

No.1955... adult. Gyante, 12,000ft May 3, 1904.
No. 2019... adult. Lhasa, 12,200 ft Aug 24, 1904.

In full moult"

Thereafter follows a description: "... This was the only Shrike seen in Tibet. The Tibetan name is 'Jo-nak' ... "

Only if the Book could speak of its exotic, historical journeys, and extraordinary owners, leading to its present ignominy, a hundred and seven years after publication, what an enchanting, epochal narrative that would make.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Edward Dickinson for putting me in touch with Ralfe

Whistler, Hugh Whistler's son. I would also like to thank Ralfe for trying to locate information for this note.

Reference

- Allen, C., 2004. *Duel in the snows: the true story of the Younghusband Mission to Lhasa*. London: John Murray.
French, P., 1994. *Younghusband: the last great imperial adventurer*. UK: HarperCollins.
Jones, A. E., 1919. A list of birds found in the Simla Hills, 1908-1918. *J. Bombay Nat. His. Soc.* 26 (2): 601-620.
Walton, H. J., 1906. On the birds of southern Tibet. *Ibis* 8 (6): 57-84.
Wynne, O. E., 1969. *Biographical key - names of birds of the world - to authors and those commemorated*. Fordingbridge, Hants., U.K: Published by the author.

Red-tailed Wheatear *Oenanthe chrysopygia* in Uttarakhand

Manoj Sharma & Deepak Chaturvedi

Sharma, M., & Chaturvedi, D., 2010. Red-tailed Wheatear *Oenanthe chrysopygia* in Uttarakhand. *Indian BIRDS* 6 (6): 172-173.

Manoj Sharma, Village Shankarpur, Ramnagar 244 715, District Nainital, Uttarakhand, India. Email: treesswift@gmail.com (Corresponding author)

Deepak Chaturvedi, Krishna Kuteer, Kila Street, Kashipur 244 713, District Udham Singh Nagar, Uttarakhand, India.

Email: photo_deepak@rediffmail.com

Manuscript received on 17 October 2009.

The Red-tailed Wheatear *Oenanthe chrysopygia*¹ is a winter visitor to the Indian Subcontinent, where it occurs from the beginning of October till end of March. Its strongholds in India are the arid, semi-arid, and semi-desert areas (Ali & Ripley 1998). Baker (1924) described its winter distribution in the Indian Subcontinent as, 'North-West India, West of the Jhelum River, Sind, Cutch, Northern Guzerat and Rajputana as far East as Jodhpur'. Vagrants have been recorded as far south as Goa (Lainer 2004). The eastern-most records are from Nepal, where it has been recorded twice (Giri & Choudhry 1997; Inskipp 2006). There are a few records of the species from the Himalayan foothills, and nearby areas of northern India. A bird was collected on 29 September 1912 at Sairee, close to Shimla (Dodsworth 1913; Jones 1919). It was recently recorded at Chandigarh (Singh 2005). It has been listed for Rajaji National Park, Uttarakhand as winter visitor with unknown status (Pandey *et al.* 1994).

On 25 September 2006, at 0745 hrs, from atop a domestic elephant, MS briefly saw a wheatear with rufous in its rump and tail. It flew low, from boulder to boulder, in an almost-dry stream bed, known as Jhina Sot (29°26'55.19"N 78°53'36.33"E) at 316 m, situated at a distance of 100 m from Jhina forest resthouse, on the southern periphery of Corbett Tiger Reserve. On the morning of 26 September 2006 MS searched for the bird again. At 0810 hrs, he spotted it perched on a big boulder in the stream bed, where it had been seen the previous day. It regularly

flew down to the ground to pick up insects. MS observed it for an hour, while it fed within a radius of 50 m. A small pool of water in the semi-dry stream, and the surrounding area, was its feeding territory. The bird chased insects on ground, with wings, and tail, stretched open. Some of the big rocks and boulders were its favourite perches. It occasionally perched on the sand banks and nearby lantana bushes. If approached, while it was on the ground, it ran a little distance before flying low to a nearby rock or boulder. MS observed the bird again from 1510 to 1730 hrs, when DC also photographed it.

Red-tailed Wheatear is 'distinguished in all plumages from other wheatears occurring in the subcontinent by rufous-orange lower back and rump and rufous sides to tail' (Grimmett *et al.* 1998). The rump of the bird seen was rufous. The lateral basal panels on uppertail were same colour as rump, as described by Cramp (1988). Central black panel on the tail joined a broad black sub-terminal band. Pale rufous colour of the vent extended as prominent rufous on the basal two-third of the undertail before it joined the broad black sub-terminal. There were thin rufous terminal bands on uppertail and undertail as shown in the illustrations in Cramp (1988). The bird had a strong black bill, dark iris, glossy black tarsus, prominent dull white supercilium that was broader in front of the eye, black rear eye-stripe, rufous-brown ear-coverts, and dull white chin and throat. The upperparts were sandy, or grey-brown with greyer sides of the neck and shoulders and pale buffish breast, buffish belly and flanks.

This is the first record of occurrence of a Red-tailed Wheatear in Corbett Tiger Reserve, and the Kumaon Hills. It was not

¹ For long treated as a conspecific of *O. xanthopyrma*, but now elevated to full species level (AERC TAC 2003; del Hoyo *et al.* 2005; Rasmussen & Anderton 2005).



