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A Long-tailed Sibia *Heterophasia picaoides* in the Sumin Reserved Forest, Sikkim, India

The Long-tailed Sibia *Heterophasia picaoides* is a resident of the Eastern Himalaya and the hills of northeastern India and inhabits the broad-leaved evergreen forests in tropical and subtropical zones (Grimmett et al. 2011). In Assam, it has been reported as a common winter migrant to Nameri National Park (Barua et al. 2005). Outside India, it is common in China, Laos, Vietnam, Malaysia, Sumatra, Nepal, and Bhutan (Collar & Robson 2020). Both males and females resemble each other, and they can be easily distinguished from other sibilas by their distinctive long, white-tipped, graduated tails, crimson irises, and a white patch on the wings (Collar & Robson 2020).

On 16 January 2025, we were returning home after birdwatching at Sumin Reserve Forest (27.235°N, 88.551°E; 1670 m asl). At 1030 h, we observed a flock of 12 birds with long tails feeding on the nectar of Ghurpis *Leucosceptrum canum* flowers. At first, we ignored them, assuming they were Grey Treepies *Dendrocitta formosae*, but after a few seconds, we realized they seemed different, so we observed them again carefully. Unsure of their identity, we immediately opened the Merlin app and searched for “long tail.” The top result was Long-tailed Sibia, and upon comparison, we felt confident in the identification, adding another lifer to our list. A check of its eBird range map indicated the species is sparsely distributed. Since there was no network coverage at the site, we walked downhill for ten minutes to call senior birders for confirmation. While they suggested it might be a different species, we remained convinced it was a Long-tailed Sibia, having already verified the identification on Merlin and matched it with the plates in Grimmett et al. (2011). We then returned to the site, obtained photographs and videos using binoculars and a phone camera, and sent them to Rozen Dhungel and Dibyendu Ash. They confirmed the identification. The sighting was subsequently uploaded to eBird (2025) and confirmed as a Long-tailed Sibia by the reviewer. Since our initial images were of low resolution, we informed fellow birders Kanchan Rai and Ranjeet Subba, who later captured high-resolution photographs [196], which were featured in newspapers such as *The Voice of Sikkim* and *The Echo of India*.

Historical records indicate multiple sightings and preserved specimens of the Long-tailed Sibia from Sikkim and the nearby areas of Darjeeling and eastern Nepal, including the three syntypes by Hodgson from Nepal at the Natural History Museum, London (Sharpe 1883:402). Sharpe also listed four more skins from Nepal and three from Darjeeling (Sharpe 1883:402). GBIF (2025a) lists a specimen (CUMV#11915) collected by Frank S. Wright in 1860 from an unspecified location in Sikkim. Stevens (1923) reported observing a large party of Long-tailed Sibilas feeding on ‘Simul’ (*Bombax*) flowers and noted their occurrence beyond Singtam in the Tista Valley at 1,800 m asl during February and March 1920; he later collected a nest and egg (NHMUK#E1925.12.25.6647 in GBIF 2025b) as well as specimens (FMNH #84840) from Sikkim (Field Museum of Natural History 2025). Additionally, five historical specimens from Darjeeling were listed from the Indian



Kanchan Rai

196. Long-tailed Sibia, Sumin Reserved Forest, Sikkim.

Museum (Finn 1901:70). Ali (1962) also mentioned the species for Sikkim. No photographic or any other published records from the state exist after his account. Acharya & Vijayan (2010) likewise contain no record. Consequently, the recent sighting at Sumin after more than six decades represents a significant ornithological record for Sikkim.

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An European Honey-buzzard *Pernis apivorus* in Maharashtra, India

We report the first confirmed sighting of the European Honey-buzzard *Pernis apivorus* (hereinafter, EHBU) in Maharashtra, India. On 06 November 2024, at 0905 h, we observed a large raptor soaring over Vetat Tekdi grasslands, near quarry area (18.527°N, 73.817°E) in Pune District, Maharashtra [197, 198]. The bird appeared to be molting feathers from both wings and the tail. It was being mobbed by Black Kites *Milvus migrans*. Photographs were taken from multiple angles. Initially the bird was identified as an Oriental Honey-buzzard *Pernis ptilorhynchus* (hereinafter, OHBU). However, when photographs were shared on the Pune Birding Community forum, Adesh Shivkar noted that the features suggested EHBU rather than OHBU. On the next day, 07 November 2024, the bird was again seen briefly soaring at the same site at 0710 h. This time again, it was being chased by Black Kites.



Mayur Arole

197. European Honey-buzzard, with clearly visible dark carpal patch and four fingered primaries, photographed on 06 November 2024 at Vetat Tekdi, Pune, Maharashtra.



Aniruddha Gokhale

198. European Honey-buzzard showing a single, prominent dark terminal tail band, photographed on 06 November 2024 at Vetat Tekdi, Pune, Maharashtra.

Based on the identification criteria in Anand et al. (2020), following characteristics were observed in the bird clearly distinguishing it from OHBU and OHBU x EHBU hybrid;

1. **Dark carpal patch:** Prominent and clearly visible on the observed bird, absent in OHBU.
2. **Single dark terminal band on the tail:** Unlike OHBUs,

which typically exhibit two or more dark tail bands, the bird had a single, prominent dark terminal band.

3. **Subtle outer bar on secondaries:** The outer bar of the secondaries in the observed bird merged subtly into the coverts before reaching the body, unlike in OHBUs, where the bar extends further toward the body.
4. **Fewer primary fingers:** The bird showed only four primary fingers, whereas OHBUs typically have six.
5. **Eye color:** The bird's eye appeared yellow, in contrast to the red eyes typically seen in OHBUs.

As there are no features that would suggest an OHBU, we can rule out the possibility of an OHBU x EHBU hybrid. The identification was further confirmed through expert consultation, including discussions with Nirav Bhat, who also noted these distinguishing features. The species was sighted again on 14 February 2025 at the same location (Rane 2025).

These observations represent the first documented record of the EHBU in Maharashtra. There is one previous record of a hybrid OHBU x EHBU individual photographed from Sanjay Gandhi National Park, Mumbai in 2022 (Desai 2022). These sightings add to the growing knowledge of the distribution of the EHBU in India and is of considerable interest to birders and ornithologists in the region.

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A Pied Crow *Corvus albus* at Pulicat Lake, India: Could ship-assistance be the reason for all records from India?

Pulicat Lake is the second largest brackish water lagoon in India, covering c.620 sq. km. It has numerous islands, and is fed by three major rivers, making it a vital ecosystem for diverse flora and fauna (Francis & Aram 2016). The lake spans across two districts, Nellore in Andhra Pradesh and Tiruvallur in Tamil Nadu. In this note, we report a sighting of the Pied Crow *Corvus albus* from the Tamil Nadu sector of Pulicat Lake, a species native to Sub-Saharan Africa and not previously recorded from this region.

On 22 November 2024, at around 1000 h, we (BSN, SDR, & RS) saw a Pied Crow in the Annamalaichery area (13.457°N, 80.264°E) of Pulicat Lake, Tamil Nadu. The weather was clear and sunny. The bird was initially observed through a Nikon D5600 camera with a 70–300 mm lens. It was seen perching