

Photo: Padma Gyalpo



163. Lapland Longspur, photographed on 06 February 2026 from Hanle, Ladakh, showing extensive black on the crown, pale ochre supercilium, prominent white wing bars, and chestnut-edged greater coverts and tertials.

more extensively chestnut-edged wing coverts.

The bird was again sighted by the same team the following morning at around 0800 h. It was observed foraging alongside Horned Larks *Eremophila alpestris*, although it did not follow the larks when it took flight. During flight it gave repeated *pr'r'rt* calls. Later, numerous observers photographed the bird between 06–16 February 2026 at the same location (eBird 2026). The last record of the bird was on 22 February 2026 (Gyalpo 2026).

The Lapland Longspur is not listed in any of the standard references on the birds of Ladakh (Ward 1907; Osmaston 1925, 1926; Sillem 1934; Vaurie 1972; Holmes 1986; Pfister 2004; Grimmett et al. 2011; Rasmussen & Anderton 2012a; b; Delany et al. 2014; Sharma et al. 2021) and also not in the most recent checklist of birds of Ladakh (Gyalpo 2024). The present observation therefore constitutes the first record of the species from Ladakh and only the second confirmed record from India.

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Status of the Eurasian Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus* in the Kashmir Valley, Jammu & Kashmir, India

The Eurasian Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus* is a widespread and common breeder across much of the Palearctic region (Byers et al. 2010). This medium-sized bunting is particularly distinctive during the breeding season, when the male exhibits a characteristic head pattern: a blackish head and breast, a prominent white sub-moustachial stripe, and a conspicuous white nape (Grimmett et al. 1998; Byers et al. 2010). It winters in the north-western India, extending as far east as the Delhi region (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). The species is considered rare in India, with scattered reports from Jammu & Kashmir, Ladakh, Punjab, Haryana, and Delhi (Grimmett et al. 1998, 2011). In Ladakh, the adjoining region of Kashmir Valley, the Eurasian Reed Bunting was recorded ‘very occasionally’ during the Southampton University Ladakh Expeditions during 1976–1982 period (Williams & Delany 1986). Recent sightings have also been reported from the region (Hussain et al. 2021; eBird 2026). Within Gilgit-Baltistan, the species is a winter visitor (Biddulph 1881) and an uncommon passage migrant through the central parts of Gilgit-Baltistan, mainly in Hunza, Gilgit and Diamer (Shah 2025).

Regarding Eurasian Reed Bunting’s status in Ambala District of British Punjab, Jones (1919) stated—“Probably a regular winter visitor, a few being seen almost every season. A male and female procured near Jagadhri, 17th February 1918”. This suggests that the species may have been more widespread and regularly occurring in northern India in the past. In contrast, recent records from the region outside Kashmir and Ladakh, are

extremely scarce. The only twenty-first century records from this region are sightings from Sultanpur, Delhi Area in November 2003 (Harvey et al. 2006; Vyas 2019) and from Tinsukia, Assam in December 2022 (Phukan et al. 2023). An earlier sight record from the Rajaji National Park, Uttarakhand (Pandey et al. 1995), was not included in Mohan & Sondhi (2024), presumably due to lack of verifiable details. The subspecies *pallidior* is considered the regional form. The subspecies *pyrrhuloides* was previously reported from Wular Lake (Meinertzhagen 1927; Ali & Ripley 1987), but the two specimens on which this claim was based, were later considered fraudulent by Rasmussen & Anderton (2012), as with other records attributed to Meinertzhagen. In this note, we report recent sightings of Eurasian Reed Bunting from the Kashmir Valley, Jammu & Kashmir, India.

On 12 March 2021, HS was scheduled to meet his friend Ansar at Dal Lake, located in Srinagar, Srinagar District, Jammu and Kashmir. A road runs across the lake, effectively bisecting it. While waiting on this road (34.116°N, 74.869°E; c.1,600 m asl), HS noticed a bird perched among the reeds at a distance. At first glance, the bird was mistaken for a House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*, due to its similar size and superficial resemblance, compounded by the unfamiliarity of HS with the Eurasian Reed Bunting [164]. However, upon closer observation, the bird's



164. Reed Bunting at Dal Lake on 13 March 2021.



165. Reed Bunting at Hokersar Wetland on 24 February 2022.



166. Reed Bunting at Wular Lake on 16 February 2025.

black face, black head and stout bill were clearly visible, allowing HS to correctly identify it as a Eurasian Reed Bunting. A few photographs were also taken. The bird remained in the area and was subsequently observed by several other birders over the next five days, although it was not seen thereafter.

