

Large-tailed Nightjar in Harike, Punjab

In the Indian Subcontinent, the Large-tailed Nightjar (LTN) *Caprimulgus macrurus* is distributed from foothills of Himalaya from northeastern Pakistan, east to Bhutan and northeastern India, south to eastern India and Bangladesh (Cleere & Kirwan 2020). It breeds mostly from base of hills to 900 m, wintering mostly in the plains (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012).

Here, we present a sighting of the LTN from Harike, Punjab, India. On the evening of 22 November 2025, at 1815 h the first author observed a nightjar along the path leading to the bird watching area at Harike (31.1302° N, 74.9662° E, 210 m). It was already getting dark, and the path was particularly shaded by dense adjoining vegetation.

Approximately 30 seconds after entering the path, the first author noticed



Large-tailed Nightjar at Harike. © Manish Ahuja.



The dust track on which the Large-tailed Nightjar was found. © Gurpartap Singh.

a shiny object on the track. Initially, he assumed it to be the eye shine of a mammal. As he approached closer, however, he realised that it was unlikely to be a mammal, as a mammal looking directly towards him would show two shining eyes in the darkness. On approaching

further, he identified the object as a nightjar. As he did not have his camera with him, he used his mobile phone to take a few photographs before the bird flew away.

The photographs were subsequently examined,

and the bird was identified as LTN, from the combination of wing coverts spotted buff, indistinct tawny/buff collar around hind neck, and broad white tips to two outermost tail feathers (Cleere 2010), even though the white throat patch was obscured due to insufficient light. The broad white tips to two outermost tail feathers indicated it to be a male.

This species is very rare in this area, though a few sightings have been reported from other parts of Punjab, mainly in the Shivalik foothills. The few published/documentated reports from the state are presented below.

Except the one sighting each from Ludhiana and Harike, all other sightings have been from the Shivalik foothills in Sahibzada Ajit Nagar, Rupnagar and Pathankot districts. Thus, the present sighting is significant as it is only the third one outside the Shivalik foothills. This individual must have come down to the plains for wintering, from the foothills in the north.

The location where the LTN was found is a dust track leading to the bird watching area at Harike Wildlife Sanctuary. On one side is the embankment with vegetation along the huge waterbody carrying water from the Sutlej River and on the other side is the forest between the sanctuary and the twin irrigation canals coming from the Harike Barrage.

The location is very secluded as the entry is restricted. This species, like its congeners, is crepuscular and nocturnal. True to its nature, the bird was observed when it was already getting darker in the evening. It habitually squats in the middle of paths and forest roads, flying up and sailing around every now and again to hawk over the adjacent clearings (Ali & Ripley 1983). In the present case also, the bird was found squatting on a path in wooded area. Interested researchers and birdwatchers can identify and locate similar habitats where this species may occur.

Previous reports of Large-tailed Nightjar from Punjab.

Location	Date and description	Reference
Unspecified, Rupnagar District	Unspecified	Anonymous 1987
Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana	Not mentioned; specimen collected, morphometric measurements taken	Saini & Saini 1995
Harike Wildlife Sanctuary	30 November 1996, one bird reported by Per Undeland	Robson 1997
Dhar, Pathankot District	Between 17 and 22 April 1997	Per Undeland, in litt., e-mail dated 13.xi.2025
Santokhgarh, Rupnagar District	Unspecified; indicated as resident/ partially migratory	Kumar et al. 2006
Bardar, Rupnagar District	Two birds seen in flight, call recorded	Chaudhary 2019
Anandpur Sahib, Rupnagar District	06 June 2020, five birds reported, photos clicked	Bamby 2020
Village Bani, Rupnagar District	07 June 2020, one bird photographed	Bhatti 2020
Paili Khurd, Rupnagar District	07 June 2020, four birds reported	Virk 2020
Siswan, Sahibzada Ajit Singh Nagar District	Unspecified; indicated as resident	WII 2020

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