

chestnut crown, black head, green upperparts with turquoise wing patches, and a distinct red vent. By evening, the bird showed signs of improvement and was taking flight inside the house. It was therefore released the following morning at Bhondsi Nature Reserve [72], located in the foothills of the Aravali Range, a known habitat of the closely related Indian Pitta *P. brachyura*.

Photo: Pankaj Gupta



72. Western Hooded Pitta photographed upon release at Bhondsi Nature Reserve, Haryana on 24 June 2025.

Upon release at around 0550 h, the bird took a quick flight and was subsequently observed foraging on the ground and moving between citrus bushes and bamboo clumps over the next two days. After two days, the bird was no longer sighted.

The Western Hooded Pitta is a summer visitor to the Himalayan foothills and north-eastern Bangladesh, Myanmar, southern China, northern Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, and northern and central Thailand. Further east, it is resident in Java, Sumatra, and throughout much of Borneo, the Philippines, and Sangihe off northern Sulawesi, where the species reaches its easternmost limits (Kirwan & Erritzoe 2025). In India, the species breeds in western Himachal, Haryana, Uttarakhand, and northern Uttar Pradesh. During non-breeding season, it occurs in northern Bihar, northern Bengal, Sikkim, Assam, all north-eastern hill states, while being straggler to Narcondam Islands (Praveen 2025). The nearest previous records to the present sighting are from Kalesar National Park, within Haryana (Kalsi et al. 2017; Sharma 2018) and Himachal Pradesh (Jones 1943). This is the first confirmed record for the National Capital Region in Gurugram, Haryana.

Although this record likely represents a case of vagrancy far beyond the species' usual range, we recommend monitoring of the Western Hooded Pitta to understand any changes in seasonal migration patterns and any possible range expansion.

References

- Jones, A. E., 1943. On the occurrence of the Green-breasted Pitta (*Pitta cucullata* Hartl.), at Simla. *Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society* 43 (4):658.
- Kalsi, R. S., Sharma, S. C., & Choudhary, J. R., 2017. Hooded Pitta *Pitta sordida* in Kalesar National Park, Haryana, India. *Indian Birds* 13 (5):137–138.
- Kirwan, G. M. & Erritzoe J., 2025. Western Hooded Pitta (*Pitta sordida*), version 2.0. *In Birds of the World* (B. K. Keeney, Editor). Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Ithaca, NY, USA. <https://doi.org/10.2173/bow.wehpit1.02>
- Praveen, J., 2025. *Birds of India - The New Synopsis*. Nature Conservation Foundation, Mysuru. Pp. i–xlvii, 1–468.
- Sharma, C., 2018. Website URL: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S47225981> [Accessed on 20 February 2026.]

– Soma Ateesh Tripathi, Pankaj Gupta, Jyoti Raghavan Khanduja, Jasmine Oberoi & Arnab Gupta

Soma Ateesh Tripathi, White Wood, Malibu Towne, Gurgaon, Haryana, 122018, India.
E-mail: soma.ateesh@gmail.com [SAT] [Corresponding author]

Pankaj Gupta, 5164, Sector B, Pocket 7, Vasant Kunj, 110070, New Delhi.

E-mail: pankajgupta_fm@yahoo.co.in [PG]

Jyoti Raghavan Khanduja, Birch Street, Malibu Towne, Gurgaon, Haryana, 122018, India.

E-mail: joeragskhan@gmail.com [JRK]

Jasmine Oberoi, Pine Drive, Malibu Towne, Gurgaon, Haryana, 122018, India.

E-mail: jasmineoberoi96@gmail.com [JO]

Arnab Gupta, 5164, Sector B, Pocket 7, Vasant Kunj, 110070, New Delhi.

