



29. Normal coloured female of Black-headed Cuckoo-Shrike.



30. Black-headed Cuckoo-Shrike. Form of dilution resulting in silver-grey plumage.



31. Black-headed Cuckoo-Shrike. Form of dilution resulting in silver-grey plumage.

Pics: Niranjan Sant

References

- Grimmett, R., Inskipp, C., & Inskipp, T., 2011. *Birds of the Indian Subcontinent*. 2nd ed. London: Oxford University Press & Christopher Helm. Pp. 1–528.
- Guay, P. J., Potvin, D. A., & Robinson, R. W., 2012. Aberrations in plumage coloration in birds. *Australian Field Ornithology* 29: 23–30.
- Mahabal, A., Sharma, R. M., & Sayyed, A., 2015. Colour aberrations in Indian birds. *BirdingASIA* 24: 119–121.
- Mahabal, A., van Grouw, H., Sharma, R. M., & Thakur, S., 2016. How common is albinism really? Colour aberrations in Indian birds reviewed. *Dutch Birding* 38: 301–309.
- 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; 1–683.
- van Grouw, H., 2013. What colour is that bird? The causes and recognition of common colour aberrations in birds. *British Birds* 106 (1): 17–29.

– Niranjan Sant

27, Adarsh nagar, Vadgaon, Belgaum 590005, Karnataka, India.

E-mail: niranjansant@yahoo.co.uk

Received on 09 August 2017

Possible nesting of Pacific Swift in the Nilgiri Hills, Tamil Nadu in 1981

In 1981, I travelled extensively around India. Although this was a 'hippy trail' journey, I did not neglect my birdwatching, and while I mostly saw mundane species for the localities I visited, there is one observation that, in retrospect, appears to be of note. The delay in publishing is due to life pressures causing me to put aside my notebook on returning to the UK; it was subsequently mislaid until I rediscovered it in mid-2017.

In April–May 1981 I spent some time in the Nilgiri Hills based in Ootacamund. On 06 May I travelled to a remote rest house, noted as 'Mukerti Bungalow' in my notebook, where I spent the night prior to climbing Mukurthi Peak (2554 m asl) the following day. At the summit, at 0905 hrs on 07 May, I saw several 'large long-winged white-rumped *Apus*, - ? *pacificus* – going in and out of the cliff below [the] summit'. I added in my notes that this white-rumped swift had a 'moderate tail fork, kept more or less closed (i.e. greater than [Indian House Swift *A.*] *affinis* but less than [Horus Swift *A.*] *horus* [an African species] – in any case wings too pointed for *affinis* and [the] white rump patch doesn't extend more than 1/2-way round flank'. After descending, I then watched from under the summit cliff from 1000 hrs to 1030 hrs, but the birds had mostly gone – I saw only three Alpine Swifts *A. melba* and one large white-rumped swift, though there were occasional swift-like calls from the cliff face. Finally I saw two of the white-rumped birds fly off from the face of the cliff, where they had apparently been perched. After this there was silence, and I returned to the bungalow (possibly what is now, *fide* Wikipedia, called the Mukurthi Fishing Hut). The only other swifts seen in the immediate area were Indian Swiftlets *Aerodramus unicolor*, though I saw Indian House Swifts elsewhere in the Nilgiris.

I was in no doubt then that these birds were Pacific Swifts *Apus pacificus*, and I have no reason to revise this view. I was already familiar with the species in Japan and with the similar Horus Swift in Ethiopia, and with House Swifts widely in Africa and Asia: size, dark underparts, and the forked tail rule out the White-rumped Needletail *Zoonavena sylvatica*. I was travelling light and only had Ali (1968), and Woodcock (1980) with me, which have little information on Pacific Swifts. This species is mainly recorded in southern India in winter (e.g. Grimmett *et al.* 1999; Sashikumar *et al.* 2011; Praveen *et al.* 2016), though there is an old report of its suspected nesting in the hill-caves near Dudhsagar in the Ghats of Uttar Kannada [=Northern Kanara], Karnataka (Davidson 1898), some 475 km NNW of Mukurthi. However, in recent times, there appears to be only one published spring record (Anand 2016) and none in summer. They were not seen in March over the Kerala border in Silent Valley by Vijayan *et al.* (2000). Anand saw and photographed a bird on 09 April 2016 at Jawalikadavu APW Camp in the Nilgiris, significantly only about 31 km NE of Mukurthi Peak. My birds were a month later and clearly interacting with the cliff as if breeding. It seems probable that there is (or was) a

small outlying breeding population in the Nilgiris, where, to judge by the paucity of published papers, there has been little serious general birdwatching activity in recent years. Reviewing birds in the Nilgiris (including Mukurthi National Park) from visits over the four years 2001–2004, Zarri & Rahmani (2005) did not mention Pacific Swifts; I have not scoured all the online trip reports from visiting foreigners, but the sample I have looked at did not reveal any Pacific Swift observations in spring or summer.

Acknowledgements

I thank Praveen J. for help with references not easily found in UK, and an anonymous referee for finding the old account by Davidson.

