

(Muzaffar A. Kichloo, pers. comm. May 2025).

In India the species breeds in Jammu, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, northern Bengal, Sikkim, and all north-eastern hill states. Non-breeding range extends to adjacent plains and Central Indian highlands, south-western Bengal, Chota Nagpur plateau of Jharkhand, northern Odisha, Andhra, and Chhattisgarh (Praveen 2025). The nearest record of this bird from the current location is from Mendhar, Poonch District (Khan 2021, 2024). This observation represents a significant north-westward extension of its known range in India.

I thank Muzaffar A. Kichloo for confirming this as the first regional record and helping with the manuscript, and to Waseem Bhat for assistance with identification.

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The Indian Blue Robin *Larvivora brunnea* as a passage migrant in Chhattisgarh, India

The Indian Blue Robin *Larvivora brunnea* breeds from May to September across northeastern Afghanistan, the Safed Koh range, and the Himalayas from northern Pakistan to Bhutan, extending into southern and central China (Collar 2020). In India, it breeds along the Himalaya from Kashmir, Jammu, Himachal, Uttarakhand, northern Bengal, Sikkim, Arunachal, and Nagaland (Praveen 2025). It winters in hilly areas from 600–2,100 m, mainly in the Western Ghats and Sri Lanka, as well as in Meghalaya, Cachar, Manipur, and Mizoram (Ali & Ripley 1987; Rasmussen & Anderton 2012; Praveen 2025). Passage migrant records are scattered across peninsular India, including Gujarat, Central India, north-eastern Ghats, West Bengal, and northern plains (Praveen 2025).

On 21 April 2021, HG photographed an Indian Blue Robin foraging in the undergrowth of a small wooded patch at Mowa (21.272°N, 81.656°E), Raipur, Chhattisgarh. On 30 April 2025, during a birdwatching session near Dhaara Dam (21.277°N, 80.833°E) in Rajnandgaon, Chhattisgarh, PT was initially attracted by the call of a White-rumped Shama *Copsychus malabaricus*. While filming the Shama, an unfamiliar bird with striking blue upperparts, a prominent white supercilium, black cheeks, chestnut-colored throat and breast, and white undertail coverts was noticed nearby. It was identified as a male Indian Blue Robin based on these characteristics [75]. The individual was observed near a small stream flowing from a leakage point of the dam, actively foraging along the muddy edges and occasionally perching on nearby saplings.

On 03 May 2025, SDB sighted and photographed the species at Sector-03 (21.199°N, 81.373°E), Bhilai, Chhattisgarh, an area comprising old plantations established by the Bhilai Steel Plant (BSP) and a perennial stream. The bird later flew into dense vegetation, limiting further observations. Despite visiting the site on the next two consecutive days, the bird was not spotted again. The area is a well-known birding hotspot regularly visited by local birders.



Photo: Pratik Thakur

75. Indian Blue Robin from Dhaara Dam, Rajnandgaon, Chhattisgarh on 30 April 2025.

In Chhattisgarh, this bird has been previously reported from a garden in Raipur on 13 April 1991 (Bharos 1992), and from Narayanpur on 07 October 2005 (19.715°N, 81.225°E) (Bharos et al. 2019). All documented records of the Indian Blue Robin from Chhattisgarh coincide with the spring and autumn migratory periods, indicating that the species most likely occurs as a passage migrant in the state.

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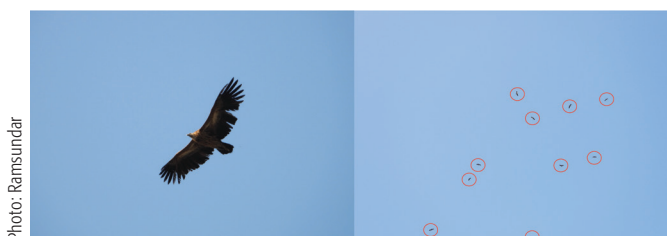
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The Critically Endangered Indian Vulture *Gyps indicus* in Rajgir Wildlife Sanctuary, Bihar, India

The Indian subcontinent hosts nine vulture species, of which seven are resident breeders, including the Indian Vulture *Gyps indicus*. The Indian Vulture is listed as Critically Endangered (BirdLife International 2021) due to a substantial decline of over 90% across India since the 1990s, driven by a range of threats, including habitat destruction, food scarcity, and widespread diclofenac contamination (Oaks et al. 2004; Cuthbert et al. 2011). Historically, the Indian Vulture was found extensively across India,

Pakistan, and Nepal, favoring rocky cliffs, open arid environments, and sparsely wooded areas for scavenging and roosting.

