



8. Black-browed Reed Warbler at Bundala National Park.

Analysing its plumage and structural details with reference to Rasmussen & Anderton (2012), we were able to confirm it as a Black-browed Reed Warbler. Further we compared it with similar species occurring in the area. Black-browed Reed Warbler can be separated from Blyth's Reed Warbler by its distinguishing head pattern, fine bill, smaller size, rounder head, warmer plumage, and different build. A well-marked Paddyfield Warbler *A. agricola* can be distinguished by its darker, warm brown crown and a comparatively less pronounced brow; especially behind the eye, which is much broader on a Black-browed Reed Warbler. The Black-browed Reed Warbler is quite different from a Clamorous Reed Warbler in size alone, where the latter is about twice larger. The latter also lacks the head pattern, has a longer bill, and different body structure. The Manchurian Reed Warbler *A. tangorum*, which is a somewhat similar species, can be differentiated by the difference in the head pattern; which has a less contrasting black brow, finer supercilium behind eye (broader behind the eye on Black-browed) and less prominent eye-stripe. It has a shorter primary projection when compared with the Black-browed, a longer tail, and bill, with relatively pale tarsi and toes. A Sedge Warbler *A. schoenobaenus* can be differentiated from this bird by the more streaked upperparts and crown, and a longer primary projection. A Moustached Warbler *A. melanopogon* can be differentiated by its streaked warm brown upperparts and dark crown, broader eye-stripe and more defined ear-coverts with a moustachial line. Also it has a very short primary projection compared to a Black-browed (Kennerley & Pearson 2010; Rasmussen & Anderton 2012).

This Black-browed Reed Warbler was sighted again, at the same location, on the next day (04 February 2020) (Pavan Gamage, verbally, dated 04 February 2020), but was not reported thereafter. Its occurrence here could be possible due to overshooting, its usual wintering areas in north-eastern India and moving further southwards to Sri Lanka or, passing Myanmar to the Andaman Islands, which is a regular wintering site (eBird 2020), and finally ending up in southern Sri Lanka. Being small, skulking, and favoring inaccessible habitats, this warbler may be overlooked in the region. Such sightings reflect the importance of conservation of wetlands such Bundala National Park (a RAMSAR wetland), which are the last remaining wetlands to harbour such birdlife.

After our submission, we were made aware by the Ceylon Bird Club Rarities and Records Committee of another report of Black-browed Reed Warbler a week earlier, on 25 January 2020, from the same location. It was sighted again on the next day after ours (04 February 2020) as well (Pavan Gamage, verbally, dated 04 February 2020), but was not reported thereafter.

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White-browed Crake *Amauornis cinerea* from the Andaman & Nicobar Islands

On 02 December 2019, at 1600 h, during a guided bird watching tour at Sippighat wetlands (11.60°N, 92.70°E) in South Andaman Island, GS spotted a crake walking behind a Cinnamon Bittern *Ixobrychus cinnamomeus*, on the reed bed. Initially, we thought it was Baillon's Crake *Zapornia pusilla*, which is a regular winter visitor to the islands. However, upon closer examination, through a spotting scope, we noticed that the bird had a dark grey crown, greenish-yellow bill with orange base, and a blackish eye-stripe with a white supraloral, and moustachial stripes. The bird had long yellowish-green legs with elongated toes [9,10]. The characteristics of the bird did not resemble any crake previously documented from the Islands. Kazmierczak (2000) and Grimmett et al. (2011) had no illustration of the species, but Robson (2015) identified it as the White-browed Crake *Amauornis cinerea*.

The bird was recorded subsequently, at the same location on 03 December 2019 at 0535 h, when we saw it actively foraging for over one hundred minutes. The bird walked on reeds, lily pads, and other aquatic vegetation in a manner reminiscent of a jacana (Jacanidae).

This is the first record of the species from the Andaman & Nicobar Islands, and the second for India. It was sighted at Maguri-Motapung Beel, Assam, on 05 March 2016 (Gogoi & Phukan 2016).



9. White-browed Crake in Sippighat, South Andaman Is.



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10. White-browed Crake in Sippighat, South Andaman Is.

