

The White-tailed Flycatcher is not a widespread species in the Eastern Himalayas; possibly breeding in south-eastern Arunachal and wintering in adjacent Upper Assam and the Patkai Hills. It has been reported from Meghalaya, Manipur, and Mizoram (Ali & Ripley 1987; Grimmett *et al.* 2011; Rasmussen & Anderton 2012; Clement 2019; eBird 2019). It is listed for Nagaland in Choudhury (2001) without any details of status and abundance, as well as Choudhury (2003) with status given as 'unknown'. Its presence in the Patkai Hills and further southwards, in the Mizo Hills might have led to the speculation that it would occur in the Naga Hills as well. Choudhury (2003, 2005) must have been the source of this being listed in several online checklists for Nagaland (Grewal 2010; Lepage 2019).

Hence, this appears to be the first definitive evidence of it occurring in the Naga Hills.

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'East Siberian Wagtail' (White Wagtail) *Motacilla alba ocularis* in Rajasthan

In the afternoon of 29 January 2019, Frank Dorel, Henk Hendriks, Peter de Rouw, Mahendra Singh, and Roland van der Vliet were enjoying the spectacle of the Demoiselle Cranes *Grus virgo* at Kheechan, Rajasthan, India. Several other species frequented the lake's edge including several White Wagtails *Motacilla alba*. Most of them were Masked Wagtails *M. a. personata* and Siberian White Wagtails *M. a. alba* ('*dukhunensis*'), but one was clearly different. We identified it as an East Siberian Wagtail *M. a. ocularis*

(de Rouw 2019). It was not shy, enabling PdR to digiscope it [117]. We did not realize the importance of the sighting until later in the evening, when, while reviewing our daily sightings against Grimmett *et al.* (1998) and Rasmussen & Anderton (2012), we realized that *ocularis* is only supposed to winter in Northeast-India. From the only digiscoped image available, our bird can be seen to be grey-backed and to have a distinct eye-stripe, amongst other features. The bird is a male but its age cannot be determined with certainty.



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117. East Siberian Wagtail.

The subspecies *ocularis* breeds in Siberia eastwards into Alaska. It winters from north-eastern India, eastwards to the Philippines (Tyler 2019). However, knowledge of the occurrence, and present distribution, of *ocularis* in India is not well known, probably because many observers do not distinguish between subspecies of White Wagtail. In general, the main field guides to the birds of the Indian Subcontinent generally state its wintering distribution as 'North' and/or 'Northeast-India' (Grimmett *et al.* 1998; Rasmussen & Anderton 2012; Arlott 2015). Ali & Ripley (1998) are more specific, mentioning Assam, Nagaland, Manipur, and Bangladesh as its wintering grounds, as well as a rare occurrence westwards, to Harike Lake, Punjab, based on a bird trapped on 31 March 1985 (Akhtar & Prakash 1989). Vyas (2019) does not mention it for the well-watched Delhi area. Outside its regular wintering areas in north- and north-eastern India, we found only one other Indian record supported by photographs: on 15 October 2018, a bird was present at Mattu, Udipi County, Karnataka (Manimoole & Lakshmiis 2019). Therefore, our bird would be the first documented record of this subspecies in Rajasthan. We should note though that Alström & Mild (2003) mention *ocularis* to rarely winter west to Rajasthan, based on their own observations although not corroborated by any documentation.

Outside the Indian Subcontinent, *ocularis* is predominantly a spring migrant northwards of India, in both the Kathmandu Valley, Nepal (Proud 1955; Inskipp & Inskipp 1991), and eastern Kazakhstan (Wassink 2010). It has, furthermore, been recorded as a rare winter visitor to Seistan, Iran (Sarudny 1911). Vagrants are increasingly being reported, not only in Japan, Australia, and North America (Alström & Mild 2003; Dunn & Alderfer 2006), but also in the Western Palearctic. After the first Western Palearctic record in the United Arab Emirates on 07 November 2017 (Partridge 2018), others were reported in Cyprus (28 March–14 April 2018), Oman (18 November 2018), Sweden (25 November 2018), and again Cyprus (30 March–11 April 2019), probably due to a greater interest in the identification of White Wagtail subspecies. We hope that this note will result in a higher awareness of this subspecies in the Indian Subcontinent, leading to a better understanding of its occurrence there.

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Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe* in Bhutan

The Northern Wheatear nests widely across northern Eurasia, southwards to the Middle East and North Africa, and its breeding range includes north-eastern Canada and western Alaska. Birds from its north-easternmost breeding grounds cross the Middle East and central Asia en route to winter in Africa (Kren & Zoerb 1997). Alaskan breeding wheatears, fitted with geolocators, have been documented to fly 14,500 km both ways, to and from wintering grounds in northern sub-Saharan Africa (Bairlein *et al.* 2012).

On a birding trip with Rockjumper Birding Tours to Bhutan, in March–April 2019, led by DE and André Bernon, and with Roberson among ten mostly American participants, we spent a couple of days birding the Puna Tsang Chhu from Punakha,

Punakha Province, downstream ten kilometers to Wangdu Phodrang. This stretch of river is now famed for its vagrant waders and waterfowl: Eight of the rarities discussed in Bishop (1999); 38 species of ducks, waders, and gulls mentioned in Tobgay (2017), many of them rare for Bhutan. A primary viewing spot is just north of Wangdu Phodrang, where the river's inlets and islets are just opposite Hotel Pema Karpo. We had excellent waterbirds at this site, including 51 Pallas's Gull *Ichthyaetus ichthyaetus*, on 31 March 2019. Yet, our initial stop on 30 March 2019 was 200 m southwards where barren agricultural fields and bits of scrub were across the road from the Puna Tsang Chhu.

We stopped at those dry fields to look for an Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina*, another Bhutan rarity, which had recently been discovered by others. We relocated and photographed it, and decided to see if other migrant land birds might be present. A nearby scrubby patch had at least 20 Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla* and two Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica* (rare in Bhutan). Then DE spotted a Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe* on an adjacent boulder. He sees many Northern Wheatears annually in his Swedish homeland, and immediately identified it. This female wheatear was smaller and shorter-legged than the Isabelline Wheatear present nearby, and was pale grey from crown to lower back, had contrastingly dark wings, and a very long primary projection. It was creamy-whitish below with a buffy throat and a white supercilium that was broader behind the eye. It disappeared shortly after everyone saw it and some obtained photos [118, 119].



118. Female Northern Wheatear, 30 March 2019, Punakha Province, Bhutan.

D. Roberson



119. Another view of the female Northern Wheatear, 30 March 2019, Punakha Province, Bhutan.

D. Eterius