

not spread their tails, which is also unusual for Whinchats, which frequently spread their tail either when taking off, or landing, and we wonder whether is due to the moult?



24. The pale edges showing on the upperparts indicate worn plumage.



25. Some primary coverts seem to be missing on the right side.

Both: R. Magesh

Whinchats breed in the Europe, eastwards till about western Siberia, and spend their non-breeding months in Africa. We should be expecting some birds, probably juveniles, from the eastern part of its range to straggle annually to the Indian Subcontinent.

We are grateful for all the identification details provided by an anonymous referee.

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Indian Yellow Tit *Machlolophus aplanotus* in West Bengal

While birding on 05 January 2019, at Kankrajhore, Amlasole (22.71°N, 86.58°E) (Belpahari block under Banspahari Gram Panchayat, Jhargram district, West Bengal), at 0800 h, AKD

spotted a small bird foraging, and hanging from a tree amidst dense forests. The tree was about 30 m from us; it was ten meters tall, and was flowering. The bird was yellow and black in colour and of the size of a House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*. The bird caught our eye because it looked and behaved differently from other familiar birds of the area. It was chirping continuously and feeding on insects. The bird was present for around 40 s and before it flew away, I managed to click some photographs [26]. My brief views suggested a species of tit (Paridae). After checking field guides (Grimmett et al. 2011; Rasmussen & Anderton 2012), I concluded that it was an Indian Yellow Tit *Machlolophus aplanotus*. Despite the images being of substandard quality, the ID was later confirmed in Wildlife of West Bengal Facebook page. This appears to be the first report for West Bengal though it has been reported from adjoining Odisha (eBird 2021).



26. Indian Yellow Tit from West Bengal, January 2019.

Avik Kumar Datta

On 02 February 2019, we went to the same location and were able to capture sharper images [27, 28]. These images eliminated a potential Black-lored Yellow Tit *M. xanthogenys* of the Himalayas that is known to occur in northern Bengal as there is no range overlap. The Himalayan bird shows a much thicker eye stripe.

We are indebted to Kanad Baidya for identification, and Praveen J for help with writing this note.



27.

Biswanup Mandal & Prasun Kanti Mahata



Biswarup Mandal & Prasun Kanti Mahata

27, 28. Indian Yellow Tit from West Bengal, February 2019.



Source: Google Maps

Fig. 1. A map showing the area of observation where Pale Martins were recorded.

The martins flew very low over the surface of the water [29] and seemed to be feeding on air borne insects. They seemed like a swarm of locusts over fields, or of mosquitoes and dragonflies over a large pond, around monsoons. The flock of feeding martins stretched for many hundred meters over the river, as far as we could see as we drove along. Martins were also sitting on sand banks of the river and on reeds and grasses along the river [30, 33]; even the mud road and fields adjoining the river were dotted with a large number of birds [31, 32, 34].

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A richness of Pale Martins *Riparia diluta* at Harike Wetlands, and a technique for estimating the size of large flying flocks

The Pale Martin *Riparia diluta* breeds over a wide area from western Asia to south-western Siberia, and Mongolia, as well as from Tibet to central and eastern China, with a small resident population in northern India (del Hoyo et al. 2004; Grimmett et al. 2011; Rasmussen & Anderson 2012). The northern breeding populations are strongly migratory, but their wintering sites are poorly known. The nominate subspecies probably winters mainly in northern India (del Hoyo et al. 2004). They breed between November and May, mainly February–April; however breeding and non-breeding distributions are poorly known, and require further study (Turner 2020).

Here we present an account of a large congregation of Pale Martins at Harike Wetlands, Punjab, India (31.07°N, 75.00°E). On the evening of 10 June 2021 we noticed thousands of martins flying over the Sutlej that flows into the wetland [29].



29. Martins flying over the river.



30. Martins resting on reeds by the river.

Both: Vivek Sagar

Realizing that this was an uncommon sight, we took several photographs and also made videos to confirm the identity of the species. While it was not possible to photograph the entire flock, we photographed individuals, and groups of birds flying over the