hornbill on its back, from above, as it was flying. Upon contact or slightly prior to that, the hornbill took a steep clumsy descent, with wings flailing, and disappeared into the forest vegetation below. The Shikra ceased pursuit and flew away. It was unclear if the hornbill sustained an injury. The Shikras were nesting on a platform of sticks in a lofty tree near where the incidents happened. All three dives originated at or near the nest.

Shikras are pugnacious hawks known for the fierce defense of their nests (Lamba 1964; Sangha 2003; Naoroji 2006; Ananian et al. 2010). They are known to eat bats and other small vertebrate prey of 'manageable size' (Ali & Ripley 1987; Muni & Hegde 1998; Agoramoorthy & Hsu 2001; Zarri 2001). There is a photographic record of a Shikra pursuing a young Indian Grey Hornbill *O. birostris* (Goel 2020). The endemic Sri Lanka Grey Hornbills are also known to eat small vertebrate prey like lizards (Ali & Ripley 1987; Henry 1971; Wijerathne & Wickramasinghe 2018). So here we have a case of a predator attacking a predator. Theoretically, a Sri Lanka Grey Hornbill can opportunistically prey on a Shikra egg or chick. This made me wonder if the Shikras were offensively pursuing the hornbills as prey, or if they were defensively reacting to a specific previous unpleasant experience with the hornbills.

I did not have to wait long for an answer. On 06 June 2020, my attention was drawn to the nest by prolonged agitated calls of the Shikra. Two Sri Lanka Grey Hornbills were perched by the nest when a parent Shikra was in it, apparently incubating. The hornbills hopped around the nest and took turns attempting to maraud it. The hornbills appeared to be hunting cooperatively, with one apparently trying to distract the Shikra while the other was trying to maraud the nest contents. The Shikra stood its ground and kept shuffling around to face each intruder, hissing defiantly and uttering its '*ki-kiu*!' calls. After about five minutes, the hornbills gave up and flew away. Clearly, the attacks by Shikras that I had observed earlier were defensive, rather than offensive, in nature. Given that the hornbills are double (59 cm) the size of a Shikra (30-34 cm) (Ali & Ripley 1987), it is unlikely that Shikras would pursue prey of such large size.

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Brood parasitism on Red-billed Leothrix *Leiothrix lutea* in Meghalaya

We report a case of brood parasitism of a Red-billed Leothrix *Leiothrix lutea*, by an unidentified cuckoo species, observed on 04 July 4 2020 in Kyrdemkhla (25.45°N, 91.82°E; 1,777 m asl), a village that is 28 km southwards of Shillong, Meghalaya,.

The host parent was photographed **[101, 102]** feeding a cuckoo juvenile, twice, with small caterpillars or worms, on a tree branch. The cuckoo was silent. Only one adult Leothrix was observed and there were no Leothrix chicks seen. Based on our birdwatching forays in Meghalaya over the last 15 years, we narrowed the list of probable cuckoo species to three: Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*, Indian Cuckoo *C. micropterus*, and Himalayan Cuckoo *C. saturatus*, as the calls of these birds are frequently heard, though sightings are rare. The juveniles of these three species look similar to each other, and we could not make a conclusive identification.

101. Foster parent Red-billed Leothrix feeding a cuckoo juvenile

102. Back view of the same cuckoo juvenile

Both: Kynsai Kharkongor

Our bird had a white nape patch, white feather fringes, narrow bars on the underparts, and well-spaced chestnut spots on all the wing feathers. An Indian Cuckoo should have widely spaced barring on undersides, and its juveniles have black-and-white barring on the head with white wing-bars—unlike our cuckoo. The Himalayan Cuckoo is more difficult to rule out, but is expected to be darker, with a more finely barred head and no white patches on the head and nuchal area. A Common Cuckoo juvenile's plumage is most similar to our bird (Mullarney et al. 1999), which species is congruent with the known documented host species from India.

The Common Cuckoo is known to parasitise more than two hundred species over its range (Payne 2005), including the Red-billed Leothrix, which has been recorded as one of the hosts in India (Baker 1942). It has not been documented as a host for either Indian- or Himalayan Cuckoo (Lowther 2013). Brood parasitism has not been reported in the endemic population of Red-billed Leiothrix in southern China, in spite of co-resident cuckoo species (Yang et al. 2014). The Red-billed Leiothrix has been introduced in several countries: Australia, Tahiti, France, Colombia, USA, and England, and feral populations exist in Japan, Italy, and Hong Kong (Male et al. 1998). In these introduced and feral populations, only one instance of parasitism on the Red-billed Leothrix has been reported by an Oriental Cuckoo *C. optatus* in Japan (Tojo & Nakamura 2014), several decades after the Red-billed Leothrix became established in the 1930s (Anon. Undated).

In summary, the most likely parasite species observed by us is a Common Cuckoo, which is a known parasite of the Red-billed Leothrix.

We thank the reviewers for their assistance in identifying the juvenile cuckoo species.

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Nest of Salty-breasted Rail *Lewinia striata* in Navsari, Gujarat

The Slaty-breasted Rail *Lewinia striata* is a summer/monsoon migrant in southern Gujarat, and there is the possibility that it might be breeding in this region (Patel 2016). Ganpule (2016) lists it as a rare monsoon migrant, with isolated sightings from Saurashtra, and states that it is regular in southern Gujarat. Grimmett et al. (2011) and Rasmussen & Anderton (2012) do not show its distribution in Gujarat, but it occurs here regularly.

On 16 July 2018, in the evening, we sighted the Slaty-breasted Rail **[103]** in the outskirts of Navsari (20.84°N, 72.87°E). On 19 July 2018, as the water level had decreased, three pairs were seen here. After this sighting, the birds were not seen for the entire month of August 2018.

Minal Patel

103. Slaty-breasted Rail near Navsari.

On the morning of 04 September 2018, during the course of our routine bird watching in this area, we saw some movement in a patch of reeds beside the road. We noted that there was a bird in the reeds but could not see it properly. Soon, a Slaty-breasted Rail was spotted. One individual flew from this patch of reeds, landing 5–5.5 m beside the road, and after a few seconds, another bird emerged from exactly the same place. Jugal Patel, who has studied the Slaty-breasted Rail in southern Gujarat, had told us that pairs are frequently seen, and he strongly suspected they bred there (Jugal Patel, *pers. comm. verbally*). We decided to check the spot from where they had emerged. After reaching the spot, we scrutinized the grass and it took us a few minutes to see the egg in the concave-shaped nest. The nest was about 4–5 cm in diameter, and made up of 3–5 cm long, smooth, sticks. We took two photographs of the single egg in the nest **[104a, b]**, and left the spot as quickly as possible. After that, we positioned ourselves at a safe distance and waited for the birds to return. One bird returned to the nest within seven to eight minutes, and started incubating, and so we immediately left the area.

Neel Tandel