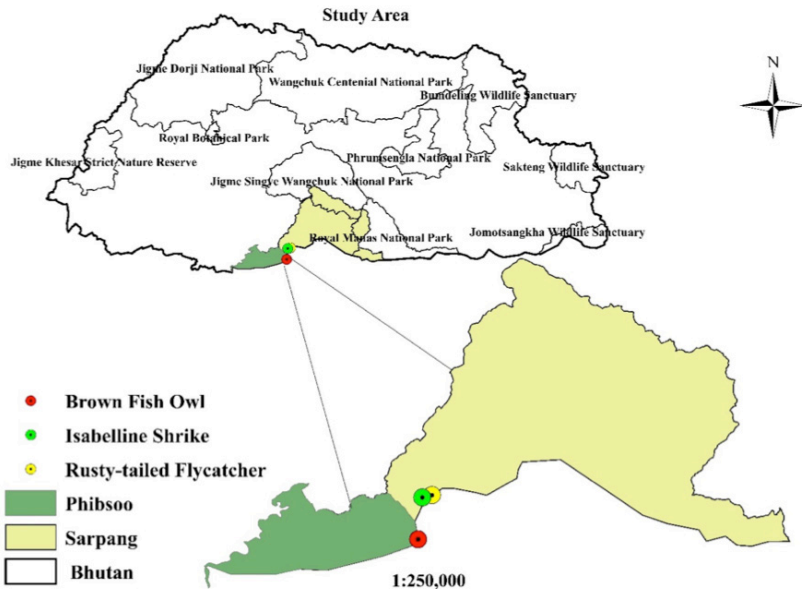


# New records to the birds of Bhutan from Sarpang & Phibsoo Wildlife Sanctuary

In this paper, we record the occurrence of Rusty-tailed Flycatcher *Ficedula ruficauda*, Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus* and Brown Fish-Owl *Ketupa zeylonensis* from Sarpang & Phibsoo Wildlife Sanctuary (PWS) as first records from Bhutan. For each of these records, we provide a digital photograph, geo-referenced locality data, and habitat information.



Observation sites of new birds.

Rusty-tailed Flycatcher: *Ficedula ruficauda* (Swainson, 1938) is a partially migratory and small passerine bird that breeds in central Asia and the western

Himalaya (Rasmussen & Anderton 2005; Taylor & Clement 2006). The bird had rufous upper tail-coverts and tail resulting in a redstart-like appearance,

flat forehead, and crown feathers slightly raised giving a slight crested appearance, plain face with only a faint supercilium and indistinct eye-ring. The bird also has orange bill and rather plain brown upperparts which are additional identification features for Rufous-tailed Flycatcher.



Rusty-tailed Flycatcher. © Namgay Dorji

According to BirdLife International (2021), the bird is common in northern and western India, Pakistan, and Nepal. It is a rare bird in eastern India, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan. On 15



Isabelline Shrike. © Namgay Dorji

July 2018, a Rusty-tailed Flycatcher was observed for the first time in Bhutan by Namgyel Dorji from Singye Gewog (26.8488 N; 90.2144 E) at 0900 h at an elevation of 313 m.

The bird was observed perching on a wire in open forest with the main canopy comprising *Duabanga grandiflora*, *Bombax ceiba*, and *Tetrameles nudiflora* while the undergrowth consisted of *Chromolaena odorata*, *Mikania micrantha*, *Psilanthus bengalensis*, *Justicia adhatoda*, and bamboo species. The species has been assessed as Least Concern by BirdLife International (2021).

Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus* is known to breed from Iran through central Asia, the Russian Altai Mountains to northern China and Mongolia reaching the upper Amur River (Dementev & Gladkov 1968; Cramp &

Perrins 1993). It prefers to breed in hilly areas between 1,000 and 2,000 m (Ignatov et al. 2015). The taxonomy of Isabelline Shrike is known to be complex and has been the source of debate (Ignatov et al. 2015). Among shrikes, *Lanius isabellinus* has the highest potential for vagrancy in Europe based on its range and migratory habits. It was observed for the first time in Bhutan at Singye Gewog (26.8451 N, 90.1991 E) in Sarpang on 6 October 2018 at an elevation of 313 m at 0930 h by Mr. Namgyel Dorji.

The bird's habitat was covered by dense forest of *Terminalia tomentosa*,



Brown Fish-Owl. © Namgay Dorji

*Duabanga grandiflora*, *Gmelina arborea*, *Tetrameles nudiflora*, *Schima wallichii*, and *Bombax ceiba* with an undergrowth of invasive weeds such as *Chromolaena odorata*, *Sida acuta*, *Psilanthus bengalensis*, and *Tabernaemontana divaricata*. Expert advice from Dr. Sherub and Tim Inskipp was sought through the Bhutan Birdlife Organization which later confirmed the species as a first winter *Lanius isabellinus*, a new record for Bhutan. Furthermore, Grimmett et al. (2016) was used for identification. The bird had a typical structure of a shrike. The greyish bill had dark edges, the thin supercilium was white to creamy in color, a black mask ran from the forehead across the lores to the ear coverts, the upper parts were uniformly grey. The tail and rump were bright rufous with the rump paler than upper tail. The species is categorized as Least Concern by BirdLife International (2021).

Brown Fish-Owl *Ketupa zeylonensis* is a resident owl which occurs in the subcontinent south of the Himalaya from northwestern Pakistan, east to Assam, eastern Meghalaya, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka (Wadatkar et al. 2014). The bird occurs mostly in lowlands by streamsides, thickets, villages, groves, in open forests (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012), also in deciduous and semi-deciduous forests, and well-wooded areas up to 1,900 m (Ali & Ripley 1987; Rasmussen & Anderton 2005). Marks et al. (1999) reported that the species is generally uncommon even though the global population is not quantified. However, the species is listed as globally

Least Concern due to its extremely large range (BirdLife International 2021). The bird was sighted for the first time in Bhutan on 25 November 2019 by Mr. Namgyel Dorji at Phibsoo (26.7794 N, 90.1926 E) at an elevation of 315 m in 2019.

It was observed resting on a branch of *Tetrameles nudiflora*. The area was covered by dense forest of *Shorea robusta*, *Terminalia indica*, *Duabanga grandiflora*, *Michelia champaca*, *Schima wallichii*, with an undergrowth of invasive species such as *Chromolaena odorata*, *Psilanthus bengalensis*, *Tabernaemontana divaricata*, *Mikania micrantha*, and *Clerodendrum* species. The bird was identified using Grimmett et al. (2016), Grewal et al. (2017) and expert identification through the Bhutan Birdlife Organization. The bird had fine cross-barring on the underparts especially on lower flanks with dark rufous brown upperparts. It also had heavily streaked darker underparts. The tail of the bird is short with white tips, yellow legs and unfeathered tarsi. The unfeathered tarsi eliminate the closely related Tawny Fish-Owl *Ketupa flavipes*.

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