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Vivid Niltava *Niltava vivida* in the Mishmi Hills, Arunachal Pradesh

On 21 May 2018 we were birding in the Mishmi Hills. At 1120 hrs, at a locality named ‘Sixty-Five’ (28.28°N, 95.88°E), RM spotted a bird that resembled a Rufous-bellied Niltava *Niltava sundara*; it was perched high on the tallest tree and singing repeatedly. The Rufous-bellied Niltava is commonly found in the hills, and RK, SB, and MMB thought that it was the same species they were seeing. But RM insisted that it was a Vivid Niltava *N. vivida*; he thought so because it perched differently, and had a different song from the Rufous-bellied Niltava. The song of the mystery bird comprised four syllables of mellow whistles, whereas that of a Rufous-bellied Niltava included a hard ‘tic’, a thin ‘see’, and a low, soft ‘cha cha’. RM recorded the song of the unidentified bird on his mobile and played it back. The bird responded immediately by approaching closer and moving and perching on nearby trees, and overhead electricity transmission cables, continuously singing its melodious song. All of us photographed it for nearly 30 mins [128]; it did not seem to be bothered by our presence. From the photographs we could clinch its identification as a Vivid Niltava, based upon the fact that the orange of the breast extending as a wedge onto its lower throat.



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128. Vivid Niltava clearly showing the orange wedge protruding onto its lower throat.

Since a wild male Vivid Niltava had never been photographed in the Indian Subcontinent, we posted photos on the ‘Indian Birds’ forum on Facebook, where Tim Inskipp confirmed our identification. Tim helped us list the historical records of the species from Arunachal Pradesh.

- Single males collected on 06 & 09 May 1938 at Lhalung, West Siang District by Ludlow & Kinnear (1944).
- Singh (1995) reported it from Milinja, Anjaw District, and the Thingbu track, Tawang District, but without any details.
- A female was photographed at Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary in December 2004, but the photographs were fuzzy (Athreya 2004, 2005).
- Bray *et al.* (2007) reported one from Lama Camp, Eaglenest, on 21 January 2007, but without any details.
- Weiss (2016) reported a male at Mehao Wildlife Sanctuary, Lower Dibang Valley District, on 29 December 2016, noting, “Rufous patch on black throat (connected with rufous underparts).” The picture, was taken by Rofikul Islam, but was not uploaded along with the checklist.

Rasmussen & Anderton (2012) listed it as a winter visitor, perhaps resident, as only from eastern Manipur and Mizo [=Lushai] Hills (UMMZ # 189882–85, April specimens), with one specimen in February (UMMZ # 189886)) from Khasi Hills; the specimen numbers and collection dates were obtained from <http://portal.vertnet.org>. Chatterjee (2016) photographed the female of the species in the Mizo Hills in January 2016. Ours was a late spring record, and so we thought that it could have been a passage migrant to northern latitudes. Based on our sighting, Anudyuti Mukherjee and Binanda Hatiboruah went to search for the bird, at the same locality, in June 2018—and were able to photograph it (Hatiboruah 2018)! Hence, the bird could be breeding in that site.

We are grateful to Tim Inskipp for confirming the species and providing historical records from Arunachal Pradesh. We used Vertnet, Oriental Bird Images, Surfbirds, Facebook, and eBird for searching historical records.

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