minutes on the *Litsea* tree, during which it swallowed three to four fruits and dropped one of them.

Dietary information on the other three species of cochoa is also lacking, although the Javan Cochoa *C. azurea* is known to feed on *Zanthoxylum ovalifolium* and *Z. scandens* (del Hoyo *et al*. 2005).

The other species observed feeding on *Litsea* sp., were Black-crested Bulbul *Pycnonotus melanicterus*, White-throathed Bulbul *Alophoixus flaveolus*, Red-vented bulbul *P. cafer*, Blue-throated Barbet *Megalaima asiatica*, and Lineated Barbet *M. lineata*.

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# Notes on two migratory cuckoos from the Western Ghats, Tamil Nadu, southern India

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Robin, V. V., & Rao, S., 2011. Notes on two migratory cuckoos from the Western Ghats Tamil Nadu, southern India. *Indian BIRDS* 7 (5): 145–146.
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*Manuscript received on 12 August 2011.*

Cuckoos in the Genus *Cuculus* and *Hierococcyx* comprise species that are both sedentary and migratory. The migratory species have a wide distribution, and in India, they breed in the Himalayas where they are described as being highly vocal brood parasites. In their wintering grounds in peninsular and southern India, these species are under-recorded as they are silent and also resemble resident species with respect to field characters.

During a field study that involved mist-netting, in the evergreen forests of the Anamalai Tiger Reserve in the Western Ghats of Tamil Nadu, southern India, we captured, marked, and measured one individual of Large Hawk Cuckoo *Hierococcyx sparverioides* on 24 December 2005 and two individuals of Lesser Cuckoo *Cuculus poliocephalus* on 28 October 2004. All captures were *c*. 1400 m above MSL and at the edge of a large evergreen forest patch bordering tea plantations.

The Large Hawk Cuckoo is known to resemble the Shikra *Accipiter badius* in plumage and behaviour (Ali & Ripley 1983; also see Payne 2005 for an illustration of flight similarity and description regarding this). It is known to breed in the Himalayas at an elevation of 900–2700 m, between April and July, and migrate south to the peninsula in winter. Issues have been raised regarding the possibility of confusion in identification with the more common resident Common Hawk Cuckoo *H. varius* (Ali & Ripley 1983). Moreover, its silent habits in the wintering grounds make it difficult to detect. The species has been only sporadically recorded from this region (Yoganand 1997; Kannan 1998; Sridhar 2005; Raman 2006). We captured this species during our under-storey mist-netting session at Anamalai Tiger Reserve, at 1450 m elevation in a degraded forest patch adjoining a tea estate. It was identified in hand and its identity was confirmed by an examination of morphometric details **(Table 1)**.

The Lesser Cuckoo is known to occur in montane habitats in much of its breeding range (Payne 2005). In the Himalayas, it occurs at 1500–3200 m above MSL between April and August, and migrates to lower elevations and latitudes in the winter, 'wandering widely in the peninsula south to Kerala' (Ali & Ripley 1983). Ali & Ripley (1983) speculate on a wide winter distribution for this species but attribute the lack of records to its silent habit in the non-breeding season. Though there is one record from the Nilgiri Hills in Tamil Nadu (Ali & Ripley 1983), many past studies in this region have not reported this species (e.g., Kannan 1998; Sridhar 2005; Raman 2006). The two individuals caught were similar in plumage but differed in size, with one being smaller than the other.

These records form part of a larger study on the conservation biology of the White-bellied Shortwing *Brachypteryx major* that one of the authors (VVR) has been conducting in the same area for four years (2003–2007). Coincidentally, both species of cuckoos are known to parasitise *Brachypteryx* species in the Himalayas though the genus level affinity of the shortwings in the Western Ghats is not presently clear (Robin *et al*. 2010). The study in the Western Ghats involves annual intensive mist-netting, maintaining a constant trapping effort in about 10 ha of forests spread across four plots, while also monitoring four small patches (<2.5 ha each) of montane forests. However, the two species of cuckoos were recorded only in one season and were never re-captured. We speculate that these individuals were probably moving through these areas. More intensive sampling over a longer period of time across a

Table 1. Morphometric measurements of two species of cuckoos captured in southern India

| Species | Right tarsus (mm) | Right wing (mm) | Tail (mm) | Bill (mm) | Weight (g) | Age |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Large Hawk Cuckoo *Hierococcyx sparverioides* | 25.4 | 224 | 204 | 24.4 | – | Adult |
| Lesser Cuckoo *Cuculus poliocephalus* | 18.47 | 152 | 131 | 21.32 | – | Adult |
| Lesser Cuckoo | 20.16 | 154 | 136 | 24.64 | 47 | Adult |

larger geographical area, or citizen science initiatives like Migrant Watch (http://migrantwatch.in), may help in understanding the wintering grounds of these cuckoos in the Western Ghats better.

