

Correspondence

Ward's Trogon *Harpactes wardi* in Taal-Kharka, East Sikkim, India

Ward's Trogon *Harpactes wardi* is considered Near Threatened under the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species (BirdLife International 2019a). It breeds in the Himalayas from Bhutan westwards through Arunachal Pradesh, northern and eastern Myanmar to southern China and northern Vietnam (Collar 2019). The species is frequently reported from Arunachal Pradesh (Rahmani 2012). However, it is very rare in Sikkim and there have not been any historical specimens, or recent photographs from the region (Ali 1962; Acharya & Vijayan 2010; Rahut 2013).

On 18 May 2018, we were birding and travelling towards Taal-kharka (27.17°N, 88.72°E) in East Sikkim, near the Pangolakha Wildlife Sanctuary, for the day. The forests of Bhutan and West Bengal border the village. It was a tough trek and we occasionally stopped for birds such as Yellow-cheeked Tits *Machlolophus spilonotus*, Ferruginous Flycatcher *Muscicapa ferruginea*, Black-throated Sunbird *Aethopyga saturata*, and Black-throated Parrotbill *Suthora nipalensis*. While returning, we heard the call of a bird and, suddenly, a trogon appeared in front of us on a nearby *Castanopsis* sp., tree, at a distance of about c. 100 m. We instantly photographed it [104] and confirmed its identification as a male Ward's Trogon, using Grimmett *et al.* (2011). We were at 2,321 m asl, in Taalk-harka forest, approximately 15 km from the main village.



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104. A male Ward's Trogon at Taalk-harka.

There are very few sight records of Ward's Trogon from the Sikkim Himalayas. It has been reported from Baguwa and Jorethang, South Sikkim District, in October 1996 (Ganguli-Lachungpa 1996); however, these areas are at a lower altitude (<1000 m) than preferred by Ward's Trogon and also of a different biotope. Hence, these records should be treated as tentative even though it is included in Rahmani *et al.* (2016). Rahmani *et al.* (2016) also list this species for Pangolakha Wildlife Sanctuary (BirdLife International 2019b), but without any details. Pangolakha is close to the area where we saw the species, and they must have relied on some unpublished records. Grimmett *et al.* (2019) map three disjunct areas in Sikkim (one each in western, southern, and eastern Sikkim) where the species has been reported; – two of them being the references mentioned

above. The record from western Sikkim could be Majumdar's (2011), but the associated description is very scarce, and the same is not made public in eBird maps. There are no records of this species from the adjoining Singalila National Park in West Bengal where birders frequent.

In any case, this appears to be the first photographic documentation of this species from Sikkim. This is not unexpected as the area is adjacent to Lava, and Neora Valley National Park in West Bengal from where some records *post* 2000 exist (Birdwatchers Society of Bengal 2001; Rahut & Dutta 2013; Rahut 2013; Mitra 2017; Ravindra 2017). It is not clear whether the species occurs further westwards as reports from other parts of Sikkim appear dubious. We propose that the Neora Valley–Pangolakha section to be considered the westwards distribution limit of this species.

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Nesting of Asian Brown Flycatcher *Muscicapa dauurica* in Goa, India and a review of breeding records from peninsular India

The Asian Brown Flycatcher *Muscicapa dauurica* is known to winter in peninsular India, south of the Vindhya Range. It is a summer visitor to the Himalayan foothills, and in the hills of central India, breeding at 1,200–2,600 m asl. In the Western Ghats and its associated ranges, and probably the Satpura Hills and the Eastern Ghats, a resident (or summer visitor) population breeds (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). However, due to paucity of reports the breeding range is poorly known.

On 29 April, 2018, at 1700 h, a nesting pair of the Asian Brown Flycatcher was observed in Bhagwan Mahaveer Wildlife Sanctuary, Goa, at c.100 m asl at roughly two kilometers from location 15.38°N, 74.23°E. While both birds were actively hunting insects, by making short aerial sorties, one of the birds sat intermittently in a cup-shaped nest on a completely leafless (unidentified) tree that was about 17–18 m tall [105–107]. The tree stood next to the motorable dirt road that passes through the sanctuary. We observed and photographed the nest from this dirt road, standing a considerable distance away from the site. The nest was situated 11–12 m above the ground, wedged between the main trunk and a branch, like that reported by Sangha *et al.* (2009). We measured the heights with a Hypsometer, and by applying trigonometry. The nest seemed to be made of some unidentified hardened material. Both the birds were singing from time to time and moving around in a radius of about eight to ten meters from the nest site. During our 30 min of observation, substantial activity was observed in the vicinity of the nest. Other birds that were observed, actively feeding, in a 10–15 m vicinity of the nest included three Common Woodshrikes *Tephrodornis pondicerianus*, two Drongos *Dicrurus* sp., two Purple Sunbirds *Cinnyris asiaticus*, a Black-hooded Oriole *Oriolus xanthornus*, and two Lesser Golden-backed Woodpeckers *Dinopium benghalense* [108–110].



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105–107. Asian Brown Flycatcher *Muscicapa dauurica* sitting and probing its nest, Goa, April 2018.

Ashwin Mohan



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108–110. Asian Brown Flycatcher calling very close to a nest, Goa, April 2019.

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One year later, on 17 and 18 April 2019, we revisited the above mentioned nesting site. At 1130 h on 17 April, we reached the site and found the nest at exactly the same spot. There was almost no bird activity in its vicinity, apart from calls of a Greater Racket-tailed Drongo *Dicrurus paradiseus*. Upon comparing the picture of the 2018 nest with the 2019 nest, we saw that the shape and structure of the nest had changed [109]. The 2019 contained a greenish lichen that was seen growing elsewhere on the tree. The material of the 2018 nest could not be identified, but it seemed more rigid and overall very brown. It is difficult to say whether the nest was rebuilt. No Asian Brown Flycatcher was seen in the 30 min of observation time. We revisited the same site next morning at around 0900 h. This time we observed two Asian Brown Flycatchers. These birds did not sit on the nest,