

going down slope, giving good views in flight. We also flushed a female before returning to the camp.

On 17.iv.2003 a bird called at 05:15hrs for about four minutes. Another bird started calling soon after from a different direction. A third bird called around 06:15hrs.

We trekked up to Khorli Poi (c.3000m) on the opposing north face of the valley where we camped for two days. In the inclement weather, with heavy snowfall, we did not see tragopans, but two males were heard. A male roosting some distance from our tents, started calling at night (03:45hrs). Two more birds from different directions called from the first light of pre-dawn on 21.iv.2003. On

22.iv.2003 one bird called sporadically during the night (02:45 hrs).

2. Cheer Pheasant *Catreus wallichii*: The only time we heard this 'Vulnerable' species was from the top of the south-facing slope near Rolla. The birds called at 17:45hrs for a minute or two on 18.iv.2004.

3. Orange Bullfinch *Pyrrhula aurantiaca*: Previously reported only by Ben King (Gaston et al. 1994) who visited the park from 27.ix–2.x.1984. One female was observed near Shilt on 16.iv.2003. Kazmierczak (2000) gives only three isolated records from Himachal Pradesh and one from Uttaranchal outside Jammu and Kashmir, of this 'Near-threatened' species.

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Greater Spotted Eagle, Grasshopper Warbler and Broad-tailed Grassbird near Pune, Maharashtra, India

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Greater Spotted Eagle *Aquila clanga* is considered Vulnerable by BirdLife International (2001). It is an uncommon winter visitor to western Maharashtra but difficulty in separation from Indian Spotted Eagle *Aquila hastata* makes records uncertain but Greater / Indian Spotted Eagles are not uncommonly sighted in the Deccan, often near water.

I observed an adult for half an hour beside the Mula-Mutha about 4km east of Koregaon Park, Pune on 4.ii.2005 and managed to take many photographs clearly showing the short gape extending only to the middle of the eye, the dark brown iris and circular nostril, which separates this species from Indian Spotted Eagle, Steppe Eagle *Aquila nipalensis* and Tawny Eagle *Aquila rapax*.

The following unconfirmed records are claimed from the Pune District: **Ujani**, between 11-12.i.1997, SS (SS in litt. 2002); **Ujani** 1 on 5.ii.1994 (AP pers. obs.); **Bhimashankar** undated (Kalpavriksh 2001); **Bhimashankar** Pune District, undated (Islam & Rahmani 2004); **Khamgaon** 1 adult on 22.xii.2002, RP (RP in litt. 2.i.2003); **Varvand** 1 adult on 22.xii.2002, RP (RP in litt. 2.i.2003); **Pashan** Pune, 'a few records,' undated, RP (RP in litt. 2002).

There are also the following unconfirmed records from the Bombay area: **Near Bombay** Monga (2001) lists it as occasional and there have been 12 reports from around Bombay between 2000-2002 on <birdsofbombay@yahoogroups.com>, and raptor expert Clark (1994) recorded it once in October 1990 and again in February 1996

(MD 18.xii.2000 <birdsofbombay@yahoogroups.com>). In the Bombay area up to and including the Ghats, Abdulali (1981) lists it as uncommon; Ali & Abdulali (1938) had only two records from Bombay and Salsette and considered it a straggler. The quote from Abdulali (1981) in BirdLife International (2001) 'uncommon' has been misinterpreted, as the species is unbracketed and therefore refers only to the Bombay area up to and including the Ghats and not the whole of Maharashtra. Further records claimed from near Bombay: Mahul, 1+ on 12.xii.2001 (Verma 2004); SGNP, one in January 1987 (BirdLife International 2001); Mahul-Sewri, Bombay, undated (Islam & Rahmani 2004); SGNP, Bombay, undated (Islam & Rahmani 2004); Thane Creek, Bombay/Thane District, undated (Islam & Rahmani 2004); Bombay, the record of a male specimen from January 1939 at FMNH in BirdLife International (2001) is incorrect, there is no such specimen (Field Museum 2004).

Further unconfirmed records from: **Taloda** and **Toranmal** Dhule District, undated (Islam & Rahmani 2004).

There are two confirmed records from: **Lake Beale**, Nasik District, the two specimens in the BNHS collection (Abdulali 1969) are presumably the same specimens given as Lake Beale (December 1949) and Ghoti (December 1957) in BirdLife International (2001).

In the 19th century Davidson and Wenden (1878), observed it several times in the Deccan and 'believed (it) to breed near the Ekroot tank,' Sholapur District and Butler

(1881) found it to be not common and very local. The breeding mentioned in Khandesh by Ali & Ripley (1983) is discounted by BirdLife International (2001).

In Goa, Lainer (2004) records it as a locally, fairly common winter visitor and cites various sources.

Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia* is another rarely recorded winter visitor to western Maharashtra but is probably under-recorded due to its skulking nature. It is more common in the Bombay neighbourhood including the Ghats (Monga 2001, Ali & Abdulali 1945, Abdulali 1981). I was sitting under the shade of the hillside at Bopdeo Ghat in the spot where the photograph was taken, about 4-5km west of the crest of the ghat on 6.ii.2005. I had sat for about 45 minutes and had heard some rustling close behind me, which I had presumed to be of mice or lizards. When I got up to stretch and move off a bird flew from the grass right behind me. Luckily it was as surprised as me and had to alight nearby low down near a bush in order to check me out. This gave me time to see the clear fairly strong brown stripes on the pale long under-tail coverts and the clearly but finely striped markings on the side of the upper-breast (possibly right across but not seen fully) and the strongly marked dark centred greater coverts. The upper-parts were an overall pale sandy yellowy brown with brown stripes and the ground colour of the under-parts was off white. There was a fairly faint pale supercilium and a dark eye-stripe and the alarm call was a tongue clicking 'tsuk'. The bird then dived into cover and could

not be lured out again. The pale upper-parts is typical of some individuals of the race *straminea* the only known race occurring in India, which are either grey-brown or sandy-olive above (Baker 1997). Lanceolated Warbler *Locustella lanceolata*, which is a very similar species, typically shows more streaking on the upper-tail coverts and breast and usually less extensive streaking on the lower under-tail coverts than Grasshopper Warbler.

Recorded by others around Bombay: **Bombay area** 'Small numbers' (Monga 2001); **Bombay and neighbouring area**, occasional, migrant (Abdulali 1981); **Bombay** (Additions to their original paper), 'first noticed in tall grass on border of a swamp near Mumbra (11.i.1943). We have subsequently met it on several occasions across the Harbour at Powai and also at Lake Beale (Ghoti) Nasik District. Bird shot on 15th November was in general moult. It is apparently a fairly common winter visitor,' (Ali & Abdulali 1945).

Further records from: **Pune** 'met with in rice fields and bushes of reeds in wet patches around Pune,' (Mahabal & Lamba 1987); **Ghoti** Nasik District (1), **Kalyan** Thane District (1), **Thana** Thane District (2), **Panvel** Raigad District (1), specimens in BNHS collection (Abdulali 1986); **Alibag-Roha** Raigad District, two on 10.xi.2002, SD (Prasad 2003).

There is an unusual record of a migrating individual at an unspecified location at sea **between the Bombay High Oilfield and the Gulf of Kambay** Gujarat on 31.x.1983 (Simpson 1984).

The species was unrecorded and possibly overlooked in 19th century in western Maharashtra although further south at Belgaum Butler (1881) found it 'not uncommon' in 'standing crops, rice fields, sugarcane and tall reed-beds' and there are the following records from Goa: **Tivim-Damedem** one on 31.xii.2000, GF, one on 27.i.2002, GF (Lainer 2004); **Candolim Salt Pans** one in xi.1994, AR (Willoughby 1996); **Tambdi Surla** one between 29.xi-19.xii.1999, although there were errors in this list (Dennis & Dennis 1999).

Broad-tailed Grassbird *Schoenicola platyura* is categorised as Vulnerable by BirdLife International (2001). There have been a number of recent records from western Maharashtra, where it was previously unrecorded and the species may be more common than previously supposed on the unexplored grassy hills of the Ghats.

I flushed one individual on 6.ii.2005 from just in front of me on the small path about 3-4km west of the temple at the top of Bopdeo Ghat, Pune District. The bird landed nearby low down in a bush and allowed me to see the broad tail, uniform earth brown upper-parts and fairly short stout bill, which was reminiscent of a Rufous-tailed Finch-Lark *Ammomanes phoenicurus*. The habitat was a steep grassy hillside with scattered bushes (see photograph).

Previous records from Maharashtra include: **Ramshej Ghat** Nasik District, 'is again displaying this time at a place 3kms away from last year,' (BR in litt. 19.viii.2004); **Ramshej Ghat** 'Displaying at about 1000m elevation,' in 'half of August 2003. Uncommon,' video footage taken (BR in litt. 12.x.2003, *J. Bombay Nat. Hist. Soc.* in prep., BR in litt. 9.ix.2003, ZI in litt. 30.viii.2003); **INS Shivaji, Lonavla** Pune District, one on 10.xi.2002, 'hillsides interspersed with low bushes. The coarse grasses have grown to 2-3 feet high,' KS (KS in Islam & Rahmani 2004, Prasad 2003); **Pune** no details give, possibly referring to previous record (Pande *et al.* 2003); **Amba valley** Pune District, two in about October-November 2001. 'They were in a thicket with clumps of Carissa and plenty of undergrowth. There were a couple of large Mango trees and the thicket was bounded by agricultural land on one side and open scrub interspersed with open grassy meadows with 3 foot high grass on the other sides,' VB (Prasad 2003); **Rajgurunagar** Sahyadri School, Pune District, two between 29.i-4.ii.2001 VS (Prasad 2003); **Dhule District** untraced isolated record (Grimmett *et al.* 1998, BirdLife International 2001).

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