

# Birds of the Rara-Jumla Area

## West Nepal      May, 1985 by Jack Cox

The following are new or noteworthy records for grid squares of the Inskipp atlas of birds for Nepal:

1. Eurasian Buteo - (Buteo buteo) - noted over Jumla town in early May (05 & 06); alt. ~7,700' (2350m); Grid sq. E3 not new, but report is during breeding season; first for this sq.? Yes
  
- 2) Chestnut-eared Bunting - (Emberiza fucata) - also around Jumla town, E3; not a new square, but an unusual record; 05 May 1985; alt. ~7,700' (2350m);  
No - A few reports from Jumla at ~2350m in May & August '81 & '85
  
- 3). Eurasian Hobby - (Falco subuteo) - at least 4 flying over Jumla + adjacent fields; 05 May '85; alt ~7,700' (2350m); not a new square.
  
- 4). Spotted Dove - (Streptopelia chinensis) - several in fields around Jumla town. Sq. E3 not new but this perhaps first breeding <sup>season</sup> report for it; 05 May '85; ~7,700' (2350m); Yes
  
- ! 5). Barn Swallow - (Hirundo rustica) - a single along the Tila Khola at Jumla, ~7,600' (2315m); 05 May '85.  
Yes First report for sq. E3 - also in breeding season.
  
- 6). White-throated Tit - (Aegithalos niveogularis) - seen in birch/fir (N slope) forest of Dori Lekh N of Jumla near the pass; ~11,000' (3350m); 21 May 1985. In a mixed hunting party with Coal Tits, Spot-winged Black Tits, Rufous-breasted Black Tits, Yellow-rumped Leaf Warbler and

w/in group  
(ostensibly) a Himalayan Tree Creeper; not a new grid sq. or breeding season record, but particulars perhaps of interest. Grid sq. E3  
*Yes - all records are of (not best)*

7). Long-tailed Minivet (Pericrocotus ethologus) -  
At least 2 ♀♀ in pines & spruce S slope of Dori Lekh, NW of Jumla; 07 May '85; E3 not a new grid sq., but report is from breeding season.  
*Yes*  
3050m  
~10,000'

8). Crowned leaf Warbler (Phylloscopus reguloides) -  
At least 2 in a mixed hunting party near site of #7 above. 07 May '85; E3 not a new grid sq., but report is 1st(?) from breeding season.  
*Yes*  
3050m  
~10,000'

9). Crested Brown Tit - (Parus dichrous)  
At least 1 in a mixed hunting party near site of #7-#8 above; 07 May '85; grid sq. E3 not new; ~~an apparently unmixed~~ flock of 5 with other species at Lake Rara on 14 May '85; latter record is for grid sq. E2 - not new for sq., but 1st(?) breeding season record; ~10,000' (3050m)  
*Yes*

10). Goldencrest - (Regulus regulus)  
A pair in chopped over pine-conifer forest S slope of Dori Lekh, NW of Jumla ~10,000' (3050); 07 May '85; grid sq. E3 not new, but this is 1st(?) breeding season record.  
*Yes*

! 11). Himalayan Tree Creeper (Certhia himalayana)  
A single with nesting material (beak-full of short yellow grasses) inching up a walnut tree while evading a ♂ sparrow hawk, which 3X tried to swoop around the trunk to catch it. In afternoon ~4PM along the Khāprā Khola ~7500' (2285m) near Bumra

Yes village N of Jumla; grid square E3 not new for Nepal, but possible breeding symbol can now be outlined. 09 May 1985.

12). ~~Sparrow~~ <sup>Sparrow</sup> Hawk (Accipiter nisus)

As previously noted, <sup>(#11)</sup> a ♂ trying to attack a Himalayan Tree Creeper in an open walnut grove along the Khāprā Khola near Bumra village; grid sq. E3 not new, but breeding season report is. Alt. ~7500' (2285m). 09 May 1985. Watched at close range for ~10 minutes. Yes

13). Sooty Flycatcher (Muscicapa sibirica)

single in top of abovementioned walnut tree performing sortays for insects in late afternoon. Same site as #11-12. ~7500' (2285m). 09 May 1985. First breeding season report for West Nepal? New record for grid sq. E3. Yes

14). Blue-headed Redstart (Phoenicurus caeruleocephalus)

At least one pair, possibly two, in bushes and pine tree lower branches along trail from Khāprā to Chautha; alt. ~8,500' (2590m); 10 May 1985; not a new record for grid sq. E3, but 1st (?) breeding season report. Yes

15). (Yuhina gularis) - Stripe-throated Yuhina  
single in short rhododendron + scrub (amongst pines) oak along trail to Chautha, Khāprā Khola; ~8,500' (2590m); 10 May 1985. New record for grid square E3 + in breeding season as well. Yes.

