More records of Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush *Monticola saxatilis* from southern and western India

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The Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush *Monticola saxatilis* is considered a regular autumn passage migrant in parts of Jammu & Kashmir (Grimmett *et al.* 2011; Rasmussen & Anderton 2012), including Ladakh (Pfister 2001). It is also suspected to breed in northern Kashmir (Zahler *et al.* 1998). However, outside this state, there have been no records until five recent records from the state of Gujarat (Table 1). Here, we report a series of records, since 2013, from various parts of southern, and western India during the autumn migration season.

Karnataka

In November 2013, RBB and his wife were on a bird-watching tour to Karnataka when they stayed at the Talacauvery resort (12.38°N, 75.51°E) in Bhagamandala. This is located at the top of a hill, within a large compound, that is encircled by a low compound wall, enabling one to see open canopies of thick forest, deep valleys, bushy slopes, and patches of open grassland.

In the early morning of 23 November 2013, RBB was watching birds in the resort's compound. After an hour or so, he saw a movement on the compound wall. He moved little closer and saw that every now and then, a bird came onto the compound wall, diving back to the ground, and then flying up again to the perch; it did this for some time.

Both: Raghavji B Balar

131. A first winter male Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush at Bhagamandala, Karnataka.

132. A first winter male Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush at Bhagamandala, Karnataka.

RBB's first impression was that he had photographed a Scaly Thrush *Zoothera dauma* **[131, 132]**. He posted these pictures on the Oriental Bird Pix Google group, three years later when members corrected him, stating that the pictures were those of a Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush. The proportionately shorter tail, with wings almost reaching the tip of the tail, and the shorter beak eliminated a Blue Rock Thrush *M. solitarius*. The absence of a white patch on the wing eliminated Blue-capped Rock Thrush *M. cinclorhynchus.* The blue-grey sheen on the upper parts, with blue appearing on the tip of its feathers, indicated it was a male, while the scaly under parts indicated a first-winter bird.

Kerala

On 18 November 2015, SRPK photographed **[133]** a rock thrush in Haripad (9.25°N, 76.45°E), Alappuzha District. The bird was quite confiding and he could take a series of photographs from various angles. Initially this bird was suspected to be either be

Table 1. List of Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush reports from western, and southern India

Date	Coordinates	Locality	State	Sex	Age	Reference
01 October 1998*	23.25°N, 68.81°E	Naliya	Gujarat	Female / 1st Winter male		Jadeja & Shah (2007)
17 October 2000	23.25°N, 68.81°E	Naliya	Gujarat	Female / 1st Winter male		Jadeja & Shah (2007)
17 October 2002*	23.25°N, 68.81°E	Naliya	Gujarat	Female / 1st Winter male		Jadeja & Shah (2007)
23 November 2013	12.38°N, 75.51°E	Bhagamandala	Karnataka	Male	1st Winter	This work
04 February 2015	23.61°N, 69.36°E	Banni	Gujarat	Male	1st Summer	Mishra (2015)
23 September 2015	22.95°N, 69.68°E	Karaghogha	Gujarat	Female	Unknown	Chudasama (2016)
18 November 2015	9.25°N, 76.45°E	Haripad	Kerala	Male	1st Winter	Kumar (2015)
12 September 2016	26.3°N, 73.02°E	Jodhpur	Rajasthan	Female	Unknown	Saikia & Goswami (2016)
22 September 2016	27.8°N, 70.13°E	Jaisalmar	Rajasthan	Female	Unknown	Saikia (2016)

* Sight records

an aberrant Blue Rock Thrush, or a first winter Blue-capped Rock Thrush. But the following characteristics—the rufous rump, rufous-tipped tail, growing rufous feathers on its under parts, and longer primary projection—pointed to this species, which was also confirmed independently by experts as a first winter male (Peter Clement in litt, email dated 23 November 2015, Krys Kazmierczak in litt, email dated 22 November 2015). In a bird with juvenile plumage, it seems possible that the central tail feathers may be mostly black (on the closed tail) with little or no sign of any orange or rufous in the outer feathers as seen in this bird **[134]**. This differs from that of the adults, which show more orange/rufous as all the outers are rufous as well as the edges to the central pair as documented in standard field guides. This probably means that as the central pair of feathers on a first-winter bird are slightly broader and all dark so that they completely obscure any orange/rufous in the outer feathers on a perched bird (Peter Clement *in litt.,* e-mail dated 23 November 2015).

Both: Prasanth Kumar S. R.

133. A first winter male Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush at Haripad, Kerala.

134. A first winter male Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush at Haripad, Kerala showing all dark central tail feathers.

Rajasthan

On 12 September 2016, while on a visit to Herbal Park (26.30°N, 73.02°E) near Mehrangarh Fort, Jodhpur, Rajasthan, PJS and VPG photographed a thrush with brownish grey upper parts, with white spots, black bars, and reddish tail **[135]**. This was later identified as a female Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush, and was confirmed by an expert (Krys Kazmierczak *in litt,* in email dated September 2016). Though it has been recorded a few times in Gujarat, surprisingly, this appears to be the first record for Rajasthan (Grimmett *et al.* 2011; Rasmussen & Anderton 2012).

This record was soon followed by the sighting, and photograph (PJS) of another female **[136]**, taken near the national border (27.8°N, 70.13°E), close to Jaisalmar on 22 September 2016.

Hence, this species might be more than just a vagrant to southern, and western India, and is probably a passage migrant

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135. A female Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush at Jodhpur.

S. Subramanya

Fig. 1. Sites where Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush was reported from western and southern India. (Map for indicative purpose only.)

in low numbers (Table 1; Fig. 1). It should be noted that the western Indian autumn records were in September or October while both the southern Indian records were in the second half of November. Perhaps some birds that spend a part of their autumn in western India move southward for an extended sojourn before departing for their wintering grounds in Africa.

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136. A female Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush near Jaisalmar.

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