

The Smoky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuligiventer* from Mayurbhanj, Odisha: An addition to the avifauna of Odisha

The Smoky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuligiventer* is a small, dark-colored warbler that is characterized by its dark coloration and warbled song. This species breeds in the western Himalayas (northwestern India and small parts of northern Pakistan and western Nepal) and frequents temperate and subalpine forests and shrubby hillsides (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). Most of the records are from the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Haryana, Manipur, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Uttar Pradesh, and Uttarakhand with one historical account from adjoining West Bengal (Fig. 1; eBird 2025).

On the morning of 20 January 2025, at 0715 h, SM made an impromptu visit to the wetland named Sarkari Dam (22.094°N, 86.555°E) to look for any warblers that may have wintered in the area, as well as other wetland species at the vegetated edges. The wetland is surrounded by large masses of *Typha* and almost unopened borders of creeping mats of *Ipomoea*, creating a thick lush margin of shallow edges. The reservoir is bordered by agricultural fields offering a mosaic of habitats that draw in a variety of insectivorous birds. SM was scanning a shaded patch of vegetation close to the bund when an unfamiliar call emanated from the east side of the *Ipomoea* Bush. A few minutes later, the bird flew from the bush and started foraging on the top of the bush. SM photographed [195] the species and later the bird was identified as Smoky Warbler by its overall dull plumage,

sooty-grey wash below using the field guide (Grimmett et al. 2011). The species was carefully distinguished from other dark *Phylloscopus* warblers that may occur in eastern India. Unlike Dusky Warbler *P. fuscatus*, the species did not have prominent superciliary stripes and ear-coverts. Tickell's Leaf Warbler *P. affinis* was ruled out due to its brighter greenish upperparts and clearer underparts. The consistently sombre coloration, structure, and behaviour supported the identification as *P. fuligiventer*.

Initially, it was presumed that the birds were just passage individuals on their way to more widespread or more suitable wintering sites. However, a series of subsequent visits over the next few weeks confirmed their ongoing presence at the site until the first week of February. The species was recorded in four eBird checklists between 20 January 2025 and 08 February 2025. The bird appeared to have temporarily settled in the same reed-dominated areas along the lake margins. Its absence after first week of February coincided with a discernible decrease in water levels, making portions of the reed beds available for livestock grazing, potentially resulting in habitat degradation or disturbance. This constitutes the first confirmed record of the species from Odisha. The nearest known record is from West Bengal, c.245 km north of the present site, highlighting the potential of under-surveyed wetland habitats in the region to host overlooked winter visitors.

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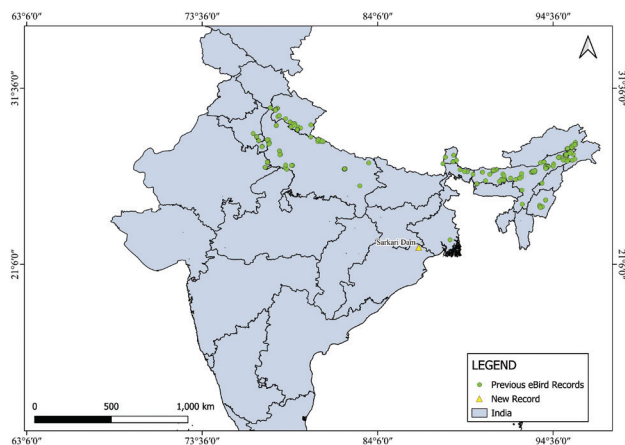


Fig 1. Map summarizing the records of Smoky Warbler in India (Source: eBird).



Soubhagya Mohanty

195. Smoky Warbler at Sarkari Dam, Mayurbhanj, Odisha.

The Spotted Crane *Porzana porzana* in Himachal Pradesh, India

The Spotted Crane *Porzana porzana* is a small waterbird in the family Rallidae. It breeds across much of Europe and western Asia, and winters primarily in Africa and the Indian subcontinent (Taylor 2020). It can be distinguished from similar species by the profuse white spotting on the head, neck, and breast (Grimmett et al. 2011). The species is olive-brown above with dark and white streaks, and has a grey supercilium, throat, and breast. The underparts are pale, with brown and white barring on the flanks (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). In India, the Spotted Crane is a widespread but rare winter visitor (Grimmett et al. 1998), with records mainly from north-western Maharashtra, Gujarat, Kolkata, and the Delhi region, and sporadically from Jammu & Kashmir, Ladakh, Punjab, Rajasthan, Assam, the eastern coast, central India, the southern Deccan, and the south-western coast, some of which may represent passage migrants (Praveen 2025; but see Grimmett et al. 2026). This note reports three records of Spotted Crane from Himachal Pradesh.

On 27 November 2016, CA visited marshes around the Shah Nehar Barrage near Sthana village, Kangra District, in the outflow area of Pong Dam (31.962°N, 75.906°E; c.325 m asl). While searching for Great Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*, which was recorded on the previous day (Abhinav et al. 2018), a crane was observed feeding among reeds [196]. After some time, clear views were

obtained. The bird appeared grey-brown and plump, with prominent white spotting on the head and underparts. The flanks showed white barring, while the upperparts had sparse white streaking. The bill was orange-yellow with a darker tip [197], and the legs were greenish-yellow. Based on these features, the bird was identified as a Spotted Crake. It remained shy, staying mostly under cover and not venturing into the open. Dhadwal & Kanwar (2018) subsequently reported that the species was recorded at the same location during the winter of 2017.



