

- Chandra, K., & Gupta, R. P., 2009. Aves. In: Fauna of Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve. *Conservation Area Series* 40: 179–270. Kolkata: Director of Zoological Survey of India.
- Chandra, K., & Singh, R. K., 2004. Avifauna of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. *Zoos' Print Journal* 19 (7): 1534–1539 [with a web supplement].
- eBird. 2016. eBird: An online database of bird distribution and abundance [web application]. eBird, Ithaca, New York. Available: <http://www.ebird.org>. [Accessed on 02 April 2016.]
- George, P. J., 2015. Chestnut-eared Bunting *Emberiza fucata* from Ezhumaanthuruthu, Kuttanad Wetlands, Kottayam District. *Malabar Trogon* 13 (1): 34–35.
- Ghosh, S., Basu Roy, S., Datta, B. K., & Sett, A. K., 2008. *Fauna of Madhya Pradesh (including Chhattisgarh), State Fauna Series*, 15 (Part 2), Aves: 1–152. Kolkata: Director of Zoological Survey of India.
- Grimmett, R., Inskipp, C., & Inskipp, T., 2011. *Birds of the Indian Subcontinent*. 2nd ed. London: Oxford University Press & Christopher Helm. Pp. 1–528.
- Jayapal, R., Qureshi, Q., & Chellam, R., 2005. Some significant records of birds from the central Indian highlands of Madhya Pradesh. *Indian Birds* 1 (5): 98–102. With one map.
- Rasmussen, P. C., & Anderton, J. C., 2012. *Birds of South Asia: the Ripley guide*. 2nd ed. Washington, D.C. and Barcelona: Smithsonian Institution and Lynx Edicions. 2 vols. Pp. 1–378; 1–683.
- Sangha, H. S., Singh, S., & Garg, S., 2016. Chestnut-eared Bunting *Emberiza fucata* wintering in Jaipur, Rajasthan. *Indian BIRDS* 11 (1): 26–27.

Sighting of Common Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita* [*fulvescens/abietinus*] in Greater Rann of Kachchh, Gujarat, India

Prasad Ganpule

Ganpule, P., 2016. Sighting of Common Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita* [*fulvescens/abietinus*] in the Greater Rann of Kachchh, Gujarat, India. *Indian BIRDS* 12 (1): 21–22.

Prasad Ganpule, C/o Parshuram Pottery Works, Opp. Nazarbaug, Morbi 363642, Gujarat, India. E-mail: prasadganpule@gmail.com.
Manuscript received on 26 February 2016.

The Common Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita* is a common winter migrant to Gujarat (Grimmett *et al.* 2011). The taxonomy of Common Chiffchaff is complex and not well understood (Dean *et al.* 2010). It is a polytypic species, with the subspecies *tristis*, also known as Siberian Chiffchaff, known to winter in India (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012).

On a bird-watching trip on 14 December 2014 to Nada Bet (21.22°N, 72.20°E), near Suigam, in the Greater Rann of Kachchh, Gujarat, I saw a Common Chiffchaff [26] with yellowish streaks on its mantle, a yellowish supercilium (in front of the eye), and most notably, a prominent yellowish base to its lower mandible (almost half the lower mandible was yellowish), which is typical of the *fulvescens* or *abietinus* races of the Common Chiffchaff. The subspecies *tristis* is typically known to have an all-black bill, with no yellow on mantle, in the supercilium, or on

the lower mandible. Though it is difficult to judge the colour of the upper parts, and plumage details, in Common Chiffchaffs from photographs, I could observe this individual for more than two minutes, in good light, and the above features were properly noted, and can be seen in the accompanying photograph.

