

Photos: Abhijit Avalaskar



130, 131. Red-throated Diver off Sindhudurg District, Arabian Sea.

western coast of India, I posted the photographs on social media; several people confirmed my identification.

Prasad (2005) did not include this species in the list of birds of western Maharashtra. There are only two reports from South Asia till date (Praveen *et al.* 2014). One was a dead bird obtained on 17 November 1901 from Ormara in Balochistan, Pakistan, while the other was a more recent record from Koshi Barrage, Nepal between 15 and 25 February 2002. There have been no reports from India till date (Praveen *et al.* 2014).

Hence, this photographic evidence is a country first for India, and a third record for the Indian Subcontinent, and South Asia.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to all the bird experts, especially, Taej Mundkur, and Adesh Shivkar for confirming the identification of the rare species. Thanks to Raju Kasambe, for help in writing the manuscript.

References

- Prasad, A., 2006. *Birds of western Maharashtra. A reference guide*. 1st ed. Mapusa, Goa: Other India Press. Pp. 1–315.
- Praveen J., Jayapal, R., & Pittie, A., 2014. Notes on Indian rarities–2: Waterfowl, diving waterbirds, and gulls and terns. *Indian BIRDS* 9 (5&6): 113–136.
- Rasmussen, P. C., & Anderton, J. C., 2012. *Birds of South Asia: the Ripley guide: attributes and status*. 2nd ed. Washington, D.C. and Barcelona: Smithsonian Institution and Lynx Edicions. Vol. 2 of 2 vols. Pp. 1–683. 📖

Sighting of Swinhoe's Minivet *Pericrocotus cantonensis* at Berbera, Odisha

Sumant Rajguru & Panchami Manoo Ukil

Rajguru, S., & Ukil, P. M., 2016. Sighting of Swinhoe's Minivet *Pericrocotus cantonensis* at Berbera, Odisha. *Indian BIRDS* 11 (4): 102–103.

Sumant Rajguru, 181 Kananshree Villa, Gayatri Vihar, Chandrashekharpur, Bhubaneswar 751024, Odisha, India. E-mail: rajguru.sumant@gmail.com. [SR]

Panchami Manoo Ukil, 12/A Forest Park, Bhubaneswar 751009, Odisha, India. E-mail: panchami14@gmail.com [PMU]

Manuscript received on 18 March 2016.

The Swinhoe's Minivet (Brown-rumped Minivet) *Pericrocotus cantonensis* is a black, grey, and white minivet with a distinctive white forecrown. It has been previously considered a race of the Rosy Minivet *P. roseus*, with which it hybridises in parts of southern China, having created a limited, but stable, population of hybrids often treated as *P. roseus stanfordi*. Swinhoe's-, Rosy, and Ashy *P. divaricatus* minivets form a superspecies (Taylor 2016). Swinhoe's Minivets breed in China and winter further down in South-east Asia. Its presence in the Indian Subcontinent is still unclear as recent works (Grimmett *et al.* 2011; Rasmussen & Anderton 2012) treat it as hypothetical, though it has been reported as 'definite' from Bangladesh. A few photographs, from different parts of India, exist on *Oriental Bird Images* (www.orientalbirdimages.org), and *eBird* (www.ebird.org). However a more comprehensive review vis-à-vis the similar Ashy Minivet is required. Here we put on record our photographs of a male Swinhoe's Minivet from Odisha.

On 27 February 2016, at 0700 hrs, Achyut Patro, Chitta Ranjan Mohapatra and SR noticed a greyish-brown minivet in the area

just before Salia Dam (19.79°N, 85.07°E) on the fringes of the Berbera-Dhunali Reserve Forest (Puri Forest Division, Khordha District, Odisha, India). This area comprises undulating foothills with dry deciduous, interspersed with evergreen, vegetation, and mostly dry undergrowth, which is not as dense as in the core forest which is about 15 km away from the point of sighting. The bird was observed to be solitary, silently flitting in the upper canopies of tall trees. We did not hear its call. There were no other minivets around and the only other bird seen close by was a Black-winged Cuckooshrike *Coracina melaschistos*, though other woodland birds could be heard. We were able to click a few photographs [132–134] before it moved away. It was not sighted again in that area after that day inspite of several attempts by SR on subsequent days.

