



भारतीय राजदूतावास, काठमाण्डू
EMBASSY OF INDIA
KATHMANDU (NEPAL)

S. VYAS (1988)

9 July 1988

Dear Mrs. Inskipp,

I have your letter of 15 June 1988. I am glad to learn that you propose to bring out a revised edition of your very useful "Guide to the Birds of Nepal", and I would be happy if you could put my records of Muscicapa muttui to good use in it.

I have been posted in Kathmandu since October 1986, and expect to remain here until at least mid-1989. My birdwatching has been rather sporadic, unfortunately, due to pressure of official work, and largely restricted to the Tarai and the Kathmandu Valley. Nevertheless, I am listing below some of my records which add in one way or the other to the distribution data presented in the first edition of your book, and which you might find useful.

- 1) Eurasian Bittern Botaurus stellaris: One at Kosi Barrage on 18 March 1987.
- 2) Black Bittern Dupetor flavicollis: One at Kosi Barrage on 19 May 1987.
- 3) Grey-headed Fishing Eagle Ichthyophaga ichthyaetus: Pair very noisy, at Ghora-ghori Tal, Kailali District, on 12 March 1988.
- 4) Shikra Accipiter badius: Confirmed breeding Kathmandu Valley (KV), incubating in May 1987 and feeding downy young in first half June, at Rani Bari and Nagarjung.
- 5) Upland Buzzard Buteo hemilasius: One soared frequently over Maharajganj, KV, through January-February 1987; one near Harsiddhi Village (Kathmandu-Godaveri road) on November 14, 1987 which flew into a wooded grove to displace a Long-legged Buzzard from its perch. Both seen in close view, legs feathered down to toes.
- 6) Imperial Eagle Aquila heliaca: One at Nagarjung, on 15 November 1987, circling low then flying off south-west.
- 7) Booted Eagle Hieraaetus pennatus: Frequent in KV and Tarai, but I have not a single record of a pale phase!
- 8) Amur Falcon Falco ~~subbuteo~~ Amurensis: About 80 birds (mostly juvenile, but including about 10 adult males) perching on overhead wires above fallow fields near Harsiddhi Village (KV); present in area at least between November 7 and 14, 1987, their numbers dwindling to about 50 by the latter date. Associating with a single female Kestrel.
- 9) Eurasian Hobby Falco subbuteo: Frequent in KV in Summer. Confirmed breeding in late May-June in Indian Embassy grounds and in Tangal Durbar, KV.
- 10) Grey Partridge Francolinus pondicerianus: Common, feeding along paths in thin forest, and calling freely, near Kohalpur (Nepalganj) on 13 March 1988.
- 11) Watercock Gallixrex cineria: 2 males in ricefields near Gokarna, KV, calling and very pugnacious towards each other, on 27 June 1987.
- 12) Little Tern Sterna albifrons: Upto 100 at Kosi Barrage on 19 May 1987, some feeding flying young in flight, others flying towards large sandbank south of Barrage carrying fish

in winter

in beaks. Probably breeding on sandbank along with River and Blackbellied Terns.

13) White-winged Black Tern Chlidonias leucopterus: 2 at Kosi Barrage on 19 May 1987, in full breeding plumage, associating with Whiskered Terns.

14) Oriental Scops Owl Otus scops: Common and calling freely, in sal forest between Dhangarhi and Nepalganj, 12 March and 15 April 1988.

15) Dusky Eagle Owl Bubo coromandus: Calling before dawn, Chitwan, 1 March 1987.

16) Jungle Owlet Glaucidium radiatum: Appears to have extended range into KV; present all 1987 at Rani Bari.

17) Brown Hawk-Owl Ninox scutulata: Breeding KV (Indian Embassy grounds and Rani Bari). At least 3 family parties each with 2 flying young being fed by parents, between 14 July and mid-August 1987.

18) Savanna Nightjar Caprimulgus affinis: Several calling at Dharan, 25 April 1987 and at Kohalpur (near Nepalganj) on 15 April 1988.

19) White-rumped Needletail Zoonavena sylvatica: 2 at Bhalubhang gorges on 17 April 1988.

20) Blue-bearded Bee-eater Nyctyornis athertoni: 2 at Godaveri, 21 November 1987.

21) Brown-headed Barbet Megalaima zeylanica: Breeding Birganj, 21 April 1987.

22) Pied Ground Thrush Zoothera wardii: Pair at Godaveri, KV, seen both in 1987 and 1988 at the same spot, between early April and end-May. Male singing freely. From behavior, almost certainly breeding.