This sighting was surprising since *fulvescens* has not been recorded in India till date, but has occurred in Seistan, south-western Afghanistan (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). To confirm the identification of the bird in the photograph, I sent the images to Alan Dean (*in litt.*, e-mail dated 09 May 2015), and Arend Wassink (*in litt.*, e-mail dated 26 August 2015); both opined that the bird in question was *fulvescens*, or even, a probable *abietinus* race of the Common Chiffchaff. The latter is not known to occur in India; 'not genuinely known for the region, but possible in NW in migration' (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012).

The taxonomic status of *fulvescens* is still unclear. It is believed to be a form of *tristis*, and comprises birds with 'additional' yellow and olive in their plumage (Dean & Svensson 2005; Dean *et al.* 2010). However, *abietinus* is a distinct subspecies, breeding in eastern Europe and wintering in the Balkans, north-east, and eastern Africa, and Arabia (Clement 2016). Birds with mixed characters of *tristis* (*fulvescens*), and *abietinus* are regarded as *riphaeus*—a trinomial used for hybrids between *abietinus* and *fulvescens* from the 'zone of overlap' (see Fig. 1 in Dean *et al.* 2010: 321).

Vocalisations are important in the identification of various subspecies of Common Chiffchaff. Unfortunately, no call was heard while I was observing this bird. Thus, without analysis of the call, it is difficult to conclusively identify this individual. But based purely on a geographic premise, it is likely that this bird was *fulvescens*. As *abietinus* is deemed to reach northern Iran



Prasad Ganpule

26. Common Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita fulvescens*.

in winter (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012), it seems likely that *fulvescens*, whose breeding range is east of *abietinus*, between the Urals and Yenisey (Russia), will reach north-western India (Alan Dean, pers. comm., email dated 09 May 2015). However, it is well known that the Common Chiffchaff has a tendency to vagrancy, with many reports of occurrence outside its known range (Clement 2016).

Hence, it is not possible to completely rule out *abietinus*. Identification, and separation, of *fulvescens* from *abietinus* is difficult. The various races of Common Chiffchaff display a considerable overlap in plumage, and it can be very difficult, if not impossible, to assign an individual to a particular race (Dean & Svensson 2005). It would be prudent to be cautious in the identification of this Chiffchaff. Thus, this individual is best treated as *fulvescens* / *abietinus*, since the call was not noted and no measurements were taken.

The occurrence of Common Chiffchaff, race *fulvescens* / *abietinus*, in India is interesting and has not been noted earlier. It is possible that it is overlooked. Bird-watchers should search

for such Common Chiffchaffs in north-western India, where they could occur.

Acknowledgements

I thank Alan Dean and Arend Wassink for all their help.

References

- Clement, P., 2016. Common Chiffchaff (*Phylloscopus collybita*). In: del Hoyo, J., Elliott, A., Sargatal, J., Christie, D.A. & de Juana, E. (eds.). *Handbook of the birds of the world Alive*. Lynx Edicions, Barcelona. [Accessed on 15 May 2015].
- Dean, A. R., & Svensson, L., 2005. 'Siberian Chiffchaff' revisited. *British Birds* 98: 396-410.
- Dean, A. R., Bradshaw, C., Martin, J., Stoddart, A., & Walbridge, G., 2010. The status in Britain of 'Siberian Chiffchaff'. *British Birds* 103 (6): 320-338.
- Grimmett, R., Inskipp, C., & Inskipp, T., 2011. *Birds of the Indian Subcontinent*. 2nd ed. London: Oxford University Press & Christopher Helm. Pp. 1-528.
- Rasmussen, P. C., & Anderton, J. C., 2012. *Birds of South Asia: the Ripley guide*. 2nd ed. Washington, D.C. and Barcelona: Smithsonian Institution and Lynx Edicions. 2 vols. Pp. 1-378; 1-683.

Chinese White-browed Rosefinch *Carpodacus dubius* in Mishmi Hills: A confirmation record for India

Praveen J., Sachin Shurpali, Vijay Ramachandran, Mike Prince, Chris Bowden, Vinay Das, & Shashank Dalvi

Praveen, J., Shurpali, S., Ramachandran, V., Prince, M., Bowden, C. G. R., Das, V., & Dalvi, S., 2016. Chinese White-browed Rosefinch *Carpodacus dubius* in Mishmi Hills:

A confirmation record for India. *Indian BIRDS* 12 (1): 22-23.