196. Spotted Crake photographed at Shah Nehar Barrage area, Pong Lake on 27 November 2016.



Both: C Abhinav

197. The same Spotted Crake in [196] showing orange-yellow bill with a darker tip. Photographed from Shah Nehar Barrage area, Pong Lake on 27 November 2016.

On 10 October 2022, RR and DO observed a crake at Sissu Lake, Lahaul and Spiti District (32.475°N, 77.128°E; c.3,034 m asl). The crake had prominent spotting on the head and underparts, by which it was identified as Spotted Crake [198]. It was seen feeding in a marshy area adjacent to the lake, which had sparse patches of vegetation. The bird frequently emerged into the open to feed, retreating into cover upon the slightest disturbance. It was last recorded at the site on 14 October 2022.

On 08 November 2022, HC observed a crake feeding in a marshy area along the Bata River, Paonta Sahib, Sirmaur District (30.459°N, 77.585°E; c.405 m asl). The following morning, the bird was relocated at the same site, where it emerged from the vegetation and began feeding in the open. Several photographs were taken, and the bird was subsequently identified as a Spotted Crake, based on its small size and distinctive spotted plumage [199]. The bird remained relatively confiding and continued feeding in the open for an extended period. It was not seen again at this location on subsequent visits.



Raj Rawal

198. Spotted Crake photographed from Sissu Lake, Lahaul, Himachal Pradesh on 10 October 2022.



Himanshu C

199. Spotted Crake photographed along the Bata River, Paonta Sahib, Himachal Pradesh on 09 November 2022.

There are a few previous records of the species from Himachal Pradesh. Hume & Marshall (1880) mentioned its occurrence in the Kotgarh and Rampur (= Rampur Bushahr), both in Shimla District of the state. The former specimen was listed in the 'Catalogue of the birds in the British Museum' (Sharpe 1894). Grimmett et al. (2011) mapped a record from western Himachal Pradesh, away from Shimla District, but this record couldn't be traced. Tim Inskipp was contacted regarding this record on multiple occasions, but no response was received. den Besten (2004) didn't report this species from Kangra District, located in western Himachal Pradesh. The sighting by CA at Pong Lake in November 2016 represents the first photographic record of Spotted Crake from Himachal Pradesh. Given its secretive behaviour and preference for densely vegetated wetlands, the Spotted Crake is likely under-recorded in Himachal Pradesh. Additional surveys of suitable wetland habitats during migration and winter may help clarify its status and distribution in the Western Himalaya.

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Possible bark ingestion behaviour in a Brown-headed Barbet *Psilopogon zeylanicus*

On 26 September 2025, at 1705 h, while birding near Oriya Road in Mount Abu, Rajasthan, India (24.627°N, 72.741°E; 1,200 m asl), I observed a Brown-headed Barbet *Psilopogon zeylanicus* engaging in unusual behaviour involving possible bark fragment ingestion from a branch of a Cluster Fig *Ficus racemosa* [200]. The bird was observed chipping-off bark fragments in its bill, and then manipulating the bark fragments by repeatedly tossing pieces in the air; but it struggled to manage the larger fragments [201–202]. Some pieces fell to the ground, which were eventually retrieved, and the bird then attempted to break them into smaller pieces. The bird was seen ingesting 2–3 smaller bark fragments over a period of c.5 min, before flying away carrying a remaining piece in its bill (Sahil 2025). During my observations, there was no apparent evidence of insects on the bark. Some branches, including the one on which the bird was perched, bore fungal growth, but the bird appeared to have chipped-off a section of bark from an adjacent branch without visible fungus, suggesting the behaviour may not have been solely related to foraging for small invertebrates.

The Brown-headed Barbet is primarily frugivorous, occasionally takes insects and animal matter, and known to excavate nest cavities in dead wood. The species generally feeds on a variety of berries and fruits, and also consumes flower parts (Ali & Ripley 1983; Short & Horne 2001; Krishnan 2021). Similar diets are typical across Asian Barbets (Megalaimidae), which are mainly arboreal frugivores and supplement with insects during breeding. Certain African Barbets (Lybiidae), as well as Coppersmith Barbet *P. haemacephalus*, a species common in the Indian Subcontinent and Southeast Asia, feed on insects and larvae, which the birds seek among branches and crevices of bark (Marshall & Marshall 1871). There appears to be no literature available on intentional bark ingestion feeding behaviour for Brown-headed Barbet. Some frugivorous bird species ingest small stones and grit to aid in digestion (Dean & Milton 1991; Gionfriddo & Best 1995). Woody material, twigs, or cambium is occasionally eaten to assist



200. Brown-headed Barbet manipulating bark fragments in its bill.



201. Brown-headed Barbet tossing bark fragments.



202. Brown-headed Barbet manipulating bark fragments in its bill.

digestion or obtain minerals in a few unrelated groups, such as Ruffed Grouse *Bonasa umbellus* and certain parrots (Forshaw 2010; Rusch et al. 2020).

In correspondence with the author of the *Birds of the World* species account for Brown-headed Barbet (Krishnan 2021), the following explanations were proposed and are considered here: (1) the bird may have been extracting small invertebrates concealed within the bark; (2) bark fragments may have been ingested to function as gastroliths or to aid digestion in the gizzard; and (3) the individual may have been collecting wood fragments