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A partially leucistic Rock Bunting *Emberiza cia* from Jammu and Kashmir

On 16 November 2023, at 0720 h while birding in Daksum village (33.61°N, 75.43°E) in Anantnag District of Jammu & Kashmir, India, MIL observed a white-feathered bird feeding in the bushes. Upon close observation, MIL saw that the bird in question had a complete white head and white wings. MIL was able to obtain photographs and sent them to IAK for identification [299].

The bird appeared to be partially leucistic. It possessed a distinct chestnut rump, vent and underparts, with dark brown and speckled primary and secondary coverts. The greater wing coverts were white along with a white crown and pinkish beak. The white feathers extended down to the back, with white claws, and small white patches in the tail. The body characteristics, coloration of the pigmented areas, location and habitat helped us deduce that it was a partial leucistic Rock Bunting *Emberiza cia* and negate other *Emberiza sp.* The Rock Bunting is a small passerine distributed from northwest Africa to the Himalayas, where it feeds on seeds and insects (Grimmett *et al.* 1999).



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299. A partially leucistic Rock Bunting.

In birds, various types of colour aberrations are known (Grouw 2006), with leucism identified as the most common type (Guay *et al.* 2012). This marks the probable first report of a partially leucistic Rock Bunting from India.

We thank an anonymous referee for help with confirming identification of the bird.

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A Broad-billed Sandpiper *Calidris falcinellus* in Jammu & Kashmir, India

On 04 August 2023, at 1631 h, a Broad-billed Sandpiper *Calidris falcinellus*, was spotted at Payeen Saderkoot area of Wular Lake (34.36°N, 74.63°E; 1,578 m asl) in Bandipora, Kashmir by SM. It was observed in a mixed flock of Little Stints *Calidris minuta* and Curlew Sandpipers *Calidris ferruginea*. The species was confirmed as a Broad-billed Sandpiper by HS and PY based on its small size, short legs and neck, and a long, thin bill which was downwardly kinked at tip (Van Gils *et al.* 2020). It had dark upperparts, contrasting with the white underparts and streaky breast [300]. It mainly occupied the shallow, muddy banks of the Wular Lake, feeding alongside a group of other shorebirds. The bird was observed at this location for a week, but could not be located thereafter.

Broad-billed Sandpiper breeds in Scandinavia and north-western Russia (Van Gils *et al.* 2020). The species is a winter visitor to South Asia and occurs very locally along coastal areas from Baluchistan, Pakistan to Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, and in the Andaman Islands, India; it is also known to occur inland as a passage migrant at several sites from eastern Pakistan to Bihar, India (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012; eBird 2024). Recent studies from Gujarat, India concluded that the species appears to be fairly common and widespread winter migrant to the Gujarat coast; widely occurring along the Gulf of Kachchh and along the Bhavnagar coast in the Gulf of Khambhat as well as southern Gujarat (Ganpule *et al.* 2015; Patel & At-Untiyadra 2018). In northern India, previous records of the species are scattered, from Delhi and Bihar regions (Ali & Ripley 1980; Vyas 2019), as well as from Rajasthan (Sangha & Kulshreshtha 2004). In Pakistan, it has been previously reported from several areas (Ward 1999; Grimmett *et al.* 2008; Haider & Rouf 2011; Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). Other inland records are from Pong Lake in Himachal Pradesh (Abhinav 2011), Chhattisgarh (Agarwal 2019; Gupta 2022), and Nanjarayan Tank Bird Sanctuary in Tamil Nadu (Anonymous 2022). For the Ladakh region, the species is listed in a checklist but without any supporting details (Yousuf 2023; Yousuf *et al.* 2023); however, there are no previous sightings of the species reported from Jammu & Kashmir, India. Thus, our record of the Broad-billed Sandpiper appears to be the first known record of the species documented for the region¹.

The authors are extremely thankful to the Wular Conservation & Management Authority (WCMA) for the permissions and ground-level support.



Showket Maqbool

300. Broad-billed Sandpiper at Wular Lake.

¹ See elsewhere in this issue for the J&K checklist, where this species is included based on this record.