Sighting of ‘Ehrenberg’s Redstart’ *Phoenicurus p. samamisicus* in Thol Bird Sanctuary, Gujarat, India

Hardik Bhatt

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On 16 February 2018, at 0915 hrs, I was in Thol Bird Sanctuary (23.141°N, 72.407°E) near Ahmedabad, Gujarat. I happened to come across an area with thorny trees where I heard a peculiar call. I could see some bird movement but it was too dense to see clearly. So I settled down and waited at a distance. After about five minutes, a redstart *Phoenicurus* sp., came out and perched on a nearby tree. It started preening and was aware of my presence, but was quite wary. It immediately struck me that the bird was different from a Black Redstart *P. ochruros* and I took some photos while it was perched on the tree for a few seconds and I also managed to record its call.

A detailed description of this individual is given here: a redstart with a prominent white band across its forehead, with white extending beyond the eyes. It had a grey crown and mantle, black throat (with black not extending onto upper breast), orange underparts with white centre of belly and vent, and a very prominent white wing patch.

I shared the photos with other birders here and it was identified as a Common Redstart *P. phoenicurus*, of the *samamisicus* race. This race of the Common Redstart is also known as ‘Ehrenberg’s Redstart’. It breeds from Turkey and Greece, eastwards to Turkey and Ladakh. This record is of three individuals, which were trapped and photographed at Tikse in May 1982 (Delany et al. 2014), which was the first record of the species from India. However, there are no documented sightings of *samamisicus* so far from India. Rasmussen & Anderton (2012) state about this race, ‘not yet genuinely recorded but a likely summer visitor to NW Afghanistan’. It is stated that a specimen of *samamisicus* in BMNH, labelled ‘Daulatpur, Sind’ originated in Iran and thus, this is included in the ‘rejected species’ list for the avifauna of the Indian Subcontinent and Afghanistan (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012; Appendix 2). So, there are no records of *samamisicus* from India or the Indian Subcontinent.

This sighting of a Common Redstart from Thol Bird Sanctuary, near Ahmedabad, is an addition to the avifauna of Gujarat as the species is not included in the recent checklist of birds of Gujarat (Ganpule 2016) or in the first update to the Gujarati checklist (Ganpule 2017). Though the nominate race of the Common Redstart has been noted in India before, the race *samamisicus* or ‘Ehrenberg’s Redstart’, is an addition to the avifauna of India and the Indian Subcontinent.

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References


