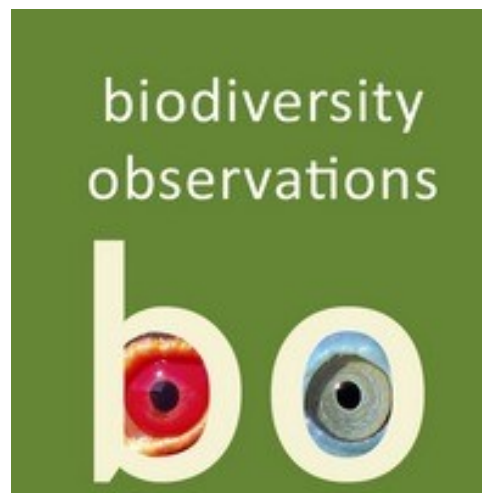


# Winged laughter: First confirmed sighting of the Laughing Dove *Spilopelia senegalensis* in Kollam, Kerala, India

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## Observation

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## Abstract

The Laughing Dove *Spilopelia senegalensis* had previously not been recorded in Kollam, Kerala, India; the sighting reported here was made on 2 December 2023. The distance to the nearest previous record is c. 80 km.

## Introduction

The Laughing Dove *Spilopelia senegalensis*, also known as the Palm Dove, is a slender, long-tailed dove with a pinkish-brown underside, and a lilac-tinged head and neck. Sexes are indistinguishable in the field. Plumage variations occur across populations; those from arid zones typically exhibiting paler hues (Ali & Ripley 1981).

Widely distributed across Africa, the Middle East, Central Asia and India, and introduced to Western Australia (Baptista et al. 1997), the Laughing Dove is known to inhabit variety of habitats, including dry landscapes and urban gardens. In India, the species is commonly found in dry deciduous biotopes and on the fringes of semi-desert regions. It has only been recorded on the eastern edge of Kerala, a state in southwestern India (State of India's Birds 2023).

## Observation

The encounter occurred at 15h45 on 2 December 2023, when a Laughing Dove was spotted perched on the Indian railway's overhead electric line (Figure 1) in front of Fatima Mata National College, Kollam (8° 53' 13.556" N, 76° 36' 9.670" E), India. We noticed the dove immediately. We were not actively birdwatching, so we did not have our digital photographic equipment with us. Nevertheless, we observed the bird through binoculars and captured a few photographs, using a Samsung S20FE mobile phone. The bird appeared to be a subadult, lacking the characteristic chequered mark on its neck.

This is the first documented record of the species within the Kollam district of Kerala. The observation was recorded on eBird (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S155574769>). Previous reports from eBird indicate sightings in Palakkad, Idukki and Kannur districts in eastern Kerala and many other regions of India. The closest sighting is c. 80 km distant.




**State of India's Birds 2023.** State of India's Birds factsheet: Laughing Dove *Spilopelia senegalensis* (India). Available online at <https://stateofindiabirds.in/species/laudov1/>

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**Figure 1:** The Laughing Dove perched on overhead electric line.

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