

References

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Letters to the Editor

The European Greenfinch *Chloris chloris* from Ladakh is a Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*

Bharadwaj (2017) reported, with images, the first record of European Greenfinch *Chloris chloris* from the Indian Subcontinent. We analysed the published pictures, as well as the picture set hosted in Oriental Bird Images, and the bird in question does not seem to be a European Greenfinch, but instead a Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*. Here we list the arguments on why this is not a European Greenfinch.

Bill: In European Greenfinch, the bill is rather long and conical, with straight edges and longer culmen. However, in this bird, the bill is rather short and bulging, showing curved edges to both upper and lower mandible and is less conical in shape. The bill colour of a European Greenfinch should also be paler than in this bird. In shape, size and colour, the bill of this bird matches that of a Common Rosefinch.

Moult: The pattern of the feather wear, very evident with heavy worn coverts and tertials, is a strong indication of a Common Rosefinch, which moults in winter quarters. The European Greenfinch invariably moults on the breeding grounds after the breeding season, usually showing a complete moult in adults and a partial moult in first year birds. The greater and median coverts, as well as the tertials, of the Ladakh bird are very worn, and are not moulted for at least six months, which would be highly unlikely in a European Greenfinch; in September, a European Greenfinch is invariably in fresh plumage.

Plumage patterns: There is a hint of worn wing-bars, the remains of what were more marked bars when the feathers were fresh, on the greater as well as on the median coverts. This is a diagnostic character of Common Rosefinch when compared with a European Greenfinch, which lacks these wing-bars. Similarly, the worn tertials show clear remnants of pale edges, diagnostic of Common Rosefinch, and again absent in European Greenfinch.

As the only claim of European Greenfinch from the Indian subcontinent it has to be withdrawn; we propose that the species should be dropped from the checklist for India and the Indian subcontinent.

Reference

- Bharadwaj, A. K., 2017. European Greenfinch *Chloris chloris* in Ladakh: An addition to the avifauna of the Indian Subcontinent. *Indian BIRDS*. 13: (6) 162–163.

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On looking at these photos again I agree that this isn't a European Greenfinch and that it more closely fits a female Common Rosefinch in post-breeding moult—contrary to the opinion I provided earlier, and which was quoted in Bharadwaj (2017). On more considered reflection the bill is a fairly obvious indicator that this isn't a Greenfinch's bill from any part of its range and the moult pattern and forked tail also are not right.

In mitigation, I think I was persuaded by the green edges to the primaries and the base of the tail which are (or appear) to be very bright for a rosefinch and unlike the majority of female or first-winter Common Rosefinches but there are several photos on OBI of birds in fresh plumage that get close to this colour though none of the field guides or handbooks mention this, nor admittedly does Clement *et al.* (2011), and may well be worth further investigation. In addition, the head and nape appear to be grey and not at all streaky, it has a small dark eye and in one photo the lores appear to be dark, all features more closely associated with European Greenfinch. In other photos of the Ladakh bird the face and mantle appear to be tinged dark green or olive green also a colour found in female Greenfinch compared to the brown or olive-brown in Common Rosefinches but this could be more apparent than real and a colour distortion of the camera. Finally, the photo of the bird in profile—the only one which shows the underparts well—shows no, or at least very little, streaking that is at all obvious thus giving the impression of rather plain underparts but this again could be a distortion.

In summary, I agree with the conclusion that this record should be withdrawn, despite the oddities in plumage.

Reference

- Clement, P., Harris, A., & Davis, J., 1999. *Finches & sparrows*. 2nd ed. London; Princeton: Christopher Helm; Princeton University Press. Pp. 1–500.

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Editorial comment: The European Greenfinch *Chloris chloris* has now been removed from the India Checklist.

