

Birds of South Asia: Additions over ‘The Ripley Guide’

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The term ‘South Asia’ has been framed in varying contexts to represent the southern region of the Asian continent. It is still commonly used synonymously with the term ‘Indian Subcontinent’, a cohesive biogeographical unit comprising the seven sub-Himalayan countries: Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. In recent years, however, the term ‘South Asia’ is increasingly used in a geopolitical context to reflect the geographical extent of the eight member-countries of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), namely, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. Rasmussen & Anderton (2005, 2012), for their editions of ‘The Ripley Guide’ (BSA1 & BSA2), used this latter definition and, additionally, included the Chagos Archipelago (henceforth, Chagos), also known as the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT) lying south of the Maldives on the same undersea ridge.

Since the publication of BSA2, there have been several additions to the South Asian avifauna, including a reassessment of past records (see Table 1). We base the inclusion of species, in the Table below, on past evaluations of inclusion/exclusion for the Indian Subcontinent (Praveen et al. 2017; Praveen et al. 2019e), Afghanistan (Praveen 2018), and Chagos (Carr 2015); and do not make any fresh evaluations. For matters of taxonomy, we follow Praveen et al. (2019b); the list of species in Rasmussen & Anderton (2012) is mapped to this taxonomy to create the Table. Two subspecies that carried individual accounts in BSA2, as hypothetical/possible for the region, were also added to the Indian avifauna, namely, Baltic Gull *Larus fuscus fuscus* (Williams & Gottschling 2018) and Black-browed Tit *Aegithalos iouschistos bonvaloti* (Sangha et al. 2013). However, we only list the species recognised by Praveen et al. (2019b) in the Table below.

In terms of evidence (see Praveen et al. 2016 for definitions), two of the species are supported by preserved specimens (Cory’s

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No.	Species	Status in BSA2	Evidence	Status	Country
1	Red-breasted Goose <i>Branta ruficollis</i>	Hypothetical	Media	Vagrant. Photographic records from Uttar Pradesh (Panwar & Panwar 2014) and Himachal Pradesh (Abhinav et al. 2018)	IN
2	Australian Shelduck <i>Tadorna tadornoides</i>	Hypothetical	Media	Vagrant. A few individuals photographed in Chagos; and convincingly argued to be wild vagrants (Carr 2015)	BIOT
3	Namaqua Dove <i>Oena capensis</i>	Not included	Media	Vagrant. Photographed in western Gujarat (Trivedi & Trivedi 2018; Patel & Raol 2018); its provenance was concluded as a wild vagrant (Praveen et al. 2019)	IN
4	Horsfield’s Bronze Cuckoo <i>Chalcites basalıs</i>	Not included	Media	Vagrant. Photographed in the Great Nicobar Island (Gokulakrishnan et al. 2018)	IN
5	White-browed Crake <i>Amaurornis cinerea</i>	Not included	Media	Vagrant. A long-staying individual photographed in north-eastern Assam (Gogoi & Phukan 2016)	IN
6	Sooty Shearwater <i>Ardenna grisea</i>	Hypothetical	Sight record	Vagrant or probably a rare passage migrant over the seas around the Maldives; multiple sightings with field notes (Anderson et al. 2016)	ML
7	Cory’s Shearwater <i>Calonectris borealis</i>	Not included	Specimen	Vagrant. One specimen recovered from the coasts of Kerala and preserved at Zoological Survey of India, Kozhikode (Praveen et al. 2014)	IN
8	Tahiti Petrel <i>Pseudobulweria rostrata</i>	Not included	Media	Vagrant. One photographed from the seas around Chagos (Carr 2015)	BIOT
9	Matsudaira’s Storm-Petrel <i>Oceanodroma matsudaira</i>	Hypothetical	Media	Presumably a regular visitor to the seas around Chagos (Carr 2015)	BIOT
10	White-eared Night Heron <i>Gorsachius magnificus</i>	Not included	Media	Vagrant. One photographed in Bihar (Shafi et al. 2018)	IN
11	Javan Pond Heron <i>Ardeola speciosa</i>	Not included	Media	Vagrant or probably rare winter visitor to the Andaman Islands (Gokulakrishnan et al. 2018; Shaktivel 2019)	IN
12	Chinese Egret <i>Egretta eulophotes</i>	Not included	Media	Photographed on the Andaman Islands and presumably a regular winter visitor there, since (Sivaperuman et al. 2016)	IN