References

- Ali, S., 1968. *The book of Indian birds*. 8th (Revised and enlarged) ed. Bombay: Bombay Natural History Society. Pp. i–iv, v–xlvii, 1–162, xlvii–li.
- Anand, V., 2016. Checklist S28901022. Online at: <http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist/S28901022> [accessed 28/9/2017].
- Davidson, J. A. G., 1898. The birds of North Kanara. Part II. *Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society* 12 (1): 43–72.
- Grimmett, R., Inskipp, C., & Inskipp, T., 1999. *A guide to the birds of India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Sri Lanka and the Maldives*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Pp. 1–888.
- Praveen J., Subramanya, S., & Raj, V. M., 2016. A checklist of the birds of Karnataka. *Indian BIRDS* 12 (4&5): 89–118.
- Sashikumar, C., Praveen J., Palot, M. J., & Nameer, P. O., 2011. *Birds of Kerala: status and distribution*. 1st ed. Kottayam, Kerala: DC Books. Pp. 1–835.
- Vijayan, L., Bhupathy, S., Balasubramanian, P., Nirmala, T., & Ravikumar, S., 2000. *A bird survey in the Silent Valley National Park, Kerala*. Coimbatore: Sâlim Ali Centre For Ornithology & Natural History. Pp. 20.
- Woodcock, M. W., 1980. *Collins Handguide to the Birds of the Indian Sub-continent Including India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri-Lanka and Nepal*. 1st ed. London: Collins. Pp. 1–176.
- Zarri, A. A., & Rahmani, A. R., 2005. Annotated avifauna of the Upper Nilgiris, Western Ghats, Tamil Nadu, India. *Buceros* 10 (1): i–iii, 1–46.

– Anthony S. Cheke

139 Hurst St., Oxford OX4 1HE, UK.

E-mail: anthony.cheke@dodobooks.com

Whiskered Yuhina *Yuhina flavicollis* from Jammu and Kashmir, India

On 12 August 2017 around 1015 hrs we spotted a pair of Whiskered Yuhinas *Yuhina flavicollis* feeding on the ripe fruits of *Berberis lycium* along a perennial stream near village Mathola, (32.97°N, 75.67°E, c. 2025 m) Bholderwah Tehsil, Doda District, Jammu & Kashmir. The birds were photographed and identified as this species by SKR based on his previous sightings in other parts of the north-western Himalayas, which was subsequently confirmed from the field guides (Ali & Ripley 2001; Grimmett *et al.* 2011; Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). The photographs clearly revealed the prominent features like dark brownish crest on head, white eye-ring, blackish moustache extending below the eyes till neck, yellowish hind collar, and white underside to establish its identification as Whiskered Yuhina. While returning, at around 1745 hrs, we spent some time searching for the birds and found two individuals fluttering around a *Cedrus deodara* tree about 100 m away from our earlier sighting. One bird instantly came out and perched in front of us on an *Aesculus indica* tree, and subsequently flew to an adjacent *Ailanthus altissima* tree before finally disappearing towards the stream. We followed their activities for some time and noticed that the pair was nesting three meters above the ground, within tree twigs of *Cedrus deodara*. On 23 November 2017, around 0915 hrs, NS spotted one individual

[32] fluttering around the *Mallotus philippensis*–*Flacourtia indica* understorey along a moist seasonal stream near Bal Jarallan village (33.30°N, 74.36°E, c. 720 m), in Rajouri Tehsil and District, Jammu and Kashmir. Another individual joined it later.

This species has so far been reported up till Chamba (Singh 2011; Shah *et al.* 2016) in western Himachal Pradesh, apart from the districts of Kangra (den Besten 2004), Solan (Singh 2015a), and Mandi (Singh 2015b). Thus, it appears to be an addition to the avifauna of Jammu and Kashmir.



Neeraj Sharma

32. Whiskered Yuhina at Bal Jarallan.

Acknowledgements

The help and support provided by the Department of Forests and Wildlife Protection, Government of Jammu & Kashmir is gratefully acknowledged. The authors appreciate the participation of Parmil Kumar, Sanjay Bose, and Sahasrangshu Chowdhary during the field survey.

References

- Ali, S., & Ripley, S. D., 2001. *Handbook of the birds of India and Pakistan together with those of Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan and Sri Lanka*. 2 ed. Delhi: (Sponsored by Bombay Natural History Society.) Oxford University Press [Oxford India Paperbacks]. Vol. 5 (Larks to Grey Hypocolius) of 10 vols. Pp. 2 ll., pp. i–xvi, 1–278 + 1 l., 2 ll.
- den Besten, J. W., 2004. *Birds of Kangra*. 1st ed. Dharamsala & New Delhi: Moonpeak Publishers & Mosaic Books. Pp. 1–176.
- Grimmett, R., Inskipp, C., & Inskipp, T., 2011. *Birds of the Indian Subcontinent*. 2nd ed. London: Oxford University Press & Christopher Helm. Pp. 1–528.
- 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.
- Shah, T. A., Ahuja, V., Anandam M., Srinivasulu C., 2016. Avifauna of Chamba District, Himachal Pradesh, India with emphasis on Kalatop-Khajjjar Wildlife Sanctuary and its surroundings. *Journal of Threatened Taxa* 8 (1): 1711–1718.
- Singh, A. P., 2011. Birds of the upper catchment of Ravi River, Chamba district, Himachal Pradesh, India. *Indian BIRDS* 7 (4): 97–103.
- Singh, D., 2015 a. Avifaunal diversity of Solan district, Himachal Pradesh, India. *International Journal of Science and Research* 4 (10): 550–556.
- Singh, D., 2015 b. Avifaunal diversity of Mandi district, Himachal Pradesh, India. *International Journal of Current Research in Life Sciences* 4 (11): 452–458.

– Neeraj Sharma & Suresh K. Rana

Neeraj Sharma, Institute of Mountain Environment, University of Jammu , Bholderwah Campus 182222, Jammu & Kashmir, India

E-mail: nirazsharma@gmail.com [Corresponding author] [NS]

Suresh K. Rana , Wildlife Institute of India, Chandrabani, Dehradun 248007, Uttarakhand, India

E-mail: envsuresh09@gmail.com [SKR]

Received on 17 August 2017