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Elliot's Laughingthrush *Trochalopteron elliotii* and Black-headed Greenfinch *Chloris ambigua* from Anini, Arunachal Pradesh, India

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During my recently concluded master's study on the 'Role of Brahmaputra River as a biogeographical barrier,' I came across a couple of interesting species for the Indian Subcontinent. I visited Anini, which is the district headquarters of Upper Dibang district, between 23 and 25 April 2012. I birded mainly around Anini town and along the road towards Mipi village, which is located on the border of Dihang Dibang Biosphere Reserve (hereafter DDBR). Anini lies just south of DDBR (28°27'–29°03'N, 94°29'–95°49'E), which spans an area of 5111.5 km² (core: 4094.8 km², buffer: 1016.7 km²), and incorporates parts of West Siang, Upper Siang, and Dibang Valley districts, and the Mouling National Park, Mehao and Dibang Wildlife Sanctuaries. It shares its northern boundary with Tibet and eastern boundary with Myanmar. DDBR is located in the Eastern Himalaya Global Biodiversity Hotspot, recognised worldwide for its rich flora and fauna. Almost completely forested, DDBR encompasses a huge variety of habitats owing to its vast elevational range (500–6000 m asl), from lowland tropical evergreen forests to high alpine meadows.

On 24 April 2012 while birding en-route Mipi (28°50'N, 95°52'E; 1500 m asl) from Anini I glimpsed a pair of Elliot's Laughingthrushes *Trochalopteron elliotii* crossing the road. The birds responded well to song recordings from China (Xeno-canto recording XC68368). They circled around the speaker and gave several good views for over five minutes. However I did not come across this species during the rest of my stay at Anini.

Elliot's Laughingthrush is a common resident of China from eastern Qinghai and adjacent northern Gansu (south-eastern Qilian Shan) east to Southwest Nei Monggol (Helan Shan), south to south-eastern Xizang, central Tunnan, western Guizhou, southern Ningxia, southern Shaanxi and Whubei (Collar & Robson 2007). There has been only one earlier sighting of this species for India, from north-eastern Arunachal Pradesh close to Hotspring (extreme north-eastern of Arunachal Pradesh) where a flock of 20 individuals were sighted on 15 September 1994 (Singh 1995). This species is listed as hypothetical by Rasmussen & Anderton (2012), and considered doubtful by Grimmett *et al.* (2011) for the Indian Subcontinent.

I also found that Black-headed Greenfinch *Chloris ambigua* was very common on all three days of my stay there (28°47'N,

95°53'E; 1600 m asl). These birds were seen perched on overhead electric wires, and conifer trees, on multiple occasions. Black-headed Greenfinch has a very wide distribution in China, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam (Robson 2001; IUCN 2013). However it is considered hypothetical for the Indian Subcontinent (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). However, Singh (1995) had earlier reported this species from Walong, Arunachal Pradesh. Atul Jain, Harkirath Singh Sangha, and Manoj Sharma also sighted the birds at Walong on 7 May 2013 (*pers. comm.*)

Hotspring and Walong are located in Anjaw district, Arunachal Pradesh, c. 130 kms south-east of Anini. The sightings of these hypothetical species are significant as there are several areas in Arunachal Pradesh whose ornithology is still unexplored. Such areas can still throw potential ornithological surprises.

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