

The Indian Grey Hornbill *Ocyrceros birostris* from Samtse, Bhutan: An addition to the country's avifauna

The Indian Grey Hornbill *Ocyrceros birostris* is a small silver-grey hornbill that inhabits open woodlands and deciduous forests (Balasubramanian 2020). It primarily feeds on fruits from *Ficus* sp., along with other fruits like *Pithecelobium dulce*, *Manilkara hexandra*, *Syzygium cumini*, *Zizyphus mauritiana*, and *Thevetia nerifolia* (Balasubramanian 2020). The species plays a crucial role in seed dispersal, significantly enhancing germination in dry-deciduous forests (Charde et al., 2011). Its range includes most of the Indian subcontinent, excluding north-eastern India and higher Himalayan regions (BirdLife International 2020).

On the morning of 04 March 2025, KG observed and photographed [70] an Indian Grey Hornbill, south of the Samtse College of Education at an elevation of c.391 m asl (26.890°N, 89.100°E), perched on a *Cassia leavigata* tree. The photographs were reviewed and confirmed by ornithologist, Sherub, and the following field marks were noted: medium size, greyish-brown upper parts, a faint pale supercilium, dark ear coverts, dark brown flight feathers with whitish tips, a tail with a white tip, and a dark subterminal band. This marks the second confirmed observation of the species in Bhutan, following the first sighting [71] on 13 April 2023 by CT near Mouthangchhu (26.860°N, 90.490°E) in Gelephu under Sarpang district, Bhutan (eBird 2023). This sighting in Bhutan, near the border with India, is not unexpected, as the species occurs regularly on the Indian side, particularly in the Jaldapara National Park and Buxa Tiger Reserve landscapes (eBird 2026). With these records, the total number of hornbill species documented in Bhutan rises to five: Great Hornbill *Buceros bicornis*, Rufous-necked Hornbill *Aceros nipalensis*, Oriental Pied Hornbill *Anthracosceros albirostris*, Wreathed Hornbill *Rhyticeros undulatus*, and Indian Grey Hornbill.

The Divisional Forest Office, Samtse, has been actively monitoring this species to better understand its population status



Photo: Kuenley Gyeltschen

70. Indian Grey Hornbill from Samtse, Bhutan in March 2025.



Photo: Chubzang Tangbi

71. Indian Grey Hornbill from Gelephu, Bhutan in April 2023.

and habitat use patterns, as it is regularly observed. During the observation period, the individual displayed typical behavioral traits such as foraging and roosting. It appeared to be assessing potential roosting locations, likely within a cavity of a nearby mature *Bombax ceiba* tree. This cavity is a shared and competitive resource, frequently used by other cavity-nesting birds, including owlets, mynas, and parakeets, a pattern also documented by Santhoshkumar & Balasubramanian (2010).

The subtropical broadleaf forests of Samtse, characterized by a mosaic of natural forest, agricultural land, and riverine habitats, offer suitable conditions for the Indian Grey Hornbill. However, these habitats are increasingly affected by anthropogenic pressures, highlighting their growing conservation importance. The consistent presence of this individual in the Samtse area suggests that the landscape may function as a significant foraging site or serve as a seasonal habitat for the species. The occurrence of the Indian Grey Hornbill in Bhutan represents either a range extension or an undocumented resident population within the country's subtropical forest zone. This record contributes to the national avifaunal checklist, underscores the need for systematic biodiversity assessments in lowland districts, and highlights the ecological connectivity between Bhutanese subtropical forests and adjoining Indian lowland habitats.

References

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- Kuenley Gyeltschen, Nima Dorji, Pema Thinley, Tshering Gyeltschen, Tshering Peldon & Chubzang Tangbi
- Kuenley Gyeltschen, Divisional Forest Office, Samtse, Department of Forest and Park Services, Bhutan. E-mail: kuenleyg@moenr.gov.bt [KG]
- Nima Dorji, Divisional Forest Office, Samtse, Department of Forest and Park Services, Bhutan. E-mail: nimadorji1907@gmail.com [Corresponding author] [ND]
- Pema Thinley, Divisional Forest Office, Samtse, Department of Forest and Park Services, Bhutan. E-mail: pthinley@moenr.gov.bt [PT]
- Tshering Gyeltschen, Divisional Forest Office, Samtse, Department of Forest and Park Services, Bhutan. E-mail: tsheringgyeltschen@moenr.gov.bt [TG]
- Tshering Peldon, Divisional Forest Office, Samtse, Department of Forest and Park Services, Bhutan. E-mail: tpeldon@moenr.gov.bt [TP]
- Chubzang Tangbi, Langur Eco Travels, Thimphu, Bhutan. Email: tangbi@holidaysinbhutan.com [CT]

A Western Hooded Pitta *Pitta sordida* from Gurugram, Haryana

On 23 June 2025, JO observed a greenish, stub-tailed bird sitting motionless on her first-floor balcony at Malibu Towne, Sector 47, Gurugram, Haryana (28.465°N, 77.048°E). The bird allowed close approach and appeared fatigued. Malibu Towne is a heavily wooded residential township in Gurugram with low-rise buildings and tree-lined avenues, dominated by *Alstonia scholaris*, *Azadirachta indica*, *Albizia lebbek*, *Delonix regia*, *Bombax ceiba*, *Cassia fistula*, and several *Ficus* species.

The bird was brought inside the house and quickly put in a safe cardboard box. JO clicked a few pictures of the bird and circulated them on colony's nature group, where it was identified as an adult Western Hooded Pitta *Pitta sordida*, based on its