

## Recent ornithological literature on South Asia and Tibet

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## Correspondence

### Berwala Bird Sanctuary: A response

Mr Suresh C. Sharma's observations [*Newsletter for Ornithologists* 1 (6): 95] on my article "Berwala Bird Safari" [*ibid.* 1 (5): 72-73] reminds me of a statement by Jim Corbett, "In Nature there is no finality." It would be 50 years when I read it but it surfaces to memory every time there is a bird sighting out of the usual. For instance, the Rufous-tailed Wheatear *Oenanthe xanthopyrmyna* has a well-defined wintering ground but then in 1912 A. E. Jones spotted one at Sairee, near Shimla, hundreds of miles father afield. Now Jones was an ornithologist of standing and so Salim Ali and Dillon Ripley especially mention this sight-record in their book. In 2003, 90 years later, I spotted one at Chandigarh. Not many would have believed it. I was singularly lucky to have photographed it and a scientist authenticated the physical features in the photograph and on the ground-site. The full account of it with the photograh will appear in a future issue of this journal.

I had been hearing the Blue Whistling-Thrush *Myophonus caeruleus* at the Zakir Rose Garden in Chandigarh in December-February between 1996-1999. I saw one at last in 2002. Would anyone believe me? Among the various books I looked through, Whistler recorded one sighting from as far

south as Rohtak, which at that time was part of the Thar Desert! Luckily in March 2004, I was able to photograph it in the Rose Garden and the corelation to ground-site was verified by Mr Jakati, the Chief Wildlife Warden of Haryana.

When Mr Jakati mentioned having sighted a Eurasian Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis* on his lawn at Panchkula (adjoining Chandigarh), Mr S. C. Sharma looked in disbelief. Goldfinches have since been seen more than once in the winter of 2003-2004 near the Vulture Rehabilitation Centre at Pinjore, about 10km from Panchkula. Mr Gurdial Singh who in his earlier days had guidance from the late Lt Gen. Sir Harold Williams and B. B. Osmaston, has once seen on his lawn at Chandigarh a White-capped Redstart *Chaimarrornis leucocephalus*! In 2002, I sighted two Common Shelducks for the first time at the Sukhna Lake, Chandigarh. These are all chancy occurences and may or may not be experienced by all birdwatchers but that is no reason to doubt those who happen to be lucky in encountering such species.

Now coming specifically to my article: I have seen every bird mentioned in my text as surely as day follows night. Where cuckoos are concerned there is a typing error, i.e., "Hawk" was displaced by

"Lesser". And the next three lines wee altogether missed in the typing, which describe the sighting of one Lesser Cuckoo and also that such solitary records are shown by Kazmierczak and Grimmett, et al., in their books. The Indian Cuckoo is heard without fail even at Panchkula and Chandigarh, which are lower than Berwala. There is just no doubt about it.

Mr Jakati and I were returning from a walk in Berwala when we met Mr S. C. Sharma and his two companions near the "vertical mud cliff". That is when Mr Sharma showed us the two Wallcreepers *Tichodroma muraria* and all of us believed this to be the first sighting at Berwala even though it may well have been sighted regularly elsewhere in the Morni Hills. (The same would also be true of most other species figuring in the Berwala checklist.) We even discussed whether the presence of Wallcreepers would help in getting the Important Bird Area status for Berwala. Lastly, Mr Sharma had indeed provided a checklist of 154 species (not 140), but I stated 83 as the number observed by me.

The Berwala Bird Sanctuary was officially inaugurated in early 2002. Since then there have been several changes in the bureaucratic heirarchy. The Sanctuary is showing signs of grave neglect. Its gazette