

Kashmir (Ward 1906; Osmaston 1927), and the species has not been reported again for decades (Kichloo et al. 2024). However, from Himachal Pradesh, we have been able to find multiple records from different sources, especially since 2019 (Table 1).

It would be erroneous to infer any pattern in the movement as we have only a limited number of records. Therefore, based on the current knowledge about the Banded Bay Cuckoo as a resident bird in India, we can safely say that this species is a resident of, at least, southern Himachal Pradesh, with records from both winter and summer seasons, although it is uncommon. Records from other parts of the state are largely unconfirmed. Multiple records from the Chakki Mod area in Solan District are probably due to the high birding activity there, as its proximity to Chandigarh makes it convenient to visit. Birdwatchers visiting other locations in the Shivalik belt, from Sirmour District through Kangra District, should remain alert to the possible presence of this species.

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Addition of the Black-faced Bunting *Emberiza spodocephala* to the avifauna of Punjab, India

In the Indian subcontinent, the Black-faced Bunting *Emberiza spodocephala* is known to winter in north-western Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Assam and the adjoining north-eastern states of India, east-central Bangladesh, and also terai and duars west to central Nepal; from plains to c. 1000 m; commonly in bushy habitats, sugarcane fields, gardens, rice fields, and areas near water bodies (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012; Praveen 2025).

On 23 March 2025, at 0900 h, PSA observed a Black-faced Bunting during a routine bird-watching trip on Garhshankar-Nangal road in hilly agricultural landscape north-east of Garhshankar (31.292°N, 76.265°E), Hoshiarpur District, Punjab, India. It was identified as a non-breeding male by its dark lores, olive grey head and crown, dark chin, brown coverts with pale-tipped wing bars, pale brown upperparts with dark streaks, and some dull rufous streaks on the flanks. The tail was dark brown, featuring white on the outer rectrices [185]. The absence of broad, grey-white to buffy-white sub-moustachial stripe ruled out the possibility of female and immature male. Additionally, the bird lacked yellow underparts with dark flank streaks, ruling out an individual in full breeding plumage (Bradshaw 1992).



185. Black-faced Bunting near Garhshankar, Hoshiarpur District, Punjab.

Although Black-faced Bunting is considered a relatively short-distance migrant, it is known to exhibit vagrancy. The species has been recorded in western Europe on multiple occasions and as a vagrant in Xinjiang (western China), Batanes (northernmost Philippines), and as far south as the Taliabu Island in the Sula Archipelago, east of Sulawesi, Indonesia (Kirwan et al. 2022).

In Punjab, there are no previous records of Black-faced Bunting, nor from adjacent states like Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, and Jammu & Kashmir. However, a recent confirmed record exists from Ladakh (Gyalpo 2024) and one single record from Uttar Pradesh (Gokulakrishnan et al. 2024). In Uttarakhand, the species was earlier mentioned as a wintering vagrant to Corbett National Park (Byers et al. 1995), but no supporting details were provided. A subsequent mention by Khatri (2004) from the Corbett Tiger Reserve served as the basis for its inclusion in the avifauna of Uttarakhand by Tak & Sati (2010). This, in turn, formed the basis for a location record shown in the distribution map by Grimmett et al. (2011) from Uttarakhand, which was later cited by Mohan & Sondhi (2024), though they list it under the doubtful records. Tim Inskipp (in litt. email dated 23 March 2025), also considered the documentation insufficient and that the species' occurrence in Uttarakhand requires confirmation.

If the unverified Uttarakhand sighting is excluded, the present

observation is the only confirmed documentation of Black-faced Bunting from the region between Nepal and Ladakh and the first record from Punjab, India.

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On the breeding of the Indian Thick-knee *Burhinus indicus* in Aravalli Biodiversity Park, Delhi, India

The Indian Thick-knee *Burhinus indicus* is a widely distributed bird species across the Indian subcontinent, typically inhabiting open dry fields, grasslands, thorn forest, scrubby riverbeds, often favouring chalky soil, bare ground or grasslands for breeding (Grimmett et al. 2011; Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). It is characterized by its prominent yellow eyes, long yellowish legs, and a stout, slightly upturned yellow and black bill and a cryptic brownish plumage with streaks providing effective camouflage. Existing literature has described key elements of its breeding behaviour such as nest site selection, often in open ground or under sparse cover (Stuart Baker 1935; Ali & Ripley 1987; Sangha 2021), typical clutch sizes and egg morphology (Stuart Baker 1935), and the biparental nature of chick rearing (Ali & Ripley 1987), while Stuart Baker (1935) reported only female incubates. However, despite these contributions, detailed accounts of the full breeding cycle of the Indian Thick-knee, particularly the incubation period, remain conspicuously absent from documented studies. However, the Indian Thick-knee apparently shares several aspects of its breeding behaviour with the Eurasian Thick-knee *B. oedicnemus* (Hume & Kirwan 2020), with which it was once considered conspecific (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). The species is a resident in the Delhi region, found in a variety of open habitats, including semi-arid areas, scrubland, and even within urban limits (Vyas 2019).

We documented the breeding of Indian Thick-knee at Aravalli Biodiversity Park (28.539°–28.573° N, 77.143°–77.165° E), Delhi, a restoration site in a city, c.2.8 sq. km in size, situated between urban centres of Vasant Vihar and Vasant Kunj in Delhi. This area was once mined, and its barren landscape was dominated by invasive flora such as *Prosopis juliflora*, *Lantana camara*, and *Leucaena leucocephala*, with some remnant native Aravalli species like *Acacia leucophloea*, *Capparis decidua*, *C. sepiaria*, and *Adhatoda vasica*. In 2004, the Centre for Environmental Management of Degraded Ecosystems (CEMDE), University of Delhi, initiated a significant ecological restoration drive of the area under a collaborative program with the Delhi Development Authority (DDA). Subsequently, more diverse vegetation types, including scrub forest, dry deciduous forest, grassland, and shrubland, were established.

MRK photo-documented the breeding of the Indian Thick-knee. Utmost care was taken to ensure the safety and well-being of the birds, following the *Indian BIRDS* nesting biology guidelines (Barve et al. 2020). All applicable guidelines and ethical considerations for wildlife photography were strictly adhered to throughout the study. Observations and photographs were captured from a safe distance (9–10 m) using binoculars and a telephoto lens, without causing undue disturbance to the nesting birds, their nest, or eggs. Morning and evening times were also avoided as feeding was maximum at these times. Most of the observations took place during 1100–1130 h and 1500–1530 h. The nest location was clearly marked and monitored periodically (every 4–5 days) [186]. Nest characteristics, including dimensions and surrounding vegetation within a 5 m radius, were documented, and the dimensions of the nest were estimated visually from a distance of 9–10 m. Observations on parental behaviour, incubation period, hatching, chick development, and post-hatching movements were recorded. The ambient temperature of the area during our study was around 44°C. The exact coordinates of the nest location are not mentioned here.



186. Nesting site of Indian Thick-knee at Aravalli Biodiversity Park, Delhi.

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The first Indian Thick-knee was observed on 05 May 2024, while its nest was found on 06 May 2024 under an *Acacia leucophloea* tree located in an undisturbed corner of the park [187]. The nesting site also included sparse *Carissa spinarum* and *Capparis sepiaria* shrubs. The nest was a scrape on the ground, lined with a thin layer of humus, leaves, dry flowers, and small twigs, after the bird, apparently, cleared c.1.5 cm of leaf litter. The nest measured c.25–30 cm in length, 15–20 cm in width, and a few centimetres in depth.

Two pale white eggs with irregular dark brown patches, providing effective camouflage against the nest background,