

at an elevation of 3,097m asl; this was the first record for the Indian subcontinent (Rinchen & Koirala 2022). There are no other reports of the species from South Asia, and my bird would be the second for the region, while it is the first for the country. Upon learning this, I was overjoyed, and it was incredibly fulfilling.

The findings in both West Bengal and Bhutan suggest that the species is likely to be discovered again in the eastern Indian subcontinent. This record in May perfectly matches the timing of the return migration of Tiger Shrike to its breeding ground, and an odd individual could have strayed to India. However, the July sighting from Bhutan at such a high altitude is intriguing, as the bird should have been breeding by then, much further north.

My acknowledgements to Ashwin Viswanathan, Kanad Baidya, Santanab Majumder, Santanu Manna, Kshounish Sankar Ray, Shubhankar Patra, and an anonymous referee for all the information and support.

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Rufous-bellied Niltava *Niltava sundara* and Small Niltava *N. macgrigoriae* in southern West Bengal

The Rufous-bellied Niltava *Niltava sundara* is a small passerine species in the *Muscicapidae* family. It prefers the middle and upper layers of broadleaf and mixed hill forests, where it often associates with other species in mixed flocks (Grimmett et al. 2011). It gives a series of high, piercing metallic whistles. In India, it ranges from Jammu & Kashmir to northern West Bengal and Northeast India. Outside India, it is found in Bangladesh and Southeast Asia (Clement 2020). There were no confirmed records of this species from southern West Bengal, which is part of the Ganges and Hooghly River floodplains.

On 16 February 2019, MK recorded one male individual from Amta (22.576°N, 88.000°E) in the Howrah district of West Bengal. The bird was dark blue with almost blackish upperparts, a brilliant blue crown and shoulder patch, a black throat, and a bright orange underpart [47]. This plumage is strikingly different from that of a Large Niltava *N. grandis* or a Small Niltava *N. macgrigoriae*. It was also distinct from Chinese Vivid Niltava



Mridulanti Kar

47. Rufous-bellied Niltava, Howrah District of West Bengal

N. oatesi, as the latter possesses an orange throat with blue sides, a darker and duller crown, and a much duller shoulder patch (Grimmett et al. 2011). Additionally, there are no reports of Chinese Vivid Niltava from West Bengal. This is the first record of Rufous-bellied Niltava from southern West Bengal. The closest records are from Hazaribagh, Jharkhand (Goswami 2022) and Bhagalpur, Bihar (Rani 2023).

Similarly, the Small Niltava is another small passerine species in the *Muscicapidae* family. It prefers the lower and middle levels of hilly and montane forests, usually found singly or in pairs (Grimmett et al. 2011). The known range is similar to the Rufous-bellied Niltava, except that it does not extend into Jammu and Kashmir (Clement 2020). On 06 March 2022, SM and MKC recorded one Small Niltava while birding at Garh Jungle, Durgapur, Paschim Burdwan district of West Bengal (23.595°N, 87.426°E). The recorded bird had bright purplish-blue upper parts, a blue nape and crown, a black chin, a blue throat, and a light blue forehead [48]. The breast was blue, and the lower underparts were white. This species is easily differentiated from Large Niltava, which is much larger and has dark purplish-blue underparts, a black face, chin, and throat, and a dark blue crown with a black band on the forehead (Grimmett et al. 2011). This is the first record of this species from southern West Bengal. This bird was subsequently recorded many times from the Rabindra Sarovar area of Kolkata in 2022 and 2023, the first of such sightings being in November 2022 (Malhotra 2022).

