

New record of Swinhoe's Minivet with a distribution note from West Bengal, India

Swinhoe's Minivet aka Brown-rumped Minivet *Pericrocotus cantonensis* is poorly known from the Indian Subcontinent with known reports only from Bangladesh (Grimmett et al. 2011; Rasmussen & Anderton 2012).

Brown-rumped Minivet is enlisted to the Indian avifauna (Praveen et al. 2018), based on records from Odisha (Rajguru & Ukil 2016) and Karnataka (Sridharan et al. 2016).

Three photographs of Ashy Minivet from Kuldiha Wildlife Sanctuary, Odisha, by Rakesh Khedwal

China, Korea, and Japan. The species is a winter migrant to southern and southeastern Asia (Robson 2008; BirdLife International 2021). Our note is the first published record of Swinhoe's Minivet in West Bengal.

Midnapore is located at 22.250°N & 87.650°E and 23m above the sea level. West Bengal is a state in eastern India between Bay of Bengal

and Ajoy Kumar Dawn on 01 (or 02) November 2011, which was next acceptably identified as a Swinhoe's by Inskipp in 2015. An updated compilation by Tim Inskipp, of all known Ashy- and Swinhoe's Minivet sightings in West Bengal, suggests the same (Inskipp 2016). In West Bengal, few photographs were taken only from Nadia District in 2016 and 2017 but no publication from this state. Swinhoe's Minivets breed in central, eastern, and southeastern China, and winter in parts of southern Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam (BirdLife International 2021). Whereas, the Ashy Minivet *P. divaricatus* breeds in parts of Siberia,

and Himalaya, rich in mangrove swamps to dense forest. The state's climate varies from tropical savanna in the south to humid subtropical in the north. During our continuous migratory bird monitoring on 29 November 2020, we spotted four birds near Rajbandh, Anandapur (22.576°N & 87.338°E) village area in West Medinipur, West Bengal. Perched on the top of a bamboo tree, we lost three but fortunately got one proper photograph. Seeing the white head and black eye stripe, we realized it was different. We took many photographs but were unable to take from front because of positional disadvantages.

Identification of Swinhoe's Minivet

1. Distinct thin black eye stripe (vs thicker in Ashy Minivet).
2. Broad white forehead extending, beyond the eye (not much prominent because of juvenile bird), onto the fore-crown (white restricted on eyes in Ashy Minivet), which is one of the diagnostic features of a male Swinhoe's Minivet. Female different Ashy by paler rump and browner upperparts – our finding is female one.
3. Hind crown is dark grey (vs black in adult male Ashy Minivet).
4. Colour of rump is little buff-brown in Swinhoe's Minivet (vs grey in an Ashy Minivet).
5. Our pictures show the tail well, but the white shafts on the inner tail feathers that should ideally be present on a Swinhoe's Minivet cannot be seen.
6. Swinhoe's Minivets usually have a pale yellow-tinged wing patch (vs white in Ashy) but this is generally hidden in the folded wing and is not seen in any of our pictures. Very little is known about the status of this species in India due its similarity with the Ashy Minivet. Most of the dated published records of the Ashy Minivet did not consider Swinhoe's as it was nonfamiliar with Indian birders. This is especially significant as females and first winter males of both species are misidentified (Bakewell 2012). Inskipp (2016) placed the Swinhoe's Minivets as vagrant in their book. Grewal et al. (2016) placed the photograph of Swinhoe's Minivet under Ashy Minivet with no separate description. It is expected that upon deeper examination, more such photographs of Ashy Minivets, lying in online forums, may subsequently turn out to be of Swinhoe's.

References

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