E-mail: arnavgupta1209@gmail.com [AG]

A Black-winged Cuckooshrike *Lalage melaschistos* from the Kashmir Valley, Jammu & Kashmir, India

On 29 April 2025, during an afternoon bird survey near Sangrama, Baramulla District (34.238°N, 74.434°E, c.1,640 m asl), Jammu & Kashmir, India, I observed two individuals of Black-winged Cuckooshrike *Lalage melaschistos*, at 1600 h. The birds were emerging from the flowering canopy of Black Locust *Robinia pseudoacacia* tree. Despite overcast skies and low-light conditions, I managed to obtain several photographs. The birds were observed moving between Apple *Malus domestica* and Black Locust tree canopies. At first, they were mistaken for juvenile cuckoos; however, upon closer observation, features such as uniform grey plumage, contrasting black wings, black bill, and a white-tipped tail were noted, suggesting their identity as Black-winged Cuckooshrike [73, 74]. For verification, I shared the images with Waseem Bhat, who confirmed their identification as Black-winged Cuckooshrikes.

A review of available literature and online databases revealed no prior records of this species from the Kashmir Valley. This was further confirmed by Muzaffar A. Kichloo, regional eBird editor and lead author of the checklist of birds of Jammu & Kashmir



73. Black-winged Cuckooshrike showing uniform grey plumage with contrasting black wings.



74. Black-winged Cuckooshrike showing black bill and white-tipped tail.

Both photos: Ab Qayoom Sofi

(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.

References

- Khan, N. A., 2021. Webpage URL: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S92167898>. [Accessed on 27 May 2025.]
- Khan, N. A., 2025. Webpage URL: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S171670250>. [Accessed on 27 May 2025.]
- Praveen, J., 2025. *Birds of India - The New Synopsis*. Nature Conservation Foundation, Mysuru. Pp. i–xlvii, 1–468.

– Ab. Qayoom Sofi

Forester, JV Forest Division Baramulla, Department of Forests, Govt. of Jammu & Kashmir.
E-mail: sofiadulqayoom25@gmail.com

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.

We sincerely thank Dr. Anurag Vishwakarma and the Chhattisgarh Forest Department for their support and assistance during the study.

References

- Ali, S., & Ripley, S. D., 1987. *Compact handbook of the birds of India and Pakistan together with those of Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan and Sri Lanka*, 2nd edn. Oxford University Press, Delhi. Pp. i–xlii, 1 l., 1–737.
- Bharos, A., 1992. Sighting of an Indian Blue Chat *Erithacus brunneus* (Hodgson) at Raipur, Madhya Pradesh. *Journal of Bombay Natural History Society* 89 (3):377.
- Bharos, A. M. K., Mandavia, A., & Naidu, R., 2019. First breeding record of Spot-bellied Eagle Owl (*Bubo nipalensis*), and sighting of Indian Blue Robin (*Luscinia brunnea*) from Bastar Division, Chhattisgarh, India. *Cheetal* 56 (2):21–28.
- Collar, N., 2020. Indian Blue Robin (*Larvivora brunnea*), version 1.0. In *Birds of the World* (J. del Hoyo, A. Elliott, J. Sargatal, D. A. Christie, and E. de Juana, Editors). Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Ithaca, NY, USA. <https://doi.org/10.2173/bow.inbrob1.01>.
- Praveen, J., 2025. *Birds of India - The New Synopsis*. Nature Conservation Foundation, Mysuru. Pp. i–xlvii, 1–468.
- Rasmussen, P. C., & Anderton, J. C., 2012. *Birds of South Asia: the Ripley guide: attributes and status*, 2nd edn. Smithsonian Institution and Lynx Edicions, Washington, D.C. and Barcelona. Vol. 2 of 2 vols. Pp. 1–683.

– Pratik Thakur, Himanshu Gupta & S. D. Barman

Pratik Thakur, Prakriti Shodh Evam Sanrakshan Welfare Society Dongargarh, Rajnandgaon 491445, Chhattisgarh. E-mail: pratik5959@gmail.com [PT]

[Corresponding author]

Himanshu Gupta, Medical officer, UPHC Nawapara Ambikapur 497001, Chhattisgarh. E-mail: shmm10@gmail.com [HG]

S. D. Barman, Executive Associate, Bhilai Steel Plant, Bhilai, Chhattisgarh. E-mail: sudiptabarman@gmail.com [SDB]

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,