16). Brown Accentor - (Prunella fulvescens)

single atop crest of Ghurchi Lekh ~13,000' (3960m) in open alpine grassland; S of Lake Rara; 11 May 1985; 1st breeding season record for grid sq. E-3. Yes.

17). Brandt's Mt. Finch - (Leucosticte brandti)

a small flock of 5-7 near above site, at dusk 11 May 1985. Rather noisy as they pecked over sere<sup>+ short grass</sup> at lek top (Ghurchi Lekh) N slope ~13,200' (4020m) before quickly moving on. Of particular interest because of habitat: not mt. desert biotope; bare patch in alpine grassland; 1st record for grid sq. E3; although not w/in breeding season, only a few weeks away. Note formation as small flock.

no fragments, strong slopes of alpine meadows  
Yes

18). White-browed Blue Flycatcher - (Ficedula superciliosa)

a ♂ in bushes along lakeside trail, Rara Nat'l Park, 12 May 1985; ~10,000' (3050m); breeding season record only for grid sq. E2 (.. nothing special, actually).

no

19). Long-tailed Mt. Thrush (Zoothera dixonii)

a pair in fir forest down along S slope of Ghurchi Lekh ~11,000'; 12 May 1985; just inside grid square E2; 1st report for the sq + breeding season one as well.

Yes.

20). Brown-headed Gull - (Larus brunicephalus)

an adult flying around lake margin, early AM 13 May 1985; also, next afternoon going in opposite direction. On 15 May 5 young seen sitting in lake center; 1 came ashore to stand awhile; ~10,000' (3050m); 1st record for sq. E2, and rather late in the season.

Yes.

not seen?

21). Great Crested Grebe (Podiceps cristatus)

Six on the lake Rara 14 May 1985, and 7 seen on 15/5/85 - all in breeding plumage: rufous neck patch + black-frilled base to it. Grid sq. E2 not new for Nepal, but possible breeding symbol can now be included; alt ~10,000' (3050m).

22). Yellow-billed Blue Magpie (Cissa flavirostris)

A pair noted in lakeside conifers, Rara Lake, 13 May 1985; alt. ~10,000' (3050m). Grid sq E2 not new for Nepal, but report falls w/in breeding season. -new

23). Red-headed laughing-Thrush (Garrulax erythrocephalus)

A small party of 4 or 5 in trailside bushes, Lake Rara; 14 May 1985; alt. ~10,000' (3050m); grid sq E2 not new for Nepal, but report w/in breeding season. -new

24). Yellow Wagtail (Motacilla flava)

A pair, most probably M. f. thunbergi, along pebble + sand shoreline with collapsed reeds; Lake Rara ~10,000' (3050m); 15 May 1985; first record for the species for grid sq. E2;

25). Red-throated Pipit (Anthus cervinus)

single along sandy, pebbly littoral of Lake Rara, 14 May 1985; virtually same site as #24. This stretch of lake shoreline borders the extensive swampy meadow to the E; alt. ~10,000' (3050m).

26). Black-necked Grebe - (Podiceps caspicus)

single bird near a small flock of Great Crested Grebes, but apparently not associated with them; bird with black nape (back of neck) + rufous neck; face

greyish; therefore in breeding plumage; also, very noticeable rufous on flanks; seen again on 15/5/85; possibly breeding in grid sq. E2.

27). Coot (Fulica atra)

no mt-  
10/10/85

a flock of 8 on Lake Rara, rather late in spring: 14 May 1985; not a new grid sq.

28). Tufted Pochard (Aythya fuligula)

a lone ♂ associating with Great Crested Grebes on Lake Rara, 14-15 May 1985; alt ~10,000' (3050m); E2 not a new grid sq.

29). Wood Sandpiper (Tringa glareola)

← 15 May '85 associated with Common Redshank along sandy, pebbly fringe of dead reeds nearby; in same site as #24-25 and lesser Sand Plover / Temminck's Stint, 14-15 May 1985; alt. ~10,000' (3050m); not a new grid sq., but late season record for Rara Lake

30): Temminck's Stint (Calidris temminckii)

(v3) several pairs scattered along S & E fringe of Lake Rara 14-15 May 1985; new record for Rara? alt ~10,000' (3050m); new alt record for the species in Nepal?; grid square E2 new for Nepal.

