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The Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola* from Hokersar Wetland, Jammu and Kashmir, India

Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola* is a medium sized wader, also known as Common Pratincole, Red-winged Pratincole or European Pratincole (Sangha 2021). In India, it is a local summer visitor to Gujarat, where it breeds, and a passage migrant elsewhere (Sangha 2021; Praveen 2025). In non-breeding season, it spreads thinly in Peninsular India, locally in Chilika (Odisha) and south-western coastal plains. Inland reports from Deccan, Andamans, northern and central India are likely to be of migrating birds (Praveen 2025).

On 08 May 2024, HS visited Hokersar Wetland, Srinagar District, Jammu & Kashmir (34.102°N, 74.715°E; c. 1,600 m asl). At 1150 h, he observed a pratincole resting close to the lake and took some photographs. It was in breeding plumage [217]. The lores were black and the black gorget was encircling the pale throat. The red at the base of bill was prominent and present on both the upper and lower mandibles. The eye-ring was pale and tail was deeply forked and extended beyond the wingtips. A white trailing edge to the secondaries, a feature diagnostic for separating it from similar looking Oriental Pratincole *G. maldivarum* (Grimmett et al. 1998; Rasmussen & Anderton 2012), was also observed [218]. Based on these features, it was identified as a Collared Pratincole in breeding plumage. The images were sent to Ashwin Viswanathan, (pers. comm. dated 08 May 2024) and later to Prasad Ganpule (pers. comm. dated 28 February 2025), both confirmed the bird as a Collared Pratincole. The bird was seen again the next day, on 09 May 2024 at the same place, but was not seen after that. It was probably migrating to its breeding grounds in Central Asia (Maclean & Kirwan 2020).



217. Collared Pratincole in breeding plumage photographed from Hokersar Wetland, Jammu & Kashmir.



218. Collared Pratincole photographed from Hokersar Wetland, Jammu & Kashmir showing white trailing edge to the secondaries.

Both photos: Hafizullah Sofi

On 05 May 2025, HS again saw a pair of Collared Pratincole, c.200 m away from the previous site [217]. These were also identified by the above-mentioned features. The birds were regularly seen thereafter by various birders. A maximum of seven birds were recorded at the same spot on 25 May 2025 by HS. The last sighting was on 06 June 2025, when three birds were seen (Sofi 2025). A single bird was also photographed on 07 May 2025 at Wular Lake in Bandipora District, Jammu & Kashmir (Jeelani 2025).

These sightings were not surprising, as there have been records from neighbouring Ladakh (Pfister 2001, 2004), Himachal Pradesh (Dhadwal & Kanwar 2018) and Punjab (Grimmett et al. 2011; Sangha 2021). There were no previous records of this species from Jammu & Kashmir before these sightings and it is included in the bird checklist of Jammu & Kashmir (Kichloo 2025) based on these observations.

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The Ashy Woodswallow *Artamus fuscus* in Solan, Himachal Pradesh, India

The Ashy Woodswallow *Artamus fuscus* is a stocky bird with large silver bill, slate-grey head, brownish back, and pinkish grey underparts (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012; Rowley & Russell 2020). It is distributed across most of the Indian Subcontinent, extending eastward to Myanmar, southern & south-eastern China, Thailand and Indochina (Rowley & Russell 2020).

On 21 May 2022, CS and Geeta Goswami observed two birds perched on a high-tension wire, near a tall electricity tower, c.4 km from Dr. Yashwant Singh Parmar, University of Horticulture and Forestry, Nauni, Solan District, Himachal Pradesh (30.867°N, 77.193°E; c.1,230 m asl). They were identified as Ashy Woodswallows by their characteristic morphology. Subsequently, based on the information provided by CS, CA visited the location on 25 May 2022 and observed three Ashy Woodswallows [219]. The birds were seen flying over the hillside, with scattered trees and shrubs, and catching insects in the air and then returning to perch on the tower and wires to feed on the catch.

On 14 August 2022, HC photographed a flock of 12 Ashy Woodswallows at the same spot followed by a more recent sighting of two individuals on 04 April 2025. He also recalled an earlier observation of photographing two Ashy Woodswallows from the same location on 18 June 2019. These multiple sightings across three different years, suggest that the species may either be a resident or a regular summer visitor to this site. The former appears more likely, as the species is considered resident within its range (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). There is another independent record from Government Hospital, Nahan, Sirmour District (30.564°N, 77.296°E; c.925 m asl), dated 05 May 2016, where Ankit Vikrant recorded two Ashy Woodswallows in flight (Vikrant 2016). They were identified by robust built, broader wings

and slower flight than any other swallow and martin species known from the region (Ankit Vikrant pers. comm. dated 20 June 2025).

Ashy Woodswallow is mainly distributed in the eastern, north-eastern and southern India (Grimmett et al. 1998). Although its range is mentioned to extend from the Himalayan foothills of Himachal Pradesh (Ali & Ripley 1987; Rasmussen & Anderton 2012), only a single record is shown from Himachal Pradesh in the distribution map by Grimmett et al. (2011). A specimen of Ashy Woodswallow was collected and three others were observed at a site, 12–16 km from Solan Railway Station, on the Kalka-Shimla railway line, Solan District on 05 July 1925 (Basil-Edwards 1926). The specimen is currently housed in the collection of Bombay Natural History Society (Abdulali 1977) and may have been the basis for including Himachal Pradesh in the distribution range of the species. Dhadwal (2019) mentioned a record from Poanta Sahib, Sirmour District from 2018 from unknown source, though the record was deemed unverifiable by him in the absence of sufficient evidence. No other records of this species from Himachal could be traced. In the neighbouring state of Haryana, the species is scarce in Panchkula and Hathnikund-Kalesar area (Kalsi et al. 2019). In Dehradun District, the western end of Uttarakhand, Ashy Woodswallow is considered a rare resident (Singh 2000). Therefore, while the recent records from Solan are not entirely unexpected, they do confirm the presence of the Ashy Woodswallow in Himachal Pradesh. These also represent the first photographic records of the species from the state. So far, Solan and Sirmour are the only districts in Himachal Pradesh from where the species has been reported and the former seems to be the northern-most limit of the distribution range of the species.

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219. Ashy Woodswallow photographed resting on electric tower in Solan District, Himachal Pradesh on 25 May 2022.