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The Asian Waterfowl Census was carried out in selected wetlands covering Manas National Park and Tiger Reserve (MNP&TR) and surroundings from December 2013 to February 2014 to ascertain the status of the water birds and threats to their population (Bose et al. 2014). On 10 February, we surveyed in Subankhata Reserved Forest area in Baksa District, Assam which forms the eastern buffer of the MNP&TR (Fig. 1). During our survey, we covered mainly three major water bodies located in the area. In Saatvoini Beel (vernacular meaning 'a small lake') (26°39'34.78"N & 91°28'38.78"E), at about 1310hr, we came across an unfamiliar duck, that was later identified as a female of the Mandarin Duck *Aix galericulata*.

Saatvoini Beel is located in the human-dominated landscape surrounded by villages and agricultural land. The Beel is mainly used by the villagers for fishing activity. Earlier it was connected with Pagladia River (Fig. 1).

The lone female Mandarin Duck was observed in a mixed flock of Lesser Whistling Duck *Dendrocygna javanica* and Ferruginous Pochard *Aythya nyroca*. The bird was observed for more than 10 minutes with an 8×40 binocular from a distance of 40–45 m. A video footage of the duck, taken by one of our team members,

THE SIGHTING OF MANDARIN DUCK *AIX GALERICULATA* (LINNAEUS) (AVES: ANSERIFORMES: ANATIDAE) AFTER A GAP OF 112 YEARS IN ASSAM, INDIA

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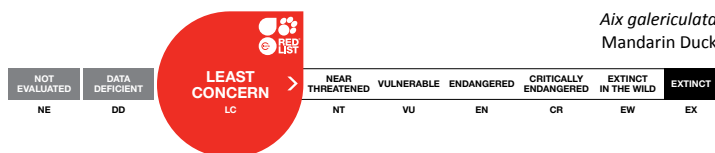
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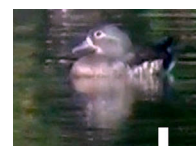
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also helped in confirming the species identity (Image 1). The bird remained in the wetland for a while before flying away with the flock of Lesser Whistling Duck.

The following characters noted in the field helped in the identification of the species: on top of the head it was grey, with a white ring around the eye which continued as a streak behind it. Most of the upper body was olive brown. The throat and the upper neck were white. The lower neck, breast, sides and flanks were



Aix galericulata
Mandarin Duck



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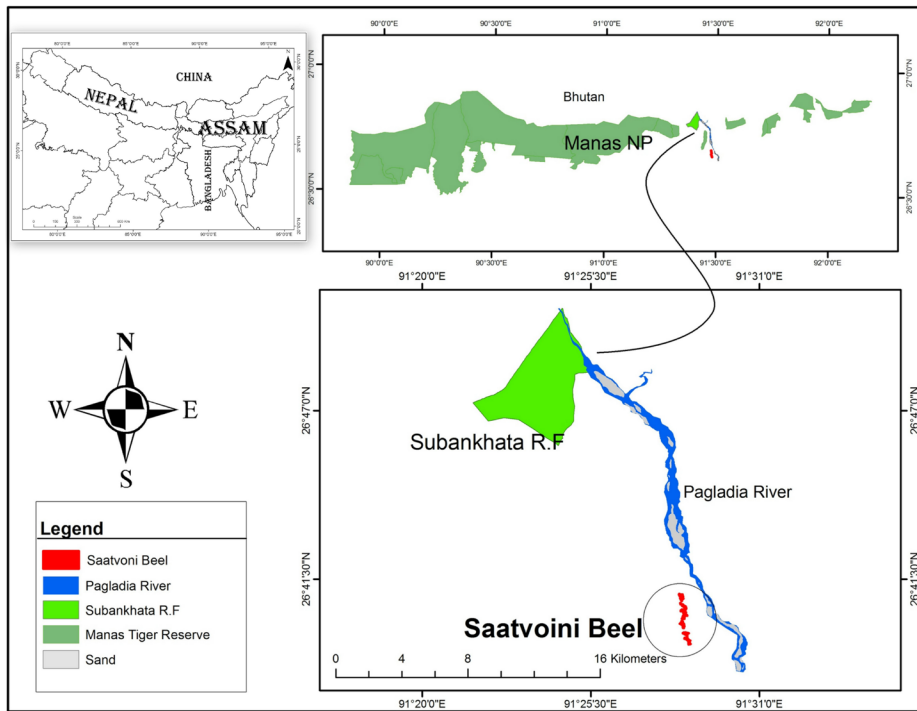


Figure 1. Map depicting the sighting location of the Mandarin Duck *Aix galericulata* (Linn.) in Assam, India

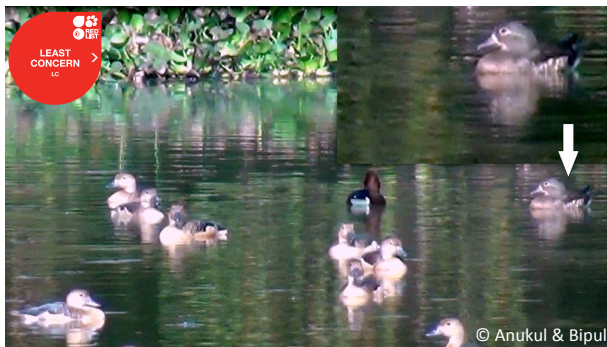


Image 1. Screen grab from video showing the Female Mandarin Duck *Aix galericulata* (Linn.) in Saatvoini Beel, Baksa District, Assam, India on 10 February 2014.

olive brown, sketchily speckled. The underside of the body was whitish.

The Mandarin Duck migrates from eastern Sichuan and as far west as southeastern Gansu and reported to be breeding in far eastern Russia, Korea, Japan and northeastern parts of China (Heilongjiang, east Jilin and perhaps north Hebei) (Madge & Burn 1988). In the south this species has been reported to be vagrant in several countries. In India, there are a few records of this species including one on the Dibru River, Rungagora, Assam, in 1901 or 1902 (Stevens 1915). Baker (1902) reported six individuals on the Subansiri River, Lakhimpur District, Assam. Besides that on 03 March 1934 two pairs were shot in Manipur (Gimson 1934). In the recent past,

the Mandarin Duck has been recorded from Manipur - an individual was reportedly caught near Sugnu in Chandel District and later another individual sighted on the 11 December 2013 in Toubul area of Loktak Lake (Choudhury 2009; CCNCS 2013).

The present sighting of Mandarin Duck *Aix galericulata* (Linn.) from Baksa District in February 2014 is the first reliable record of this species in Assam after a gap of 112 years.

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