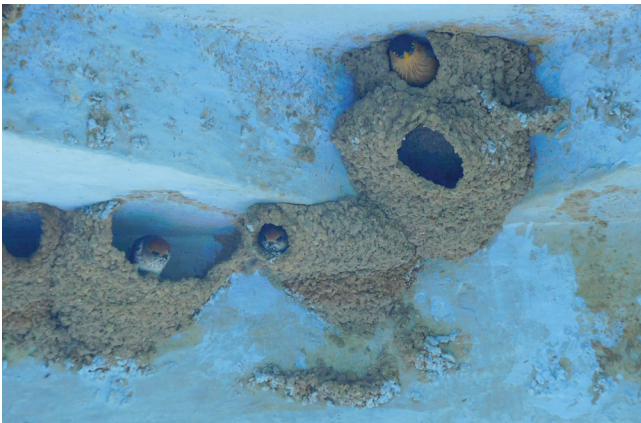




214. Brahminy Starling (center) in the nesting colony of Streak-throated Swallow.



215. Brahminy Starling with nesting materials on nest of Streak-throated Swallow.



Ali: Lakhan Kumar

216. Brahminy Starling occupying the nest of Streak-throated Swallow while the latter species occupies neighbouring nests.

had been occupied by the starlings. After the Brahminy Starling took over the nest, the swallows made several tries to regain it. They would hover around the nest and its entrance but could not enter because the Brahminy Starling was always present inside; instead, they would land at neighbouring nests. No physical confrontation or aggressive fighting was observed between the two species during this time.

It is uncertain whether the starling eggs eventually hatched, or whether the starling chicks survived and reached fledging maturity. It is also uncertain whether either the eggs or the chicks had naturally survived as the stage of the breeding cycle could not be ascertained. The possibility of the eggs or the chicks being

predated before maturity must also be considered. Thus, it is uncertain and inconclusive whether the Brahminy Starlings had successfully bred at this nest structure. That said, we can conclude that Brahminy Starlings usurped and occupied a nest of Streak-throated Swallow and attempted to breed in the latter's nest.

Many birds fiercely compete for nesting sites, such as cavities or tree-holes, especially in the case for cavity-nesting birds. Other species, such as, House Sparrows *Passer domesticus* have been known to occupy and usurp nests of Streak-throated Swallow (Pawar et al. 2025). Our observations show the adaptive breeding behavior of Brahminy Starling and breeding challenges faced by Streak-throated Swallow.

References

- Barve, S., Raman, T. R. S., Datta, A., & Jathar, G., 2020. Guidelines for conducting research on the nesting biology of Indian birds. *Indian Birds* 16 (1):10–11.
- BirdLife International, 2026. Webpage URL: <https://datazone.birdlife.org/site/factsheet/18306-gandhi-sagar-wildlife-sanctuary-and-reservoir>. [Accessed on 3 August 2026].
- Craig, A. J. F. K., & Feare, C. J., 2020. Brahminy Starling (*Sturnia pagodarum*), 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.
- Pawar, M., Sarsavan, A., & Yadav, L., 2025. House Sparrows *Passer domesticus* occupying Streak-throated Swallow *Petrochelidon fluvicola* nests. *Indian BIRDS* 21 (1):21–22.
- 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.
- Sharma, S. K., 1996. Nesting in anchor-pipe by Brahminy Myna, *Sturnus pagodarum* (Gmelin). *Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society* 93 (1):91.
- **Lakhan Kumar & Manohar Pawar**
Lakhan Kumar, Government PG College, Rampura 458118, District Neemuch, Madhya Pradesh, India. E-mail: lakhan.yadav08@yahoo.in [Corresponding author]
Manohar Pawar, DK50/5, Danish Kunj, Kolar Road, Bhopal 462042, Madhya Pradesh, India.

The Black-faced Bunting *Emberiza spodocephala* from Wular Lake: An addition to the avifauna of Jammu & Kashmir

The Black-faced Bunting *Emberiza spodocephala* is widely distributed across Asia, breeding in central and eastern Asia from the upper Ob' valley and northeast Altai, east to the coasts of the Sea of Okhotsk, and the northern half of Sakhalin (Byers et al. 1995). All breeding populations undertake southward migration during the northern winter. Their distribution includes much of southern and eastern China, Taiwan, extending along the Himalayan foothills from central Nepal, east through northern Myanmar, and extreme northern Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam (Kirwan et al. 2022). In India, the species winters in West Bengal, Assam, adjoining areas of Arunachal, Nagaland, Cachar, the Manipur valley, and Tripura (Praveen 2025). Vagrant records have been observed from Ladakh, Punjab, Uttarakhand, and northwestern Uttar Pradesh (Praveen 2025).

On 24 January 2026 at 1155 h, during a birdwatching session near Wular Lake, Bandipora, Kashmir, the authors sighted a passerine bird perched on a willow tree *Salix* sp. along the lakeshore (34.381°N, 74.652°E, c.1580 m asl). The individual was photographed for documentation and identification. The images were shared in the 'Birds of Kashmir' WhatsApp group, where it was identified as Black-faced Bunting by Irfan Jeelani based on greyish head, black lores and chin, grey breast well demarcated from the lower yellowish-white underparts, and chestnut back [217].

There are no previous records of Black-faced Bunting from Jammu & Kashmir (Kichloo et al. 2024; Kichloo 2025), hence

Ishfaq Majeed



217. Black-faced Bunting showing greyish head, black lores and chin, and grey breast well demarcated from the lower yellowish-white underparts, photographed from Wular Lake.

the present record represents the first documented occurrence of the species in Jammu & Kashmir. The nearest records of this species are from Ladakh (Gyalpo 2024) and Punjab (Antaal & Singh 2025). Since this location is further east than the record from Ladakh, it likely represents eastern-most wintering record of this species in South Asia (eBird 2025).

