

Table 1. Date-wise monitoring of Vigors's Sunbird *Aethopyga vigorsii*

No.	Date	Number of birds seen			Activity	Other birds seen in association with Vigors's Sunbird
		Adult male	Immature male	Female		
1	26 January 2017	00	01	00	Nectaring on <i>D. falcata coccinea</i>	Jerdon's Leafbird <i>Chloropsis jerdoni</i>
2	3 February 2017	00	01	00	Hovering and moving restlessly among Bamboo stands	Velvet-fronted Nuthatch <i>Sitta frontalis</i>
3	10 February 2017	00	02	02	Nectaring on <i>D. f. coccinea</i>	Oriental White Eye <i>Zosterops palpebrosus</i>
4	19 February 2017	00	02	00	Nectaring on <i>D. f. coccinea</i>	Oriental White Eye <i>Z. palpebrosus</i> , Black-lored Tit <i>Machlolophus xanthogenys</i>
5	27 February 2017	00	01	00	Nectaring on <i>D. f. coccinea</i>	Oriental White Eye <i>Z. palpebrosus</i> , Black-lored Tit <i>M. xanthogenys</i> , Common Tailorbird <i>Orthotomus sutorius</i>
6	4 March 2017	00	00	00	Oriental White Eye <i>Z. palpebrosus</i> , Black-lored Tit <i>M. xanthogenys</i>
7	19 March 2017	00	00	00	Grey-breasted prinia <i>Prinia hodgsonii</i> , Oriental White Eye <i>Z. palpebrosus</i>
8	9 April 2017	00	00	00	Jerdon's Leafbird <i>Chloropsis jerdoni</i> ; Oriental White Eye <i>Z. palpebrosus</i> ; Black-lored Tit <i>M. xanthogenys</i>
9	14 May 2017	00	00	00	Jerdon's Leafbird <i>Chloropsis jerdoni</i>
10	21 May 2017	02	00	02	Perched on <i>Albizia</i> tree and nectaring on its flowers	Grey-breasted Prinia <i>P. hodgsonii</i> ; Oriental White Eye <i>Z. palpebrosus</i> ; Black-lored Tit <i>M. xanthogenys</i>

Acknowledgements

We are thankful to Professor Sudhakar Kurhade for his kind help in preparing this short note. We are also thankful to Balkrishna Devre, Ravindra Sonawane, Abhay Uzagare, Rajendra Nannaware, Satish Kamble, Aman Gujar, Chetan Bhavsar and Deputy Conservator of Forests, S. S. Dahiwalé, Yawal Wildlife Sanctuary officials for their consistent support while exploring biodiversity of Satpuda of Jalgaon District.

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Assemblages of White-winged Redstart *Phoenicurus erythrogastrus grandis* in the Spiti Valley

During a successful snow leopard *Uncia uncia* safari to Kaza (32.37°N, 78.13°E) and its environs in the Spiti Valley, Himachal Pradesh, from 20 to 23 February 2017, we observed large concentrations of White-winged Redstart *Phoenicurus erythrogastrus grandis*. It is the largest redstart of upper montane areas of the Caucasus and Central Asia, to central China, breeding above the tree line on open dry, rocky or barren hillsides, and wintering in similar habitats at lower altitudes (Clement & Rose 2015). In the Indian Subcontinent it is resident, subject to altitudinal movements, and breeds in Chitral, Gilgit, Baltistan, Ladakh, and along the northern Himalayan slopes (sporadic on southern slopes), through Kumaon, Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan, and Arunachal Pradesh (Ali & Ripley 1997).

While driving c. 80 km from Nako (3625 m asl), Kinnaur District, to Kaza (3800 m), c. 85 birds, including approximately ten females, were counted along the road. Later, while based at Kaza, we explored the accessible parts of the snow-bound Spiti Valley and found the species very common in valley-bottom thickets/ plantations of poplar *Populus* sp., and willow *Salix* sp., with great partiality to sea buckthorn *Hippophae rhamnoides* thickets as has been reported earlier (Ludlow 1950; Mallon 1987; Collar 2005). In one such extensive sea buckthorn thicket along the Spiti River, measuring c. 1200 x 500 m, close to the Rangrik Bridge, in Spiti Valley, their concentration exceeded 300 individuals on a daily basis, reminiscent of numbers observed in winter along the floor of the Indus Valley between Tikse and Spitik, in Ladakh, by Mallon (1987), and near Tabo (30.05°N, 78.28°E, 3280 asl) in Spiti Valley (Singh 2003).

While most of the birds were confined to the berry-bearing

buckthorn thickets, a few were present in and around settlements with small plantations. Some White-winged Redstart males appeared to be holding territories as they frequently drove off other males. Barely five to ten percent of the birds encountered by us in the valley were females. There were no birds on the Gramphu–Batal–Kaza road up to Khurik. On 23 February 2017 we drove up to Chhidang in Pin Valley but encountered only three to four birds. At both these sites there was an absence of sea buckthorn bushes. During an earlier visit in June 2009 HSS and SS did not encounter the species, as it is only a winter visitor to the valley.

While Pfister (2004) observed that throughout the year the bird was wary and shy in Ladakh, we found it quite tame in the Spiti Valley. In adjoining Ladakh (where it is a scarce breeder), the migrating birds possibly come from Tibet (Collar 2005). A 1981 study in Tikse, Ladakh, undertaken by members of the Southampton University, recorded the passage of a large number of White-winged Redstarts during November; when they ringed 941 birds, and trapped another 1543 (Beaman & Porter 1983). It is very likely that the birds we found in Spiti Valley also originated in Tibet.

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Received: 17 April 2017.

Hooded Pitta *Pitta sordida* in Kalesar National Park, Haryana, India

While birding in Kalesar National Park (30.30°–30.45°N, 77.42°–77.58°E; 180–700 m asl), in Yamuna Nagar District, Haryana, on 24 June 2017, we spotted a small, stub-tailed bird that flushed from the leaf litter collected on the edges of a fire-line between two sections of a sal *Shorea robusta* forest. The bird was subsequently spotted hiding in the scrub at the base of a small tree. While we observed, it flew and perched on a small



175. Hooded Pitta in Kalesar National Park, Haryana.



176. Hooded Pitta in Kalesar National Park, Haryana.

Pic: Rajiv S. Kati

branch of a short sal tree a few meters from the fire-line. We retreated and waited patiently, and after a few minutes the bird flew back on to the leaf litter on the fire-line and started foraging. A few minutes later another, similar, bird was observed flying across the fire-line. We observed the birds for about an hour and took photographs. The species was identified as the Hooded Pitta *Pitta sordida* [175, 176] as it had a dark chestnut crown on black head, green breast and flanks, black patch on belly, scarlet lower belly and vent, and glistening, bluish lesser-covert patch and upper tail-coverts. In flight, the birds showed black primaries with prominent white patches. Both the birds called repeatedly: a two-noted whistle *vieuw-vieuw* repeated three to four times at short intervals. The same pair was observed at that location for two consecutive days. We visited the same site for a further two subsequent days, but did not see, nor hear, the species—mainly due to heavy rains. On a later visit, we re-sighted it on 30 July 2017.

The distributional range of the Hooded Pitta extends from India through South-east Asia to south-central China, the Philippines, and New Guinea (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). The western races, excluding the races from New Guinea, are sometimes split as Western Hooded Pitta; to which group the Indian birds belong (Erritzoe & Kirwan 2017). In India, it has been