On 15 February 2025, a group of bird enthusiasts and wildlife biologists recorded three adult Indian Vultures at Vaibhargiri Hill, within the Rajgir Wildlife Sanctuary, Bihar, during a field survey to assess the area's avian diversity [76]. The vultures were observed flying at a considerable altitude, soaring on thermal currents in their characteristic gliding manner. A subsequent sighting of a flock of 14 Indian Vultures in flight was also documented by the same team on 13 March 2025, within the nearby Rajgir Zoo area; of these, approximately eight were adults, while six appeared to be immature. This vulture is mainly pale, with light wing-coverts, a yellow bill, and a blackish neck covered in whitish down. Juveniles appear darker but have a pale, fully downy neck; they are paler than White-rumped Vulture *G. bengalensis* and smaller and lighter than Slender-billed Vulture *G. tenuirostris*.



76. An Indian Vulture in flight at Vaibhargiri Hill & a large flock at Rajgir Zoo area.

Although vulture populations have been documented in parts of Bihar, such as Bhagalpur, Kaimur Wildlife Sanctuary, and Valmiki Tiger Reserve, where the White-rumped Vulture and Red-headed Vulture *Sarcogyps calvus* are known to occur (Mall et al. 2022), there are no previous records of the Indian Vulture from Rajgir Wildlife Sanctuary. The present observation, therefore, represents the first confirmed sighting of this species within the sanctuary. Regionally, this species is known from neighbouring Nepal (Subedi & DeCandido 2013) and West Bengal (Ranade & Prakash 2021), indicating that the Rajgir population may form part of a wider distribution range extending across eastern India and adjoining areas. We are not aware of any other recent records of Indian Vulture from Bihar.

This is the first confirmed record of the Indian Vulture in Rajgir Wildlife Sanctuary and its adjoining areas, including the Rajgir Zoo Safari, Bihar (25.004°N, 85.402°E) (Fig 1), together encompassing 35.84 sq km. The area is characterized by a mosaic of mixed deciduous forest, dry *Sal* Forest, open scrubland, mixed bamboo forest, and rocky outcrops, together providing ideal habitat for vultures. The Rajgir Hills, situated within the southern Gangetic Plain, represent the only forested tract in the Nalanda district, providing crucial refuge for a diverse assemblage of flora and fauna. This record of the Indian Vulture underscores the area's suitability as a habitat for roosting, foraging, and seasonal congregation. The observation significantly extends the known range of the species in Bihar, providing crucial confirmation of its presence. It also highlights

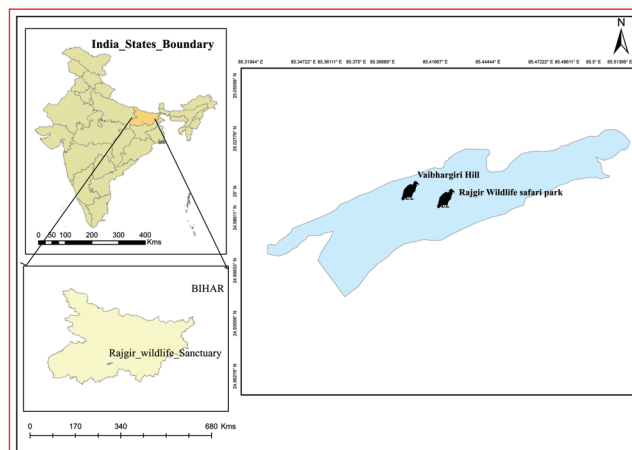


Fig 1. Map of Rajgir Wildlife Sanctuary showing the Indian Vultures observation sites.

the conservation value of Rajgir Wildlife Sanctuary and adjacent areas, including Rajgir Zoo Safari, as emerging strongholds for vulture populations in the region.

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In Memoriam

MADHAV DHANANJAYA GADGIL
(24 MAY 1942 – 7 JANUARY 2026)

In Memoriam

JAMSHED PIROJSHA IRANI
(1939–2026)