

reported as a summer visitor from Himachal up to north-eastern India apart from an endemic population in the Nicobar Islands (Ali & Ripley 1987; Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). The nearest published records, to the present sighting, are from Uttarakhand (Mohan & Chellam 1991; Mohan 1996; Singh 2000), and Himachal Pradesh (Jones 1943). This is the first reported sighting of a Hooded Pitta from Haryana.

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Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin* in Hanle, Ladakh

On a birding trip to Ladakh and Srinagar, with my family, I saw and photographed a Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin* at Loma check post (33.17°N, 78.82°E), enroute Hanle from Chusul on 04 June 2017 at 1325 hrs. The lone bird was seen in the company of Tickell's Leaf Warblers *Phylloscopus affinis* on an unidentified plant.

The driver had to stop the car at the check post for registration. We were in the car and I noticed a species of finch on the top of the office. So, I leisurely took out the camera to identify it.



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177. Garden Warbler in Hanle.

After identifying it as the Great Rosefinch *Carpodacus rubicilla*, I noticed some warblers in the trees opposite the building. All of them were Tickell's Leaf Warblers, except one, which looked quite different. I started taking photographs haphazardly [177]. But since we were in a sensitive, military area, they stopped me, and by the time I had convinced them, it had vanished from the five to ten trees present there. As a result, I got only four to five photos of the bird. I could not spot it when we returned from Hanle on 06 June 2017.

The bird in the photographs looked like a plain warbler with brown upperparts and dull white underparts as well as very short supercilium. I thought it was either a Garden- or a Barred Warbler *Sylvia nisoria* but after referring to field guides (Kazmierczak 2000; Grimmett *et al.* 2011), the Barred Warbler was eliminated as it lacks the following features that were present on the bird in the photo: stout bill, black iris, unbarred flanks and undertail, and grey-washed neck.

The Garden Warbler is commonly found in Europe and western Asia where it breeds. It spends the winter in Africa and is a vagrant on the Indian Subcontinent. The only other record from the Indian Subcontinent, prior to this, was of three juvenile birds that were trapped and ringed at Tikse, Ladakh on 26 September and 09 October 1980, and 10 September 1981 by the Southampton University Ladakh Expeditions of 1976–1982. It is suspected that the bird I photographed might have been from the eastern population, which is sometimes treated as a separate subspecies, *woodwardi*, since it breeds in eastern Europe and temperate Asia, eastwards to western Siberia, and is more likely to pass through Ladakh on passage.

I thank Abhinav Choudhary for his prompt re-confirmation, and Nitu Sethi for asking Martin to ID the bird. I also thank Krys K. for his inputs on the subspecies of the bird. I am grateful to Praveen J. for helping with the manuscript.

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An aberrant Rusty-fronted Barwing *Actinodura egertoni* from Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary, Arunachal Pradesh, India

At 0647 hrs on 12 May 2017, as part of a long-term project on monitoring bird population dynamics using mist netting and bird ringing, in Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary, we captured a Rusty-fronted Barwing *Actinodura egertoni* (27.07°N, 92.40°E; 2030 m asl). Surprisingly, this individual had a white eye ring surrounding each eye [178], unlike any Rusty-fronted Barwing we have observed, or captured, over the last seven years of bird population monitoring in the area. We had first captured, and ringed, this individual on 07 April 2012 (Bombay Natural History

Society ring number AB172076), when we did not record—or failed to notice—a white eye ring. The orbital skin of this species is described as being “grey-green” (Collar & Robson 2007), and no description of this species in the literature mentions an eye ring (Ali & Ripley 1987; Collar & Robson 2007; Grimmett *et al.* 2011; Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). In all other respects, the appearance of this individual barwing was consistent with the description of Rusty-fronted Barwing, including the ‘diagnostic dark chestnut forehead, face and chin’ (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012), lacking in all other barwing species (Collar & Robson 2007).

Of the seven species of barwings found globally (Collar & Robson 2007), only two species have prominent white eye-rings. These are the Spectacled Barwing *A. ramsayi*, and the Black-crowned Barwing *A. sodangorum*, both of which are (a) morphologically very different from the Rusty-fronted Barwing, and (b) occupy ranges very distant from the eastern Himalayas—in southern China, Vitenam, Laos, Cambodia, and Myanmar (Collar & Robson 2007).

Morphological variation can be high within barwing species. Different races of the same species do show morphological differences in different parts of their geographical range (Collar & Robson 2007). The Rusty-fronted Barwing has four races (*egertoni*, *levisi*, *khasiana*, and *ripponi*), each of which occupies a different geographical area, and differs in plumage details from each other. However, none has been described as having eye rings. For many species, eye rings are often diagnostic, and it is surprising to find an eye ring in an individual from a species that lacks this feature. Unlike one other reported case from South America, where an individual Tropical Kingbird *Tyrannus melancholicus* had a bright yellow eye-ring on only the right side of the head (Hayes *et al.* 1985), the barwing we report had a white eye-ring around both eyes. This suggests a case of leucism, in which a bird can show a ‘varying proportion of white feathers’, but with normal colouration

of other feathers, eyes, skin, and beak, which is likely the result of a genetic mutation (Guay *et al.* 2012).

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178. Rusty-fronted Barwing with a white eye ring.