23) Wire-tailed Swallow Hirundo smithii: Singles between Balubhang and Butwal, 17 April 1988.

24) Chestnut-headed Tesia Tesia castaneocoronata: Feeding fledged young, Phulchowki, 25 June 1987.

25) Paddyfield Warbler Acrocephalus agricola: One, studied at close range, Rani Bari, 18 April 1987. Birds seen later upto mid-May, all appeared to be Blyth's Reed Warbler.

26) Large-billed Leaf Warbler Phylloscopus magnirostris: A few present in mixed parties at Rani Bari between 22 August and 9 September 1987. Calling and singing distinctively.

27) Tickells Warbler Acrocephalus affinis: Abundant passage in Nepalganj area, March-April 1988.

28) Small and Rufous-bellied Niltavas Niltava macgrigoriae and sundara: Fledged young of both species being fed by parents above Godaveri, KV, first-week June 1988.

29) Rufous-tailed Flycatcher Muscicapa ruficauda: Singles at Godaveri, KV, on 25 October 1987 and 10 April 1988.

30) Yellow-bellied Flycatcher Rhipidura hypoxantha: Pair feeding 3 flying young, Phulchowki, 25 June 1987.

31) Paradise Flycatcher Terpsiphon paradisi: Breeding records; Pair building nest at Rani Bari on 13 May 1987, later deserted; pair feeding young at Nagarjung on 4 July 1987. Also pair at Nagarjung on 20 June 1988.

32) Chestnut Munia Lonchura malacca: 2 birds of the white bellied race, L. m. malacca associating with a few chestnut bellied birds at Kosi on 19 May 1987. Probably escapes.

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AN ADDITION TO THE NEPAL LIST - SIGHT RECORDS OF THE BROWN-BREASTED (LAYARD'S) FLYCATCHER (*Muscicapa muttui*) AT KATHMANDU ON 6 SEPTEMBER 1987, AND AT CHATRA, EAST NEPAL FOOTHILLS, ON 4 OCTOBER 1987.

(a) Rani-bari, Kathmandu, 6 September 1987, about 10.00 am. Flycatcher perched on thin bare bamboo twig arching across opening between a few trees and a bamboo clump, 3m. above ground. Kept to same thicket over 20 min. of observation. Flycatching and perching either on bare twig or within undergrowth. Tame, permitting approach to within 15 ft.

Size: smaller than sparrow. Perching upright; did not cock tail or flick it*. Silent.

Above: warm, rather ruddy brown* (not grey- or olive-brown), redder towards tail. Tail dark brown, paler outer feathers visible from below. Lores (shape of triangle in front of eye), eyering and triangle behind eye white. Eye large and dark brown. Darkish line below eye; below that a pale malar stripe, then a clearcut dark moustachial stripe*. Rufous edges on closed wing (tertials) noticeable from above* (as in European Whitethroat!).

Below: throat almost white, fairly distinctly cutoff from broad brownish-buff breast band and flanks*. Belly and vent white. Underparts clearly totally unstreaked*.

Bill rather longish, pale below*. Legs pale pinkish-yellow*.

(Identification based on points marked * above).

(b) Chatra, 4 October 1987, about 6.30 am. Flycatcher seen amongst thickets near stream flowing through open mixed sal forest just above Chatra Village. Associating with a group of Yellow-breasted Babblers, Tits, Warblers, a Grey-headed Green Woodpecker and a Crow-billed Drongo. Tame, keeping to low shrubbery, but not skulking or secretive.

Identified by dark moustachial line, white throat contrasting with darker breast band, rufous edged wings, pale legs, rather ruddy upperparts, totally unstreaked underparts.

This species is not yet recorded from Nepal; indeed, its occurrence in the Eastern Himalayas, north of the Brahmaputra is poorly documented and rather mysterious. According to Salim Ali & Ripley (Handbook, Vol. 7), it has been recorded in Sikkim from August to November (Mandelli, 1875, not noted since); and on passage in autumn in Madhupur, eastern Bihar. More normally, it breeds in Assam south of the Brahmaputra, and further east; wintering in evergreen forest in extreme south-west India, Sri-Lanka and South-east Asia.

The two records of the Brown-breasted Flycatcher in Nepal this year fall in the autumn migration period; they could be the result of casual westward straying, though the species could well occur regularly in Nepal on passage.

These observations bring the total number of species recorded in Nepal to 836.

For,

H. S. Nepali (Kazi)


(SUDHIR VYAS) 30/10/87

First Secretary
Embassy of India, Kathmandu.