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13	Abbott's Booby <i>Papasula abbotti</i>	Hypothetical	Media	Vagrant. One bird photographed from the Maldives (Anderson et al. 2016)	ML
14	Far Eastern Curlew <i>Numenius madagascariensis</i>	Hypothetical	Media	Vagrant. One bird photographed in the Chagos Archipelago (Carr 2015)	BIOT
15	Sabine's Gull <i>Xema sabini</i>	Not included	Media	Vagrant. One photographed on the coasts of Kerala (Sreenivasan et al. 2013)	IN
16	Franklin's Gull <i>Leucophaeus pipixcan</i>	Not included	Sight record	Vagrant. One sighting, with field notes, from the coast of Goa (Holt et al. 2013; Praveen et al. 2014)	IN
17	White-eyed Gull <i>Ichthyophaga leucophthalmus</i>	Hypothetical	Media	Vagrant. One bird photographed from the coasts of northern Karnataka (Jamalabad 2016), considered of wild provenance (Praveen et al. 2019)	IN
18	Caspian Gull <i>Larus cachinnans</i>	Hypothetical	Media	Regular winter visitor to the coasts of Gujarat (Ganpule 2015) and presumably also in inland lakes of the northern Indian Subcontinent	IN
19	Mongolian Gull <i>Larus smithsonianus mongolicus</i>	Hypothetical	Media	Vagrant or rare winter visitor to eastern coasts of the Indian Subcontinent (Dutta 2013; Praveen et al. 2014)	IN
20	Black Tern <i>Chlidonias niger</i>	Hypothetical	Media	Rare passage migrant through the region (Carr 2013; Bhatt et al. 2014; Bhatia 2016; Jamalabad 2016; Reghuvaran et al. 2017; Koenraads et al. 2018)	IN, BIOT
21	European Honey-Buzzard <i>Pernis apivorus</i>	Hypothetical	Media	Vagrant. One bird photographed in the Chagos Archipelago (Carr 2015)	BIOT
22	Red Kite <i>Milvus milvus</i>	Hypothetical	Sight record	Vagrant. One bird sight recorded with field notes from Uttarakhand (Naoroji & D'Silva 1988). Considered hypothetical by Rasmussen & Anderton (2012), but accepted subsequently based on field notes (Praveen et al. 2016)	IN
23	Grey-faced Buzzard <i>Butastur indicus</i>	Hypothetical	Media	Vagrant to the Andaman & Nicobar Islands (Manchi et al. 2014; Zaibin et al. 2014)	IN
24	Blue-throated Bee-eater <i>Merops viridis</i>	Not included	Media	Vagrant. A long-staying individual photographed in northern Kerala; considered of wild provenance (Manekkara 2016; Praveen et al. 2019)	IN
25	Red-footed Falcon <i>Falco vespertinus</i>	Hypothetical	Specimen	Vagrant. An old specimen at NHM, Tring from Gilgit, Kashmir (Prŷs-Jones et al. 2017)	IN
26	Lord Derby's Parakeet <i>Psittacula derbiana</i>	Hypothetical	Media	Resident or breeding visitor to the Upper Lohit Valley in north-eastern Arunachal Pradesh (Praveen et al. 2015)	IN
27	Blue-winged Pitta <i>Pitta moluccensis</i>	Not included	Media	Photographed on Narcondom Island (Manchi & Kumar 2014) where presumably a rare passage migrant	IN
28	Swinhoe's Minivet <i>Pericrocotus cantonensis</i>	Hypothetical	Media	Rare passage migrant through much of the Indian Subcontinent (Rajguru & Ukil 2016; Sridharan et al. 2016; Theba et al. 2018)	IN
29	Pied Crow <i>Corvus albus</i>	Not included	Media	Vagrant. Photographed in the Thar Desert, Rajasthan, with debatable provenance (Saikia & Goswami 2017), but subsequently considered of wild provenance (Praveen et al. 2019)	IN
30	Amur Paradise-flycatcher <i>Terpsiphone incei</i>	Not included	Media	Vagrant or rare winter visitor to the Andaman Islands (Grundsten et al. 2018)	IN
31	Masked Shrike <i>Lanius nubicus</i>	Possible	Media	Vagrant. One photographed from southern Gujarat (Bharti 2017)	IN
32	Chestnut-flanked White-eye <i>Zosterops erythropleurus</i>	Not included	Media	Photographed in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh (Sailo et al. 2018; Lobo et al. 2018) and presumably a rare passage migrant through north-eastern India	IN
33	Eastern Yellow Wagtail <i>Motacilla tschutschensis</i>	Hypothetical	Media	Photographed in northern-eastern India and the Andamans (Viswanathan et al. 2017) and presumably a winter migrant to those parts	IN
34	Three-banded Rosefinch <i>Carpodacus trifasciatus</i>	Hypothetical	Sight record	Vagrant. One sight record with field notes (Clements 1992) from Bhutan: considered hypothetical in Rasmussen & Anderton (2012), but accepted subsequently based on field notes (Praveen et al. 2017)	BH
35	Chinese White-browed Rosefinch <i>Carpodacus dubius</i>	Hypothetical	Media	Vagrant. One photographed in north-eastern Arunachal Pradesh (Praveen et al. 2016)	IN
36	Pink-rumped Rosefinch <i>Carpodacus waltoni</i>	Possible	Media	Vagrant. One photographed in northern Bengal (Sengupta 2017)	IN
37	Godlewski's Bunting <i>Emberiza godlewskii</i>	Hypothetical	Media	Breeding resident in Upper Lohit Valley of north-eastern Arunachal Pradesh (Gode 2013; Sharma et al. 2014)	IN
38	Rustic Bunting <i>Emberiza rustica</i>	Hypothetical	Media	Vagrant. One photographed in Bhutan (Lilje 2017), and sight records from Nepal (Praveen et al. 2017)	BH, NP

