av4086 and Av4087 (Fig. 1; Aimassi *et al.* 2020: 79). The type locality was only known imprecisely for many decades—Salvadori (1866: 381) mentioned ‘probabilmente dall’Imalaja’ (probably from Himalaya); Salvadori (1915: 12) ‘inviata dal Barone Solaroli da Sirdanha [*sic*] Monti Imalaja’ (sent by Baron Solaroli from Sirdanha [*sic*] Himalayan Mountains); and Peters (1934: 295) referred only to ‘India’—until Passerin d’Entrèves *et al.* (1995) proposed restricting the type locality to the ‘surroundings of Mussoorie, in Uttar Pradesh’, India. They cited a letter from Marquis Paolo Solaroli in the ‘fondo Ministero degli Esteri del Regno di Sardegna, Gabinetto, Lettere dei regi sudditi, Lettere ricevute, mazzo 1670’, protocol no. 71599, at the Archivio di Stato di Torino (Turin State Archives) relating to the shipment of 444 bird skins. Here, we provide reasons to revise this to the environs of Sardhana, in Uttar Pradesh.

Solaroli (1796–1878) was an Italian mercenary stationed for some time in the principality of Sirdanah / Sirdanha [= Sardhana, 29°25’N, 77°37’E], near Meerut, Uttar Pradesh. Although Sardhana was referred to as a ‘rajat at the foot of the Himalayas’ by Passerin d’Entrèves *et al.* (1995), it is not even close to the *terai*; in fact, it is slightly less than 100 km from Delhi.

There is little certainty as to where Solaroli collected the 444 specimens now largely at MZUT (335 specimens), and the only ‘new’ evidence is the letter he sent from Mussoorie (in present-day Uttarakhand).



Figure 1: Two syntypes of Indian Thick-knee *Burhinus indicus*, MZUT Av4086 (left) and MZUT Av4087 (right), in the Museo Regionale di Scienze Naturali di Torino (Luca Ghiraldi)

Mussoorie is c.150 km north-northeast of Sardhana. While at least some birds in the collection give it a 'Himalayan' feel, e.g. Bearded Vulture *Gypaetus barbatus*, White-collared Blackbird *Turdus albocinctus*, Eurasian Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*, Chukar *Alectoris chukar* and Western Tragopan *Tragopan melanocephalus*, clearly indicating the collector(s) visited the Middle Himalaya, the bulk of the collection comprises common birds of the northern plains expected around Sardhana (which is not Himalayan). We contest that Sardhana must have been site of collection of most of these specimens. In particular, *Burhinus indicus* does not occur around Mussoorie (30°28'N, 78°04'E; c.2,000 m) in the Middle Himalaya, but is found on the Gangetic plain around Sardhana (c.225 m) (<https://ebird.org/india/map/indthk1>). As such, the site from where the consignment was sent is not appropriate as the type locality here, and we recommend to revise the type locality of *Burhinus* [= *Oedicnemus*] *indicus* to the 'environs of Sardhana, Uttar Pradesh'.

#### Acknowledgements

We are grateful to Luca Ghiraldi at MZUT for taking the images used in this note. Praveen is grateful to Swapna Liddle for providing historical context concerning Sardhana and to Lakshmi Bharadwaj for divining the present-day location of 'Sirdanha'. Our thanks to two anonymous referees for providing critical comments that greatly improved this note.

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*Addresses:* Praveen J., Hon. Associate (Ornithology), Trivandrum Natural History Museum, Thiurvananthapuram, Kerala, India; and Bird Monitoring Group, Nature Conservation Foundation, 361 'Hari Hara', Kodigehalli, 5th Main Road, Sahakara Nagar, Bengaluru 560092, Karnataka, India, e-mail: [paintedstork@gmail.com](mailto:paintedstork@gmail.com). Giorgio Aimassi, Lungo Po Antonelli 175, I-10153 Torino, Italy, e-mail: [aimassi.giorgio@gmail.com](mailto:aimassi.giorgio@gmail.com)