31). Common Redshank (Tringa totanus)

with other species (see #29) on fringe of Lake Rara, 15 May 1985; first record of the sp. for Lake Rara (?) - grid sq. E2; alt. ~10,000' (3050m).  
+ new high alt. record

32). Little Skylark (Alauda gulgula)

a flock of 4 with pipits in swampy, short grass meadow of Lake Rara's SE fringe; appeared to

be subsp. ilhamasum. 14-15 May 1985; alt. ~10,000' (3050m). ; not a new grid sq., but 1st (?) breeding season record

33) Lesser Sand Plover (Charadrius mongolus)

a single (stray?) in summer plumage seen along SE littoral of Lake Rara 14 & 15 May '85. alt. ~10,000' (3050m); plumage description for breeding season fits King's except for sides of head not with noticeable rufous wash; species ID confirmed in photos of the bird; 1st upland record for Nepal and, of course for grid sq. E2; appeared to favour the relatively wide sand + pebble littoral along the SE banks of Rara; this habitat ~~not~~ only patchily present along other littoral.

34) Citrine Wagtail (Motacilla citreola)

a pair of ♂♂ (without ♀♀?) along SE Lake Rara littoral, at times associated with at least one M. flava adult; grid sq. E2 not new for Nepal, but apparently this is 1st report from breeding season; on 13, 14, and 15 May '85 in same area as #s 33, 31, 30 & 29.; alt. ~10,000' (3050m)

35) Kalij Pheasant (Lophura leucomelana)

a ♂ L. l. hamiltonii above abandoned L. Rara village + Nat'l park offices near a small stream in rhododendron + Spirea thickets, bordered by conifer + pine forest. alt ~10,300' (3150m); grid sq. E2 not new, but breeding season report is. 16 May 1985.

36) White-throated Tit (Aegithalos niveogularis)

① at least one in lower branches of fairly dense pine & conifer forest behind nat'l park offices, L. Rara;

(cont.) 36). possibly in the company of Spot-winged Black Tits, ~10,200' (3110m); 16 May 1985; not a new grid sq. (E2), but 1st (?) breeding season report. ② seen again on 21 May 1985 on Dori Lekh. See #6 for particulars.

37). White-checked Nuthatch (Sitta leucopsis)  
single bird (?) with spot-winged Black Tits in same location as #36. Call is loud & unique; seen tapping away at medium-sized branches of a fir tree ~1/2 way up. alt ~10,200' (3110m); 16 May 1985; grid sq. E2 not new, but 1st (?) record for sq. during the species' breeding season.