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39	Tristram's Bunting <i>Emberiza tristrami</i>	Possible	Media	Presumably a rare passage migrant through the eastern Indian Subcontinent (Naniwadekar et al. 2013; Khan 2016; Thangaraj & Mani 2016)	IN, BD
40	Yellow-browed Bunting <i>Emberiza chrysophrys</i>	Not included	Media	Vagrant. One photographed in southern West Bengal (Kundu & Abhinav 2018)	IN
41	Lapland Longspur <i>Calcarius lapponicus</i>	Not included	Media	Vagrant. One photographed in Bhutan (Chophel & Sherub 2016)	BH
42	Sedge Warbler <i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>	Hypothetical	In hand	Vagrant or rare passage migrant through the Ladakh Valley (Delany et al. 2014). Considered hypothetical by Rasmussen & Anderton (2012), but accepted subsequently based on morphometrics and photographs (Praveen et al. 2017)	IN
43	Wood Warbler <i>Phylloscopus sibilatrix</i>	Not included	Media	Vagrant. One bird photographed on adjacent days in south-eastern Ladakh (Bengtsson et al. 2016; Kang et al. 2016)	IN
44	Asian Stubtail <i>Urosphena squameiceps</i>	Hypothetical	Media	Rare winter visitor to the eastern Indian Subcontinent (Gassah & Ismavel 2019)	IN, BD, NP
45	Black-headed Greenfinch <i>Carduelis ambigua</i>	Hypothetical	Media	Resident and probably breeding in north-eastern Arunachal Pradesh (Dalvi 2013; Singh 2013; Sharma et al. 2014)	IN
46	Garden Warbler <i>Sylvia borin</i>	Hypothetical	In hand	Vagrant or rare passage migrant through the Ladakh Valley (Delany et al. 2014; Singh 2017)	IN
47	Elliot's Laughingthrush <i>Trochalopteron elliotii</i>	Hypothetical	Sight record	Probably a rare resident in extreme north-eastern India. Accepted based on a sight record (Dalvi 2013) and the field notes of the same published on eBird (Dalvi 2012)	IN
48	Yunnan Nuthatch <i>Sitta yunnanensis</i>	Possible	Media	Year-round, and presumably breeding, in the Upper Lohit Valley of north-eastern Arunachal Pradesh (Bonpo & Kuriakose 2014)	IN
49	White-cheeked Starling <i>Spodiopsar cineraceus</i>	Possible	Media	Vagrant. Two photographic records from Arunachal Pradesh (Hatibaruah et al. 2017; Maheswaran 2018)	IN
50	Zappey's Flycatcher <i>Cyanoptila cumatilis</i>	Not included	Media	Vagrant. Photographed in the Great Nicobar Island (Gokulakrishnan et al. 2018)	IN
51	Mugimaki Flycatcher <i>Ficedula mugimaki</i>	Not included	Media	Vagrant or rare passage migrant through the Andaman Islands (Das 2014; Singh 2017)	IN
52	Whinchat <i>Saxicola rubetra</i>	Hypothetical	Media	Vagrant. Photographed in Sri Lanka (Steiof et al. 2017)	SL
53	Chinese Thrush <i>Otocichla mupinensis</i>	Rejected	Media	Vagrant. Photographed in north-eastern Arunachal Pradesh (Rajagopal & Inskipp 2014)	IN
54	Fieldfare <i>Turdus pilaris</i>	Hypothetical	Media	Vagrant. Photographed on the northern Bengal-Sikkim border (Banerjee & Inskipp 2013)	IN
55	Naumann's Thrush <i>Turdus naumanni</i>	Not included	Media	Hybrids with Dusky Thrush are winter visitors to the Eastern Himalayas (Dalvi et al. 2017) while the pure form is extremely rare, possibly only vagrants. One pure form photographed from western Arunachal Pradesh (Hatibaruah et al. 2019)	IN, BH

