

Range extension for the Orange-breasted Green-pigeon *Treron bicinctus* to western Uttarakhand, India

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On 24 November 2010, while collecting data for a research project, I spotted Orange-breasted Green-pigeons *Treron bicinctus* on trees along Bam Rau at 0730 hrs (30°06'67.7"N, 77°99'70.8"E) in Rajaji National Park. At first it resembled a Yellow-footed Green-pigeon *T. phoenicopetrus* but on closer observation its characteristic red feet, and orange breast-patch were noted. Three individuals were observed, of which, two were males and one was a female. The birds were observed for more than 20 min through 8x42 binoculars, from a distance of 20–25 m., and photographed. During the entire observation period, birds were perched, and preening themselves. Both males showed a narrow pinkish band on the upper breast followed by a broader orange breast-patch, a bluish-grey nape, and hind neck. Tail was slaty grey above with a broad blackish sub-terminal band. Underside of tail was black with a grey tip. Female showed a bright greenish-yellow breast but lacked the pinkish-orange breast-patch.

Globally, Orange-breasted Green-pigeons are present in India, Myanmar, Thailand, Malay Peninsula, and South Vietnam. Its conspecifics are also present in Ceylon, Java, and Hainan (Ali & Ripley 1983). It is a resident bird in India with normal seasonal local movements. In northern India, it is distributed from eastern Uttarakhand to Assam valley, lower part of southern Assam hills, Himalayan foothills, and adjacent plains. In peninsular India, it ranges from West Bengal, and Chota Nagpur, southward along the Eastern Ghats, also inhabiting the Western Ghats and associated hill ranges from Kerala northward through Karnataka to Goa (Ali & Ripley 1983; Rasmussen & Anderton 2005). It prefers evergreen and moist deciduous forest types. Similar to all other green-pigeons, it is gregarious, arboreal, and frugivorous (Husain 1958; Ali & Ripley 1983). Green-pigeons feed largely on drupes and berries, especially *Ficus* sp. Fruits, which is their staple food (Ali & Ripley 1983). This sighting also took place near mixed hill forest where a large number of fruiting trees, especially *Ziziphus mauritiana* were fruiting.

Other Indian records are from Assam (Barua & Sharma 1999, 2005; Choudhury 2006), Arunachal Pradesh (Choudhury 2003), Orissa (Gopi & Pandav 2007), Uttar Pradesh (Javed & Rahmani 1998), and Karnataka (Srinivasan & Prashanth 2006). Orange-Breasted Green-pigeon has been recorded, for the first time, in Panna National Park (Madhya Pradesh) in January 2010 (Ponappa 2010), and from near Chennai (Tamil Nadu) in August 2011 (Frederick 2011), much away from its known geographical range. As far as its distribution in Uttarakhand is concerned, it has been reported only from Corbett National Park, Nainital district (Bhartari 1999). Recent avifaunal studies in this, and adjacent areas do not report this species (Pandey *et al.* 1995; Singh 2000; Sultana & Javed 2000; Singh 2002).

Rajaji National Park is a part of the Shiwalik landscape, and boasts more than 300 spp of birds (Pandey *et al.* 1995). Its habitat has undergone various changes since the compilation of Pandey *et al.*'s list. One of the major changes is the relocation of *Gujjars* in 2003, a pastoralist tribe, from various parts of Rajaji. *Gujjar* relocation has substantially reduced lopping, and other anthropogenic pressures. Consequently, all the evacuated areas are recovering quickly, and therefore have more resources for wildlife. The area where the present sighting took place was also one of these evacuated areas in the southern part of the national park.

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18. Orange-breasted Green-pigeon *Treron bicinctus*.
Photo: Monica Kaushik