

Leucistic Red-whiskered Bulbul observed in The Nilgiris, Tamil Nadu, India

The Red-whiskered Bulbul *Pycnonotus jocosus* is a passerine bird that comes under the family Pycnonotidae and is commonly known as bulbul. It is a resident frugivore bird found mainly in tropical Asia (Grimmett et al. 2011). It prefers dry scrub, open forest, plains and cultivated lands and its distribution is affected by the vegetation pattern due to its specific feeding ecology. The breeding season is spread out and it peaks from March to October in northern India and December to May in southern India. They nest usually on bushes, sunroof walls and small trees (Sacchi et al. 2002). Identifiable characteristics include its distinctive red ear patch and undertail coverts, a dark brown upper side, tan flanks, and white underside, a thin and notched beak, oval-shaped bristled nostrils and a black shoulder spur and blackhead with a pointed crest. The legs and toes are usually short and have little strength (Grimmett et al. 2011). Leucism is characterized by the absence of pigmentation which can



Leucistic Red-whiskered Bulbul, The Nilgiris, Tamil Nadu, India. © Kishore, M.

either be partial or complete or have white patches in the feathers. Abnormally coloured birds have reduced chances of survival and mating success compared to normal-coloured birds (Guay et al. 2012).

The Red-whiskered bulbul was observed from The Nilgiris on 17 January 2022 at 1630 h. The locations of the observation were 11.4307 N & 76.7363 E with an elevation of 2,286.54

m. A partial white-crested bird was observed near a rural area, while it was feeding on *Rubus ellipticus* plant. Closer observation confirmed that as a Red-whiskered Bulbul with a leucistic character. The head crest, nape, breast and back of the individual were highly patchy with irregular white feathers, and the concentration of white coloured feathers was high. The beak, legs and eyes were in routine colouration

and the vent was also in normal red colour. The leucistic Red-whiskered Bulbul was recorded for the first time in the Nilgiris District.

Based on the literature of the previous record of leucistic Red-whiskered Bulbul observed from Ramanthali village from Kannur District Kerala on August 2016 and Kasseruppe village near the Bannerghatta National Park (Green Minute 2020); in Tamil Nadu, from Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve (Saravanan 2017). Here we describe the observation of leucistic Red-Whiskered Bulbul in The Nilgiris, Tamil Nadu, India. And need to study its survival rate and breeding behaviour whether its plumage affects it in its life. Leucism can produce alterations in pigmentation due to nutritional alterations, heritable mutation, and external factors (Van Grouw 2013).

References

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