observed (Praveen & Lowther 2020). Years ago, in a village called Pattanur in Kannur, northern Kerala, a pair of Monarchs was seen to chase away a Banded Bay Cuckoo in what was suspected to be a defensive behaviour against brood parasitism (C. Sashikumar, verbally, dated 11 September 2020).

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References

Maxim Rodrigues: E-mail: maxim.rodrigus@gmail.com [corresponding author]

Cheer Pheasant Catreus wallichii in Rudraprayag Forest Division, Garhwal Himalaya

The Cheer Pheasant Catreus wallichii inhabits Chir Pine Pinus roxburghii and mixed pine forests that have craggy, grassy tracts located on steep hill slopes. The species ranges across northern Pakistan and north-western India to west-central Nepal (Ali & Ripley 1983). It occurs in the states of Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, and the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir. In Uttarakhand, it has been reported from parts of Nanda Devi Biosphere Reserve, Govind National Park, Nandhaur Wildlife Reserve, Garhwal Himalaya was established in 2005 by amalgamating some forest ranges of the Kedarnath, Pauri, and Tehri Forest Divisions by the Uttarakhand State Government. Earlier, it was a Panchayat block, but has been elevation of 1,400 and 3,500 masl in Western and Central Himalaya (Rahmani & Dhananjai 2013). The historical records of the Cheer Pheasant in the region has been indicated in Vishu Ganga, Bheling Valley, and Tehri pre-1950 period, and from 1980 to present in Pauni, Kedarnath Sanctuary; Dehradun, Chamoli, Benog Sanctuary, Nainital (BirdLife International International 2001; Rahmani & Dhananjai 2013) In this note, we report the status of the Cheer Pheasant in Rudraprayag Forest Division in Central Himalaya.

The Rudraprayag Forest Division (30.19°–30.61°N, 78.84°–79.15°E; 565–3,758 m asl., 1,081.58 km2) in the Garhwal Himalaya was established in 2005 by amalgamating some forest ranges of the Kedamath, Pauni, and Tehri Forest Divisions by the Uttarakhand State Government. Earlier, it was a part of the Upper Ganga Soil Conservation Division. The terrain of the division is hilly, rugged, and undulating, and the catchments of the Alaknanda and Mandakini rivers.

A preliminary base-line Cheer survey was conducted for six months (September 2019 to February 2020) in all the forest ranges. From the five ranges and one unit, 12 individuals of Cheer Pheasants were recorded from only three ranges (Rudraprayag, Agasthyamuni, and South Jakholi) [39]. All the sightings were in the mixed forests, consisting mainly of Chir Pine forest. In December 2019, Rudraprayag Forest Division had organized the Chirbatiya Winter Bird Festival, during which, further sightings of Cheer were made in the area. It appears that a very small population exists across the Rudraprayag Forest Division; more such pockets may exist in its entire range need to be identified and earmarked for conservation (Table 1).

Table 1. Cheer Pheasant reports from Rudraprayag Forest Division

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Observers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01 March 2017</td>
<td>Kedarnath Wildlife Sanctuary</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Surajit Dutta (2017)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 March 2018</td>
<td>Tungnath Rudraprayag</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Saikat Das (2018)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 September 2019</td>
<td>Rudraprayag, Dhanpur block</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>This study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 December 2019</td>
<td>South Jakholi, Longa block</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>This study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02 February 2020</td>
<td>Agasthyamuni, Mukk Van Panchayat block</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>This study</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The authors are thankful to the Uttarakhand Forest Department.

References


The status of the Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus* in Himachal Pradesh

The Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus* is the smallest of the three phalarope taxa (Chandler 2009). Like the other phalaropes, it is polyandrous and shows reversed sexual dimorphism, where the females are brighter plumaged and slightly larger than males, and the latter provide all the parental care (Ali & Ripley 1987; Grimmett et al. 1998; Rubega et al. 2020). It has a circumpolar breeding distribution and is found in the coastal regions of the Arctic Ocean, southwards to the Aleutians and the United Kingdom. Its winters are spent as a pelagic, off central-western South America, in the Arabian Sea, and from central Indonesia to western Melanesia (Rubega et al. 2020).

It is rare inland in northern India (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). In this note we discuss the records of the Red-necked Phalarope in Himachal Pradesh. The species is unmistakable in breeding plumage. In non-breeding, and juvenile plumages, we differentiated it from the similar Red Phalarope *P. fulicarius* by a finer, all-black bill versus a thicker bill, which sometimes is pale/yellowish at base, of the latter.

**Observations**

- On 14 May 2011, CA and Devinder Singh Dhadwal visited Pong Lake, Kangra District (32.03°N, 76.06°E; c.410 m asl). We saw and photographed a Red-necked Phalarope. It was feeding along with a small, mixed flock of waders, which mainly comprised Temminck’s Stint *Calidris temminckii*, Little Stint *C. minuta*, Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*, and Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus* (Abhinav 2011). It was coming into breeding plumage, with dark grey head and upperparts, and a curved rufous band, running from posterior part of head to the breast.
- On 13 October 2014, CA observed a dark-plumaged Red-necked Phalarope feeding in a small pool of water near the shore of Pong Lake [40]. The cap, band behind eye, back of neck and upperparts were black, the last with pale golden markings. The whitish breast and fore-flanks had a light grey wash. It was identified as juvenile Red-necked Phalarope.
- On 29 April 2015, CA photographed a Red-necked Phalarope in the shallow waters of Pong Lake (Abhinav 2015). It was moulting into breeding plumage.
- AV saw one individual at Gette, Spiti, Lahaul & Spiti District (32.30°N, 78.02°E; c.4,400 m asl) on 23 August 2016. It was predominantly white with a grey mantle, black cap and mask behind eye, indicating that it was an adult in non-breeding plumage.
- On 06 May 2017, CA visited Pong Lake, near Balorh, Nagrota Sunan, a large area of which comprised muddy flats and shallow water. CA spotted four Red-necked Phalaropes feeding in the shallow water [41]. One bird was largely white with a dark grey mantle. It had specks of black over crown, back of neck, and breast, and a hint of rufous on sides of neck—indicating that it had just started getting its breeding plumage [42]. The rest of the individuals had darker upperparts and more extensive rufous on their necks [43]. These birds were seen again on 10, and 21 May. On the latter date they were almost in breeding plumage, having almost black upperparts with pale golden stripes on back, white throat, black neck, and curved rufous band on sides of neck and breast [44]. There was a distinct white spot above the eye. One bird was lighter in plumage, and was probably a male. It was feeding separately, c.300 m from the other three birds. On 28 May, only the suspected male was seen at the same spot [45]. It was not seen again during later visits, thus having stayed at Pong Lake for at least 22 days.