

Asian Stubtail *Urosphena squameiceps* in Rabindrasarobar, Kolkata: A first record for India

Sandip Das

Das, S., 2014. Asian Stubtail *Urosphena squameiceps* in Rabindrasarobar, Kolkata: A first record for India. *Indian BIRDS* 9 (1): 26–27.

Sandip Das, Manomathanagar, Manoharpur East, P. O. & P. S. Dankuni, District Hooghly, West Bengal 712311, India. Email: sandipwildlife@gmail.com.

Manuscript received on 01 December 2013.

Asian Stubtail *Urosphena squameiceps* is a small, short-tailed, Old World warbler that breeds in north-eastern Asia and winters from southern China to northern Southeast Asia, including the south Chin Hills and western Myanmar (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). Though it has been recorded from Nepal and Bangladesh, it is still considered 'hypothetical' in South Asia as published details are not considered definite.

On 03 November 2013, I went to Rabindrasarobar, Kolkata (22°30'N, 88°21'E) for birding with two of my friends. It is a well-wooded area with some undergrowth. The morning was sunny with clear skies. After birding, I had put my camera back in its case by 1300 hrs, when I noticed a movement amongst the dry leaves on the ground near the safari park. A tiny warbler was moving on the ground like a thrush and catching small spiders and insects. It was moving beside two Orange-headed Thrushes

Geocichla citrina and a Forest Wagtail *Dendronanthus indicus*. It would fly close to the ground for a short distance (3–4 m) when disturbed. After spending more than 30 minutes watching and photographing the bird, I left the place.

The bird is distinctive enough to be identified as an Asian Stubtail as there is no other warbler that feeds on the ground and has a very short tail. The long supercilium, black eye-stripe, rather pale and long legs, and longish dark beak were all visible in the photographs [37, 38]. Back from the field, I sent the photographs to Sumit K. Sen of *Kolkata Birds* and he circulated them to warbler experts, including Peter Kennerley and Philip D. Round; all confirming it as this species.

This appears to be the first record from India and probably the second photographic record from the Indian Subcontinent; Table 1 lists the known records from the Indian Subcontinent.



37. caption to follow



38. caption to follow

Table 2. List of Asian Stubtail records from Indian Subcontinent

Date	Location	Coordinates	Reference
21 January 1993	Dharan forest, north of Itahari, eastern Nepal	26°46'N, 87°17'E	Lewis 1994
16 January 1997	Lawachara forest, Bangladesh	24°20'N, 91°47'E	Thompson & Johnson 2003
18 December 1999	Lawachara forest, Bangladesh	24°20'N, 91°47'E	Thompson & Johnson 2003
02 January 2011	Madhobkunda Waterfall, Barlekha, Moulvi Bazar, Bangladesh	24°38'N, 92°13'E	Chowdhury 2013; see elsewhere in this issue
03 November 2013	Rabindrasarobar, Kolkata, West Bengal, India	22°30'N, 88°21'E	Das 2013; this record

It has been recently photographed from Bangladesh in January 2011 (Chowdhury 2013; see elsewhere in this issue). These photographic records should remove any doubt of its occurrence in the region.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Peter Kennerley, Philip D. Round, Praveen J., Sumit K. Sen, and Arka Sarkar for their support and valuable input on identification of the bird.

References

- Lewis, A., 1994. Asian Stubtail *Urosphena squameiceps*: a new species for Nepal and the Indian subcontinent. *Forktail* 9: 155.
- Rasmussen, P. C., & Anderton, J. C., 2012. *Birds of South Asia: the Ripley guide*. 2nd ed. Washington, D.C. and Barcelona: Smithsonian Institution and Lynx Edicions. 2 vols. Pp. 1–378; 1–683.
- Thompson, P. M., & Johnson, D. L., 2003. Further notable bird records from Bangladesh. *Forktail* 19: 85–102.

Letter to the Editor

A study of Crossbills (*loxia curvirostra*) in the Himalaya: An appeal for information

There is some evidence to indicate that there may be at least two distinct varieties of crossbills in the Himalaya, one associated with Himalayan hemlocks *Tsuga dumosa* and other with Chinese larch *Larix potaninii* (Edelaar, P., 2008, *Ibis* 150: 405–408; see also Kannan's review of the paper in *Indian BIRDS* 4 (1): 35–36, 2008). We plan to make a formal study to investigate this as part of Anant Deshwal's Ph.D. programme at the University of Arkansas. We wish to study song dialects and habitat associations, and, if possible, morphometric measurements, in the various crossbill populations. We want to compare these data between populations associated with various conifers. We plan to include areas with only Hemlocks, areas with only Larches, and areas where both the conifers overlap in distribution. This is an appeal for information.

Anyone who has encountered crossbills in the Himalaya is encouraged to contact Anant Deshwal with information regarding

numbers, dialects, dates, altitude, conifers in the area, and any other pertinent information. This information will be invaluable in the planning of the study. Since the birds seem to be present exclusively in high altitude regions (2500–4000 m) they seem to be missed by most casual birders. It is important for us to know where they occur and in what numbers to plan field sites and other logistics. All information will be gratefully acknowledged.

– Anant Deshwal & Douglas A. James

Department of Biological Sciences

University of Arkansas

Fayetteville AR 72701, USA

e-mail: adeshwal@uark.edu and djames@uark.edu

and

– R. Kannan

Department of Biology

University of Arkansas - Fort Smith

Fort Smith, AR 72913, USA

e-mail: ragupathy.kannan@uafs.edu