Although uncommon, the observation of these two Niltava

Table 1. Interesting records of Himalayan birds from southern West Bengal, India

Species	Latest Report	Location	Source
White-tailed Robin <i>Myiometula leucura</i>	October 2014	Rabindra Sarovar, Kolkata	Manna (2014)
Black Baza <i>Aviceda leuphotes</i>	November 2020	Bakkhali, South 24 Parganas	Banerjee (2020)
Himalayan Swiftlet <i>Aerodramus brevirostris</i>	December 2020	Baruipur Marshes, South 24 Parganas	Biswas (2020)
Jerdon's Baza <i>Aviceda jerdoni</i>	March 2022	Henry's Island, South 24 Parganas	Mandal (2022)
Himalayan Bush-Robin <i>Tarsiger rufilatus</i>	March 2022	Garh jungle, Paschim Bardhaman	Dan (2022)
Violet Cuckoo <i>Chrysococcyx xanthorhynchus</i>	March 2022	AD Block, Canal side Park, North 24 Parganas	Manna (2022)
Dollarbird <i>Eurystomus orientalis</i>	October 2022	Sundarban Tiger Reserve, South 24 Parganas	Choukidar (2022)
White-capped Redstart <i>Phoenicurus leucocephalus</i>	October 2022	Ajodhya Hill, Purulia County	Mahato (2022)
Common Hill Myna <i>Gracula religiosa</i>	March 2024	Chandrolok Complex, Bhattachala, Purba Burdwan	Chatterjee (2024)
Ruby-cheeked Sunbird <i>Chalcoparia singalensis</i>	March 2024	Hijuli Forest, Nadia	Ghosh (2024)



48. Small Niltava, Paschim Burdwan District, West Bengal

species in southern West Bengal aligns with reports of other Himalayan birds found outside their typical range in this region. The growth of the local birdwatching community, coupled with the extensive adoption of platforms such as eBird, has led to consistent unexpected species sightings in this region. Table 1 lists several of these recent records.

We thank Kanad Baidya and Sandip Das from the Bird Watchers' Society of Kolkata for their constant guidance and help in bird identification. We also thank the anonymous reviewers for their valuable suggestions, which have improved the manuscript immensely.

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Addition of the Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka* to the avifauna of Punjab, India

On 05 November 2023, while birding near the Siswan Dam (30.869°N, 76.746°E), c.22 km from Mohali and c.15 km from Chandigarh, on the Chandigarh-Baddi Road, Sahibzada Ajit Singh Nagar District, Punjab, India, PB observed and photographed a wheatear [49–52]. It caught insects and perched on dry bushes and on the ground. However, it did not stay on a single perch for much time.

Initially, thought to be a Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti*, the identity was eventually established as Pied Wheatear *O. pleschanka* first-winter male. This was based on a long primary projection, a buff supercilium, a dull grey-brown head and upper parts, blackish-brown wings with broad pale buff-brown fringing, and some black on the face and throat. The last characteristic is usually concealed by buff or whitish fringes (Clement & Rose 2015), but it showed well in this individual. Pinkish-buff breast (Shirihai & Svensson 2018) is another characteristic feature of a Pied Wheatear first-winter male that is evident in this individual. We sought opinions (in litt, emails dated January 2024) from several experts to confirm the identification. Nigel Collar, Richard Grimmett, Peter Alfrey, Raffael Ayé, Mohammad Kaboli, Shaobin Li, E. N. Panov, and Fares Khoury agreed with our assessment, identifying the bird as a first-winter male Pied Wheatear.

It must be noted that the observed individual has a rather small amount of fine pale buff fringing in the upper parts, thus forming only a faint scalloping pattern. Peter Clement noted in an email dated 26 January 2024 that it was unexpected for a first winter Pied Wheatear's upper parts to lack a prominent scalloped pattern with pale tips in November or December. He observed that while this bird shows some minimal or vestigial tips on the upper parts, the amount of wear seemed unusually extensive for the season, especially since the pale fringes on the wing coverts were still well-defined. Despite this anomaly, he identified the bird as a first-winter male Pied Wheatear. Therefore, this individual provides new insights into the moulting patterns of a first-winter male.



49. Pied Wheatear first-winter male.