

east to northern parts of Japan; and it winters in north-eastern parts India, Bangladesh and parts of Southeast Asia (Pearson 2024). In mainland India, the species has been recorded recently from Gujarat (eBird 2025a) and northern Odisha (see elsewhere in this issue); but its status in these regions remains unclear.

Our record of the species from Bongaon area of Majuli Island in March 2025, along with previous records of the species from Maguri Beel in Tinsukia District, Assam, dated March 2019 (Sen 2019) and December 2022 (Pratim 2022), suggests that the species is likely to be wintering in suitable habitats in Assam. Moreover, the species has been regularly recorded from parts of Bangladesh during winter season (during December and February) (eBird 2025a). This also suggests that the species probably has a more widespread range in winter than is currently known.

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A Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla* from Sikkim, India

On 12 April 2024 at 0840 h, a Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla* was photographed near the Old Silk Route view point at Zuluk, eastern Sikkim. The location was moderately crowded with tourists, and the weather was cold but pleasant following light snowfall the previous night. The bird was located after following its distinctive high-pitched *tsi-tsi-tsi* call. It was perched on a *Salix* tree near a mountain cliff (27.257°N, 88.787°E; c.3000 m asl). Key field features included a blackish head and crown, orange breast extending to the flanks, black, white, and orange streaks on back and wings, prominent white wing bars, pale belly, and a yellowish conical bill with grey tip [281]. The identification was confirmed using Rasmussen & Anderton (2012).

This is the first photographic record of the species from Sikkim. It has not been listed in Stevens (1923), Acharya & Vijayan (2011), or Chettri et al. (2021). No records were found on eBird also.



281. Brambling photographed from Zuluk, Sikkim, India.

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The Brambling breeds in northern and north-eastern Europe, eastwards to eastern Russia (Chukotka), south to north-eastern Kazakhstan, central and south-eastern Altai, Tuva, southern Lake Baikal region and winters in west, central, and southern Europe, northern Africa, the Middle East, and south-western, central, and eastern Asia (Clement & Arkhipov 2020). In India, the bird has been reported from Gilgit, Ladakh, Jammu & Kashmir, and Himachal Pradesh; sporadically to Uttarakhand and Arunachal Pradesh and one record from Delhi region (Praveen 2025). The closest confirmed records of the species from the present sighting are from Darjeeling District, West Bengal, where the species has been documented on at least six occasions between 2021–2024 (Rana 2021; Subba 2023; Beck 2024; Dey 2024; Mitra 2024; Syangbo 2024).

It remains unclear whether the present individual is a vagrant or represents a part of a small overlooked migratory population in the Sikkim-Darjeeling region. Systematic surveys and long-term monitoring in the region would help clarify its status.

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A Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla* from Junagadh, Gujarat

The Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla* breeds from northern Scandinavia, eastwards through northern Russia and Siberia till the coasts of the Pacific in Russia (Copete 2020). In the non-breeding season, it is found in eastern Nepal, north-eastern India, northern and central Myanmar, northern Thailand, northern Laos, northern Vietnam, southern China, and Taiwan (Copete 2020). Vagrancy of the species has been well documented, and 2024–2025 has been an exceptional season for Little Bunting in India with first records from the states of Tripura, Jharkhand, Haryana, and Rajasthan recorded (Chakrabarti et al. 2025). We add to this list with our record from the state of Gujarat.

On 28 March 2025 at 0645 h, while birding in the premises of our lodge, Aramness (21.155°N, 70.557°E) in Junagadh, Gujarat, we saw a small bird that flew in and perched on a lemon tree. We managed to photograph it [282] before it disappeared within less than 15–20 sec. Later, almost every day, till our return on 03 April 2025, we managed to get photographs of this particular bird. Photographs showed a bunting with a black crown with reddish brown head stripe, chestnut ear-coverts, dark eye-stripe behind the eye curving downwards to surround the ear-coverts, dark moustachial stripe connecting to the breast streaking and pale eye-ring. The upperparts showed a grey-brown rump lightly streaked black, and a mantle with heavy black streaking. The median coverts were tipped buff-white, creating a wing-bar. The underparts were buff-white with narrow, distinct black streaking on breast and flank. We compared our photographs with our field guide (Grimmett et al. 2011) and found out that it is a Little Bunting. As this was a lifer for us, we reverified the identification with others and obtained confirmation as to this species (Pravar Mourya, *in litt.* 28 March 2025).



282. Little Bunting showing chestnut ear-coverts, dark eye-stripe behind the eye curving downwards to surround the ear-coverts, dark moustachial stripe, and streaked breast.

Our sighting constituted the first photographic record of Little Bunting for the state of Gujarat, India. A pair of Little Buntings has been reported from Jasdan near Rajkot, Gujarat but further identification details were not documented (Khacher 1996). This has been the evidence used to list the species in Gujarat (Ganpule 2016; Ganpule et al. 2022). Ours will be the first independently verifiable evidence of its occurrence in the state. The habitat of the area where the bird was spotted was an agricultural land, currently used as organic garden of the Aramness resort. This habitat contains small stretches of Mango *Mangifera* sp., Lemon *Citrus* sp., Sapota *Malinkara zapota*, Sitafoal *Annona squamosa*, Indian Jujube *Ziziphus mauritiana*, and Teak *Tectona grandis* amongst other grasses and shrubs.

We would like to thank Mr. Pravar Mourya for helping us to reconfirm the identification the Little Bunting. We would also like to thank Mr. Jimmy Patel and Mr. Parikshit Rathore for encouraging us continuously and giving permission to do birding inside the lodge premises.

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Wall-making behaviour by a Blue-bearded Bee-eater *Nyctyornis athertoni* nestling

The family Meropidae comprises 31 species of bee-eaters, distributed across three genera in the Old World (Winkler et al. 2020). The genus *Nyctyornis* is represented by two species; the Red-bearded Bee-eater *N. amictus* and the Blue-bearded Bee-eater *N. athertoni*. The Blue-bearded Bee-eater is the largest of all bee-eaters, characterized by its predominantly green plumage and distinctive beard-like blue throat feathers. It is a resident of secondary evergreen and moist deciduous forests in the Indian subcontinent and Southeast Asia (Ali & Ripley 1987; Praveen 2025). Blue-bearded Bee-eaters are cavity nesters that excavate nest tunnels in vertical banks (Ali & Ripley 1987). In this note I report a hitherto unrecorded instance of wall-making behaviour by a Blue-bearded Bee-eater's nestling in a nest tunnel, an apparent anti-predatory behavior, observed in Oros, Sindhudurg district, Maharashtra, India. This behaviour occurred daily during the feeding season, with wall construction at dusk and dismantling at dawn, using its bill as the primary tool.

I opportunistically observed a Blue-bearded Bee-eater nesting site in Oros village (16.107°N, 73.697°E), Sindhudurg district, Maharashtra. I made my observations during the period