Praveen J., B303, Shriram Spurthi, ITPL Main Road, Brookefields, Bengaluru 560037, Karnataka, India. E-mail: paintedstork@gmail.com [PJ]

Sachin Shurpali, 203, Prakruthi Paradise, Kempamma Devi Road, New Thippasandra, Bengaluru 560075, Karnataka, India. Email: shurpali@gmail.com [SS]

Vijay Ramachandran, 80, Adarsh Vista, Basavanagar Main Road, Bengaluru 560037, Karnataka, India. Email: vijay750@gmail.com.

Mike Prince, GA Regency Alandon, 2 Ware Road, Frazer Town, Bengaluru 560005 Karnataka, India. E-mail: mike@bubo.org.

Christopher G. R. Bowden, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL, U.K. E-mail: chris.bowden@rspb.org.uk.

Vinay Das, B-8, Kudremukh Colony, Koramangala 2nd Block, Bengaluru 560034, Karnataka, India. Email: vndas@yahoo.com.

Shashank Dalvi, Alumnus of WCS-NCBS Master's Programme, F-21, NCBS, GKVK, Bellary Road, Bengaluru, Karnataka, India. E-mail: shashank.da@gmail.com [SD]

Manuscript received on 22 May 2016.

The Himalayan White-browed Rosefinch *Carpodacus thura* is a polytypic species with a distribution range that extends from north-eastern Afghanistan, through the main range of the Himalayas, till central- and western China (Clement 2016). Rasmussen (2005) proposed a major update of the Asian Rosefinches, treating the two western Himalayan races—*blythii*, and *thura*—of the White-browed Rosefinch as a separate species from the Chinese races—*dubius*, and *femininus*: the former being called the Himalayan White-browed Rosefinch *C. thura sensu stricto*, and the latter, Chinese White-browed Rosefinch *C. dubius*. This was also supported by subsequent phylogenetic studies (Tietze *et al.* 2013). This split also resulted in the latter species being treated as hypothetical for South Asia, for want of verifiable reports. Baker (1926) listed the nominate race of the Chinese White-browed Rosefinch as, "a not uncommon Winter [sic] visitor to Eastern Assam", which area included present-day Arunachal Pradesh, during Baker's time. Ali & Ripley (1987) listed the *femininus* race of the Chinese White-browed Rosefinch from northern Arunachal Pradesh. However, both references do not provide an irrefutable provenance of record, or reference, from

South Asia, and hence it is listed as hypothetical (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012), and not included in the India Checklist (Praveen *et al.* 2016). Through this note, we would like to establish the presence of the Chinese White-browed Rosefinch in northern-eastern Arunachal Pradesh, by presenting photographic evidence.

On 05 May 2016, while on a birding trip to Mishmi Hills (Mehao Wildlife Sanctuary), SS summoned everyone, at 0852hrs, when he spotted a bird that had a bill like that of a bunting. It was hiding in the hedges adjoining a grassy slope (28.26°N, 95.91°E; c. 2550 m asl), not far from Mayodiya Pass. The bird flushed and sat in the open, for half a minute, when everyone got good views. SS took several photographs [27, 28] at this moment. It was clearly a rosefinch, bigger than a Common Rosefinch *C. erythrinus*, mostly grey above, white below, with streaked under parts. A white supercilium was prominent, as were the white streaks on the cheeks. The bird was tentatively recorded as a female Himalayan White-browed Rosefinch using field guides (Grimmett *et al.* 2011; Rasmussen & Anderton 2012) based on its larger size (*vis-à-vis* Common Rosefinch *Erythrina erythrina*), pale eyebrow, and heavily streaked under parts; we discounting