



210. Colour aberrant Brown Shrike with normal coloured bill and feet.



211. Brown Shrike with white feathering in head and crown.



212. Brown Shrike showing pale wing and tail.

All: Subhajit Ghosh

A review of available literature, including colour aberration reports in *Indian BIRDS*, regional ornithological journals, and standard species accounts, did not reveal any published record of any colour aberration in the Brown Shrike from South Asia. To the best of my knowledge, this observation represents a possible first documented instance of any colour aberration in Brown Shrike.

I sincerely thank my friends and fellow birders for their valuable discussions and guidance, which greatly assisted in clarifying the identification and interpretation of this unusual individual.

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– Subhajit Ghosh

Hoera, Hooghly, West Bengal 712147 India. E-mail: subhajit_hoera@rediffmail.com

The Greater White-fronted Goose *Anser albifrons* in Uttarakhand, India

The Greater White-fronted Goose *Anser albifrons* is a winter visitor to northern India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh where it mainly occurs around large wetlands, lakes, reservoirs, and river systems (Grimmett et al. 2011). In India, it occurs throughout northern, western, and eastern India occasionally straggling to central and southern India to the states of Odisha, Maharashtra, and Karnataka (Praveen 2025).

On 18 January 2026 at 1030 h, while surveying for Asian Waterbird Census (AWC) in Uttarakhand, the author observed a single Greater White-fronted Goose at Baijnath Barrage, Bageshwar District, Uttarakhand (29.908°N, 79.615°E), in the Kumaon Himalaya. It was identified based on its overall grey-brown plumage, orange legs, pinkish bill, characteristic white frontal patch at the base of the bill, and black barring on the belly (Majumdar et al. 2024) [213].



Deepak Kumar

213. Greater White-fronted Goose photographed from Baijnath Barrage, Bageshwar District, Uttarakhand.

Available eBird records indicate that the species has previously been reported from Uttarakhand mainly in and around Asan Conservation Reserve, Dehradun. However, there appears to be no published note or status update of the species in Uttarakhand. Table 1 below summarizes the occurrence of the species in Uttarakhand.

All the previous records in the state are concentrated around lowland wetlands in Dehradun District. The Baijnath record

Table 1. Records of Greater White-fronted Goose from Uttarakhand

S. No.	Date	Location	Reference
1	20 January 2008	Asan Conservation Reserve, Dehradun	Suvarna (2008a, 2008b)
2	14 January 2023	SH 22, Herbertpur, Dehradun	Singh (2023a)
3	27 January 2023	SH 22, Herbertpur, Dehradun	Singh (2023b)
4	27 January 2023	Asan River, Herbertpur, Dehradun	Arora & Mahajan (2023)
5	28 January 2023	Asan Conservation Reserve, Dehradun	Khan (2023)
6	10 February 2023	Asan Conservation Reserve, Dehradun	Jain et al. (2023)
7	03 December 2023	Asan Conservation Reserve, Dehradun	Rao (2023)

suggests that the species may occasionally occur in riverine wetlands within the Kumaon Himalaya during winter.

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– Deepak Kumar

Deepak Kumar, Department of Physics, S.C.S.S. Government P.G. College Kapkote, Bageshwar Uttarakhand 263642, India. E-mail: deepakphysics@gmail.com

Nest of Streak-throated Swallow *Petrochelidon fluvicola* usurped by Brahminy Starling *Sturnia pagodarum*

The Brahminy Starling *Sturnia pagodarum* is a widespread resident in the Indian Subcontinent (largely excluding the north-western and north-eastern parts) (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). It inhabits open deciduous forest, scrub, and cultivated areas near human habitation; and is especially fond of waterlogged areas (Craig & Feare 2020). Both sexes build the nest, which is an untidy structure of dry grass, dead leaves, paper, and other material, lined with finer material, placed in hole in tree, often one made by woodpecker (Picidae) or barbet (Capitonidae), or nest of tit (Paridae) taken over, or sometimes hole in wall or roof of building used, or nest box accepted (Craig & Feare 2020). A pair nesting in steel anchor-pipe of a telephone pole has also been reported (Sharma 1996). Streak-throated

Swallow *Petrochelidon fluvicola* breeds in large colonies, and is a mud-nesting aerial insectivore that constructs very closely spaced (honeycombed) retort-shaped nests with a long entrance tube, on natural sites and buildings close to water, notably bridges over large rivers (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). We report opportunistic sightings of a pair of Brahminy Starlings usurping and occupying a nest-structure of Streak-throated Swallow in the nesting colony of the latter.

On 08 June 2025, at 0630 h, while birding in Rampura (24.460°N, 75.436°E), Neemuch District in Madhya Pradesh, we saw a pair of Brahminy Starlings visiting the nest colony of Streak-throated Swallow that were built on the inner wall inside the dome of a temple [214]. The temple is situated on the banks of Gandhi Sagar reservoir which is part of the Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary (BirdLife International 2026). The starlings were observed to be in the process of repeatedly removing the nesting material which was originally inside the nest of Streak-throated Swallow. It could not be determined whether this nest of Streak-throated Swallow was active or was an old inactive nest structure. The pair of Brahminy Starlings were removing fine material from inside the nest with their bills and discarding it on the temple floor, while large pieces of nesting material, such as feathers etc., were discarded further away up to a distance of c.5–20 m in flight. During this process of removing nesting material, and after each time this was done, Brahminy Starlings were observed cleaning their bills on the floor or on grass. The nests were being visited by the starlings frequently (i.e., every 2–3 min). While they were in the process of repeatedly discarding the original nesting material, they were also observed to be bringing fresh grass straws from nearby and depositing it inside the nests. Photographs were taken to document this behavior [215–216]. We followed recommended practices and guidelines in Barve et al. (2020) for documentation of the nest observations.

Two days later, on 11 June 2025, the Brahminy Starlings were again observed to be busy cleaning and tending to the nest structure but the frequency of this activity was noted to be relatively lower than earlier. Incidentally, some Streak-throated Swallows were also seen around the nest site. On 14 June 2025, Brahminy Starlings were not observed removing any original nesting material from the nest nor seen placing fresh grass straws in the nest, and thus, it was suspected that the starlings had laid eggs in this nest structure and were in the process of egg incubation. It was noted that they would return to the nest in c.15–20 minutes after each flight, and were found staying inside the nest for as long as c.10–32 min. It was also noted that the nest was seldom left empty by the starlings. When one bird flew away, the other bird would be present at the nest. Occasionally both the birds would leave the nest and fly away, but would usually return within 2–3 minutes.

In the initial days of the observation, a small number of Streak-throated Swallows (about c.5–10) were seen around the nests, whereas after good rains on 18–19 June 2025, hundreds of them were seen flying around the temple. On 21 June 2025, after a close observation, it was found that the Streak-throated Swallows were restoring and renovating some of their nest-structures with wet mud. Meanwhile, the Brahminy Starlings were also seen in the occupied nest. Despite the Streak-throated Swallows flying around the nest, the starlings remained present in the occupied nest. We did not observe any antagonistic interaction between the starlings and the swallows, but the swallows attempted to reoccupy the nest that