

Chestnut-tailed Minla *Chrysominla strigula*, an addition to the avifauna of Jammu & Kashmir, India

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The Chestnut-tailed Minla *Chrysominla strigula* is a widely distributed species in South, and South-east Asia, from the Western Himalayas till peninsular Malaysia, and Vietnam, with six recognised sub-species. Of these, three sub-species occur in India, including the nominate, which occurs from western-central Nepal up to western Arunachal Pradesh; *C. s. yunnanensis* is found in most of north-eastern India, excluding the range of the nominate; and *C. s. simlaensis* occurs from western Himachal Pradesh up to western Nepal (Ali 2002; Besten 2004; Grimmer *et al.* 2011; Singh 2011; Rasmussen & Anderton 2012; Singh *et al.* 2014; Thakur *et al.* 2014). In the Indian Subcontinent it prefers temperate broadleaved, and mixed coniferous forests; timberline ecotones, and alpine scrub in an elevational range of 1800–3700 m asl.

During our survey on 23 August 2014, three individuals of Chestnut-tailed Minla [55] were seen in a dense oak-rhododendron scrub interface, in SeoJ meadow, Upper Bhaderwah (32.90°N, 75.63°E; 3400 m asl) [56]. They were feeding on the fruits of *Rhododendron campanulatum*. Identification is fairly straight forward, as there are no other species with such distinctive plumage. Distributional limits of the species in north-western Himalayas, particularly in the sub-alpine, and alpine belts, remains relatively poorly known because of scattered, and isolated avifaunal surveys. The north-western extent of the species in the Himalayas, before our sighting, was reportedly limited to Kotla (Hingston 1921), Nurpur (Whistler 1926), Kangra (Besten 2004), and more recently, to Solan (Thakur *et al.* 2010), and Chamba (Singh, 2011). The present sighting of the bird is c. 50 km from its known distribution, in the neighbouring state of



Photos: N. Sharma

56. The Chestnut-tailed Minla was seen in this oak-rhododendron scrub interface, in SeoJ meadow, Upper Bhaderwah.

Himachal Pradesh. Therefore, this is an addition to the avifauna of Jammu & Kashmir.

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Photo: M. A. Kichloo

55. Chestnut-tailed Minla *Chrysominla strigula*.