

A Little Tern *Sternula albifrons* at Corbett Tiger Reserve, Uttarakhand, India

On 15 June 2012, at c.1740 h, while birding at Sher Bhujji at Dhikala, Corbett Tiger Reserve, Uttarakhand, India (29.590°N, 78.840°E, c.365 m asl), I photographed a tern flying above Ramganga reservoir. The bird, a small tern with narrow pointed wings, was flying with rapid wingbeats, often hovering and repeatedly diving to pick feed from the water's surface. It was identified as an adult Little Tern *Sternula albifrons* in breeding plumage, based on the features seen in the images [200, 201] that included white forehead with black lores, black outer primaries, and a black-tipped yellow beak.

The Little Tern is a resident in India and breeds locally (Grimmett et al. 2011) during the months of May and June (Gochfeld et al. 2020). Grimmett et al. (2011) and eBird (2024) show that the Little Tern breeds in neighbouring Uttar Pradesh, and hence it is highly likely that the species could breed in Uttarakhand as well. As the bird, a breeding adult, was photographed during mid-June, it is possible that the species may have been breeding at or near the Ramganga Reservoir in Corbett Tiger Reserve. Mohan & Sondhi (2017) does not record the presence of the species from the state of Uttarakhand. There are no records of the species from Uttarakhand on eBird (2024). Arya et al. (2021), based on surveys conducted during January 2019 and December 2020, include the species in their checklist of waterbirds of Haridwar, Uttarakhand, without giving any photographic evidence, any details of description of the species or details of any sightings. Thus, the bird photographed on 15 June 2012 at Sher Bhujji is the first confirmed record of the species from Corbett Tiger Reserve and from the state of Uttarakhand, India.



200. Little Tern at Corbett Tiger Reserve.



201. Little Tern at Corbett Tiger Reserve.

Both: Manoj Sharma

References

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The Bristled Grassbird *Schoenicola striatus* at Pong Lake, Himachal Pradesh, India

The Bristled Grassbird *Schoenicola striatus* is a large olive-brown grassbird with pale fulvous or buff-brown upperparts, distinctive bold, dark brown streaking on mantle, unmarked pale buff underparts, and a heavy broad rounded tail with whitish tips (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012; Krishnan 2021). In the breeding season the male shows a dark black bill (Grimmett et al. 1998; Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). It is a grassland specialist and occurs in a variety of grasslands from tall and wet types to medium height (>1 m high) and dry grasslands with significant shrub component (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). This note describes the records of the Bristled Grassbird from Pong Lake, Himachal Pradesh, India.

Observations

Pong Lake was created in 1976 by damming Beas River in the foothills of the Himalaya mountains on the northern edge of the Indo-Gangetic Plain. It is situated in Kangra District of Himachal Pradesh and declared as a wildlife sanctuary in 1983 (BirdLife International 2024a). At the outflow area of the Pong dam, water is dammed by the Shah Nehar Barrage at the border with Punjab. Marshland and reedbeds have been created by this barrage in the surrounding area. The reedbeds cover a smaller area on the northern side of the Shah Nehar Barrage Lake, but are more extensive at the south-eastern side. The whole habitat on the latter side is c.3 km in length and c.700 m in width, much of which is inaccessible, and is bounded by hill forest and village fields on other sides. It contains patches of reedbeds, marsh, and few small ponds along with scrub and dry grasses up to 1.5 m in height, along with a few small pastures and scattered trees.

On 14 July 2020, I was walking on a path near a *Typha* sp. patch [202], which measured c.300 X 100 sq. m (31.950°N, 75.924°E; 325 m asl), adjacent to a small pond which was bordered by reeds on one side, and dry grasses and scrub on other side. The *Typha* sp. patch was c.2 m in height and there were other similar patches nearby. I heard a bird vocalizing and immediately recognized that it was a Bristled Grassbird. As I had initially set-out to look for the species in this habitat, I had already made myself familiar with its vocalizations. The loud distinctive song consisted of paired syllables of somewhat metallic *chee-chew*. It was continuously vocalizing, but not visible as it was far from the edge of reeds. I waited for some time and then played its call by speaker for 20 sec. It immediately responded and