

A Yellow-rumped Flycatcher *Ficedula zanthopygia* from Goa, India

Although Goa is one of India's smaller states, it supports an impressive avifaunal diversity of 489 species (Baidya & Bhagat 2024). With birdwatching gaining popularity both as a hobby among local enthusiasts and as a reason for birders across the country to visit Goa, the number of reported sightings has naturally increased as more observers take to the field. Over the past five years (2019–2024), 18 new species records have been documented in the state (Baidya & Bhagat 2019 2025). To this growing list, we now add the Yellow-rumped Flycatcher *Ficedula zanthopygia*.

The Yellow-rumped or Korean Flycatcher is a small to medium-sized flycatcher that breeds across southeastern Russia, eastern Mongolia, the Korean Peninsula, and eastern China. They winter in the Malay Peninsula, Sumatra, and Java (Clement & de Juana 2020). It is considered a vagrant in India by Grimmett et. al (2011). Since the first record in 1989 from Central India, there have been c.20 records from various parts of the country, with most sightings occurring in southern India and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and one from eastern India (eBird 2025).

On 13 November 2024 at 0945 h, while on a birdwatching tour near the Mahadev Temple in Tambdi-Surla on the outskirts of the Bhagwan Mahaveer Wildlife Sanctuary, PR heard a call that resembled the *Ficedula* flycatcher. The individual, showing a prominent yellow rump and a distinct white wing patch, was sighted and photographed [205, 206]. Its overall brown upperparts, whitish underparts, yellow rump, and wing patch confirmed the identification as a female Yellow-rumped Flycatcher. The bird's relatively large size, along with its diagnostic markings, particularly the yellow rump, clearly distinguished it from similar species, such as the Red-breasted Flycatcher *F. parva* and the Taiga Flycatcher *F. albicilla*. The species was observed

intermittently at the same location after our initial sighting, with the most recent sighting recorded on 13 January 2025. The forest type where the individual occurred was a mix of moist-deciduous and semi-evergreen. The individual remained in the middle and upper canopy, fleeing between branches. It was not in the company of any other bird during the first sighting, but KT observed it getting mobbed by other birds such as Tickell's Blue Flycatcher *Cyornis tickelliae*, Yellow-browed Bulbul *Acrithillas indica*, and Black-naped Monarch *Hypothymis azurea* during subsequent visits. This is an addition to the checklist of Goa, taking the tally to 490 species.

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- Parag Rangnekar, Kuldip Topo & Lee Mott
Parag Rangnekar, Mrugaya Xpeditions, 407, III-A, Susheela Seawinds, Vasco-da-Gama, Goa, 403802, India. E-mail: rangnekarparag@gmail.com [Corresponding author]
Kuldip Topo, Nirmala Poultry Farm, Kallapwada, Usgao, Goa, 403406, India
Lee Mott, Shetland Islands, Scotland, United Kingdom

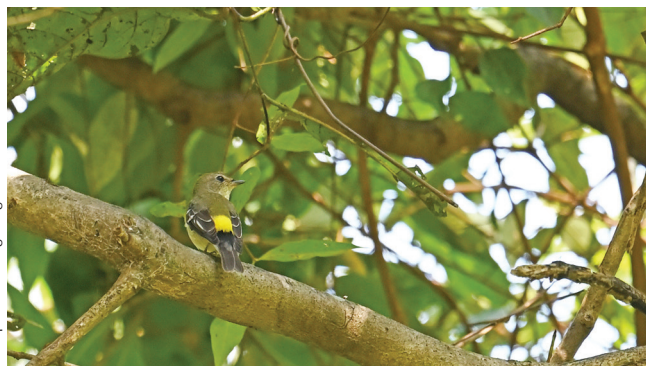
Autumn passage migration of falcons in West Champaran District, Bihar, India

Several falcons migrate long distances between Eurasia and Africa, crossing the Indian subcontinent during spring and autumn passage. Among them, Amur Falcon *Falco amurensis* travels a massive distance between its breeding grounds in north-eastern Asia and wintering range in southern Africa (Bildstein 2006), while the Lesser Kestrel *F. naumanni* breeds in Europe, Central Asia, China and Mongolia, and winters in central and southern Africa (BirdLife International 2021). The Eurasian Hobby *F. subbuteo* breeds widely across Eurasia, including parts of the Himalaya, from Kashmir to at least Nepal and probably Bhutan and winters in Africa and Southeast Asia (Naoroji 2006). All these three falcons have similar diet preferences and also associate with each other during their passage migration forming communal roosts (Naoroji 2006). Although all are known to occur as passage migrants in India, records from Bihar remain few. Here, I summarise observations of these falcons from West Champaran District, Bihar, spanning 2016–2024.

