In the Indian Subcontinent, the first mainland record of the species was documented from Chitral in Pakistan (Fulton 1904). On mainland India, only a handful of records of the species in over a century, were reported up until at least 2012 (Sharma & Sangha 2012). However, several reports in recent years have emerged from Kerala and Tamil Nadu in southern India (eBird 2024a). The only record from the Western Himalaya in northern India has been recently documented by Kumar et al. (2024). A pair of birds, one male and one female, was reported in May 2021, followed by a sighting of a single female in May 2022, both from Chamoli, Uttarakhand, at an elevation of 1,451 m asl (Kumar et al. 2024). No subsequent sightings have been reported from the Western Himalaya or the surrounding region. The nearest previous record of the species is from Nepal in the Central Himalaya (Basnet & Chaudhary 2003), *c.*850 km southeast of the sighting from Uttarakhand, India. Thus, our two records of Daurian Starling from Ladakh, one each from June 2022 and 2024, appear to be the first records of the species for Ladakh.

Ladakh, located at the junction of the Palearctic and the Indo-Malayan zoogeographic zones, supports species from both regions and boasts a uniquely diverse avifauna with 438 bird species documented to date (eBird 2024b). Several comprehensive studies have documented the avifaunal diversity of Ladakh region (Meinertzhagen 1927; Holmes 1986; Mishra & Humbert-Droz 1998; Pfister 2001; Namgail 2005; Hussain et al. 2008; Bhat & Bhat 2012; Ahmed et al. 2015; Malik 2017; Sharma et al. 2021), but none have reported the occurrence of this species. Moreover, to the best of our knowledge, we could not find any other records of the species from Ladakh on citizen science portals such as eBird. Prior to our observations, records of only four starling species have been known from Ladakh that are supported with photographic evidence: Brahminy Starling, Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*, Rosy Starling *Pastor roseus*, and Chestnut-tailed Starling *S. malabarica* (eBird 2024b). This note documents the first two records of Daurian Starling in the Ladakh (Trans-Himalayan) region, with both sightings occurring in June but at different elevations and locations. The June 2022 sighting at Hanle (4,302 m asl) represents the highest elevation record for this species in India, while the June 2024 sighting from Leh (3,219 m asl) provides an additional insight of the occurrence of the species in the region at this time of year. The linear distance between these two records is *c.*200 km.

Both our June records are particularly interesting as they occurred during the typical breeding season of the species in its native range (eastern Mongolia, Trans-Baikal region, and Amur Valley), suggesting possible range expansion or changes in migration pattern of the species. The nearest record of the species to our Ladakh records is from Chamoli, Uttarakhand, India in the Western Himalaya, *c.*440 km and *c.*220 km away respectively, and was also reported in the month of May (Kumar et al. 2024). The occurrence of the species so far west of its usual range during this period (May–June) in consecutive years is noteworthy. More observations would help to understand any potential seasonal patterns of the species or changes in its movements in the region. As the species is considered a rare straggler to India, particularly in northern India, more bird surveys would help in better understanding its true status in this region, and to establish whether it is a regular migrant or just a vagrant.

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The Himalayan Rubythroat *Calliope pectoralis* in Jharkhand, India

On 7 January 2024, at 0835 h, while birdwatching in Massanjore, Dumka District, Jharkhand, India (24.073°N, 87.332°E), the

authors observed a single individual of Himalayan Rubythroat *Calliope pectoralis*. The bird was photographed, and its identity was confirmed based on its distinct plumage and morphological characteristics **[56]**. This sighting represents the first confirmed record of the species in Jharkhand.

Banideep Sinha

56. Himalayan Rubythroat, Massanjore, Jharkhand.

The Himalayan Rubythroat is a striking passerine known for its bright red throat and distinctive vocalizations. It primarily inhabits alpine meadows and dwarf shrub thickets at elevations between 2,600–4,000 m asl, breeding across the high-altitude regions of the Himalaya, Pamirs, Tien Shan, and adjacent ranges (Collar & Christie 2020). It descends to lower altitudes during winter, occupying dense scrub, tea gardens, and grasslands along the Himalayan foothills (Collar & Christie 2020). Non-breeding populations are commonly documented in northern and central Himalayan states (Grimmett et al. 2011).

The bird observed in Massanjore exhibited the deep red chin and upper throat characteristic of Himalayan Rubythroat, with uniformly grey upper parts and a prominent white supercilium. These features distinguish it from the closely related Chinese Rubythroat *C. tschebaiewi*, which has a broader red throat patch separated from a white submoustachial stripe by a narrow black malar stripe (del Hoyo et al. 2020). Similarly, the Siberian Rubythroat *C. calliope* has a metallic, pale ruby-red chin and throat, bordered below by a blackish line that links the malar area, with an olive-brown back and a bold white supercilium and submoustachial stripe (Collar 2020). Based on these diagnostic characteristics, the authors confidently identify the bird as a Himalayan Rubythroat.

Massanjore is situated in north-eastern Jharkhand, and it lies within the Chota Nagpur Plateau, a region characterized by undulating terrain, shallow valleys, and a network of small streams and rivers. The habitat comprises dry deciduous forests, open scrubland, and moist, mixed deciduous forest patches. The Massanjore Reservoir, located on the Mayurakshi River, enhances habitat diversity, supporting a wide range of flora and fauna. This unique ecological setting provides a diverse array of microhabitats suitable for various resident and migratory species.

This sighting is a significant ornithological record, as no historical specimens or previous observations exist from the state of Jharkhand. While this species is commonly recorded in northern and central Himalayan states, such as Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh, its presence in Jharkhand has not been documented previously (Grimmett et al. 2011; SoIB 2023). However, a few wintering records exist from Purulia and Howrah Districts in adjacent West Bengal (Nandy 2019). Additionally, sightings from central India, extending to Maharashtra, suggest potential long-distance migratory capabilities (eBird 2025). Given the limited ornithological surveys conducted in Jharkhand, it is plausible that other montane and migratory species remain undocumented in the region. This record highlights the importance of systematic avifaunal surveys and long-term monitoring efforts to better understand species distributions within the state.

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Displaying Lesser Floricans *Sypheotides indicus* in the arid Desert National Park, Rajasthan, India

The Lesser Florican *Sypheotides indicus* is the smallest of the four bustards found in India and is endemic to India, Pakistan and Nepal. Listed as Critically Endangered by the IUCN (BirdLife International 2021), it is a specialist of semi-arid agro-grassland and has faced a catastrophic decline over the last three generations (Dutta et al. 2018). Lesser Florican distribution spans the semi-arid and sub-humid bioclimatic regions in India. The species migrates to north-western India to breed and known historical breeding records are from southern and western Gujarat, southern and eastern Rajasthan, and western and southern Madhya Pradesh (Sankaran et al. 1992). The breeding range once extended further west, to the southern Sindh region of Pakistan, but the species is thought to be possibly extinct there (BirdLife International 2021). The last survey in 2017 estimated their population to comprise 426 (174–805)[1] breeding males (~800 individuals) across its distribution range with one of the two large breeding populations found in the Ajmer landscape of Rajasthan with an estimated 110–136 breeding males (Dutta et al. 2018). This decline is primarily attributed to agricultural conversion and mismanagement of grasslands compounded by other factors such as historical hunting, egg collection, high

1 This is expressed as mean and 95% confidence interval