

— Short Notes —

Sightings of White-naped Tit *Parus nuchalis* in Arogyavaram, Chittoor district, Andhra Pradesh

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On 18.xii.2003, around 1600 hrs my brother drew my attention to a pair of black and white birds smaller than a House Sparrow. They were seen along with a pair of Purple-rumped Sunbirds in our house compound in Arogyavaram (13°32'N 78°30'E; 700 m), Chittoor district, Andhra Pradesh.

With the help of a pair of binoculars and Kazmierczak (2000), we identified them as a pair of White-naped Tits *Parus nuchalis*. While the scapulars and coverts were pure black in color, the secondaries were white and the primaries and tertials appeared greyish. The prominent white ear-patch was continuous with the white of the side of the neck and the breast. A black streak was running from the throat down through the middle of the belly. They had a pleasant call.

They were first seen on the *Murraya konigii* tree and later moved on to a *Pongamia pinnata* and further on to a *Prosopis juliflora* tree outside the compound, perching about 4-5 m above the ground.

About two weeks later, on 1.i.2004, around 1630 hrs they were seen again in the same compound, and this time were present long enough for a second confirmation. After a few minutes they flew from the compound and perched on an *Acacia leucophloea* tree about 50 m away but could not be followed afterwards.

In February 2005, a single White-naped Tit was seen again around the same time in the same compound.

Immediately to the north of our compound is a barren dry land with sparse thorny scrub and a few trees like *Acacia leucophloea*, *A. nilotica*, *Prosopis juliflora*, *Tamarindus indicus*, and shrubs *Lantana camara*, *Zizyphus aenoplea*, etc., and on the other sides, there is moderate to dense tree cover.

The White-naped Tit is a species known to be endemic to India (Gaston 1985; Collar *et al.* 1994) evidently having a restricted and disjunct distribution (Ali & Ripley 1987) with two separate populations, in north-western India and the other in southern India (Ali 1955; Ali & Ripley 1987). A look at the distribution map for the species provided in the Birdlife International's Red Data Book—“*Threatened Birds of Asia*” confirms that their present and past distribution range in

southern India is along the broken hill-ranges of the Eastern Ghats that connects to the Western Ghats (via Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu) and northwestern Karnataka (BirdLife International, 2001). According to the Red Data Book, this species is considered Vulnerable (A1c, C1, C2a) (BirdLife International 2001). However, it is interesting to note that the only recorded sighting in Andhra Pradesh is in the Eastern Ghats west of Nellore, presumably in the Veliconda range, undated (Jerdon 1863; Lott & Lott 1999).

Considering the conservation status and the restricted distribution range of this species, and the presence of suitable habitats in the region, it is important that surveys are conducted to understand their local distribution and ecology along this physical connectivity between the two important bio-geographic regions of the peninsula, viz., the Eastern and Western Ghats for the White-naped Tit in southern India.



White-naped Tit *Parus nuchalis*

Jugal Tiwari

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[Editorial note: The sighting of the species in Chittoor happens to be the only known sighting of *P. nuchalis* in Andhra Pradesh in recent decades, as no record of the species exists after Jerdon obtained his type specimens from the hills west of Nellore. Also, no recent reports of its sightings exist from the western part of the southern peninsula in recent years. As the author suggests, intense surveys of the species in Chittoor area are needed to assess the status of this population of the species.]

Noteworthy records from western Arunachal Pradesh in October–November 2006

Harkirat Singh Sangha, Rishad Naoroji & Manoj Sharma

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We conducted field surveys in western Arunachal Pradesh from 22.x–4.xi.2006, at the following locations: Tawang (24°37'N 91°52'E), Zimithang, Nelya (c. 3000 m), Dirang (27°19'N 92°16'E), Chander and, Tungri (c. 3000 m). Species of significance, observed during these surveys, are described below:

Eurasian Hobby *Falco subbuteo*

An adult observed early morning of 22.x.2007 attacking Jungle Crows *Corvus macrorhynchos* in the campus of 27 Madras at Km 6, Tawang. Another individual seen on 1.xi.2007 at Tungri. Eurasian Hobby has not been previously recorded in Arunachal Pradesh (Grimmett *et al* 1998; Kazmierczak 2000). Its distribution in northern parts of Arunachal Pradesh is shown as, “presence suspected,” (Naoroji 2006). However, there is one record from Wallong (1,200 m) in north-eastern Arunachal Pradesh (Singh 1995).

Merlin *F. columbarius*

At dawn on 2.xi.2007 at Tungri, one individual observed from approximately four metres perched on a bush. On being alerted it flew away. The species is otherwise only recorded in eastern Arunachal Pradesh (Kazmierczak 2000) and from D’Ering Memorial Wildlife Sanctuary (Naoroji 2006).

Eurasian Eagle-Owl *Bubo bubo*

A pair was heard calling late at night on 30.x.2006 at Larjup between Chander and Tungri. While camping at Tungri from 31.x–3.xi.2006, another pair was regularly heard calling



Eurasian Hobby *Falco subbuteo*, Banni Grasslands, Kachchh, Gujarat, December 2006.

Clement Francis