We thank Muzaffar A. Kichloo for his help during the preparation of this manuscript.

References

- Antaal, P. S., & Singh, G., 2025. Addition of the Black-faced Bunting *Emberiza spodocephala* to the avifauna of Punjab, India. *Indian BIRDS* 21 (4): 143–144.
- Byers, C., Olsson, U., & Curson, J., 1995. *Sparrows and Buntings: A Guide to the Sparrows and Buntings of North America and the World*. Boston, New York: Houghton Mifflin. Pp. 1–334.
- eBird 2025. Website URL: <https://ebird.org/map/bkfbun1>. [Accessed on 17 February 2026.]
- Gyalpo, P., 2024. Three additions to the avifauna of the Union Territory of Ladakh, India. *Indian BIRDS* 20 (6): 191–192.
- Kichloo, M. A., 2025. A checklist of the birds of Jammu & Kashmir, India (v2.0). Website URL: <http://www.indianbirds.in/indian-states/> [Date of publication: 01 July 2025.] [Accessed on 17 February 2026.]
- Kichloo, M. A., Sharma, N., Suhail, I., Shagoo, P., & Kumar, P., 2024. A checklist of the birds of Jammu & Kashmir, India. *Indian BIRDS* 19 (6): 163–180.
- Kirwan, G. M., Copete, J. L., Hansasuta, C., & Boesman, P. F. D., 2022. Black-faced Bunting (*Emberiza spodocephala*), version 1.0. In *Birds of the World* (N. D. Sly, Editor). Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Ithaca, NY, USA. <https://doi.org/10.2173/bow.bkfbun1.01>.
- Praveen, J., 2025. *Birds of India - The New Synopsis*. Nature Conservation Foundation, Mysuru. Pp. i–xlvii, 1–468.

– **Ishfaq Majeed & Sunnu Setu**

Ishfaq Majeed, Danpora Brane, Nishat, Srinagar, Jammu & Kashmir, 191121, India.

E-mail: ishihamdani6@gmail.com [IM] [Corresponding Author]

Sunnu Setu, B1-1403, Godrej Platinum, Vikhroli East, Mumbai, Maharashtra, 400079, India.

E-mail: setu.sunnu@gmail.com [SS]

Does the Red-tailed Wheatear *Oenanthe chrysopygia* winter in northern India?

The Red-tailed Wheatear *Oenanthe chrysopygia*, also known as Persian Wheatear depending on taxonomy (Clements et al. 2025), was previously treated as conspecific with Rufous-tailed Wheatear *O. xanthopyrma*, now recognized as Kurdish Wheatear. The Red-tailed Wheatear breeds in north-eastern Turkey, southern Armenia, Azerbaijan and much of Iran, extending eastwards into southern Turkmenistan, southern Tajikistan (Pamir range), Afghanistan and extreme western Pakistan; the non-breeding range of the species includes Arabian Peninsula, southern Iraq, southern Iran, eastern Afghanistan, Pakistan and north-western India (Collar 2020). Here, we describe our records of Red-tailed

Wheatear from multiple locations in Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand. We also compile its records from northern India and assess the extent of its non-breeding range in the northern winter in the region and whether it extends beyond the western parts of the country.

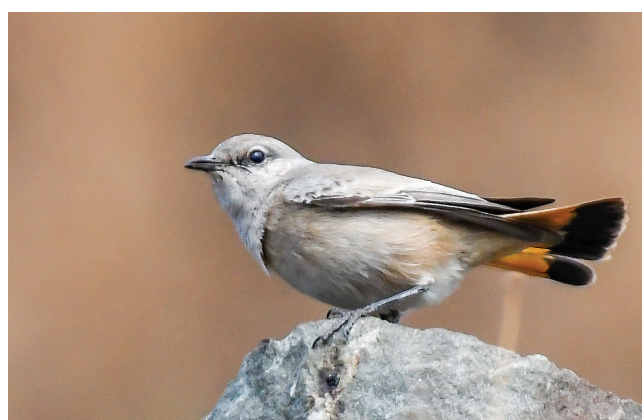
Himachal Pradesh

On 22 December 2023, GS visited Chakki Mod and Bhojnagar, Solan District in Himachal Pradesh for birding. A dull grey-brown wheatear was observed on the roadside near Bhojnagar (30.837°N, 77.061°E; c. 1,430 m asl). The bird was seen on a rocky hillside, where stones had been cut, presumably for future construction. The area comprised of large and small boulders with scattered retaining walls [218]. Due to its uncharacteristic appearance, the wheatear could not be identified in the field. Photographs were shared with CA, who identified the bird as Red-tailed Wheatear, based on the presence of warm rufous on the sides and tip of the tail. The rump appeared pale rufous, lighter than typically illustrated in field guides. GS revisited the site on next day to confirm the identification. The bird was noted in flight and also when the tail was spread [219], revealing rufous coloration along the sides. On 26 December 2023, CA and PD also visited the site and observed the wheatear actively foraging in the same location and photographed it. It remained at the same location for the next few months and the last sighting was on 26 February 2024. It would mostly perch in the open on stones or shrub-tops and afforded good views at this spot. While it was bold but when approached, it also frequently flew to the trees present near the top and at the base of this hill.



C. Abhinav

218. The habitat of Red-tailed Wheatear near Bhojnagar, Solan District, Himachal Pradesh.



Gurinder Singh

219. Red-tailed Wheatear near Bhojnagar, Solan District, Himachal Pradesh on 23 December 2023.