

## Slender-billed Oriole *Oriolus tenuirostris* in the Sikkim Himalayas

The Slender-billed Oriole *Oriolus tenuirostris* has a narrow distribution range in India (Grimmett et al. 2011), Nepal (Grimmett et al. 2016), and Bhutan (eBird 2019; Grimmett et al. 2019), whereas it has a wider range in Myanmar, southern China, Thailand, Vietnam, and Cambodia (Walther & Jones 2019). Confirmed breeding records are only from Bhutan, and Nagaland (India). It is a wintering species in other parts of its range in the Indian Subcontinent (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012).

On 11 June 2019, in a temperate forest, Thinlay Namgyal Lepcha saw a Slender-billed Oriole in the adjoining area of the Singhik Reserved Forest, North Sikkim (27.52°N, 88.56°E; 1,550 m asl). The dominant trees in the forest were *Alnus nepalensis*, *Macaranga denticulata*, *Juglans regia*, and *Engelhardia spicata*. The bird was sitting on a branch of bamboo and Lepcha took photographs [211]. The species was identified, on the basis of its long, slender, slightly down-curved bill, and narrower nape band, and differentiated from the Black-naped Oriole (Grimmett et al. 2016). Both the species have a black nape, but the Slender-billed Oriole has a much thinner eye stripe (Mason & Allsop 2009; Grimmett et al. 2019). Lepcha observed the Slender-billed Oriole foraging in the forest for the next five days, up till 16 June 2019.



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211. Slender-billed Oriole.

Though the Slender-billed Oriole is present in West Bengal, in the Dooars (Sinu 2011), Buxa Tiger Reserve (Allen et al. 1996), and Kolkata (eBird 2019), to name a few—there is a lack of adequate documentation from Sikkim. In Director: Zoological Survey of India's (2006) work, where extensive details of collected specimens have been documented, the Slender-billed Oriole is merely listed without reference to any collections or records. In Grimmett et al. (2019), two patches in Sikkim foothills are mapped as its wintering range—but we could not trace their original source. Barring these references, there are no other records of this species from the Sikkim Himalayas and ours is probably the first definitive documentation. However, this is not unexpected considering its presence in adjacent northern Bengal, and Bhutan (eBird 2019).

We are grateful to the Forest, Environment and Wildlife Department, Govt. of Sikkim, and Barapathing Rage (T) for the support during the field study. We also thank the Director, Bombay Natural History Society. Lastly, suggestions and encouragement

by H. K. Badola, B. K. Acharya, Bharat Kumar Pradhan, and friends are highly appreciated. Our thanks go to the anonymous reviewers for their inputs.

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## Addition of Rosy Pipit *Anthus roseatus* to the avifauna of Peninsular India

On 27 January 2019, my father, Nitin Hardikar, and I visited Nandur Madhmeshwar Bird Sanctuary (20.01°N, 74.10°E), Nashik, following reports of a White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* being present there. Due to the waterbody having dried up, localized patches of small swamps and water-clogged marshes existed on its edges. In the afternoon, while I was awaiting an Indian Jackal *Canis aureus indicus* that disappeared into the reeds to show up, I observed a strange *Anthus* species at the edge of a small pond. It had prominent blackish streaks on the breast, sides, and flanks, which set it apart from the other pipits that inhabit wetlands and marshes. This bird was seen hunting along the water's edge of a small pond and quickly retreat to the safety of the reeds when approached. This pond also had a Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana*, two Ruddy-breasted Crakes *Zapornia fusca*, and a White-browed Wagtail *Motacilla maderaspatensis*, apart from the pipit. I took a photo of the bird, to cross check later [212a,b]. After returning home, the bird was identified as a Rosy Pipit *Anthus roseatus* in non-breeding plumage, based on its prominent buff-coloured supercilium, as opposed to the

more common Tree Pipit *A. trivialis*. Striations on its back clearly ruled out Olive-backed Pipit *A. hodgsoni*. Two Rosy Pipits were recorded again at the same site five days later, on 02 February, indicating that there were more birds and seem to be staying around (Dhadnekar 2019).



Both: Archit Hardikar

212a,b. Rosy Pipit in Nandur Madhmeshwar Bird Sanctuary.

The Rosy Pipit generally winters in the plains and foothills in the northern part of the Indian Subcontinent (Grimmett et al. 2011; Rasmussen & Anderton 2012; eBird 2019). The nearest records are of three specimens collected by K. S. Dharmakumarsinhji, in Bhavnagar, Gujarat, on 03 April 1951 from a flock that had more individuals. Salim Ali identified the specimens at the Bombay Natural History Society (Dharmakumarsinhji 1951; Ali 1955). Hence, this appears to be an addition to the avifauna of Maharashtra, as well as peninsular India.

I would like to thank the Forest Department of Maharashtra for permitting me to observe birds in the Nandur Madhmeshwar Bird Sanctuary.

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## Status of the Oriental Bay Owl *Phodilus badius* from regions west of Bhutan, with new records from northern West Bengal

The Oriental Bay Owl *Phodilus badius* is scarce throughout the north-eastern hill states of India, the eastern Himalaya, and Nepal. It is known to occur in several Southeast Asian countries (Blanford 1895; King et al. 1975; Ali & Ripley 1983; Lekagul & Round 1991). It has been documented in the states of north-eastern India, where records exist from Assam (Baker 1897; Stevens 1915; Barman 2005), Arunachal Pradesh (Datta 2004), Manipur (Choudhury 2009), Nagaland (Ali & Ripley 1983; Choudhury 2001), and Meghalaya (Jerdon 1871). Most recent records have been from the states of Tripura, Nagaland, Assam, and Arunachal Pradesh (eBird 2019). Here we summarize the records and status of this species from regions lying west of Bhutan, and using our records from northern West Bengal to provide a wider perspective.

**Uttarakhand:** No definite records (Mohan & Sondhi 2017). There is an old verbal record of this species from Dehradun (Mr R. Thomson, verbally, to Mr Hume) mentioned by (Blanford 1895), which indicates the possibility of this bird's presence farther westwards than Nepal.

**Nepal:** Doubtful. The only collected material (skin) from Nepal was procured by Hodgson from a shop near Kathmandu, which leaves open the possibility of that bird having originated from elsewhere (Inskipp & Inskipp 1985).

**Bhutan:** Inskipp & Inskipp (1985) marked its status in Bhutan as questionable, but Grimmett et al. (2019) have shown its occurrence there—which, probably, refers to a photograph from 2012 by Rigdhen, in the Zhemgang Forest Division (Dhendup 2012). [See elsewhere in this issue for details.]

**Bangladesh:** At least one definite record. Hume & Inglis (1880) mentioned of a specimen killed at 'Dilkhushah' (currently in Dhaka, Bangladesh).

**Sikkim:** Hume (1870) summarized this bird's presence in his writing (collector, date of collection unknown). Later, Robinson (1927) mentioned that Louise Mandelli himself collected the type female of *Phodilus badius saturatus* (January, 1874B.M. Reg. No. 1886.2.1.1123) in Sikkim. But Robinson is unclear about the total number of specimens collected only from Sikkim. Ali (1989) mentioned that G. E. Shaw (20 November 1915) recorded it at an altitude of c.609 m in the region of the Teesta Valley, and Stevens (1925) stated that this species is restricted to heavy foothill forests of the Sikkim Himalayas. Later, works by several authors (Ali & Ripley 1983; Inskipp & Inskipp 1985; Grimmett et al. 2011; Grimmett et al. 2019) have recorded its presence in Sikkim.