

Brownish-flanked Bush Warbler near Garhshankar, Punjab



Brownish-flanked Bush Warbler near Garhshankar, Punjab.
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Brownish-flanked Bush Warbler *Horornis fortipes* is a resident of the Himalaya and northeastern India (Grimmett et al. 2011). Race *H. f. pallida* breeds in the lower western Himalaya at 1,800–3,000 m with the areas closest to Punjab being Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh and descends to lower elevations outside the breeding season (Kennerley & Pearson 2010). In this note, we report the sighting of a Brownish-flanked Bush Warbler from Hoshiarpur District, Punjab, India.

On 14 February 2025 at 0943 h, PSA spotted a drab looking small bird while birding around village Barapur (31.2266° N, 76.2258° E, 372 m), on Barapur-Kunail road, in the Shivalik Hills, near Garhshankar, Hoshiarpur District, Punjab. It kept moving in the lower branches of a bush,

remaining under thick cover and not offering a good view. It was identified as Brownish-flanked Bush Warbler from one of the photographs that showed fairly indistinct supercilium, most conspicuous in front of the eye, bordered below by a short dark eye-stripe, again best defined in front of the eye; dull cold olive-brown crown, nape and mantle; dull warm brown edges to the primaries and secondaries; and the rather greyer and darker breast sides (Kennerley & Pearson 2010).

From Punjab and the state capital Chandigarh, only four previous records of Brownish-flanked Bush Warbler are there. From Chandigarh, there is one skin in BNHS, marked as *Cettia montana pallida* (Brooks) (Kashmir) Pale Strongfooted Bush Warbler (Abdulali 1986).

There are two records from Harike Wildlife Sanctuary, from the late 1990s (Robson 1998, 1999) and one sighting from 2023 from Nara, Hoshiarpur District, Punjab (Malik 2023). From Chandigarh, there is a recent record on eBird (Dhillon 2021). Other than these, we were not able to find any other record from any other source. Therefore, the present sighting is significant as it is only the second photographic record of the species from Punjab, outside of Chandigarh.

As per Kennerley & Pearson (2010), “Birds that winter at lower elevations occur on low hills and hillsides covered with dense grass and scattered bushes, however, they can be found in a wide range of scrub and grassland habitats. Shy and skulking, it usually remains low in thick cover where it can be extremely difficult to view, typically affording only brief glimpses. Occasionally, it flies between bushes but rarely pauses to permit good views. It keeps cocking its tail and drooping its wings along the flanks”. Calls include a soft repeated ‘chupp’, a harsh ‘tchuk’ or ‘pick’, and a short metallic ‘tit’ or ‘trrt’ (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). Following the calls can help to follow its movement through thick undergrowth. Therefore, the bird enthusiasts who wish to record this bird in the state/region, should keep the habitat and behaviour in mind.

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Citation: Antaal, P.S. & G. Singh (2026). Brownish-flanked Bush Warbler near Garhshankar, Punjab. Bird-o-soar #301, In: *Zoo's Print* 41(9): 38–39.