PHOTOS: DEEPAK CHATURVEDI

 Red-tailed Wheatear *Oenanthe chrysopygia*.

recorded in the work of (Lamba & Bhatnagar 1977-79, Kumar & Lamba 1985, Lamba 1987, Director Z. S. I. 1995, Sharma *et al.* 2003, Director Z. S. I. 2008). This is only the second record of the species for the state of Uttarakhand, the previous record being from Rajaji National Park (Pandey *et al.* 1994). This is also the earliest recorded date of the species' occurrence in India, during autumn passage migration. The previous record is of a bird collected on 29 September 1912 (Dodsworth 1913; Jones 1919).

Acknowledgements

Harkirat Sangha helped with his valuable comments on the manuscript and Dr Hem Sagar Baral provided the references for Nepal records.

References

- AERC TAC 2003. *AERC TAC'S Taxonomic recommendations*. Online version: www.aerc.eu.
- Ali, S., & Ripley, S. D., 1998. *Handbook of the birds of India and Pakistan together with those of Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan and Ceylon*. (Robins to Wagtails). Vol 9. 2nd (Hardback) ed. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Baker, E. C. S., 1924. *The fauna of British India including Ceylon and Burma. Birds*. Vol. 2. London: Taylor & Francis.
- Cramp, S., (Chief Editor) 1988. *Handbook of the birds of Europe, the Middle East and North Africa: the birds of the Western Palearctic*. Vol. 5: *Tyrant flycatchers to thrushes*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- del Hoyo, J., Elliott, A. & Christie, D. A. (eds.) 2005. *Handbook of the birds of the World. Volume 10. Cuckoo-shrikes to Thrushes*. Barcelona: Lynx Edicions.
- Director, Z. S. I., (Ed.) 1995. *Fauna of Western Himalaya (U. P.) Himalayan Ecosystem Series: Part 1*. Pp. 1–228. Calcutta: Zoological Survey of India.
- Director, Z. S. I., (Ed.) 2008. *Fauna of Corbett Tiger Reserve (Uttarakhand). Conservation Area Series*. 35: 1–230. Calcutta: Zoological Survey of India.
- Dodsworth, P. T. L., 1913. Occurrence of Red-tailed Chat (*Saxicola chrysopygia*, De Filippi) in the vicinity of Simla. *J. Bombay Nat. Hist. Soc.* 22 (1): 196.
- Giri, T. R., & Choudhary, H., 1997. Additional Sightings! *Danphe* 6 (2): 7–8.
- Grimmett, R., Inskipp, C. & Inskipp, T. 1998. *Birds of the Indian Subcontinent*. London: Christopher Helm, A & C Black.
- Inskipp, C., 2006. Nepal rare birds: records of species currently considered by the Nepal Rare Birds Committee. *Danphe* 15 (1): 9–22.
- Jones, A. E., 1919. A list of birds found in the Simla Hills, 1908–1918. *J. Bombay Nat. Hist. Soc.* 26 (2): 601–620.
- Kumar, G., & Lamba, B. S., 1985. Studies on migratory birds and their feeding behaviour in Corbett National Park. *Rec. Zool. Sur. India, Occasional Paper* 76: 1–147.
- Lainer, H., 2004. *Birds of Goa*. Goa: The Goa Foundation.
- Lamba, B. S., 1987. *Fauna of Corbett National Park*. Calcutta: Zoological Survey of India.
- Lamba, B. S., & Bhatnagar, R. K., 1977. Fauna of Corbett National Park. *Birds. Cheetal* 19 (1): 37–40.
- Lamba, B. S., & Bhatnagar, R. K., 1977. Fauna of Corbett National Park. *Birds. Cheetal* 19 (4): 3–6.
- Lamba, B. S., & Bhatnagar, R. K., 1978. Fauna of Corbett National Park. *Cheetal* 20 (1): 19–22.
- Lamba, B. S., & Bhatnagar, R. K., 1978. Fauna of Corbett National Park. *Cheetal* 20 (2&3): 16–17.
- Lamba, B. S., & Bhatnagar, R. K., 1979. Fauna of Corbett National Park. *Cheetal* 20 (4): 18–20.
- Lamba, B. S., & Bhatnagar, R. K., 1979. Fauna of Corbett National Park. *Cheetal* 21 (1): 29–32.
- Pandey, S., Joshua, J., Rai, N. D., Mohan, D., Rawat, G. S., Sankar, K., Katti, M. V., Khati, D. V. S., & Johnsingh, A. J. T., 1994. Birds of Rajaji National Park, India. *Forktail* 10: 105–113.
- Rasmussen, P. C., & Anderton, J. C., 2005. *Birds of South Asia: the Ripley guide*. 2 vols. Washington, D.C. and Barcelona: Smithsonian Institution and Lynx Edicions.
- Sharma, M., Harvey, B., Devasar, N., & Grewal, B., 2003. *A checklist of birds of Corbett Tiger Reserve*. Published by The Field Director, Corbett Tiger Reserve.
- Singh, B., 2005. Record of a Rufous-tailed Wheatear *Oenanthe xanthopyrma* from Chandigarh, India. *Indian Birds*. 1 (2): 38.