The first record in the present series was on 26 October 2016 at 1100 h, when four male Lesser Kestrels were observed and photographed at Harinagar Sugar Mill Colony (27.152°N, 84.329°E), the place where I live, in Ramnagar Town in West Champaran. Soon after, on 01 November 2016 at 0700 h, a flock of 11 Amur Falcons, including three males, six females, and two juveniles was recorded near Gobardhana village (27.311°N, 84.315°E), perched on low electrical wires. The next year, on 16 October 2017, a small mixed flock of five Lesser Kestrels and two female Amur Falcons was observed at Harinagar Sugar Mill Colony, Ramnagar Town. The birds came in late morning, circling overhead and catching insects all day till 1620 h. The



205. Female Yellow-rumped Flycatcher, Goa.



206. Female Yellow-rumped Flycatcher, Goa.

birds remained there for eight days after which some of them were observed flying towards west on the last day. A gap in observations occurred until 2020, when on 06 November 2020, seven Amur Falcons and a male Lesser Kestrel were again seen at Harinagar. On 12 November 2020, I followed their direction of movement towards Gobardhana range in search of probable roosting site, when at 1000 h, more than 100 Amur Falcons and some Eurasian Hobbies were observed flying and catching insects above Gobardhana village, near the Gobardhana range of Valmiki Tiger Reserve.

From 2021 onwards, the sightings were regular and of larger congregations. On 03 November 2021, a mixed flock of Amur Falcons and Eurasian Hobbies was observed near Gobardhana Village. Choudhury (2016) had observed over 10,000 Amur Falcons at Bholapur Kharhat (27.200°N, 84.226°E). I went to the exact location on 06 November 2021 morning and was amazed to find more than 500 individuals of Amur Falcons roosting on high tension transmission lines. Six scattered flocks of 100–200 individuals were also observed in the area perched on low electrical wires and trees like Sheesham *Dalbergia sisso* and Bael *Aegle marmelos* while others were on the ground in the wet agricultural fields. Again, on 08 November 2021 evening, the number of Amur Falcons observed was more (almost three times more) than on the previous visit. In November 2022, daily monitoring at Bholapur Kharhat revealed a smaller number of Amur Falcons, with Lesser Kestrels and Eurasian Hobbies also present in low numbers. However, in October 2023, c.4,000–5,000 Amur Falcons were noted at the same site, alongside c.100 Lesser Kestrels and more than nine Eurasian Hobbies. The most recent records in 2024 again confirmed large gatherings, with peak counts of 4,000–5,000 Amur Falcons and smaller numbers of the other two species [207–209] (Tables 1–3).



207. A Lesser Kestrel along with an Amur Falcon at Bholapur Kharhat, West Champaran District, Bihar.



208. A flock of Amur Falcons along with small number of Eurasian Hobbies perched on high-tension powerlines at Bholapur Kharhat, West Champaran District, Bihar.



209. A Eurasian Hobby in flight at Harinagar, Bihar on 24 October 2023.

A detailed year-wise account of all observations for the three species is presented in Tables 1–3.

Table 1. Year-wise records of Lesser Kestrel <i>Falco naumanni</i> during autumn passage migration in West Champaran District, Bihar (2016–2024)		
Date	Location	Number of Individuals observed
26 October 2016	Harinagar (27.152°N, 84.329°E)	4
16 October 2017	Harinagar (27.152°N, 84.329°E)	5 (One Adult male, others juvenile)
06 November 2020	Harinagar (27.152°N, 84.329°E)	1
28 October 2021	Harinagar (27.152°N, 84.329°E)	2
27 October 2022	Harinagar (27.152°N, 84.329°E)	1
21 October 2023	Harinagar (27.152°N, 84.329°E)	15 (Two adult male, rest females / juvenile)
24 October 2023	Harinagar (27.152°N, 84.329°E)	>50
26 October 2023	Bholapur Kharhat (27.200°N, 84.226°E)	>100
07 November 2023	Bholapur Kharhat (27.200°N, 84.226°E)	>20
25 October 2024	Bholapur Kharhat (27.200°N, 84.226°E)	3 (juvenile birds)
25 October 2024	Harinagar (27.152°N, 84.329°E)	3
30 October 2024	Bholapur Kharhat (27.200°N, 84.226°E)	3 (juvenile birds)

