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A Dollarbird *Eurystomus orientalis* in Col. Sher Jung National Park, Sirmaur, Himachal Pradesh, India

Col. Sher Jung National Park, previously known as Simbalbara National Park, is located in the Sirmaur District of Himachal Pradesh. It lies in the Shivalik region and mainly comprises of Sal *Shorea robusta* forests. On 26 May 2022, I stayed in the Forest Rest House, located within the national park. On the following morning, I started birding before the sunrise. At 0545 h, while birding around a stream, running inside the forest (30.429°N, 77.485°E), I saw an unfamiliar stocky built bird, sitting at the top of a large tree. Initially, the bird appeared very dark, due to low light conditions; however, after adjusting the camera exposure settings, key features became visible. The bird was dark greenish blue, with a darker head and a pale patch on the wings. Most distinctive features were the dark red bill with a hook and almost similar coloured legs. Based on these features, it was identified as Dollarbird *Eurystomus orientalis* [169]. The bird was still present when revisited an hour later, this time perched on an adjacent tree. Subsequent targeted searches at the same location by another birder, after a couple of days were unsuccessful in relocating the individual.

Of the ten currently recognised subspecies of Dollarbird, *E. o. cyanocollis* is found in the northern India and further east in



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169. Dollarbird *Eurystomus orientalis* at Col. Sher Jung National Park, Himachal Pradesh.

eastern China, south-eastern Russia, Korea, Japan, and Greater Sundas (Fry & Boesman 2020). Ali & Ripley (1987) mentioned it as a resident, from Garhwal (westernmost record Ambala District), eastward through Nepal, Sikkim, and Bhutan to north-eastern India and Bangladesh. A specimen of Dollarbird was collected from Kalesar National Park, Haryana, which is adjacent to Col. Sher Jung National Park, on 29 May 1935 (Waite 1937) and subsequently cited by Ali & Ripley (1987). Grimmett et al. (1998) also state that its range starts from northern Haryana, with no mention of Himachal Pradesh. Grimmett et al. (2011) also exclude Himachal Pradesh from the distribution range of the species, despite the range is shown close to the border of Himachal Pradesh. However, Rasmussen & Anderton (2012) have stated that the range of Dollarbird starts from eastern Himachal Pradesh. It is possible that the Kalesar record was erroneously treated to be from eastern Himachal Pradesh, as the authors make no reference to Kalesar or Haryana. A review of available specimen databases, including those of the Natural History Museum, London (NHM 2024), VertNet (2024), and GBIF (www.gbif.org) did not yield any specimen records of the species from Himachal Pradesh. Mark Adams further confirmed that there is no specimen of Dollarbird from Himachal Pradesh in NHM, London, but they do possess the specimen from Kalesar (in litt. email dated 01 May 2024). Furthermore, no published records (Pittie 2024; Dhadwal & Kanwar 2018) or any observational record in the eBird and other public forums could be traced from Himachal Pradesh. The present record is thus the first record for Himachal Pradesh. However, the species is not unexpected as the place is only 10 km away from the Uttarakhand border, and adjacent to the Kalesar National Park where the species has previously been recorded.

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In Memoriam

SUNJOY MONGA

(7 March 1962–28 May 2025)

• Naturalist • Conservationist • Author • Wildlife Photographer • Mentor



With deep sorrow and immense respect, we bid farewell to Sunjoy Monga, one of India's most influential naturalists and conservation storytellers. A man of vision, passion, and enduring curiosity, Sunjoy leaves behind a legacy that has not only enriched our understanding of nature but also inspired generations to protect it.

A Life Rooted in Wonder

Sunjoy's love for the natural world began early. He started birdwatching at the age of six, drawn to the rhythms of birdsong and the quiet mysteries of the wilderness. What began as a childhood passion blossomed into a lifetime of work that brought the beauty, urgency, and complexity of nature into the sphere of national conversation.

A Prolific Voice for Indian Wildlife

Across more than three decades, Sunjoy authored 20 works that continue to serve as vital resources for enthusiasts, students, and professionals alike. His books — *Wildlife Reserves of India* (2002), *Jungle! The Forests of India* (2017), *Birds of Mumbai Region* (2016), and *Flow: India Through Water* (2018) — beautifully married science and storytelling, ecology and emotion. His coffee table book *City Forest* took the reader on a journey through Sanjay Gandhi National Park, Mumbai — a forest very dear to his heart. He also contributed to *Lonely Planet: India* (13th ed.) with a column on birding in Mumbai. In fact, Sunjoy's name was synonymous with Mumbai's birdlife. No journalist would write a bird article without consulting him first.

A Communicator Across Mediums

A gifted wildlife photographer, Sunjoy won the second prize in the 1991 *BBC-British Gas International Photographer of the Year* competition. His photographs were widely used by institutions and agencies across India. He served as consultant and cameraman for Channel 4's documentary series *Wild India* and as the Indian consultant for Sir David Attenborough's BBC production, *The Trials of Life*. His ability to convey nature's drama through both visual and literary mediums made him a powerful conservation communicator.

Conservation Leadership & Public Service

At various stages in his life, Sunjoy was an Honorary Warden of Sanjay Gandhi National Park, a member of the Executive Committee of the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS), and co-editor of its iconic magazine *Hornbill*. He was also the Associate Editor of *Sanctuary Asia* and *Cub* magazines, and a regular contributor to *Hindustan Times*, *Times of India*, *Mid-Day*, as well as Hindi and Marathi newspapers.

He was part of the Mumbai Metropolitan Region Environment Improvement Society and the Maharashtra Nature Park Society. He collaborated with WWF-India, CRY, and large corporate houses