



Abbott's Babbler *Malacocincla abbotti* in Purba Medinipur District, West Bengal, India. © Arajush Payra.

Sighting of Abbott's Babbler from Purba Medinipur District, West Bengal, India

Abbott's Babbler *Malacocincla abbotti*, a medium-sized bird of family Pellorneidae is widely distributed in the forests of the Himalaya from Nepal to Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya up to Lushai Hills of Mizoram and Tripura, and an isolated population in the Eastern Ghats (Grimmett et al. 2011, 2016) across southeastern Asia to Borneo (BirdLife International 2016; Collar & Robson 2019). Among the eight

subspecies recognized (Gill & Donsker 2018) two occur in India. These include *M. a. abbotti* (Blyth, 1845) from the eastern Himalaya to the Malay Peninsula and *M. a. krishnarajui* (Ripley & Beehler, 1985) from eastern India, the Vishakhapatnam Ghats. These stout birds forage in pairs in dense undergrowth close to the ground. They are easily noticeable by their distinctive calls. On 25 November 2019 around 11.30h,



Abbott's Babbler *Malacocincla abbotti* in Purba Medinipur District, West Bengal, India. © Arajush Payra

while birding around the village forests of Bara Solemanpur (21.672N & 87.575E, 7m.) in Purba Medinipur District, West Bengal, India, I heard a continuous bird call from the bushes. The moment I reached close to the bushes, the bird left the ground and perched on a Neem tree branch nearby. It was the moment I successfully captured some photographs of the bird using Nikon P900 Camera. For quite some time, the bird was busy foraging in the low vegetation, shrubs, and bamboo thickets. During my visit the next day, I again observed the bird continuously feeding in the bamboo bushes.

Later, on 9 December 2019 around 11.25h, a single individual was sighted at the same location foraging among the bushes. I identified the bird by its thick stocky bill, light grey supercilium, pale greyish breast and throat, rufous side breast, rufous short tail and vent duly verifying from Grimm et al. (2011), Arlott (2015), and Grewal et al. (2016). Though there are several records of its presence in northern West Bengal (Inskipp 1971; Sivakumar et al. 2006), its distribution in the southern parts of the state is scanty. These include a few sightings from Bibhutibhushan Wildlife Sanctuary,

Chintamani Kar Bird Sanctuary, and Sunderban Tiger Reserve in north and south 24 Parganas, respectively (Prasad 2012; Ash 2016; Modak 2017; Akhter 2019). The present sighting of the bird in Bara Solemanpur Village of Purba Medinipur District is about 115km south-west from its nearest known locality Chintamani Kar Bird Sanctuary, West Bengal (Prasad 2012) and about 90km south-east from the Panchalingeshwar Temple of Odisha (Modak 2019). Its frequent sightings in the southern most districts of West Bengal suggest its range distribution throughout the territory of West Bengal.

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Arajush Payra

Ramnagar, Purba Medinipur, West Bengal 721441, India.
Email: arajushpayra@gmail.com

Citation: Payra, A. (2021). Sighting of Abbott's Babbler from Purba Medinipur District, West Bengal, India. Bird-o-soar #79, In: *Zoo's Print* 36(4): 09–11.