Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Tryngites subruficollis* from northern Kerala: a third record for India

P. C. Rajeevan & Jayan Thomas


P. C. Rajeevan, Pandanchira, Kizhuthally, Kannur, Kerala, India. Email: p.crajeevan@yahoo.in [PCR]

Jayan Thomas, Cannanore Eye Hospital, Kannur 670001, Kerala, India. Email: jayanthoms7080@yahoo.in [JT]

This note describes the sighting of a Nearctic vagrant, the Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Tryngites subruficollis* from Madayipara, Kannur district, Kerala. Madayipara (12°01’N, 75°15’E) is a laterite hillock on the south-western coast of India, situated in Madayi village near Payangadi town in the Kannur district of Kerala. The area is largely a plateau with grassy meadows and rocks interspersed with very few trees or shrubs. There are several small pools amidst the rocky spots apart from two large artificial tanks.

This small area is rich in biodiversity (Palot & Radhakrishnan 2005) and is one of the best over-wintering areas in Kerala for migrants like Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva*, Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii*, Lesser Sand plovers *C. mongolus*, Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*, and Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus* (Sashikumar et al. 2011). Reports of the first sightings from Kerala of birds like Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina* (Sashikumar et al. 2011), and Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris* (Rajeevan et al. in press) were also from Madyaipara.

**Details of the Sighting:** While watching waders at 1115 hrs on 30 October 2011, PCR spotted a small wader that looked different in plumage and structure from the accompanying Lesser Sand Plovers; it had yellow legs and pearly-edged wings. The bird was smaller and slimmer than the accompanying sand plovers, with a short, pointed, stint-like bill, and seemed more like a small Pacific Golden Plover in general plumage. PCR recollected seeing a bird with yellow legs on 28 October 2011, also in the same area at 0830 hrs, but was unable to watch it at close quarters then. On this day, while the bird was under close observation by PCR, JT inched closer to get some photos of the bird. The bird was observed for about 30 min, from as close as 15 m. The bird was also spotted on 1 and 2 November by PCR, and was last seen on 3 November by JT & PCR when it was filmed. The bird could not be located after this date despite several visits and detailed searches by PCR. Hence, it seemed to have been around for at least three days and possibly a few more days earlier prior to 30 October.

**Behaviour:** The bird was feeding on a small patch of burnt-out grass by the side of a pool near a rocky area. It was actively feeding, a little away from the plovers, with its head bobbing while feeding. The bird was silent at all times and had striking sun-flower yellow legs. At times a plover would butt this bird with its head and the bird would flee to a side and start feeding again. The bird was not shy as we could approach as close as 15 m, without flushing it. Whenever the plovers took off, this bird also would join them, but was usually the last one to take to the air.

**Field features:** The bird was a generally drab, buff-coloured, wader with scalloped upper-parts. Its crown, nape, hind-neck, and upper mantle were streaked with fine blackish lines. It had a dove-like plain buff head with a dark eye and a pale eyering that stood out in an otherwise non-descript buff face. The bill was short, black, and straight, and was nearly equal to the length of the head measured across the eye. Mantle, scapulars, wing coverts, and tertials had black-centred feathers. The breast was buff with small black spots on its sides. The chin seemed paler brown than the face and fore-neck. The neck and breast were buff in colour and the rest of the under parts gradually faded to a whitish colour from rear belly, and vent to the under-tail coverts. In flight, the bird showed white on the under-wing, but no hint of white on the upper-wings, tail, or rump.

Photographs (Figs. 1 & 2) showing all the field features were widely circulated for expert opinion. Though the plumage showing pale eye-ring, unmarked face, and spots on the sides of breast was convincing enough for identifying a Buff-breasted Sandpiper, photographs of lone birds are liable to be confused.
Feeding record of the Green Cochoa Cochoa viridis in Pakke Tiger Reserve, Arunachal Pradesh

Nandini Velho


The Green Cochoa Cochoa viridis is a shy, arboreal, and frugivorous bird. It is fairly widespread in north-eastern India and South-east Asia (del Hoyo et al. 2005). Little is known of its diet though it is reported to feed broadly on berries, insects, and molluscs (del Hoyo et al. 2005). Bishop (1999), recorded two instances of Green Cochoa foraging in the mid-storey of subtropical forests at 1,000 m, and on exposed tops of tall trees within a mosaic of partially degraded subtropical forest at 1,400 m. On both those occasions, there were no details on what the cochoas fed on.

In 2010, I sighted the Green Cochoa in the foothill forests (150 m ASL) of Pakke Tiger Reserve (26°54′–27°16′N, 92°36′–93°09′E; 862 m²), in eastern Arunachal Pradesh. As part of a larger study on avian frugivory in the area, fruit tree watches on several bird-dispersed tree species were conducted from 0600 hrs to 1100 hrs. Focal tree watches were conducted on a Litsea sp. which was seen to be fruiting in February–March. Fruits of these species are drupaceous, occur in clusters, and have a diameter of 9.09 mm. This tree species belongs to the predominantly bird-dispersed Lauraceae family (Datta & Rawat 2008).

On 14 March 2010 at 0748 hrs a Green Cochoa was observed feeding on the fruits of a Litsea sp. The bird spent nearly three

Table 1. Table of past records of Buff-breasted Sandpiper Tryngites subruficollis from South Asia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Observer(s)</th>
<th>Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 March 1960</td>
<td>Kalametiya Lagoon, near Hambantota, Southern Province, Sri Lanka</td>
<td>TSE De Zylva</td>
<td>Norris 1960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 May 1996</td>
<td>Hanke, Punjab, India</td>
<td>Rick Heil, Paul Holt &amp; other birders</td>
<td>Robson 1996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 November 2000</td>
<td>Santa Cruz, Goa, India</td>
<td></td>
<td>Holt &amp; Heil 2003</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Suhel Qader, J. Praveen, C. Sashikumar, Aasheesh Pitte, V Santharam, Khaled Chowia, Mike Prince, Bill Harvey, Rex De Silva, S Balachandran and Krys Karmierzczuk who helped in identifying this wader from photographs and provided detailed information on prior records of this species.

References


