

Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*: A first record for Delhi NCR

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On 11 December 2016, though it was a very cold foggy morning, we made our way to Mangar Bani (28.36°N, 77.17°E), a small patch of forest between Faridabad and Delhi, from where Black-throated- *Turdus atrogularis*, and Scaly Thrushes *Zoothera dauma* had been recently reported (Gupta & Srinivas 2017). By 1000 hrs the fog thickened, making us doubt the wisdom of our plans. However, when we reached the target area and peered in from the edge, the first bird we saw was a thrush, foraging on the ground among dead leaves, in a grove of trees. Unlike the thrushes we were expecting to see, it was a small brownish bird, plain above, but with well-marked spots below. We had not seen anything like it earlier, and were thoroughly intrigued. We entered the grove to get a closer look. It flew up into a nearby tree, but returned to feed on the ground after we moved away [69]. Thereafter it followed the same pattern. It would flit to the ground, feed around a bit, and then fly to sit on a tree. We observed this Song Thrush *T. philomelos* (see below) for nearly an hour, when a second bird was spotted with it, alongside a Black-throated Thrush. Subsequently, both flew away.

On our return to Delhi we tried to identify the species by posting photographs we had taken, to the e-group 'Delhibirdpix', Bill Harvey, Mike Prince, and some others. Abhinav Choudhary, and Piyush Dogra, fellow birders, wondered whether it was a Song Thrush. As the species had only been documented a handful of times from India, we sought assistance from Bill Harvey, who immediately confirmed it as a Song Thrush—the first to be recorded in Delhi NCR (Harvey *et al.* 2006). Subsequently, the thrush was seen, and photographed three days later on a late morning (Lahiri 2017), but was not seen after that.

Rasmussen & Anderton (2012) consider it a winter vagrant to southern Pakistan, and north-western India, and include only two records, one each from Ladakh, and Bharatpur. The first report for India was from the Tikse area, Ladakh, where an individual was seen on several days from 24 November 1981 until it was trapped and ringed on 14 December 1981 (Delany *et al.* 2014). The sight record from Bharatpur remains untraced, but there is another report from Harike, Punjab, where Bill Harvey saw one briefly on the ground at the edge of a patch of wet reeds, and then in flight close to the Sikh Temple at Harike on 17 February 2002 (Harvey 2002; Bill Harvey, *in litt.*, e-mail dated 30 January 2017).

The Song Thrush breeds from western Europe, east to Lake Baikal and the eastern Sayan range in Siberia. Its northern populations move southwards in winter, as far south as northern Africa—south to Sudan and Ethiopia, and the Middle East, and, hence, vagrancy to north-western India is not surprising.

We would like to thank Bill Harvey for helping with identification, and for sharing details of his record from Harike.

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69. Song Thrush.