

were observed in the nest [188]. The eggs were broad at one end and pointed at the other, consistent with descriptions in Ali & Ripley (1987). Even upon approaching the nest to c.10m, the bird tends to leave the nest and move 8–12 m away to join its mate or move in the opposite direction, displaying distraction behaviour by sometimes pretending to sit at a different spot. Conversely, when the observer remained still at a distance, the mate would approach and sit on the nest, indicating shared incubation duties by both parents.



187. Incubating eggs by one of the parents.



188. Two eggs of Indian Thick-knee.

The first chick hatched on 30 May, and the second on 31 May 2024, indicating an incubation period of c.25 days, which aligns with the 24–27 days range reported for the Eurasian Thick-knee (Nadeem et al. 2014). The hatchlings were initially underdeveloped with minimal feathering [189]. The first chick appeared to develop feathers slightly faster than the second. The bird stayed with the chicks in the nest for the first two days post-hatching before relocating themselves c.12 m away under a *Carissa spinarum* plant within the same area. Both parents were observed monitoring the chicks from c.4 m. Three days later, the family moved again to the adjacent forest area, c.100 m away from the nest site within the park. The family was not monitored after they moved into the forest to avoid disturbing the parenting.

The observed parental care, with both parents participating in incubation and chick-rearing, is a characteristic behaviour of the species. The vegetation surrounding the nesting site, including species like *Flueggea leucopyrus*, *Capparis sepia*, *Ziziphus nummularia*, *Carissa spinarum*, *Ehretia laevis*, *Grewia tenax*, *Calotropis procera*, and various herbs and grasses, is relatively similar to its well-documented nesting habitats (Sangha 2021). Incubation period of the Indian Thick-knee has not been reported yet and, unsurprisingly, we found it to be similar to that of the Eurasian Thick-knee.



189. Chicks of Indian Thick-knee.

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An Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina* from the Union Territory of Ladakh: An addition to the South Asian avifauna

In the middle of September 2025, I accompanied a small group of birders including Sheela Panwar, Harshil Sharma, Milind Gogte, Jyotsna Gogte and Sunil Unni to explore passage migrants in Ladakh. Rigzin, Nubu and Nawang Gyatso were also accompanying us as guides cum drivers.

On 13 September 2025, we set out for Kakstet (33.767°N, 78.600°E) for our target birds, the Tibetan Partridge *Perdix*

hodgsoniae and the Common Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia*. We started checking out the area around 0700 h but couldn't locate either of our targets immediately. Hence, we split up to cover a larger area. Sheela, Harshil, Sunil, and myself then came across a small group of warblers feeding on the bushes. We started taking photos immediately, aware that warblers are potentially difficult to id and that during passage, one may stumble upon a rarity.

We identified most of the warblers as Tickell's Leaf Warblers *Phylloscopus affinis*, but I zeroed in on a particular individual that seemed different. We immediately shifted focus to this individual and took more photos [190–192]. None of us could id this warbler in the field and we got excited thinking we may have discovered something new. Typical of passage migrants, there were no calls made by this individual.



190. Icterine Warbler showing sloping crown and olive-grey upper parts and a light wing panel



191. Icterine Warbler in flight showing yellowish underbody.



192. Icterine Warbler on the bush showing yellowish underbody.

The warbler was about the size of a Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum*. It had a sloping crown, olive-grey upper parts, and a pale yellowish body and lower parts. There was no wing bar nor was there any noticeable supercilium. It had a thick and pointed bill and seem to have a light wing panel.

While we took more photos, it moved from bush to bush and finally flew away at which time Rigzin also spotted the same. The entire sighting was close to half an hour. I forwarded images to Shashank Dalvi, Harish Thangaraj, and Adesh Shivkar for their take on this bird. Merlin app had already given a couple of options and one of which was Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina*. Soon, I got confirmation from Harish that this was indeed an Icterine Warbler. We cross-referenced its features with our photos and found that the features including shape and size of the bill, plumage, pale wing panel, squarish tail, all matched. Specifically, the pale lemon yellow face to chin and throat continuing as pale yellow on to the rest of the underparts, the open face or featureless aspect with pale lemon yellow lores lacking any dark lines, the steep crown appearance, the greenish tinge to greyish-olive upperparts, the narrow whitish fringes to the secondaries, the long primary projection, the fairly short and relatively square-ended tail, the blue-grey legs, and the two-tone bill with pale orange base to lower mandible – all are diagnostic of this species. It is a bit difficult to age this bird but the worn state of the plumage might indicate this being an adult, which would turn into fresh plumage only after its late winter moult. A first winter bird in September would have recently acquired fresh plumage with buffish-yellow fringes to the greater coverts and quite broad fringes to the tertials – all of which does not seem to be the case with our bird.

This is the first record of Icterine Warbler in South Asia. It is mainly found in central and eastern Europe and migrates during the northern winter to eastern and southern Africa (Svensson 2020). The most easterly breeding distribution is in west-central Russia and northern Kazakhstan. One can speculate that this individual was on its way to Africa from these eastern-most breeding areas. After our report, no other birdwatching team has reported this species from Ladakh, indicating the bird might have moved on quickly.

I thank Peter Clement for reviewing this note and providing more details about its plumage.

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Western Tragopan *Tragopan melanocephalus* in the Kazinag National Park, Jammu & Kashmir, India

The Kazinag National Park (34.115°N–34.163°N, 74.001°E–74.155°E) is located along the north bank of the Jhelum River close to the Line of Control (LoC) in Baramulla District, about 70 km north-west of Srinagar, Jammu & Kashmir. Spanning in an area of 89 km² and elevation range of 1,800–4,300 m asl the park is home to an impressive faunal diversity including nearly 20 species of mammals such as the Kashmir Markhor *Capra falconeri*, Kashmir Muskdeer *Moschus cupreus*, Himalayan Brown Bear *Ursus arctos isabellinus*, Asiatic Black Bear *Ursus thibetanus*, Leopard *Panthera pardus*, and Kashmir Flying Squirrel *Eoglaucomys fimbriatus*. Moreover, over 120 bird species belonging to 36 families have