

Little bittern *Ixobrychus minutus* from Punjab

At 1030 h on 15 August 2021, while birding in village Machaki Mal Singh (30.62°N, 74.72°E, 196 m asl) in District Faridkot, Punjab, we spotted a lone bird resembling a Yellow Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus*. It was in a shallow reed-infested waterbody in an agricultural landscape. We were able to take a few photographs of the bird. It had a conspicuous black crown and mantle / scapular region, with buff neck, greyish face-sides, modest crest, and white shoulder patch with black wings indicated a male Little Bittern *I. minutus* [47], which was later confirmed using Rasmussen & Anderton (2012). This species is known to occur in Jammu and Kashmir, Haryana, Rajasthan, and Gujarat in western India, and Delhi, Uttarakhand, and Uttar Pradesh in northern India (Grimmett & Inskipp 2010; Grimmett et al. 2011; Trivedi & Parasharya 2019; Kumar & Kaur 2021). However this was the first report for Punjab. The bird was observed with the breeding Yellow Bitterns in the pond, as similarly observed in Gujarat (Trivedi & Parasharya 2019). We visited the site a few times later but did not find the bird again. Little Bitterns were reported from adjoining Haryana State, Jhajjar in August (Ahlawat 2021). A month later, a male, female and juvenile were spotted, an indication of possible breeding at that place (Singh 2021). These records show that the bird is widely distributed and breeding, but significant proof was missing. There is a chance that the Little Bittern breeds in Punjab, as indicated by its presence during the breeding season, in specific habitat, with Yellow Bitterns.



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47. Little Bittern.

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Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana* and Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola* from the Andaman Islands

On the morning of 19 October 2021, we were observing shorebirds on the coastal areas of Burmanallah (11.58°N, 92.74°E), South Andaman District, Andaman & Nicobar Islands. At 0630h, JU spotted a small bunting (Emberizidae) feeding on a grassy patch along the main road. The bird allowed us to approach closer to photograph it [48], and only flew short distances from us. The initial field impressions were of a Grey-necked Bunting *Emberiza buchanani*.

The photographed specimen featured an olive-grey head and breast-band, pale yellow eye-ring, sub-moustachial stripe, and throat; dark malar stripe, streaked back, and diffused streaking on the breast, and unstreaked rufous lower underparts.

After careful examination of photographs and referring to field guides (Kazmierczak 2000; Grimmett et al. 2011), we identified the bird as a male Ortolan Bunting *E. hortulana* in winter plumage. The bird was sighted again by JU [49], at the same spot on the morning of 20 October, but we failed to spot the bird on subsequent visits (till 23 October) to the area and nearby locations.



Jabiti U

48. Ortolan Bunting.



Shaktivel G

49. Ortolan Bunting.