



Photo: Rohan Kamath

39A. Blue-and-white Flycatcher *Cyanoptila cyanomelana* in Pune District, Maharashtra.

More records of Blue-and-white Flycatcher *Cyanoptila cyanomelana* from the Western Ghats, India

Mihir Barve & Rohan Kamath

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Mihir Barve, B-3 Melody, 12-ICS Colony, Bhosalenagar, Pune 411007, Maharashtra, India. E-mail: mihirbarve7@gmail.com

Rohan Kamath, A2/301, Kalpataru Enclave, D.P. road, Aundh, Pune 411007, Maharashtra, India. E-mail: rohankamath88@gmail.com

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The Blue-and-white Flycatcher *Cyanoptila cyanomelana* is a summer visitor to north-eastern Asia, moving southward during winter to Taiwan, south-eastern China, and in Southeast Asia, through the Greater Sundas, to the Philippines. Two subspecies are widely recognised, the nominate, which breeds in the southern Kuril Islands, Japan, and South Korea, and *cumatilis*, which breeds in north-eastern China, south-eastern Russia, and North Korea (Clement 2006). However, in a recent appraisal, *C. c. cumatilis* has been raised to full species status, with the English name, Zappey's Flycatcher *C. cumatilis*, while *C. c. intermedia*, a junior synonym of *cumatilis*, has been elevated as *Cyanoptila cyanomelana intermedia* (Leader & Carey 2012). It is a recent addition to the avifauna of the Indian Subcontinent (Kawale 2013; Rajeshkumar *et al.* 2014).

On 12 March 2011, we came across a lone sub-adult male Blue-and-white Flycatcher in the Tamhini region of Pune District (Maharashtra, India). The bird had a deep grey head, and crown. The wings, except for the alula, showed a completely blue coloured plumage whereas the mantle and the scapulars showed less pronounced development. The blue colour of the back had not become the deep pronounced colour seen in adults. It also showed hints of blue on its breast. We were unable to positively identify the species in the field, so we photographed it [39]. After referring to several field guides, consulting with multiple senior birders, and after looking up a March 2015 photograph from Dandeli Wildlife Sanctuary (Nair 2015), we concluded that it was a Blue-and-white Flycatcher. It is however not possible to assign a racial identity to the bird based on our photographs.

Apart from a single sight report from Upper Siang District, Arunachal Pradesh (Choudhury 2006), all recent reports have been well-documented by photographs. Ours is perhaps the first photographic record from the Indian Subcontinent. Further records of this species, all from March, from the Western Ghats are listed in



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39. Blue-and-white Flycatcher *Cyanoptila cyanomelana* in Pune District, Maharashtra.

Table 1. Three more records, from other parts of the Indian Subcontinent, are listed in Rajeshkumar *et al.* (2014) who indicate that a few birds might be stopping over on the Indian Subcontinent on their return migration. In the Western Ghats, most birders, who saw our pictures of the bird, thought it was a plumage variation of the endemic White-bellied Blue Flycatcher *Cyornis pallidipes*; hence it is

Table. Sightings of Blue-and-white Flycatcher *Cyanoptila cyanomelana* from the Western Ghats

Site	Date	Reference
Tamhini, Pune, Maharashtra	12 March 2011	This publication
Alibag, Maharashtra	10 March 2012	Kawale (2012)
Ganeshgudi, Dandeli WLS, Karnataka	07/08 March 2015	Nair (2015), Rebello (2015)
Old Magazine House, Dandeli WLS, Karnataka	18 March 2015	Toliya (2015)

likely that this species has been misidentified, or overlooked in the past. The fact that the species is probably present for a short period of the year (in March), and possibly in low numbers, could also be a reason why it was not reported earlier. We urge birdwatchers, active along the entire Western Ghats, from Maharashtra till their southern tip in Kerala, and Tamil Nadu, to be alert for this species during March.

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