

except that of a juvenile at Vellarimala on 07 March 2011, being fed by adults (Sashikumar *et al.* 2011b).

We observed the nesting behaviour of the Wynaad Laughing-thrush on 08 March 2014, at Sairandhri (11.83°N, 76.43°E; 1017 m asl), Silent Valley National Park, Kerala [123]. Two birds were seen carrying fine fibre-like nest material from the undergrowth [124], a *Strobilanthes* patch, to the nesting tree, *Mesua ferrea* with a height of 9.5 m. The pair was observed at this activity for more than an hour; 1100–1230 hrs, making 11 trips altogether to the nest, at intervals of three to fifteen minutes. After this, the pair disappeared into same undergrowth. There were no activities at the nest site in the afternoon.

On the next day, nest construction lasted for about 20 min., with the birds bringing nest material to the nest site only three times.

On the third day we did not see the birds at the site.

On the fourth day, one bird was sitting on a top branch of the 'nest' tree, for about ten minutes before it disappeared.

We continued our observations for the next five days, but did not spot the birds there, which indicates that they deserted the nest for unknown reason.

Ali & Ripley (1987) reported the breeding season of the Wynaad Laughing-thrush as April to August in Kerala, and found their nests in bushes, saplings, and *Strobilanthes*, within a couple of meters from the ground. However, our observation of the nesting activity, and the sighting of the juvenile bird by Sashikumar *et al.* (2011b), was in early March. Zacharias (1997) reported a possible communal nesting behaviour of the species from Periyar Tiger Reserve where the birds built the nest at a height of three meters on an *Actinodaphne hirsuta* tree. However, during our observations, the nest platform—an irregularly arranged clump of fibres—that the birds constructed was placed nine meters above the ground.

Although 11 sightings, of 39 Wynaad Laughing-thrushes were made in the Silent Valley National Park, from March 2013 to May

2014, no other breeding activity of the species was observed. Of these, nine observations were from the elevation range already stated, while two were from 2004 m at Sispara, close to the Mukurthi National Park. This may probably be the highest altitudinal record for this species.

The lack of observations on the breeding activities suggests the need of a systematic study on the breeding status and productivity of this endemic species.

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First record of European Roller *Coracias garrulus* from Tamil Nadu

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Introduction

The European Roller *Coracias garrulus* is a fall migrant through much of north-western-, and central- India, occasionally reaching the eastern parts of southern peninsular India (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). Its nearest breeding population is in Central Asia; its entire global population winters in Africa. Two subspecies are recognised: *C. g. semenowi* breeds from Iraq eastwards, through Kashmir, to north-western China, and is believed to pass through the Indian Subcontinent during autumn.

Migration records for southern India

During the autumn/fall migration, this species occurs widely as a passage migrant throughout Pakistan, and the north-western

Indian states like Punjab, Rajasthan, and Gujarat. The peninsular Indian region, not being in the direct flight path to the wintering grounds in Africa, only attracts a few stragglers; mostly young birds. Narayanan *et al.* (2008) summarise the records for the southern states of Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka, and the undivided erstwhile Andhra Pradesh from where this species has been recorded, till 2008, on 18 instances from 15 locations. Kerala records are from: the Irupathinalayiram Kayal area, Alappuzha District on 29 October 2002 (Narayanan *et al.* 2008), and from Chinnar Wildlife Sanctuary on 28 November 2002 by Eldhouse (Sashikumar *et al.* 2011). Subsequently, there are several records for the European Roller from northern Kerala (Keralabirder). The most recent sighting from southern India was from the Union Territory of Puducherry on 10 January 2014 by Lekshmi (2014).

Photo: Sarayu R



125. European Roller.

First sighting of a European Roller from Tamil Nadu

During a recent visit to our family farm located in Kathakottai (10.81°N, 77.76°E), 20 km east of Dharapuram, in Tirupur District (Tamil Nadu), I photographed a European Roller [125], and confirmed its ID with the help of Grimmett *et al.* (2011). On 12 October 2014 around 1200 hrs, while we were working in the farm-field, I noticed eight Paddyfield Pipits *Anthus rufulus* perched on the power lines nearby. Around 1230 hrs a roller arrived and perched on a nearby tree *Acacia leucophloea*. It looked a little different from the much more common Indian Roller *C. benghalensis*, which is usually seen in these parts. I immediately rushed inside, got my camera, and took a few photographs of the bird; later confirmed it as a European Roller—a possible first for the state of Tamil Nadu. During these events, the European Roller flew from plant to plant. Even though its flight pattern was similar to that of an Indian Roller, its dark flight feathers provided

additional confirmation that it was indeed a European Roller. It is worth noting that the area around this part of Tirupur District mostly comprises dry fallow land, with sparsely vegetated thorn scrub. From these reports, it transpires that the species may be a regular passage migrant through southern peninsular India as well, and was probably overlooked in the past, or misidentified as the commoner Indian Roller.

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Rosy Starling *Pastor roseus*: A first record from Uttarakhand, India

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During a field survey for birds in the Doon Valley (Dehradun District of Uttarakhand) I encountered a Rosy Starling *Pastor roseus* in Khatta Pani village (30.22°N, 78.04°E) on 07 May 2013 at 0830 hrs. A single individual of this species was observed and photographed on a rohini tree *Mallotus philippensis* [126]. The Rosy Starling was foraging on its open fruit and was accompanied by two Jungle Mynas *Acridotheres fuscus*, one Asian Pied Starling *Gracupica contra*, and two Red-vented Bulbuls *Pycnonotus cafer*. After a feeding bout that lasted about five minutes the Rosy Starling flew to a *Litsea monopetala* tree (that was c. 15 m high, and about 5 m away from the rohini tree) where it perched near the top for about 15 min. While perching, it periodically sang, before returning again to the rohini tree to feed. For nearly an hour the bird alternated between feeding on the rohini, and perching (and singing) on the *Litsea* tree.

The area where I saw the starling is an open strip of land lying between the River Suswa (a tertiary tributary of River Ganga), and Nagsidh Reserved Forest in Dehradun Forest Division. The forest is dominated by fairly dense sal *Shorea robusta*, with small numbers of trees such as sain *Terminalia alata*, rohini, and haldu *Adina cordifolia*, occurring as associates (Champion & Seth 1968). However, the vegetation between the forest and the river is open, and consists of a mix of riverine trees (shisham *Dalbergia sissoo*, and semal *Bombax ceiba*) and crop fields where wheat had recently been harvested.

The Rosy Starling is a winter visitor to peninsular India and Sri Lanka (Ali & Ripley 1986; Rasmussen & Anderton 2005). In northern, and western India, including the Indo-Gangetic plains, this bird is seen during early summer when it makes a passage to its breeding grounds in south-eastern Europe, south-western Asia,