



Large Grey Babbler

around, from 9.00 AM to 1.00 PM, observing the birds. We noticed a group of medium-sized birds moving around in the foliage of the trees, and when we approached closer, they moved on to another tree on the far side. They were making harsh nasal call occasionally, which was familiar to one of us (CSK) elsewhere in India, as belonging to Large Grey Babbler *Turdoides malcolmi*. The birds were extremely wary and never allowed a close look. After following the group for quite a long time, PAV was able to procure a photograph of one of the birds, which clearly showed black lores, pale yellow eyes and pale grey head, confirming the identity of the species. The shape of the birds was typical of *Turdoides* babblers. they were larger than Jungle Babbler *Turdoides striata*; as they flew from one tree to another, the pale outer feathers of the long tail – another diagnostic feature of the species - were visible. Sashikumar *et. al.*(2011) have included the

species in the Secondary List of the book, quoting an unconfirmed record from Chinnar Wildlife sanctuary and some other sightings from Tamil Nadu close to the Kerala border at Periyar and Parambikkulam Tiger Reserves.

In the same scrub, we found several warblers also. PAV took several photographs of one particular individual which was later identified as Sykes's Warbler *Iduna rama* with the help of J Praveen. In the field, the bird was almost the same size and shape of the familiar Blyth's Reed-Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum*, many of which were present in the scrub, but distinct from that species with pale grey upperparts, a supercilium that extended behind the eyes and longer tail. Flatter forehead and absence of dark tip on the lower mandible of the longer bill differentiated it from Booted Warbler *Iduna caligata*. According to Sashikumar *et. al.* (2011), this species has not been recorded in Kerala.

To the best of our knowledge, this is the first photographic record of these species from Kerala.

Acknowledgements

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References:

Sashikumar, C., Praveen, J., Palot, M.J. and Nameer, P.O. (2011) *Birds of Kerala: Status and Distribution*. DC Books, Kottayam.

A Report of Large Grey Babbler from Attappady Hills, Kerala

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Large Grey Babbler *Turdoides malcolmi* is an open land species which is widespread in the whole of Peninsular India except the high rainfall area in the western coast. Until recently, the bird has not been positively recorded from Kerala though Ali (1969) included it in the state list tentatively based on statement by T.F. Bourdillon from Travancore. Sashikumar *et. al.* (2011a) included it in the secondary list as there were no confirmed reports from the state. However, the bird is present extremely close to the state border at Lower Periyar Ghats which about eight km from Thekkady in Periyar Tiger Reserve, Sethumadai which is about 12 km from Parambikkulam Tiger Reserve, Amaravathi checkpoint which is

about 15 km from Chinnar Wildlife Sanctuary (KV Eldhose in Sashikumaret. *al.* 2011a) and quite commonly between Dindugal and Pollachi (Sathasivam 2007). Hence the unconfirmed report from Chinnar WLS during a bird survey in 1998 (Sashikumar *et. al.* 2011a) could well be true. Recently, members of Malabar Ornithological Survey team photographed a bird from Walayar, Palakkad district right at the state border in March. 2011 (Sashikumaret. *al.* 2012, also see elsewhere this issue) and this was by far the first confirmed presence within the state.

While bird-watching in the dry meadows between Kottathara and Anaikatty on 22.11.2011 in NW parts of Palakkad district very close to the state border, I flushed two birds of this species from the ground and the birds crossed the dry fallow land to the scrub adjoining it; the grey-brown upper parts and wide white outer-tail feathers were quite evident in flight. Though none of the co-birders were particularly interested in seeing this bird, we still trashed around hoping to flush them again so that all of us could see it. Except for Pramod Padmanabhan who got to see two more in the vicinity, other birders viz. Dipu Karuthedathu, CK Vishnudas and Pamela Rasmussen were a little behind and did not see these birds. It is not surprising that this species is found here as the same occur around the campus of Salim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Nature History (SACON), five km across the border (Pramod P *pers. comm.*) on the leeward side of the Ghats.

Birders who visit Attappady hills should specifically look out for this species and find out how far its range extends into the Kerala side.

References

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Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus* feeding on the seeds of *Strobilanthes heynenus*

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On 18 March 2011 at Thirunelly, (11°99' N 75°99' E) Wayanad district, Kerala we saw a flock of Common Rosefinch *Corpodacus erythrinus* comprising of more than 125 individuals, over *Strobilanthes* plants (*Strobilanthes heynenus*) feeding on the seeds. *Strobilanthes* is endemic to southern Western Ghats and is one of the dominant undergrowth plants of the evergreen forest of Thirunelly. These plants produce seeds once in their life time and die. This same plant species flowered six years before in this same area (P. A Vinayan, Personal Communication). Common Rosefinches are winter visitors to the Western Ghat. They are gregarious in the non-breeding season (Grimmet., *et al.*, 1998). According to Ai & Ripley (1987) the food of this species is mostly seeds (of weeds, millet, wheat, linseed, vetch, polygonum, bamboo etc), flower buds, fruits and berries (mulberry, raspberries, wild cherries, banyan and pipal figs, *Lantanam*, *Masea*, *Trema*); nectar of *Erythrina*, *Salmalia*, *Butea*, *Woodfordia* and other blossoms is taken. The birds are opportunistic and obviously were utilising the abundant supply of the seeds of *Strobilanthes* available on their wintering grounds.

References

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Grimmet Richad, Carol Inskipp & Tim Inskipp, (1999). *Pocket Guide to the birds of the Indian sub-continent*. Oxford University Press.