

Park by Bhargav et al. (2007), but listed in Ghosh et al. (2007). Dhadwal (2019) has recorded it once near Paonta Sahib in the same district. Our sightings along with records by other observers (eBird 2024c), indicate that it is a common resident in Sirmaur District. Thus, the distribution range of Velvet-fronted Nuthatch extends up to the southern parts of Sirmaur District in southern Himachal Pradesh.

In Fig. 2, we compare the monthly reporting frequency percentage of Velvet-fronted Nuthatch and Chestnut-bellied Nuthatch from Sirmaur District based on eBird (2024d) data. While the Chestnut-bellied Nuthatch has a much higher reporting frequency, the Velvet-fronted Nuthatch has also been recorded almost throughout the year.

To conclude, we have provided two records of Indian Nuthatch from Himachal Pradesh, which are probably the first records of the species from the state and we urge correction in the range statement of Chestnut-bellied Nuthatch and Velvet-fronted Nuthatch in Himachal Pradesh.

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## A Blue Whistling-Thrush *Myophonus caeruleus* from New Delhi, India

On the morning of 02 November 2023, we were birding from our balcony (28.552° N, 77.198° E; 227 m asl) in Hauz Khas, New Delhi, India. We spotted a bird that was unlike those seen on regular days. It was a Blue Whistling-Thrush *Myophonus caeruleus*. Key diagnostic features included a bright yellow bill, a dark blue-black head with tiny silvery spots, and bright blue tail feathers [161]. A notable behavioural characteristic was its distinctive hopping movement and frequent tail-fanning. The identification was confirmed using a field guide (Kazmierczak 2008) and the Merlin Bird ID app. The species is found in hilly regions of India and is a resident of the Himalaya and north-eastern India (Grimmett et al. 2011; Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). During winters, it descends to the foothills and has been rarely recorded as a vagrant further south in the northern Indian plains, with only a few records from locations such as Alwar, Bharatpur, and Lucknow (eBird 2024).



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161. Blue Whistling-Thrush photographed from Hauz Khas, New Delhi.

The species is frequently observed along streams in forested hills and mountainous regions (eBird 2024). Here, it remained next to the drain flowing through Rose Garden, which likely resembled its natural habitat. Calls were heard during dawn and dusk, with whistling calls being more prominent during the early morning hours, especially in the later winter months of February and March. Calls were recorded, and the following spectrograms were produced (Figs. 2, 3). The individual remained in the area until 24 March 2024.

According to eBird records, there has been only one prior record from the National Capital Territory (NCT) of Delhi. The

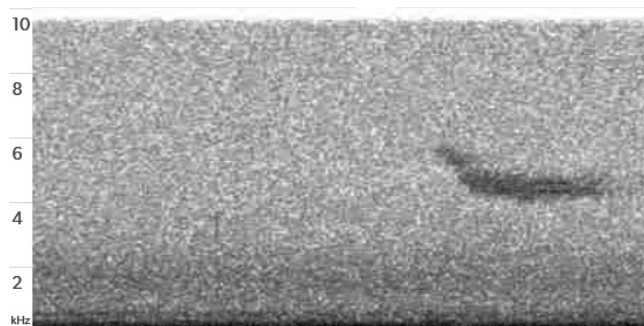


Fig. 2. Spectrogram of the call recording of Blue Whistling-Thrush observed on 15 December 2023. (Pande 2023)

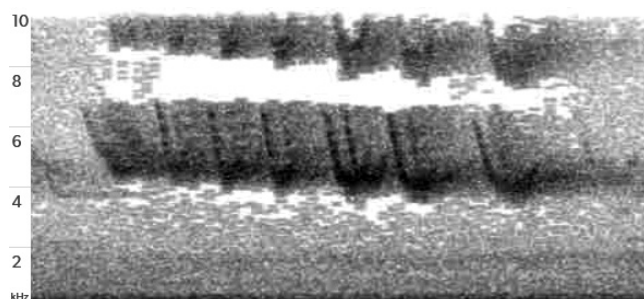


Fig. 3. Spectrogram of the call recording of Blue Whistling-Thrush observed on 24 March 2024. (Pande 2024a)

species was reported from Polo Club, Delhi Cantonment, on 28 March 2010 (Gupta 2010). An additional record exists from the broader neighbourhood of the Capital, from Rithal, Gohana near Sonipat, in January 2018 (Vyas 2023). On 05 October 2024, the species was sighted again at the same location for a second consecutive year, remaining there till the end of December 2024 (Pande 2024b). Considering the limited number of wintering records of the Blue Whistling-Thrush in the northern Indian plains, the repeated appearance of an individual at the same location in New Delhi for two consecutive winters is particularly noteworthy.

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## An Indian Skimmer *Rynchops albigollis* at the Harike Bird Sanctuary, Punjab, India

The Harike Bird Sanctuary (31.151°N, 74.994°E), a large, shallow, man-made reservoir situated on the Sutlej River just downstream of its confluence with the Beas River, has historically been a known site for the Indian Skimmer *Rynchops albigollis* (Kazmierczak et al. 1998). However, global population declines have resulted in increasingly rare sightings at the site (BirdLife International 2001).

On 09 March 2025, a solitary Indian Skimmer was observed between 0945 and 1030 h, resting and sleeping on sandbars c. 100 m downstream of Harike Barrage (31.144°N, 74.946°E). Although surrounded by a group of River Terns *Sterna aurantia*, the individual remained largely inactive. Unlike the terns, which intermittently flew and scanned the surroundings, the skimmer mostly stayed grounded, occasionally taking brief flights before returning to the same resting spot. Its identification was unmistakable, having black upperparts contrasting with white underparts and a characteristic bright orange beak with the lower mandible distinctly longer than the upper (Grimmett et al. 2011) [162].



162. Indian Skimmer photographed from Harike Bird Sanctuary, Punjab.

The Indian Skimmer is currently listed as Endangered on the IUCN Red List, with a global population size of 2,450–2,900 mature individuals (BirdLife International 2020). eBird designates it as a *Sensitive Species*, restricting public access to the online records during its breeding season (eBird 2025). The species is highly sensitive to habitat disturbance, altered flow regimes due to dams and barrages, sand mining, and increasing human activity along river corridors (Rajguru 2017; Shaikh et al. 2018).

The present observation from Harike Bird Sanctuary, alongside the recent sighting by Majumdar (2022), reinforces the ecological importance of this wetland, given its location near the historic range of the species and its complex riverine habitat.

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