

Brood protection by Greater Painted-Snipe *Rostratula benghalensis*

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Udaipur, the city of lakes, has *nullahs* that drain the excess water of the lakes. Our house is situated near one such *nullah*, which drains the excess water of Pichola Lake and Fateh Sagar. Nowadays this *nullah* carries more sewage than water. I have been watching aquatic birds and waders in this *nullah* for several years.

On 13.ix.2003 I was watching a Greater Painted-Snipe *Rostratula benghalensis*

skulking at the edge of the water, using every bit of cover. Two chicks were following it in the same manner. It approached a small bush just near the water's edge when a feral pig waded towards it from the opposite bank. The adult froze. Both the young birds came towards its legs, one on the right side and another on the left. The parent opened its wings partially and sat on the ground, retracting them. It

then stood up slowly, lifting both the chicks under its wings and froze in that position. The dangling legs of the chicks were clearly visible through field glasses. The pig crossed the *nullah* and passed within four feet of the bush without noticing the snipe. When the pig had moved on, the snipe deposited both the chicks on the ground and moved towards the safety of dense bushes.

Pied Tit *Parus nuchalis* in Pali District, Rajasthan, India

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From 28.v.2004-5.vi.2004 we toured extensively in Pali District, Rajasthan. Most of our exploration was in Kumbhalgarh Wildlife Sanctuary and adjacent areas. This is a semi-arid region and geological formations consist mostly of acidic volcanic rocks. The area is covered with thick thorny undergrowth and is strewn with huge boulders.

During this tour we spotted eight pairs

of the endemic and 'Vulnerable' Pied Tit *Parus nuchalis*. We were able to take photographs of some of the birds and also film them. Given its 'Vulnerable' status, we feel that every sighting should be recorded.

On 28.v.2004 one pair was observed near a waterhole at Maalgarh-ki-Chowki, which is near the famous Ranakpur temple.

On 31.v.2004, three pairs were observed from 10:00-11:45hrs near Jobha village. On 4.vi.2004, two pairs were observed from 10:30-14:00hrs at a waterhole constructed by the forest department near the Sumer Forest rest house. On 29.vi.2004 (11:30-12:00hrs), two pairs were observed at the waterhole near the temple at Sumer.

Fea's Thrush *Turdus feae* (Salvadori, 1887) at Lava, West Bengal, India.

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On 3.v.1999 I was birding in an area about 4km from Lava, West Bengal on the road that goes down to Kalimpong, at roughly 2,000m a.s.l. At this spot there is a semi-open area with two hairpin bends. Here there were many Striated Bulbuls *Pycnonotus striatus*, a White-throated Bulbul *Alophoixus flaveolus* and a Rufous-bellied Bulbul (Mountain Bulbul) *Ixos mcclellandii* (previously named *Hypsipetes mcclellandii*). Looking for more views of these species, whilst cutting through the shortcut path at the top hairpin through some bushes, I flushed some White-collared Blackbirds *Turdus albocinctus* feeding low down. Suddenly I also flushed another smaller thrush-sized bird, which flew to a low perch close by. I had enough time to get my binoculars on it and to see it was an unknown bird to me. Luckily when it flew, it was only to a tree about 25m away where it sat still long enough for me to have good views and to take notes and make a drawing

while it was right there.

The bird was judging by shape and jizz an obvious *Turdus*-like thrush. The markings except around the eye area were very simple. The upper-parts including the whole of the closed wing, the nape, ear coverts and upper-tail were a uniform olive-brown except the crown, which was slightly more reddish. The wings had no obvious wing bar. The under-parts including the flanks, chin and throat were a uniform light grey. Where these two colours met around the neck-sides they were blended with no strong contrast.

The facial pattern was however, striking. The lores were very dark, contrasting with a clear white full supercilium, which extended from the bill to the rear of the eye and curved down slightly around the ear coverts. Below the eye was a half-moon eye crescent, which continued unbroken in a line to the bill and so, enclosed the dark lores area with white.

The bill and legs were a nondescript

dull colour. Other features noted were the small size compared to White-collared Blackbird, a broad tail and a fairly pointed bill.

All these features were noted from the perched bird. I had poor flight views.

The bird was seen at about 15:30hrs in very changeable conditions: drizzle very quickly followed by sun, and a light breeze. Weather had been like this for at least a week. The habitat was deciduous. The area was surrounded with large trees but the bird was actually feeding in or beneath bushes, which were also on the edge of a clearing. This was right beside a steep ravine.

On returning to Lava to study Grimmett, et al. (1998) I could see that the distinctive head pattern around the dark lores was a feature of only two thrush species, Fea's Thrush *Turdus feae* and Eyebrowed Thrush *Turdus obscurus*. Very clear views of the light grey flanks were obtained, furthermore the uniform olive brown upper-parts with