

Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni*: a new species for Pakistan

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During the 1995-1996 winter we were conducting surveys for Western Tragopans *Tragopan melanocephalus* on behalf of BirdLife International and the Himalayan Jungle Project, in the Palas Valley, Indus Kohistan.

Between surveys we stayed in Islamabad and, in late January 1996, NB located a flock of about 15 pipits *Anthus* in the woodland behind our hotel, which was situated near Rawal Lake, Islamabad. The birds were flighty and difficult to observe but, on hearing their calls, NB concluded that they were probably Tree Pipits *A. trivialis*.

On 3 February, RD had good views of the birds when they were feeding on the ground and identified them as Olive-backed Pipits *A. hodgsoni*. The birds were identified by the combination of a relatively uniform grey-brown mantle showing an olive-green tint, bold black breast streaking, and the characteristic head pattern consisting of a contrasting supercilium (buffish in front of the eye and white behind the eye), bordered by a dark margin

above, and a striking small white patch on the rear ear-coverts, which contrasted with a black patch below it. Most of their flight calls sounded finer and weaker than those of Tree Pipit, but some sounded almost identical to the equivalent calls given by Tree Pipits. On the basis of their faintly streaked mantle and scapulars, we concluded that they were of the race *yunnanensis*. The birds stayed in the area until at least late February.

Olive-backed Pipits are common and widespread further east; *A. h. yunnanensis* breeds in southern Siberia from the Pechora river east to Kamchatka and Japan and is a common winter visitor to the Himalayas west to Simla (Himachal Pradesh). This is the first confirmed record of this species for Pakistan. The birds were photographed by NB.

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A note on the food habits of Eurasian Eagle Owl *Bubo bubo* in northern Pakistan

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We performed a survey of the Sai Valley of northern Pakistan (35°45'N 74°30'E) during June 1994. This area is the confluence of the Himalayan, Karakoram, and Hindu Kush mountain ranges, with over 100 mountains reaching peak elevations of over 6,000 m, and is drained by the Indus River. The Sai Valley is just south of the main town of Gilgit. The Sai River, which flows west through the valley, empties into the Indus River at the town of Jaglot on the Karakoram Highway. Since the mountains in this area block the monsoon rains, the region is extremely arid. Little woody vegetation exists in Sai below 2,000 m, with *Juniperus macropoda* growing above this elevation, and scattered woodlands of *Pinus wallichiana* and *Picea smithiana* found between 2,400 and 3,600 m.

On 6 July, while in Sai we observed an adult Eurasian Eagle Owl *Bubo bubo* fly across the gorge during the day, having been disturbed by a rock displaced by a human climber. The owl flew from its roost to cliffs on the other side of the river. On 8 July we happened upon an injured owl in the same vicinity as the original roost; this was possibly the same individual we had seen earlier. This owl had probably been wounded by local villagers, as owls are disliked in this part of Pakistan. (A local insult is said to be 'You son of an owl'.)

The owl was captured and spent some time in our camp. Whilst there it regurgitated a pellet. We subsequently investigated the roost area where the owl had first been noted, on a steep cliff above the river at 2,450 m, and discovered a number of prey remains.