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# First record of Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata* from Tamil Nadu, India

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The Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata* is a small passerine that breeds in Baluchistan and is a passage migrant to southern Pakistan, and north-western India: from Jammu and Kashmir, south to western Gujarat. We report here the first sighting of the Spotted Flycatcher in Tamil Nadu, way beyond its regular distribution range.

On 18 December 2016 we were birding at Koonthakulam Village (8.47°N, 77.75°E; Tirunelveli District). Around 1030 hrs we were birding near Papankulam tank, which is about one-and-a-half kilometers from the village. In a small copse of *Acacia nilotica* shrubs we saw a small bird, about the size of a sparrow, sitting upright on one of the lowest branches of a bush, and upon obtaining closer views we saw that it was a flycatcher. When it flew to another bush we noted that it was uniformly grey-brown in colour, with a predominantly black beak, but we could not see any eye-ring. We followed it, to get a better view, and when it perched out in the open, we clearly saw its streaked crown, and striated chest, and neck [67]. The underparts were dull greyish-white, the legs dark, and the greyish-brown tail, slightly notched. The bird was perched erect, and sallying for insects from its vantage point, but soon flew to another bush. As we followed it, we were surprised to see another individual; both were sallying for insects under the acacia shrub.

We could clearly see that this was a different individual from the first, because of the presence of a small black spot on its abdomen, and more pronounced spots on its chest, which was not seen in the other individual [68]. We had provisionally identified the bird as the Spotted Flycatcher but we're sceptical because it was way out of its known distribution range. However, since we were able to photograph it, we could confirm that it was a Spotted Flycatcher as it was more heavily streaked on the crown, and the chest (contra, the more likely, Asian Brown Flycatcher *M. dauurica*).

On subsequent visits to the same area on 20, and 25 December 2016 the bird was not seen, despite an extensive search.

The earlier southern-most records of the Spotted Flycatcher is from Goa (Dharwadkar 2017), and Pune (Iyer 2016). The bird has not been reported from Sri Lanka. Hence, this bird could have been a vagrant from its main migration route.

We would like to thank Dipu K., and Praveen J. for helping us identifying the bird.

Pics: Uday Kumar



67. The first Spotted Flycatcher had few spots on its breast.



68. The second Spotted Flycatcher's breast was more prominently marked.

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# Occurrence of Bristled Grassbird *Chaetornis striata* in Pearl Millet *Pennisetum glaucum*, and Sorghum *Sorghum bicolor* fields in Ajmer District, Rajasthan

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Sangha, H. S., 2017. Occurrence of Bristled Grassbird *Chaetornis striata* in Pearl Millet *Pennisetum glaucum*, and Sorghum *Sorghum bicolor* fields in Ajmer District, Rajasthan. *Indian BIRDS* 13 (2): 53–54.

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On 14 August 2015, at 0715 hrs I was watching a male Lesser Florican *Sypheotides indicus* displaying in a field of moong *Vigna radiate* along a track close to Shokaliya village in Sarwar Tehsil, Ajmer District. From the adjacent field of pearl millet *Pennisetum glaucum* I heard a call, and instinctively focused my binoculars on the flying brown bird, which looked larger than the displaying larks in the area. Having seen the species earlier at Harike (Punjab), and Sultanpur (Haryana), identifying it as a Bristled Grassbird *Chaetornis striata* was straightforward.

During the next hour, or so, I saw the bird several times, and had no doubt about my identification. On three to four occasions it arrived very close to me and perched on a stunted khejri *Prosopis cineraria* tree, allowing close observations, and the opportunity to compile the following field notes.

Overall dorsal plumage: Buffy-fawn, prominently streaked with black on mantle, and scapulars, almost shrike-like stout black bill, no obvious supercilium, flat crown, and streaks on nape. Uppertail, very ragged, brown, with conspicuous pale shafts, and