

# Pink-rumped Rosefinch *Carpodacus waltoni* in Sandakphu, West Bengal: A first photographic record for India

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The Pink-rumped Rosefinch *Carpodacus waltoni* is a medium-sized finch. For long, its nominate form *C. w. waltoni*, common along the Himalayas, was considered a race of the Beautiful Rosefinch *C. pulcherrimus* (e.g., Ali & Ripley 1987), or sometimes, as part of the Chinese Beautiful Rosefinch *C. davidianus* (e.g., Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). However, it has recently been found that *waltoni* is conspecific with the erstwhile *C. eos* (originally known as Pink-rumped Rosefinch). The taxon has since come to be known as *C. waltoni*, as *waltoni* antedates *eos* (Tietze *et al.* 2013).

*C.w. waltoni* is common in south-western China and can be found on the eastern part of the Tibetan Plateau (south-eastern Xizang) between an altitudinal range of 3900–4900m. Its status within the Indian limits, bordering the Tibetan facies in north-eastern India, is unclear; while Ali & Ripley (1987) maintain that it is common in Arunachal Pradesh between 3600 and 4500m, Rasmussen & Anderton (2012) treat it as hypothetical based on a few sight reports from northern Arunachal Pradesh. In the absence of any verifiable corroborative evidence of its presence within Indian limits, the India Checklist (Praveen *et al.*, 2016) had also excluded the species. Here, we report the first photographic record of the species for India, from northern West Bengal.

On the cold morning of 26 December 2013 we were on a trekking-cum-birding trip in Sandakphu, West Bengal (3636 m

asl). While walking near Sandakphu at noon, we came to a bushy area (c. 27.12°N, 87.99°E) where I spotted two rosefinches foraging under a bush. All the time, they were seen on the ground, and were never observed perching on branches. After a fairly long, and patient, wait I could take record photographs of one individual [139]. I concluded from the pictures that it could be a Himalayan Beautiful Rosefinch *C. pulcherrimus*.

When I was recently reviewing photographs taken during the trip, I thought that this rosefinch picture needed further confirmation from expert birders. So I sent it to my birding mentor and friend, Arup Kumar Banerjee. He discussed the picture with Santanu Manna, Sujan Chatterjee, and other birders from West Bengal. The picture was also posted on social media, and other online forums: the Chinese Beautiful Rosefinch, and the Pink-rumped Rosefinch were considered most likely. Since the bird could not be identified conclusively, we asked the opinion of Tim Inskipp. He, in turn, sent the image to Peter Clement who identified it as a Pink-rumped Rosefinch based on the shape of the bill, and the head pattern. According to him, the shape of the supercilium also differs from the Chinese Beautiful Rosefinch's where, 'it flares quite broadly behind the eyes' (Peter Clement, *pers. comm.*, e-mail dated 04 April 2017).

This becomes the first photographic evidence of the occurrence of a Pink-rumped Rosefinch within Indian limits, and a candidate for inclusion in the India Checklist (Praveen *et al.* 2016).

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139. Pink-rumped Rosefinch photographed in Sandakphu, West Bengal.