

are no other reports of Bar-tailed Godwit either from Ladakh or from any other States covering Himalayan or Trans-Himalayan regions (eBird 2024).



228. Bar-tailed Godwit at Tsokar Lake.

Black-faced Bunting *Emberiza spodocephala* from Spitik Marshes

On 11 November 2023, while birding in the Spitik Marshes (34.121°N, 77.521°E; 3,202 m asl), with Sudeshna Dey and Harish Thangaraj, I photographed a bird perched deep in willow *Salix* sp. trees in the area at 0430 h, but it did not give a clear view. It seemed timid and shy perhaps due to the presence of White-winged Redstarts *Phoenicurus erythrogastrus* in the same habitat, which showed a tendency for mobbing this particular bird whenever it came out in the open. After showing the pictures to my fellow birders, we agreed it to be a Black-faced Bunting *Emberiza spodocephala*. After a few attempts, I managed to get a few clear pictures. Visible characteristics, such as, greyish upper breast with lower underparts yellow, brownish mantle with black streaks, greyish head and nape with dark lores and chin, and a pinkish bill, were observed. A clear photograph [229] was achieved on 25 November at the same location (Gyalpo 2023b). The bird was observed throughout the winter season at this location regularly, evident from various checklists from the same area (eBird 2024c), from the first day of the sighting on 11 November 2023 till the last sighting on 25 April 2024 (Phuntsog 2024). This observation appears to be the eastern-most wintering record of this species in South Asia (eBird 2024d).



229. Black-faced Bunting at Spitik marshes.

The above three species are not listed or mentioned in any of the standard references (Osmaston 1925, 1926; Sillem 1934; Vaurie 1972; Holmes 1986; Rasmussen & Anderton 2012; Delany et al. 2014; Pfister 2014; Grimmett et al. 2011; Sharma

et al. 2021) making these records new additions to the avifauna of Ladakh.

I would like to thank Sh. Tanuj Nagpal, State Project Officer SECURE Himalaya Project for providing prior permission to conduct the butterfly survey in eastern Ladakh, Changthang. Many thanks to Ashwin Viswanathan for providing additional help in identifying the above birds and to Sudeshna Dey and Harish Thangaraj for helping in identifying the Black-faced Bunting.

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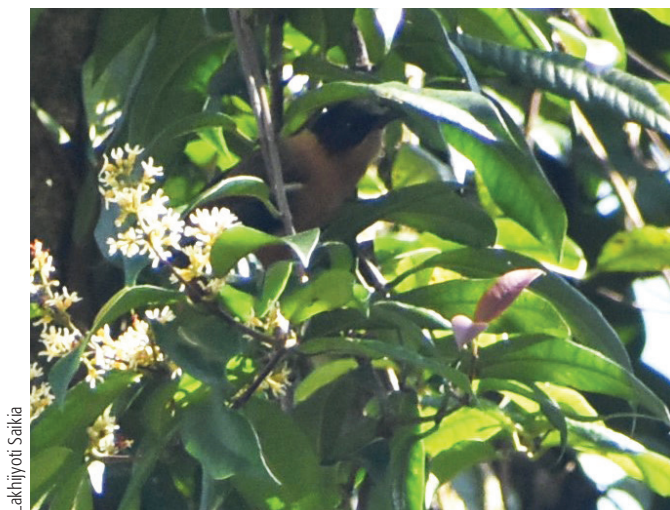
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– Padma Gyalpo

Padma Gyalpo, Choldan House, Shey, Ladakh, India. Email: gyalpo4086@gmail.com

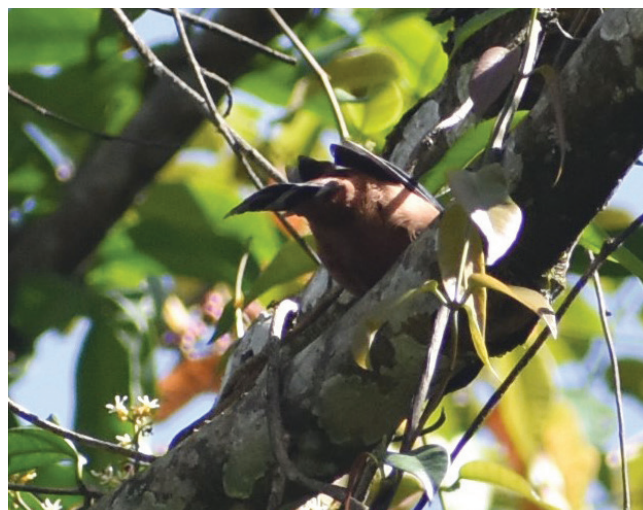
A Rufous Sibia *Heterophasia capistrata* from Upper Assam