The White-browed Crake occurs mainly in Malaysia, Singapore, Philippines, Indonesia, New Guinea, and North Australia (Taylor 1996). It is presumed that the bird is expanding its range across South-east Asia (Duckworth & Hedges 2007), including Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, and Laos (Mundkur et al., 1995; Robson, 2000, 2004, 2011; Buckton & Safford 2004). This bird stayed in this area for three and a half months, and many visiting and local birders observed and photographed it. Sudhir Gaikwad-Inamdar last saw it on 14 March.

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Passage records of the Fire-capped Tit *Cephalopyrus flammiceps* from Devalsari, Tehri Garhwal, Uttarakhand, and an analysis of eBird records from India

The Fire-capped Tit's *Cephalopyrus flammiceps* wide global distribution begins in the west from north-eastern Afghanistan, and spreading eastwards through northern Pakistan, the Himalayas covering India, Nepal, and Bhutan, southern China, eastern Myanmar, and north-western Thailand to Laos (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). In India, the western and central Himalayan populations of the nominate subspecies breed in the Himalayas largely between 2,000 and 3,500 m asl, with published records from Shimla, Dharamshala, and Khajjiar in Himachal Pradesh (Marshal 1884; Jones 1919a; Hingston 1921; Whistler 1928; Ali & Ripley 1973). It winters in the north-central Indian plains, with records reported from southern and northern Uttar Pradesh: Kanpur, Etawah, and Dudhwa; eastern Rajasthan: Bharatpur; Madhya Pradesh: Gwalior, and Saugar (=Sagar); Chhattisgarh: Raipur; and Maharashtra: Ahmednagar, and Nagpur (Ali & Ripley 1973; D'Abreu 1935; Javed 1992; Chandra & Singh 2004; Venkitachalam 2008; Kulkarni & Kulkarni 2018). The race, *olivaceus*, from the Eastern Himalayas is found from eastern Nepal eastwards, and winters between 300 and 2,300 m asl (Ali & Whistler 1939; Ali & Ripley 1973; Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). Ali & Ripley (1973) stated that *flammiceps* is seen on 'passage in the foothills mostly in the second half of March and early April'. There are numerous records of the species on its March–April spring passage in the areas between its wintering grounds and its summer breeding area. These records include sightings from erstwhile Jammu & Kashmir, Haryana: Ambala District (Jones 1919b), Uttarakhand: Dehradun, and Corbett (Singh 2000; Anonymous 2019), and Delhi (Vyas 2019).

Here, we report repeated sightings over four years of the Fire-capped Tit from Devalsari (30.53°N, 78.18°E; 1,725 m asl), Tehri Garhwal District, Uttarakhand. Devalsari is located in the Aglar Valley, and the Aglar River runs through this landscape. At Devalsari, a rural youth group, Devalsari Paryavaran Sanrakshan Awam Tekniki Samiti (www.devalsari.org) runs a conservation and livelihoods programme. As a result of this, numerous birdwatchers have been visiting the area, and regular biodiversity assessments for avian, Lepidopteron, and herpetological fauna have been conducted in the landscape in the last four years. KS, a resident of Moldhar village, is a local bird guide, who regularly watches birds and butterflies in the landscape.

On 18 March 2017 at 1337 h, SS and AS spotted a large flock of 12–15 Fire-capped Tits (1,504 m asl), about a kilometer before Bangseel village [11]. The birds were feeding on the flowers of a tree, which was provisionally identified as kakkar *Pistacia chinensis integerrima*. This tree had small reddish flowers, and its fresh leaves were a fiery red [12, 13]. The tits remained near the flowering tree, flitting from one branch to another, feeding on nectar, or, perhaps, the tender flower buds. The behavior of the tits was very much warbler-like, with the birds constantly flicking their wings, and often upending themselves on a branch to feed on flowers. We watched the tits for 15 min, while they continued to forage on two trees of the same species, which were next to each other.

On 17 March 2018 at 1600 h, KS, while birdwatching with visitors, spotted a solitary Fire-capped Tit near Udarsu village (1,570 m asl). It was perched on a Himalayan or banj oak *Quercus leucotrichophora*. This location was a few hundred meters, as the crow flies, from that of the 2017 sightings.