

local languages. Therefore, the checklist presented here can help researchers and birders in conducting field bird surveys with local Karen and Ranchi assistants. It can also be used for interview-based surveys to detect presence/absence of rare species of birds using local knowledge. The list may also allow researchers to understand the perception and awareness of recent avian invasions in the islands, which is important from epidemiological and managerial points of view, e.g., Common Myna *Acridotheres tristis* (Mohanty *et al.* 2018). Apart from wildlife research, the checklist may also help anthropologists and ethnographers. Future research can focus on understanding the influence of experience (e.g., residence time in the Islands) and demography on the knowledge and perception of birds in the local communities. We believe the information provided in this note can also aid eco-tourism initiatives of the Department of Environment and Forests, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, as it will allow for effective training of Karen and Ranchi youth as bird guides.

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Rusty-rumped Warbler *Locustella certhiola* at Pong Lake, Himachal Pradesh: An addition to northern Indian avifauna

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The Rusty-rumped Warbler *Locustella certhiola*, also known as Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler, is a scarce winter visitor to India. It is mainly found in the north-eastern part of the Indian Subcontinent, from central Nepal to the Kolkata area, Bangladesh, the western Assam Valley, and Meghalaya. It is also said to sporadically winter in Sri Lanka, peninsular India, and rarely in the Andaman & Nicobar Islands (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). There are a number of records of this species from peninsular India (eBird 2018). This note describes the sighting of a Rusty-rumped Warbler at Pong Lake, Himachal Pradesh.

On 03–04 October 2014 I was birding at Sthana village near Talwara town in Himachal Pradesh (31.96°N, 75.90°E; 325 m asl). Sthana is situated on the northern side of the lake, which is formed behind the Shah Nehar Barrage, in the outflow area of Pong Dam. There are many small ponds near the lake with an ample growth of *Typha* sp., and *Ipomea* sp. *Saccharum munja*, and *Lantana* sp., were other predominant plants around these ponds. On 04 October 2014, at 0830 hrs, when I was walking

near one of the ponds, a small, sparrow-sized brownish bird flew from a nearby bush and settled in the lantana, a few meters away from me. I clicked some photographs and within few seconds the bird disappeared in the reeds. I couldn't observe the bird properly, and did not hear any call either, but by its jizz, the bird seemed to be a *Locustella* warbler. Later, the pictures were carefully studied, and the following observations made.

The bird was a medium-sized warbler, brownish in colour with a rufous tinge, and streaked upperparts [55]. The crown and nape were rusty brown and seemed almost un-streaked in the photograph. It had a well-defined whitish supercilium, running till the posterior part of the ear covert, bordered above by dark brown. It had an ill-defined, dark brown eye stripe and pale lores. The stout, all dark bill had a pale area near its cutting edge. The mantle was boldly streaked, while no streaking was seen on the underparts. The upper wing coverts were black with broad buffish borders. The black primaries were narrowly bordered with buff. The rump was not visible in the pictures. The throat and upper



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55. Rusty-rumped Warbler in Himachal Pradesh.

breast seemed to be white, and the flank was warm brown in colour. Undertail coverts were paler and un-streaked. A hint of white could be seen at the tips of the rectrices. The legs were dark. It was moulting, as evident by one missing primary.

Two other similar looking warblers, which are found in India, are Grasshopper Warbler *L. naevia* and Lanceolated Warbler *L. lanceolata*. A prominent supercilium, whiter tail tips, and un-streaked undertail coverts, which are visible in the photograph, ruled out the possibility of a Grasshopper Warbler. Moreover, warm colouration of the bird and the obvious contrast on its mantle, between buffish fringes and blackish feather centers, indicated a Rusty-rumped Warbler. A Lanceolated Warbler was also ruled out by the above stated features. A longer bill and un-streaked underparts of this bird additionally differentiated it from a Lanceolated Warbler (Baker 1997; Grimmett *et al.* 1998; Kennerley & Pearson 2010).

The images were sent to Harkirat Singh Sangha, and Bill Harvey, and both identified it as a Rusty-rumped Warbler (*in litt.*, e-mails dated 06 October 2014).

Five subspecies of this bird have been described in literature: those in north-eastern India, and Sri Lanka belong to *rubescens*;

whereas both, *centralasiae*, and *rubescens* have been reported from the Andaman & Nicobar Islands; *sparsimstriata* is also supposed to winter in India, although there are no substantiated records (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). There are minor differences in these races, many birds showing intermediate characters; often a bird cannot be assigned to a particular race (Kennerley & Pearson 2010; Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). Since I could photograph it only from one angle, it was difficult to assign it to a race.

The Rusty-rumped Warbler arrives in India in October and remains till April or early May (Ali 1987). The bird I photographed was probably migrating. Birds wintering in the southern part of the Indian Subcontinent, and those breeding in the western-most parts of its summer range, might pass through this part of northern India.

This is the first record not only for Himachal Pradesh, but also for northern India. The nearest sighting in India is from Nal Sarovar, Ahmedabad District, Gujarat (Robson 1999; Ganpule 2016), which is c. 1100 km away. The species may be a more regular migrant in northern India, but could be easily overlooked due to its uncharacteristic appearance and skulking nature.

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In Memoriam

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(03 JULY 1932 – 03 JUNE 2018)