## Acknowledgements

We thank the Tamil Nadu Forest Department for permits to conduct the study, and the Eastern Ghats–Western Ghats Programme, Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India for funding the shortwing study. We also thank R. Nandini and T. R. Shankar Raman for encouraging us to publish this information and for going through the manuscript.

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# First photographic record of Blyth's Rosefinch *Carpodacus grandis* from Sikkim, India

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Rahut, B., Dutta, M., & Bonpo, C. R., 2011. First photographic record of Blyth's Rosefinch *Carpodacus grandis* from Sikkim, India. *Indian BIRDS* 7 (5): 146–147.
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Blyth's Rosefinch *Carpodacus grandis*[1] **(Fig. 1)** is found from northern Baluchistan (Ziarat) to Chitral, thence eastward through Gilgit, Astor, Baltistan, Ladakh (not being recorded in Kashmir proper), Lahul, Spiti, Garhwal, and Kumaon (Ali & Ripley 2007). The British Museum holds a specimen from Kumaon (Ali & Ripley 2007).

The species is not globally threatened, and is known to be locally common (Rasmussen & Anderton 2005).

It breeds between 2400 m and 3500 m in Baluchistan (North-West Frontier Province), up to 3700 m in Gilgit (Baltistan), and between 3400 m and 3800 m in Ladakh and Lahul (Ali & Ripley 2007).

Blyth's Rosefinch generally affects juniper, briar, rose bushes, and shrubs in dry biotpope. In winter (end of October to April) it moves down to the foothills (300–2400 m), into the Quetta Valley, Kohat, the Salt Range, Campbellpur, and Rawalapindi. In Dharmsala, Kangra, and Simla it is recorded in winter between 2200 m and 2600 m. In foothill areas it affects bushes, wild olive trees, patches of thorny scrub, gardens, and cultivated spots (Ali & Ripley 2007).

During our third visit to Pangolakha Wildlife Sanctuary (28–31 August 2011; guide: Chewang Rinchen Bonpo), a designated Important Bird Area in eastern Sikkim, we recorded and photographed a large, stout-billed rosefinch at *c.* 3800 m, near Lungthu (27°45'N, 88°02'E). Instantly noticeable morphological characters of the species were: (i) The prominently large size of the bird as compared to the other rosefinches (e.g. Himalayan White-browed Rosefinch *Carpodacus thura*, Dark-breasted Rosefinch *C. nipalensis*) normally found in the area, (ii) a large heavy bill, (iii) vinous-washed mantle, (iv) silvery-pink supercilium, cheek, and throat, (v) pinkish vent, and (vi) streaks all through the ventral part from throat to the belly.

After minute scrutiny of the photographs, we concluded that it was a Blyth's Rosefinch. We sent photographs of the bird to Krys Kazmierczak, who also confirmed it as a Blyth's Rosefinch (*in litt.* 17 September 2011). Tim Inskipp too posted on the Facebook page of the Sikkim bird group (13 October 2011) that this was probably the first fully acceptable record of the bird from Sikkim.

Sharpe (1888) gives its distribution as, 'Afghanistan and Himalayas from Northern Cashmere to Native Sikhim,' and records a specimen collected in 'Native Sikhim, Aug. 19, 1879 (L. Mandelli),' i.e., present day Sikkim. However, Oates (1890) noted that, 'In the British Museum there is also a single female said to have been procured in Sikhim by Mandelli, but there is no original label attached to this specimen and I fear that some mistake may have been made regarding this locality,' (pp. 216–217). Baker (1926) referred to this Mandelli specimen but attached no doubt to the locality information, and in 1934 he simply stated, 'has once occurred in Sikkim,' (p. 48). Finally Ganguli-Lachungpa et al. (2007) mention its occurrence in the Tso Lhamo plateau-Lashar-Sebu La-Yumesamdong complex.

This is the first photographic documentation of the species not only in the Eastern Himalayas but also east of the Kumaon region.

The Pangolakha Wildlife Sanctuary in Sikkim, the Neora Valley National Park in West Bengal, and the Toorsa Nature Reserve in Bhutan form a sort of green triangle that is extremely rich in biodiversity. The varied altitudes of these protected areas formulate a wide tier of natural vegetation from the barren alpine slopes at the top to the mixed deciduous variety at the foothills,

1 Elevated to species level from Red-mantled Rosefinch *C. rhodochlamys grandis*, and re-christened Blyth's Rosefinch by Rasmussen & Anderton (2005).