On 15 May 2024, while bird watching in the Dulung Reserve Forest (27.445°N, 94.213°E; 126 m asl) of Lakhimpur District of Upper Assam, India, we observed a bird that had rufous underparts, a black head, and a long tail with grey tips, and black subterminal band. The bird was sitting alone on a branch of a tall flowering tree, c. 10 m above the ground. We observed it for 20 minutes, and we were able to take a few photographs [230–231] before it flew away. By matching the photographs with Grimmett



Lakhijyoti Saikia

230. Rufous Sibia at Dulung Reserve Forest, Lakhimpur, Assam, India.



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231. Rufous Sibia at Dulung Reserve Forest, Lakhimpur, Assam, India.

et al. (2011) and Grewal et al. (2016), we identified the bird as a Rufous Sibia *Heterophasia capistrata*.

The Rufous Sibia is a resident in the Himalaya across India, Nepal, and Bhutan (Collar & Robson 2020). It is found in broadleaf evergreen forests between 1,200 to 3,400 m asl but descends in winter down to 800 m asl. However, it can locally descend even to 100 m asl in winter (Collar & Robson 2020). Our record may not be considered a winter record as most wintering species leave in April, and our sighting was on 15 May.

In the Eastern Himalaya, this species is commonly seen in Sikkim, north Bengal, the northern parts of extreme western Arunachal Pradesh, India (particularly in the Tawang & West Kameng Districts), and Bhutan. Low elevation records from north-eastern India are from Jaldapara National Park, Buxa Tiger Reserve, and Manas National Park, and the closest records to ours are from c.250 km away in Samdrup Jhonkar in Bhutan (eBird 2024). There are no records east of Kameng District. Since ours is a low elevation record, the bird must have either moved eastwards after descending to the lowlands below its regular range, or it is an uncommon resident in the temperate forests above Lakhimpur District (East Kameng to Upper Subansiri districts of Arunachal Pradesh). Literature on the hills of Assam (Choudhury 2000; Baruah 2015; Barua & Sharma 2005) report its congeners Rufous-backed Sibia *Leioptila annectans*, Grey Sibia

H. gracilis, Long-tailed Sibia *H. picaoides*, and Beautiful Sibia *H. pulchella*. Still, there is no mention of Rufous Sibia. Therefore, our current observation report of the species is the first confirmed occurrence in Assam outside Manas National Park.

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– Siddhartha Suman Bora & Lakhijyoti Saikia

Siddhartha Suman Bora, North Lakhimpur, 787001, India,

E-mail: siddharthasumanbora@gmail.com

Lakhijyoti Saikia, North Lakhimpur, 787001, India,

E-mail: lakhijyoti01@gmail.com [Corresponding author]



We would like to take this opportunity to thank the editorial board of Indian BIRDS, and all our external referees who helped us with manuscripts that were published in volume 20: Abhinand Chandran, Aju K Raju, Amardeep Kaur, Anant Pande, Andrea Corso, Arka Sarkar, Ashish Jha, Chris Bowden, David James, David Raju, Dipu Karuthedathu, Gnanaskandan K., Gurpartap Singh, Hans Larsson, Hari Krishnan Cherayipadinjakkara, James Eaton, Kanad Baidya, Klaus Malling Olsen, Komal Agarwal, Kulbhushansingh Suryawanshi, Leons Mathew Abraham, Mittal Gala, Nirav Bhatt, Omkar Dharwadkar, Oscar Campbell, Pamela Rasmussen, Patrick David, Peter Clement, Phil D Round, Pranav Gokhale, Pronoy Baidya, S. Prasanth Narayanan, Rahul Khot, Rajah Jayapal, Rajat Bhargava, Raju Vyas, Ramit Singal, Ravi Vyas, Reuven Yosef, Roshnath R., Sabiya Sheikh, Sandeep Biswas, Sandip Das, Sanjay Sondhi, Santanu Manna, Shashank Dalvi, Sidharth Srinivasan, Sumit K Sen, Tarun Menon, Tim Inskipp, Tshering Tobgay, V. Santharam, Veronika Samotskaya, and Vivek Ramachandran.

–Praveen J, Sahas Barve, Puja Sharma & Pritam Baruah