

observations on eBird, all of which are from China. It appears to be a resident bird, undertaking only local and altitudinal movements. It is found at high elevations (3,000–5,200 m asl) in open habitats with stunted shrubs such as *Rhododendron* and often uses tall, exposed perches (Yosef et al. 2021). The nearest records are from two locations in Xizang (Ko 2017; Wang & Guan 2017; Shen 2023), the last two being from the same site. These are c. 180–250 km away from the current site, as calculated from linear distances on Google Maps. The area where I saw the bird is heavily patrolled by the military and access is limited. There is also limited scope for birding on foot, making regular birding and species documentation challenging. However, this record encourages the possibility of the occasional presence of the species in the area.

I am grateful to Salehin Md Habib from Kolkata for helping me identify this and other species I photographed during the trip and to Sandeep Biswas and members of the eBird India editors WhatsApp group for ID confirmation. I would like to thank two anonymous referees who enhanced this manuscript with several finer details. I am obliged to Praveen J for his invaluable input.

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A Tiger Shrike *Lanius tigrinus* from Bakkhali, West Bengal – A new species for India

On a sunny morning on 14 May, 2024, at Kargil Beach (21.571°N, 88.201°E), Bakkhali, South 24 Parganas, West Bengal, I set out with hopes of capturing some striking photographs of waders in their breeding plumage, such as the Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*, Tibetan Sand-Plover *A. atrifrons*, and Greater Sand-Plover *A. leschenaulti*, among others. Amidst my observations, a particularly agile passerine caught my eyes. I took several photos, initially believing it to be a Brown Shrike *Lanius cristatus*. However, upon reviewing the photographs at home, I began to suspect my identification. For clarity, I sent the images to Ashwin Viswanathan and Kanad Baidya. Based on discussion with others, the bird was identified as a female Tiger Shrike *L. tigrinus*.

Identification of this shrike as a Tiger Shrike is straightforward. The only regionally occurring shrike with such a grey crown and reddish mantle is a male Red-backed Shrike. Among other things, a male Red-backed Shrike in an adult-like plumage always has a black and white tail, unlike this bird. Bay-backed Shrike in adult plumages have black forecrown, quite unlike this bird, and never show barred flanks. The proportionally larger bill, grey crown, and barred flanks and upperparts are consistent with those of a female Tiger Shrike. Additionally, an adult male can be ruled out by the presence of white lores and pale white supercilium apart from the crown and back being duller. A juvenile would have had



44. Tiger Shrike showing grey crown and upper mantle, barred rufous-brown back, thick bill, pale lores, and pale supercilium.



45. Tiger Shrike showing barred flanks and upperparts.



46. Tiger Shrike showing a clean white breast and belly grading to dirty white flanks with a dense barring.

a brown head and back and would have moulted out into an adult-like plumage by May. Even males in their second calendar year would show clean-white breast and flanks, unlike this bird, where there is dirty suffusion from the centre of the belly to the flanks. Hence, this particular bird is an adult female Tiger Shrike.

The Tiger Shrike breeds in south-eastern Russia, north-eastern and eastern China, Korea, and Japan and winters mainly in Southeast Asia; in the countries of Myanmar, Malaysia, Singapore, Laos, Vietnam, and Indonesia (Yosef et al. 2020). Recently, a female Tiger Shrike was reported from Bhutan on 09 July 2020

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.

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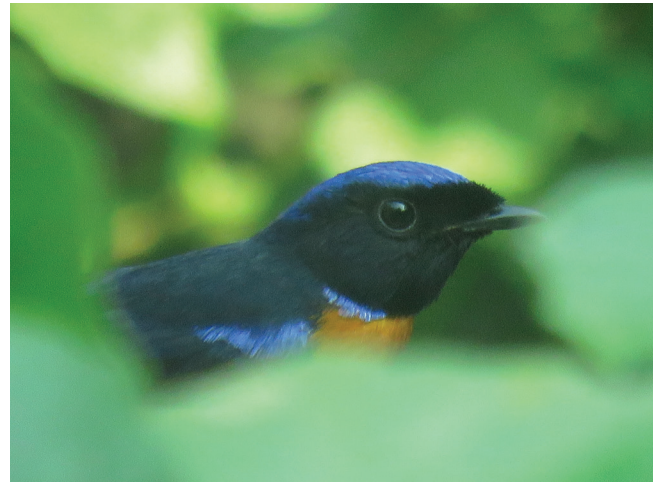
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Rufous-bellied Niltava *Niltava sundara* and Small Niltava *N. macgrigoriae* in southern West Bengal

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



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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>Myioma 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>Chalchoparia singalensis</i>	March 2024	Hijuli Forest, Nadia	Ghosh (2024)