Shearwater *Calonectris borealis*, and Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus*); two by in-hand photographs, descriptions, and morphometrics (Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*, and Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin*); and 46 by media (sonograms, images and/or videos). Five species—Sooty Shearwater *Ardenna grisea*, Franklin's Gull *Leucophaeus pipixcan*, Red Kite *Milvus milvus*, Three-banded Rosefinch *Carpodacus trifasciatus*, and Elliot's Laughingthrush *Trochalopteron elliotii*—are accepted purely based on field descriptions of sight records. BSA2 accepted very few species purely on the basis of sight records and the Crested Tit Warbler *Leptopoecile elegans* remains the only one that has still not been substantiated by a specimen or media, or analysed in hand (Praveen et al. 2016a; Praveen et al. 2017).

The provenance of six species in the Table has been discussed earlier and we base their inclusion on that (Carr 2015; Praveen et al. 2019a). Though the records of Cape Petrel *Daption capense*, from the region, were previously accepted

(Rasmussen & Anderton 2012; Praveen et al. 2016a), they were revisited and their provenance could not be established (Praveen et al. 2019a) and we follow the same treatment here. 28 of the new species (59%) were already listed as 'Hypothetical' in BSA2 and an additional five species were listed as 'Possible', indicating that the birders had access to relevant material for their identification and these species were on the radar of our bird-watchers. One species, the Chinese Thrush *Otocichla mupinensis*, was listed under rejected species (a suspected Meinertzhagen fraud!), while 21 (38%) were not included in the book. Five of the additions have come exclusively from BIOT, three from Bhutan (Three-banded Rosefinch, Rustic Bunting *Emberiza rustica*, and Lapland Longspur *Calcarius lapponicus*), two from the Maldives (Sooty Shearwater and Abbott's Booby *Papasula abbotti*), and one from Sri Lanka (Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra*)—while the others have occurred in India.

This update takes the consolidated list of birds of South Asia to 1412, while the same for the Indian Subcontinent is 1392 (Praveen et al. 2019d) and for India is 1317 (Praveen et al. 2019c).

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