Table 2. Year-wise records of Amur Falcon <i>Falco amurensis</i> during autumn passage migration in West Champaran District, Bihar (2016–2024)		
Date	Location	Number of Individuals observed
01 November 2016	Gobardhana village (27.311°N, 84.315°E)	11 (Three Male, six females, and two juveniles)
16 October 2017	Harinagar (27.152°N, 84.329°E)	2
06 November 2020	Harinagar (27.152°N, 84.329°E)	7 (Two males, rest females / juveniles)
12 November 2020	Gobardhana village (27.311°N, 84.315°E)	>100
28 October 2021	Harinagar (27.152°N, 84.329°E)	2 (one male, one female)
03 November 2021	Gobardhana village (27.311°N, 84.315°E)	>100
03 November 2021	Sarhatwa village (27.213°N, 84.328°E)	20
06 November 2021	Bholapur Kharhat (27.200°N, 84.226°E)	>10,000
17 October 2022	Bholapur Kharhat (27.200°N, 84.226°E)	16
21 October–2 November 2022	Bholapur Kharhat (27.200°N, 84.226°E)	2500–3000 (aggregated)
21 November 2022	Bholapur Kharhat (27.200°N, 84.226°E)	17

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15 October 2023	Harinagar (27.152°N, 84.329°E)	20
17 October–22 November 2023	Bholapur Kharhat (27.200°N, 84.226°E)	4000–5000 (aggregated)
12 October 2024	Gobardhana village (27.311°N, 84.315°E)	4 (One adult male, rest females)
17 October 2024	Bholapur Kharhat (27.200°N, 84.226°E)	>200
23–30 October 2024	Bholapur Kharhat (27.200°N, 84.226°E)	4000–5000 (aggregated)
24 November 2024	Bholapur Kharhat (27.200°N, 84.226°E)	28

Table 3. Year-wise records of Eurasian Hobby *Falco subbuteo* during autumn passage migration in West Champaran District, Bihar (2020–2024)

Date	Location	Number of Individuals observed
12 November 2020	Gobardhana village (27.311°N, 84.315°E)	>8
03 November 2021	Gobardhana village (27.311°N, 84.315°E)	7
29 October 2022	Harinagar (27.152°N, 84.329°E)	2 (juvenile birds)
19 October 2023	Harinagar (27.152°N, 84.329°E)	2 (juvenile birds)
24 October 2023	Harinagar (27.152°N, 84.329°E)	2 (juvenile birds)
05 November 2023	Gobardhana village (27.311°N, 84.315°E)	1 (juvenile birds)
07 November 2023	Bholapur Kharhat (27.200°N, 84.226°E)	>9
12 October 2024	Gobardhana village (27.311°N, 84.315°E)	6

Across years, roosting behaviour was consistent; falcons assembled on powerlines, trees, and agricultural fields in the evenings, departing between 0900 and 0945 h the next morning, earlier on windy days. Vocalizations at communal roosts were prominent. Lesser Kestrels were most often seen in small flocks, sometimes within Amur Falcon groups, while Eurasian Hobbies were generally fewer, but occasionally associated with larger congregations.

The Lesser Kestrel is currently considered monotypic. However, Corso (2016) described notable plumage variation between western *F n naumanni* and eastern populations as Chinese Lesser Kestrel *F n 'pekinensis'*, with the latter showing more saturated coloration and grey on the upper wing extending to the scapulars. Between 2016 and 2024, the Lesser Kestrels I observed and photographed, consistently exhibited features matching those of the eastern population [210, 211]. I shared several photographs with Andrea Corso (in litt. email dated November 2023 and September 2025) who confirmed the birds as 'wonderful *pekinensis*' corresponding to the eastern population.



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210. Two Chinese Lesser Kestrels *F n 'pekinensis'* from Bholapur Kharhat, West Champaran District, Bihar showing saturated grey on the upper wings extending to the scapulars.



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211. A Chinese Lesser Kestrel *F n 'pekinensis'* in flight from Bholapur Kharhat, West Champaran District, Bihar showing grey extending to scapulars.

These observations confirm that the Ramnagar–Gobardhana–Bholapur Kharhat landscape in West Champaran District, Bihar serves as a regular passage area for all three falcon species during autumn migration. The repeated occurrence of large numbers, especially in recent years, highlights the significance of this part of north Bihar as a migration stopover. Together with comparable records from adjoining Nepal (Budhathoki 2024; Chaudhary 2024), the observations suggest that the Bihar–Nepal Terai landscape forms part of an important migration corridor for these long-distance migrants.

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– Abhishek Sharma

C/o Prem Prakash Sharma, Harinagar Sugar Mills Ltd., Distillery Division, P. O. Harinagar, West Champaran District 845103, Bihar, India.
E-mail: nitinsharmabvm19@gmail.com

Observations of the Eurasian Bittern *Botaurus stellaris* from Odisha

The Eurasian Bittern *Botaurus stellaris* is an uncommon winter visitor across northern India, and it is known to straggle across the rest of India, where it inhabits wetlands with dense reed-beds, especially *Typha* (Ali & Ripley 2001; Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). Its status is considered scarce to rare (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). While some records exist from the western