

Update on the distribution range of the white-browed crane (*Porzana cinerea*): a new record from mainland China

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ABSTRACT

Since 1980, the white-browed crane (*Porzana cinerea*) has been experiencing an expansion from south of the Isthmus of Kra, northward to China. Recently, this species was observed in several locations throughout Southwest China, including Ningming and Baise, Guangxi (2012, 2013), and Xichang, Sichuan (2013). These sightings are the first distribution record of this species in mainland China, suggesting that the white-browed crane is following a natural species dispersal northward into mainland China from Southeast Asia.

Keywords: *Porzana cinerea*; New record; Mainland China

INTRODUCTION

The white-browed crane (*Porzana cinerea*) is a small, slim-body crane with striking diagnostic face pattern that typically resides in vegetated coastal and freshwater wetlands, ranging from Malaysia and Greater Sundas through Philippines, Sulawesi, Moluccas and Lesser Sundas to New Guinea and north Australia, and east through Micronesia and Melanesia to Polynesia (Fiji and Samoa) (Taylor, 1996). The species was not included in the early avian checklist of China (Cheng, 1987), though the first recorded observation was in Southern Taiwan between 1984 and 1985 (Lin, 1997). Later, one vagrant was observed in 1991 at Mai Po, Hong Kong (Kennerley, 1992). To date, this species has never been recorded in mainland China (Wang et al, 2006; Zheng, 2011). During a recent survey of birds in Guangxi and Sichuan, several recent sightings in the area suggest that a new distribution record of this species in mainland China is warranted.

OBSERVATIONS

On 28 August 2012, one adult white-browed crane was

observed at Honggu reservoir, Ningming Town, Southwestern of Guangxi, China. This sighting was treated as vagrant record, and no photographic evidence was obtained or published. Several months later on 2 February 2013, a sole crane was found and photographed in a suburban pond locating in Baise City, in Northwestern Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region. According to this species' typical face pattern and behaviour, it was identified as an adult white-browed crane. Later, one juvenile was found at farmland on 15 November (Figure 1) and another at Longjing reservoir on 24 December 2013 in Baise City, Guangxi. In addition, one juvenile white-browed crane was found by Min Xue, a birdwatcher, in Xichang Wetland Park, Sichuan Province, on 25 October 2013 (Table 1, Figure 2).



Figure 1 A white-browed crane (right) in Baise, Guangxi, Southwestern China (Photo by Dong-Sheng GUO)

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Table 1 Records of white-browed crane in Mainland China

Date	Age class	Number (n)	Site recorded	Longitude	Latitude	Altitude (m)	Habitat
28 Aug. 2012	Adult	1	Ningming, Guangxi	E107° 09'	N22° 03'	164	Reservoir
02 Feb. 2013	Adult	1	Baise, Guangxi	E106° 36'	N23° 52'	142	Pond
25 Oct. 2013	Juvenile	1	Xichang, Sichuan	E102° 18'	N27° 48'	1 511	Wetland park
15 Nov. 2013	Juvenile	1	Baise, Guangxi	E106° 36'	N23° 52'	147	Farmland
24 Dec. 2013	Juvenile	1	Baise, Guangxi	E106° 36'	N23° 52'	142	Reservoir

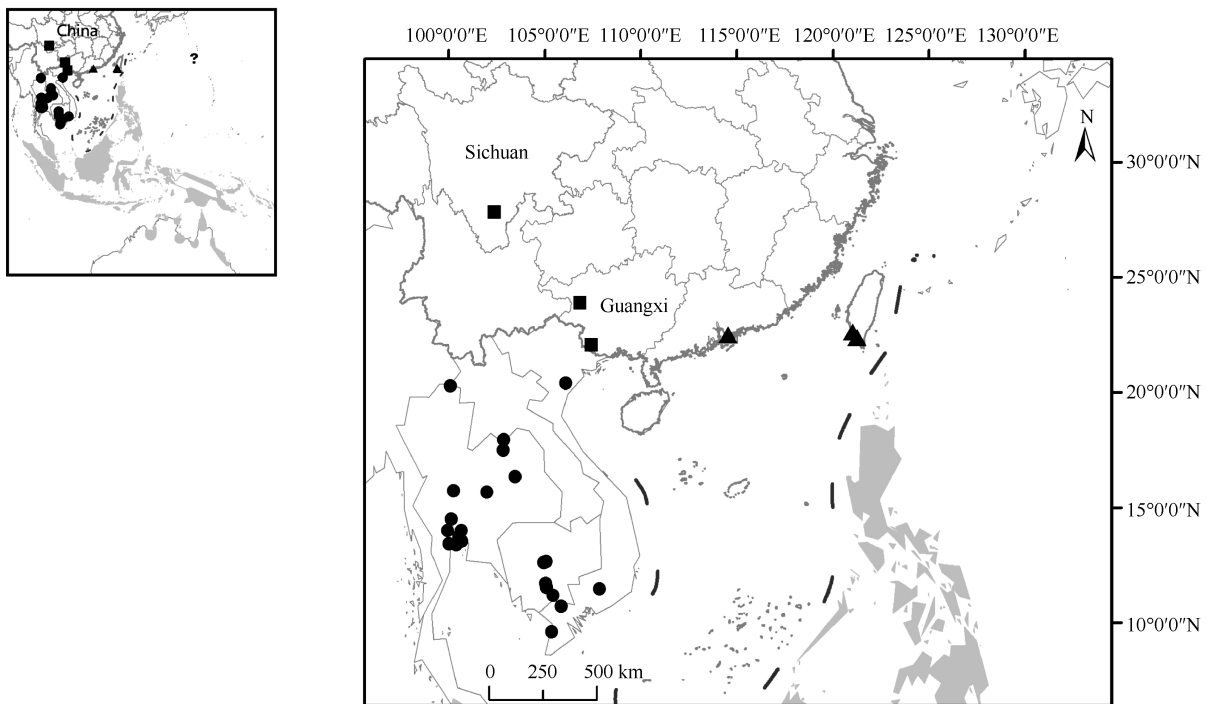


Figure 2 The distribution range and records of white-browed crane

■: New records for mainland China from this study; ▲: Previous records in Hong Kong and Taiwan; ●: Records from non-Sundaic mainland Asia since 1980 (Duckworth & Evans, 2007); grey shadow: The distribution range (Handbook of the Birds of the World, 1996); ?: Extinct site.

DISCUSSION

The white-browed crane was previously thought to distribute mainly in south of the Isthmus of Kra, which includes Malaysia, Singapore, Philippines, Indonesia, New Guinea and North Australia (Taylor, 1996). Accordingly, in Southeast Asia, early records were from Malay Peninsula (Robinson & Chasen, 1936). In the 1990s, new distribution sites were found across Southeast Asia, including Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam and Laos (Buckton & Safford, 2004; Mundkur et al, 1995; Robson, 2000, 2004, 2011). Duckworth & Hedges (2007) analyzed this species distribution records since 1980 and proposed that white-browed crane has been expanding northward from a purely Sundaic distribution and moving almost to China. This hypothesis was well supported by the studied records: one distribution site in Laos was ~800 km north of any historical sighting, while the site in northern Vietnam at Van Long

Nature Reserve—quite close to the southwestern Chinese border—was considered as an “amazing range extension” (Duckworth & Hedges, 2007). Taking our distribution data of the crane in mainland China alongside several recent records for other birds in this region (Jiang & Ning, 2010; Jiang et al, 2013), it seems likely that the white-browed crane’s distribution range is quickly expanding in Asia. Indeed, the distance between Baise and Van Long Nature Reserve is ~400 km, and Xichang to Van Long is ~900 km.

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