Nadu (Robson 1996). However, following numerous records since 2012, it is now considered as a regular winter visitor to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands (Sharma & Sangha 2012; Kumar et al. 2024; Praveen 2025; Rawat et al. 2025), and as a sporadic visitor to Kerala and Tamil Nadu (Dilip K. G & Arun 2016; Praveen 2025). Outside these regions, the species remains a vagrant, with scattered records from Goa (Baidya & Bhagat 2018), West Bengal (Dutta 2017; Patra 2024, 2025), Sikkim (Bhutia 2018), and Arunachal Pradesh (Hussain 2019; Ganeshan 2022). The species has also been recorded in the Western Himalaya. It has been recorded on 17 June 2022 near Hanle at 4,302 m asl, in eastern Ladakh (Rawat et al. 2025). Another individual was sighted at Chuchot, Leh District, Ladakh at 3,219 m asl, from 06 June 2024 to at least 16 June 2024 (Mish 2024; Rawat et al. 2025). In Uttarakhand, a pair was observed in Chamoli District at 1,451 m asl on 16 May 2021, and a female was seen on 20 May 2022 (Kumar et al. 2024). The latter is the closest known record to the present sighting. Further north-west, in the Indian Subcontinent, the species has been reported from the Turikho Valley, Chitral, Pakistan, (probably the earliest known record of the species from the region) where a male was collected from a flock of 17 birds at 3,350 m asl on 16 July 1902 (Fulton 1904).

Although our record from Himachal Pradesh lies significantly west of the typical range of the species, it is not unexpected considering prior records from the northern regions of the Indian Subcontinent. All records from this part of the subcontinent occurred between mid-May to mid-July, and above 3,000 m asl, except for records from Chamoli (1,451 m asl). We found no previous records of the Daurian Starling from Himachal Pradesh in the literature, on social media, or in citizen science platforms. This appears to be the first documented record from Himachal Pradesh, and thus part of the limited number of observations from the Western Himalaya.

The Daurian Starling arrives at its northern breeding grounds in May, and departs from Russia in late July, and from Korea between September and October (Craig & Feare 2020). The individual observed in Rakchham Chitkul WLS was likely a migrant; however, its presence in the far west of the known breeding range raises interesting questions. It is intriguing that the latest five records have been reported from the Western Himalaya over the past five years, following a gap of more than a century. Whether these sightings represent vagrant individuals or indicate that some birds from the southern parts of the Indian Subcontinent might migrate through the Western Himalaya remains uncertain.

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A case of possible cloacal protuberance in a Pale-billed Flowerpecker *Dicaeum erythrorhynchos*

The Pale-billed Flowerpecker *Dicaeum erythrorhynchos* occurs in India, southern Nepal, extreme western Bhutan, Bangladesh, western and central Myanmar, and also in Sri Lanka (Cheke & Mann 2020). It is a common and widespread resident in India (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). It is a small bird, with a pale, pinkish bill, grey-olive upperparts and pale underparts, showing no sexual dimorphism. The breeding period of the species is variable: In northern India and Nepal, its egg-laying period is from January–June, and in southern India it is from February–May (Cheke & Mann 2020), with a possibility of the species being double-brooded, laying a second clutch of eggs in August–September (Ali & Ripley 1999).

On 06 June 2017, we were birding in Aranmula (9.323°N, 76.699°E), Kerala. While documenting birds on our eBird Checklist (Chirukandoth 2017), it was observed that there was high activity of Pale-billed Flowerpeckers, with four birds continuously vocalizing and actively chasing each other through the canopies, possibly in a courtship display. An individual was observed perched on the lower branches of a shrub in the open and was photographed. It was noticed that there was a pinkish

protrusion from the cloacal region of the bird, with a drop of fluid at the distal end **[101]**. The bird, however, showed apparently normal activity and flew off immediately.

Cloacal prolapse is one of the common complications encountered in birds. Some of the common reasons could be calcium deficiency, neoplasia, infections, and obstructions (Chitty & Lierz 2008). However, the present case did not appear to be a pathological condition, as the bird was evidently not in any distress and showed normal behaviour. Since it was breeding season of the species (Ali 1931; Ali & Ripley 1999), it is probable that this bird had recently mated. Cloacal protuberance in birds can also be caused by natural reproductive activity, mostly in males (Schut et al. 2012). Cloacal protuberances have been previously documented in males of Superb Fairywren *Malurus cyaneus* (Mulder & Cockburn 1993), and in males of Stitchbird *Notiomystis cincta* from New Zealand which has been suggested to improve copulation efficiency (Low et al. 2005). It is also possible that the individual we observed was a female showing the cloacal protuberance in order to attract or display to the males that it is ready for mating. This has been previously documented in females of Alpine Accentor *Prunella collaris* (Chiba & Nakamura 2002).

Our observations appear to be the first documentation of prominent cloacal protuberance in Pale-billed Flowerpecker during breeding season.

Photo: Yash Mayekar

101. Pale-billed Flowerpecker with cloacal protuberance of c. 0.5 cm length (inset).

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A case of predation of nestling of the Dusky Eagle-Owl *Ketupa coromanda* by monitor lizard *Varanus* sp. from Assam, India

The Dusky Eagle-Owl *Ketupa coromanda* is a large owl distributed widely across South Asia and parts of Southeast Asia (Holt et al. 2023). It is resident from Pakistan (mainly Indus River basin) and most of sub-Himalayan region in India, Nepal, and east to western Assam and hills of north-eastern India in Meghalaya, Cachar district in Assam, Manipur, and parts of Bangladesh, south to central India (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). The breeding season of the species overall occurs between November and April; primarily December to January in northern India, but somewhat later in the southern parts of its range (Ali & Ripley 1981).

During the 2025 breeding season in Singioni village (27.189°N, 94.678°E; 98 m asl), Sivasagar District, Assam, a Dusky Eagle-Owl pair was observed nesting for the fifth consecutive year on a Silk Cotton *Bombax ceiba* (Simulu tree) **[102]**. The nest was located on a primary lateral branch *c.* 10 m above ground level, positioned close to the main trunk and supported by epiphytic growth that provided structural stability as well as effective concealment **[102]**. The nesting tree, with an estimated height of 18–20 m, was situated adjacent to agricultural cropland and in close proximity (*c.* 70 m) to a large wetland bordered by patches of dense vegetation near rural human settlements. Such a habitat likely offers abundant prey resources, including rodents and small reptiles, making it suitable for a large nocturnal predator like the Dusky Eagle-Owl. The first observation of the adult sitting in the nest was recorded on 17 January 2025; the species is known to reuse nesting sites and this nest had been consistently occupied for five consecutive years. We followed recommended practices and guidelines in Barve et al. (2020) for documentation of the nest observations.

On 25 January 2025, we saw one adult owl with a nestling on nest **[104]**. The nestling was covered in white natal down and appeared to be *c.* 10–12 days old. On the same day, at 1425 h, a monitor lizard *Varanus* sp. was observed climbing the nesting tree. The monitor lizard could not be identified to species level conclusively from our photographs **[105]**. Despite defensive efforts by one adult owl, with another adult perched on a nearby tree, by 1515 h, the monitor lizard successfully preyed on the nestling at nest **[105]**. Following this event, the nest was abandoned; however, adults remained present nearby for at least ten days but were not sighted thereafter. This incident underscores the vulnerability of even well-concealed nests to predation by large, climbing reptiles. Most monitor lizards are