



97. Striolated Bunting male sitting on a rock face.



98. Striolated Bunting male feeding on grass seeds.

Both: Subhra Pakhira

27 November 2023 (Poomali 2023). This species is also known to be a resident and nomadic, with small flocks dispersing after breeding (Ryan 2020). The lack of regular sightings farther from its breeding range is probably due to its nomadic nature and lack of active birders in the intervening areas. More research into its diet in the western parts of India could provide clues on where else it could be found in the rest of India.

We thank Subhrangshu Chatterjee, Pritam Majumder, Joydip Ganguly, and Biswanath Biswas for their field observations and notes of Dholburu Hills.

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## Three notable records from the Ganga River Basin, India

We report the occurrence of three notable species from the Ganga River basin in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and West Bengal during a study conducted in 2022 and 2023.

### Black-faced Bunting *Emberiza spodocephala* from the Ghaghara River near the Katerniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary, Uttar Pradesh

The Black-faced Bunting *Emberiza spodocephala* is known to be a regular winter visitor to the northeastern states of India from October to April (Ali & Ripley 1983). On 21 March 2023, during a biodiversity assessment, a Black-faced Bunting was sighted in the Ghaghara River near the Katerniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary, Uttar Pradesh (28.278°N, 81.681°E). The species was identified as a non-breeding male by its dark lores, olive grey head and crown, brown coverts with white-tipped wing bars, and pale brown upperparts with black streaks. The tail was dark brown, featuring extensive white on the outer rectrices. Additionally, it had rufous streaks on its flanks and pinkish legs. [99]. This is probably the first confirmed record of this species from Uttar Pradesh, India. This record is not unexpected, as it has been recorded regularly in the eastern Terai region of Nepal (eBird 2024a).



99. Black-faced Bunting 21 March 2023, Katerniaghat, Ghaghara River.

Cokulakrishnan G

### Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola* from the Bagmati River at Ghonghepur, Bihar and the Ghaghara River near Dant Nagar, Uttar Pradesh

The Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*, also known as the Black-bellied Plover, is a winter migrant to the coastal regions of India. It arrives in early August and departs in late April (Grimmett et al. 2011). It occasionally visits inland wetlands (Ali & Ripley 1983). It has been recorded as far inland as Kashmir, Delhi, Assam, Rajasthan, and Madhya Pradesh (eBird 2024b). On 27 November 2022, while conducting a post-monsoon biodiversity survey of the Bagmati River at Ghonghepur, Bihar, we found a Grey Plover near a reservoir (25.842°N, 86.384°E) located c.500 km away from the nearest coast (Bay of Bengal). The individual was in non-breeding plumage, as evidenced by its plain grey upperparts and speckled grey breast and belly (Grimmett et al. 2011). The bird was observed foraging on the sandy shore of the reservoir, along with Kentish Plover *Anarhynchus alexandrines* and Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*. On 28 March and 03 May 2023 [100, 101], the species was again sighted during a pre-monsoon survey in the Ghaghara River near Dant Nagar, Uttar Pradesh (26.802°N, 88.355°E). This is probably the first confirmed record of this species from the Bagmati and Ghaghara Rivers located in the



Upper Gangetic Plains. The sighting of two individuals at different locations in the Ganga River Basin, along with a nearby record from Farakka in Malda district, West Bengal in November 2016 (Sengupta & Jha 2016), indicates that this species might be more regular in these areas than previously thought.



100. Grey Plover, 28 March 2023, Ghaghara River.



101. Grey Plover, 03 May 2024, Ghaghara River.

Both: Gokulakrishnan G

### Blue-and-white Flycatcher *Cyanoptila cyanomelana* from Shivkhola Temple, Sittong, West Bengal

The Blue-and-white Flycatcher *Cyanoptila cyanomelana* breeds primarily in the forests of eastern Asia, including Japan, Korea, and parts of China, and winters in Southeast Asia, extending from southern China to the Malay Peninsula (Clement & Marks 2020). In India, the Blue-and-white Flycatcher has been sporadically observed wintering across various states (eBird 2024c), including Maharashtra (Barve & Kamat 2016; Katvi & Shenai 2017; Khatavkar & Gorle 2017), Karnataka, Kerala (Thekkethala 2017; Roddis & Loseby 2018), Tamil Nadu (Bhoopathy & Indrajith 2016), Madhya Pradesh (Jannes 2013), Arunachal Pradesh (Choudhury 2006; Borang 2015), Telangana (Vittapu & Dey 2021) and the Andaman Islands (Rajeshkumar et al. 2014). On 31 December 2023, we found one immature male near the Shivkhola Temple (26.865°N, 88.355°E) [102] close to the Mahananda River in Sittong, West Bengal. This is the first confirmed record of the Blue-and-white Flycatcher from the Mahananda River in the Ganga River Basin. The bird was identified by its brown head, upper mantle, and breast, contrasting with blue wings, a white eye ring, buff-tipped greater secondary coverts, and notably cleaner and more prominent white on its belly. Immature Blue-and-white Flycatcher and Zappey's Flycatcher *Cyanoptila cumatilis* are identical, so this identification assumes that Zappey's Flycatcher does not occur in the Indian mainland.



Gokulakrishnan G

102. Blue-and-white Flycatcher, 31 December 2023, Shivakh, West Bengal.

This study was carried out under the projects "Biodiversity Conservation and Ganga Rejuvenation" and "Planning and Management for Aquatic Species Conservation and Maintenance of Ecosystem Services in the Ganga River Basin," funded by the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG), Ministry of Jal Shakti, Government of India. We acknowledge the help and support the Director and Dean at the Wildlife Institute of India provided in carrying out this study.

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