These images were shared in different forums and most experts opined that the bird in question was a Swinhoe's Minivet, however, this can be confused with an Ashy Minivet; the latter has not yet been definitely recorded from Odisha, though there are several claims to its presence there (Inskipp 2015). The



132. Swinhoe's Minivet *P. cantonensis*. Note dingy brown wash to under parts.



133. Swinhoe's Minivet *P. cantonensis*. Note whitish shafts on tail feathers.



134. Swinhoe's Minivet *P. cantonensis*. White patch extends well beyond eye.

main features seen in these photographs, favouring a Swinhoe's Minivet, are listed below; these are based on Rasmussen & Anderton (2012), and an online blog by Bakewell (2012).

- Extent of white and grey on head indicate it is an adult male.
- Whitish shafts on tail feathers that contrast with a dark tail [133] is diagnostic (contra darker shafts that do not contrast with tail feathers in Ashy).
- Dark grey hind crown (versus black) is a feature for a male Swinhoe's [133].
- More dingy brown wash (versus pure white) to under parts [132].
- White patch extends well behind the eye (versus stopping at the eye) [134].
- Pale brownish rump (versus grey) [133].

The images have been submitted to *Oriental Bird Images*, but these have not appeared yet under either of the species. PMU sent the images to Nigel Redman, who opined, based on head pattern, that the bird could be confirmed as a Swinhoe's Minivet. A similar '*stanfordi*' race of Rosy Minivet is expected to have more pinkish on the head, and under parts, unlike this bird (Nigel Redman, in email dated 10 March 2016).

Due to its close similarities with the Ashy-, and Rosy minivets, it is quite likely that the Swinhoe's may have been overlooked in the Indian Subcontinent. Though the Rosy Minivet is a regular winter visitor to Odisha, there are very few (<10) prior claims of Ashy-, or Swinhoe's minivets from the state (Inskipp 2015). The Ashy Minivet is still listed as 'doubtful' for the state, while there appears to be one definite record of the Swinhoe's, based on photographs uploaded to online forums (Inskipp 2015). The latter refers to a bird reported as an Ashy Minivet (three photos), from Kuldiha Wildlife Sanctuary, Odisha, by Rakesh Khedwal and Ajoy Kumar Dawn on 01 (or 02) November 2011, which was subsequently identified as a Swinhoe's by Inskipp (2015). Besides these, other reports could not be assigned to either of the species with certainty.

It is likely that upon deeper analysis, more such photographs of Ashy Minivets, lying in online forums, may subsequently turn out to be of Swinhoe's.

Acknowledgements

We would like to gratefully acknowledge Wichyanan Limparungpatthanakij, Sarwandeep Singh, Nigel Redman, Praveen J., and an anonymous referee for their help in identification of the minivet, and for the information in writing this article.

References

- Bakewell, D., 2012. Ashy and Swinhoe's Minivets – males. Website URL: <http://digdeep1962.blogspot.in/2012/02/ashy-and-swinhoes-minivets-males.html> [Accessed on 15 April 2016.]
- Grimmett, R., Inskipp, C., & Inskipp, T., 2011. *Birds of the Indian Subcontinent*. 2nd ed. London: Oxford University Press & Christopher Helm. Pp. 1–528.
- Inskipp, T., 2015. Checklist and bibliography of birds of Odisha. Website URL: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/kalingabirds/>. [Downloaded on 15 April 2016.]
- 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; 1–687.
- Taylor, B., 2016. Swinhoe's Minivet (*Pericrocotus cantonensis*). In: del Hoyo, J., Elliott, A., Sargatal, J., Christie, D. A., & de Juana, E., (eds.). *Handbook of the Birds of the World Alive*. Lynx Edicions, Barcelona. (retrieved from <http://www.hbw.com/node/57903> on 15 April 2016).