After this initial photographic record, the species was

Table 1: Records of Eurasian Reed Bunting from Kashmir Valley. All reports, except #1 and #5, were seen by multiple observers other than ones mentioned

Sl. No.	Date/ Month	Location	Habitat	Comments	Observers*
1	30 September 1906	Near Srinagar	No details available	A bird shot	Ward (1908)
2	March 2021	Dal Lake, Srinagar District	Reeds in the wetland	Single bird photographed by several birders	HS
3	04 February 2022	Kangan, Ganderbal District	Scattered trees	Two birds seen, unverifiable record as the habitat was unusual and the observer couldn't provide photographs	Panwar (2022); Rajesh Panwar pers. comm. dated 19 June 2025
4	08 February 2022–23 February 2022	Hokersar Wetland, Srinagar District (34.105°N, 74.725°E)	Reeds in the wetland	Single bird photographed by several birders [165]	HS
5	08 February 2024	Hokersar Wetland, Srinagar District	Reeds in the wetland	Sight record of a single bird	HS
6	29 January–26 February 2025	Wular Lake, Bandipora District (34.377°N, 74.654°E)	Floating islands with vegetation	Up to three birds were recorded by several birders [166]	Showket Maqbool, HS, CA
7	13 January–04 April 2026	Chatlam Wetland, Pampore, Pulwama District (34.017°N, 74.935°E)	Reeds in the wetland	Two birds photographed	Mushtaq Joo, HS
8	28–30 January 2026	Hokersar Wetland, Srinagar District	Reeds in the wetland	Single bird photographed	HS

recorded on several occasions in the Kashmir Valley. All these records, along with a historical record from Kashmir Valley are given below in Table 1.

The increasing number of observations in recent years suggests that the Eurasian Reed Bunting might be a regular winter visitor to the Kashmir Valley. The record of Eurasian Reed Bunting from Dal Lake by HS is the first photographic record of the species from Jammu & Kashmir, which is after 115 years of initial report by Ward (1908). Given the general scarcity of contemporary records from India, these consistent sightings from Kashmir are of particular significance and merit further documentation and monitoring.

We thank Showket Maqbool for the sighting at Wular Lake and Mushtaq Joo for the sighting at Pampore.

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Simultaneous nest-use by Eastern Red-rumped Swallow *Cecropis daurica* and House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*

Interspecific nesting interactions are an important aspect of avian behavioural ecology, particularly in human-modified environments (Newton 1998). The Eastern Red-rumped Swallow *Cecropis daurica* is a mud-nesting aerial insectivore that constructs flask-shaped nests under eaves, bridges, and cliffs (Turner & Kirwan 2024). The House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*, a secondary cavity nester, is known for its adaptability and opportunistic nesting behaviour (Lowther & Cink 2020). Nest usurpation by House Sparrows and the species breeding in Eastern Red-rumped Swallow nests has been reported (Samson et al. 2017; Kukreti 2024), however, simultaneous occupation of the same nest by both species remains rare. A large-scale study of more than 2,700 swallow nests has shown that sparrow usurpation is increasing and can result in breeding failures, including eviction of adults, eggs, and chicks (Tella et al. 2024). These findings highlight the potential consequences of such interactions and place our observations within a wider pattern of breeding challenges for swallows.

The study site was situated on the campus of College of Forestry in Ranichauri, Tehri Garhwal, Uttarakhand, India (30.312°N, 78.408°E; 1,600–2,000 m asl), with an area of 206 ha, consisting of forest, orchards and multiple buildings. Observations were conducted opportunistically in the morning hours, during the period from 10 May to 30 June 2025, covering the pre-monsoon breeding season. A total of 12 swallow nests were monitored, of which three nests showed simultaneous occupation by sparrows and swallows. The campus is surrounded by mixed oak-pine forest and agricultural terraces, with various concrete buildings for offices or accommodation. Eastern Red-rumped Swallow nests located under eaves and in abandoned buildings were monitored through direct visual observation. Photographs were taken to document nest occupancy and interspecific interactions. Recommended practices and guidelines in Barve et al. (2020) were followed for documentation of the nest observations.

In the Ranichauri campus, House Sparrows placed nesting material of pine needles or grass in swallow-built nests. It was observed that the sparrows bred in the same nest structure, while swallows continued using the same structure [167–170]. Broken white-coloured eggs, along with their contents, were reported on the ground below the nest site, where nests were located in the balcony of faculty quarters, which was mostly safe from other predators. Though this was not directly observed, it is suspected that the House Sparrows likely removed or ejected the eggs of the swallows from the nest. Since the broken eggs which were found on the ground appeared to be freshly laid bird eggs, it is likely that these did not go through the entire incubation period. It was also noted that the sparrows occupied the outer chamber of the structure while swallows continued to use the adjacent mud tunnel structure, suggesting spatial separation within the nest structure. The sparrows added feathers and grass to the outer portion while swallows maintained the mud tunnel. House Sparrows nesting in abandoned or inactive nests of Eastern Red-rumped Swallow has been previously reported from Pauri Garhwal district in Uttarakhand (Kukreti 2024) and also from Tamil Nadu (Samson et al. 2017). Given these opportunistic observations, I am unable to describe the full adaptive behaviour for both the species from this short span of time.