raptor species; for example, observations indicate a relationship between food resources and brood reduction in Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis* (Estes *et al.* 1999) and Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* (Machmer and Ydenberg 1998). Cannibalism has been reported in the Common Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus* (Cain *et al.* 1984) and the domestic hen, and may be related to dietary factors (Ambrosen and Petersen 1997). We suggest that the behaviour of infanticide and cannibalism may have evolved in Oriental Pied Hornbill because it pays females to lay more eggs than the number of chicks that can be most effectively raised, reduce brood size to invest resources in the healthiest chicks, and to 'recycle' those in the youngest and weakest chick among its siblings.

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Chestnut-cheeked Starling *Sturnus philippensis*: new for the Indian subcontinent

PIERRE VAN DER WIELEN

On the afternoon of 28 March 2006, Alma Leegwater, Mario Renden, Rob Struyk and I were birding in a wide grassy strip amidst tall forest at Nameri National Park (26°56′4″N 92°51′09″E), Assam, north-eastern India. One of the highlights of the afternoon was the flocks of up to 80 Spot-winged Starlings *Saroglossa spiloptera* spread over the area. As this was a new species for all of us we took our time to get a good look at this gorgeous starling. Whilst examining a flock of about 40 Spot-winged Starlings, I saw an individual which, at first glance, looked like a male Purple-backed Starling *Sturnus sturninus*. Realising that this would be a vagrant in India, I alerted the others and pointed out the bird. We observed the bird for about 30 minutes through binoculars and a 20–60 × 60 spotting scope at a range of about 60 m. After consulting the two field guides we had with us (Kazmierczak and van Perlo 2000, Rasmussen and Anderton 2005), we quickly realised that several of the observed field marks did not fit Purple-backed Starling. The most obvious differences on 'our' bird were the whitish head with a large reddish cheek/ear-covert patch and the lack of a black cap. Because there was no species in either book that matched it we decided to take a detailed description and to try to obtain some photographs.

The conditions were perfect with no wind, no cloud cover and with the light coming from behind. The whole period we watched the bird, it stayed on the same bare branch even after the Spot-winged Starlings left. We obtained eight digiscoped photographs. These are rather poor but do show the diagnostic head markings. The bird flew while we were busy with camera and field guides, and we were unable to record additional field marks in flight.

Our field notes provided the following description. The bird had the typical shape of a starling; it was smaller than the Spot-winged Starlings around it, and less elongated in shape, creating a stockier look. Its head was creamy-white with a rather big dark eye with a thin, pale eye-ring. The bill was rather long, pointed and black. On both the sides of the head was a brick-red cheek/ear-covert patch with extensions towards the throat and upper breast. The flanks were grey and the belly largely white. The white underparts started from the undertail-coverts, continued on the belly and ended in a point on the upper breast. The legs were greyish. The wings were glossy-black with a white, elongated shoulder-patch. The upperparts were dark grey to black, with no gloss observed, merging into a pale grey rump with a dark wedge in the middle.

Back at our accommodation we consulted our last available field guide, Grimmett *et al.* (1998), but this did not help either. It was only when we got home two weeks later and consulted other books including Robson (2000) and Feare and Craig (1998) that we identified the bird as a male Chestnut-cheeked Starling *Sturnus philippensis*. The identification was straightforward as there are only a few species of starling in Asia, none of which shows the combination of a dark upperparts and wings, pale head and a brick-red cheek/ear-covert patch. This is the first record of Chestnut-cheeked Starling in India and the Indian subcontinent.

This species breeds quite commonly in northern and central Japan and adjacent islands in Russia, but not on the Asian mainland. The wintering area spans the region between southern Japan and the Philippines. Due to the rather low numbers in the known wintering areas it appears that the main wintering grounds have yet to be discovered (Feare and Craig 1998). On migration it is mostly seen in Japan but it also passes through eastern China, with good numbers on Taiwan. The first birds arrive in southern Japan in late March, moving north until they arrive in the breeding areas in April to early May. In their wintering areas, the last birds are usually seen in late April (Feare and Craig 1998).

Vagrants have been recorded in eastern Russia, northern Sulawesi, the Moluccas, peninsular Malaysia, Singapore and apparently in the U.S.A. (Feare and Craig 1998). In Thailand, their occurrence is quite recent, with several records in the last few winters (reports on the Bird Conservation Society of Thailand website, www.bcst.or.th/eng/sighting.htm). As Thailand is part of the wintering grounds of Spot-winged Starling it is quite possible that the Chestnut-cheeked Starling joined a flock of the former on their way back to India. Spot-winged Starlings breed in the foothills of the Himalayas in Nepal and further west. They winter from Assam east to north-western Thailand; westward migration through Assam and Nepal is in the period March–April. On their wintering grounds they often form mixed flocks with other starlings and mynas, and this suggests a way in which the Chestnut-cheeked Starling we observed may have found its way to India.

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First record of Rufous-bellied Woodpecker *Dendrocopos hyperythrus* in Lao PDR

ROLAND EVE

On 20 March 2006, I recorded a Rufous-bellied Woodpecker *Dendrocopos hyperythrus* in dry dipterocarp forest south-west of Ban Tapouak village, Xekong province, Lao PDR, (15°33′35″N 106°42′02″E, 240 m) during a biodiversity survey project (Poulsen *et al.* 2006). The weather was clear and sunny and the bird was seen at a distance of c.15 m over a period of several minutes. It was watched drumming on a dipterocarp snag (c.25 cm in diameter) in good light. It was identified by its conspicuous plain rufous underparts, contrasting grey around the eyes and on the lores, fine black and white barring on the upperparts, and a white-spotted black cap, indicating it was a female. No other woodpecker species has this combination of white-barred black upperparts and rufous underparts.

The fact that the bird was seen showing territorial behaviour (drumming) suggests that the species breeds in the area. There is also a long-distance migrant population