38). White-checked Bulbul (Pycnonotus leucogenys)  
~~single birds at same site as #36-37; 16 May '85;~~  
~~~10,200' (3110m);~~ grid sq. E2 not new, but breeding season report is;  $\geq 2$  birds in shrubs + fieldside bushes just below Gumghadi, Mugu; 17 May 1985; alt ~6450' (1965m).

39). Grey Bulbul (Pycnonotus leucogenys)  
 $\geq 1$  in a leafy tree in very steep cut-over Khola banks below Gumghadi ~6450m (~~3110m~~ 1965m)  
17 May '85; grid sq. E2 not new but breeding season report is.

40). Egyptian Vulture (Neophron percnopterus)  
single over Gumghadi, Mugu, 17 May 1985; alt. ~6450' (1965m); grid sq. E2 new for Nepal

41). Large White-rumped Swift (Apus pacificus)  
At least 2 w/ Nepal House Martins (see #42) over ridge adjacent to Gumghadi; 17 May 1985; alt ~6800' (2075m); nothing new as regards grid sq., but alt + season perhaps noteworthy.



42) Nepal House Martin (Delichon nipalensis)  
Yes. at least 2 with #41's, same site, date;  
grid sq. E2 new for Nepal. 17/5/85; ~2070m.

43) Ashy Drongo (Picrurus leucophaea)  
Yes. a pair in mixed forest (broadleaf + spruce/pine)  
at ~7500' (2285m); grid square E2 new for Nepal  
as well as in breeding season; 17 May 1985. <sup>site descript.</sup> as in #44.

44) Pied Ground Thrush (Zoothera wardii)  
a ♂ viewed excellently in large broadleaf  
tree ~7500' in a grove of Bhagrā Khola below (but  
N of) Mundu and ~1 km N of Kotila village; just  
inside grid sq. E2; 17 May 1985; ~2285m.  
*(new sq.)*

45) Chukor Partridge (Alectoris graeca)  
≥4 on mt. side with open spruce-pine  
forest ~7500' (2285m) below Kotila gau: 17 May 1985;  
Yes. grid sq. E2 not new, but breeding season report is.

46) Gold-fronted Finch (Serinus pusillus)  
≥3 on ground in bushes between fields of  
Kotila village; south of Gumghadi at ~8,000' (2440m).  
note rather low alt. and v. close to start of its  
Known breeding season (seen on 17 May '85); grid sq.  
E2 not new.

just in breeding season

~~47) Small Cuckoo~~ (OMITTED)

47) Coal Tit - (Parus ater)

(?) at least 1 with others (see #6 for full description) in birch/fir  
forest N slope of Dori Lekh N of Junla ~11,000' (3350m).  
Yes? 21 May 1986. First record for grid sq. E3 + a considerable extension  
Wward of range for the species; moreover, through the Dhaulagiri area  
"hybrid zone" w/ P. melanolophus (!?), which also in company on this occasion.

5  
52

48) Mrs. Gould's Sunbird (Aethopyga gouldiae)

check.   
 165   
 a ♂ (probably w/ a ♀) in bushes among mixed conifer/spruce/pine forest in steep ravine S of Mundu village, grid sq. E3, and N of Jumla; alt ~ 8500-9,000' (2600-2750m); extensive red back from lower nape to upper rump noticed; no streaking on bright yellow breast; head w/ purple iridescent sheen; tail not noticed; fairly shy - keeping w/in bush interior; habitat: per Fleming (1979) description and not the oak-rhododendron forest as given by Inskipp & Inskipp (1985); 18 May 1985; new report for grid sq. E3 + within breeding season

49) Speckled Wood Pigeon (Columba hodgsonii)

112   
 165   
 a flock of  $\geq 14$  in an open grove of deciduous trees (including a few walnuts) between Kotila and Mandu at ~ 8,500' (2590m); 18 May 1985; 1st report for grid sq. E3, and in breeding season; birds seemed to be only passing through; no feeding (or suitable feed, for that matter) noticed.

50) White-spotted Laughing Thrush (Garrulex ocellatus)

112   
 New square   
 A small, chattering flock of 4 or 5 in fairly thick mixed oak/conifer/pine forest with bamboo + bush understorey at ~ 9,000-9,500' (2750-2900) elevation NW of Bundi Pass (and SE of Mandu village); grid sq. E3; 19 May 1985. As noted by Ali & Riple and Fleming, these birds were associated with G. affinis (at least 1, maybe 2-3 individuals); the area is fairly remote <sup>& denser</sup> mixed high altitude forest of W. Nepal, virtually undisturbed by human activities; first (?) breeding season record for E3.

51) Black-faced laughing Thrush (Garrulax affinis)

At least 1, maybe 2 or 3 <sup>in association</sup> with a small flock (4 or 5) of G. ocellatus; see #50 for particulars; fairly shy not affording good views in the bamboo understory; apparently the first record for the species in West Nepal, thus a westward extension of range for the species of the E Himalaya  
19 May 1985. grid sq. E3

985. also

52) Eurasian Nuthatch (Sitta europaea)

at least 1 working hurriedly on a conifer trunk with other small spp; same location & date as for #50-51; at a somewhat low alt. (2750-2900m); not a new grid sq. record, but of interest because so few other reports of the species in Nepal.  
*are interesting*

All new

53) Koklass Pheasant (Pucrasia macrolopha)

a pair (♂♀??) at pass marked "Bung Lagna" on trekking map. Local name of ridge is "Piale lekhi" only ♂ seen <sup>well</sup>, & that for only an instant; when alerted, ran uphill into oak forest undercover; ♀ flushed into a screaming downhill glide; at ~ 11,000-11,500' (3350-3500m) in high altitude tall oak forest; almost  
19 May 1985; in a new wilderness setting (as much as Nepal can muster) N of Jumla / SE of Mandu village; grid sq. E3 not new, but alt & habitat noteworthy.

All new recorded

New

54) Pallas's Leaf Warbler (Phylloscopus <sup>pro</sup> regulus)

with Spot-winged Black Tit, White-throated Tit, Coal Tit, and Rufous-breasted Black Tit and a Himalayan Trecreeper in birch/fir forest ~11,000' (3350m) above Thahamari, Dori Lekhi, Jumla District, 21 May '85.  
grid sq. E3 not new but breeding season record is?

- 55) Common (Northern) Treecreeper (Certhia familiaris)  
a pair nesting (!) below Thahamari on the  
N slope of Dori Lekh (N of Jumla); nest was  
located ~5m above ground in a trunk crevice of  
a dead fir; appeared that both parents were  
feeding young (as reported by Ali & Ripley); this  
deduced by the speed which one parent would  
return with food to the crevice and another(?)  
immediately zip out (although 2 different kinds  
never seen positively alternating); 09 May 1985;  
young being fed a small green caterpillar in  
addition to numerous other smaller brown/black  
insects (too far away to positively ID). Definitely  
both parents present because while one was on a foraging  
journey, the other would occasionally peer out of the  
crevice w/ its head; alt ~ 4300' (2835m).  
Habitat: mixed forest of fir & birch with a few maples  
& relatively open understory (but some shrubs & bamboo);  
grid sq. E3 not new for the species, but breeding  
confirmed for it now; on 20/21 May 1985 I returned  
to the site; there was no further activity at the  
nest site, but on 21 May one treecreeper (most  
likely C. familiaris although not positively noted) seen  
in vicinity rather high up a conifer & only briefly.