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SIGHTING OF SIRKEER MALKOHA *PHAENICOPHAEUS LESCHENULTII* IN THE THAR DESERT

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web supplement

Jodhpur is one of the well known princely states of Rajasthan, it is also considered as a gate way to the Great Indian Desert 'The Thar' (25.6°-27.1°E & 71.9°-74.1°N). In the recent past, Jodhpur has undergone a drastic change ecologically due to ample water supply. Increased tree vegetation has attracted several avian species to this part of the 'desert'. Several garden loving species and dense forest species have been found for the first time in Jodhpur particularly the Yellow-footed Green Pigeon (*Treron phoenicoptera*) (Rahmani, 1996) and Indian Pitta (*Pitta nipalensis*) (Singh, 2001). The introduction of artificial environment and continuous water in the lakes of Jodhpur have increased the bird species from 125 (Bohra & Goyal, 1992) to 190 (checklist is under preparation).

Sirkeer Cuckoo now called Sirkeer Malkoha (*Phaenicophaeus leschenaultii*) was sighted thrice (Image 1st) in the campus of Desert Medicine Research Centre (DMRC), Jodhpur between 21 and 30 June 2004. The bird was easily identified by its cherry red curved bill and a typical walking posture (Ali & Ripely, 1983). This had not been sighted by earlier birdwatchers, viz., Whistler (1936), Bohra and Goyal (1992), Rahmani (1996, 1997), and Mukherjee (1995). Distribution of this bird according to Ali and Ripely (1983) and Grimmett *et al.* (1998) excludes the western parts of Rajasthan. There is no past history of the occurrence of this bird in the desert whereas other cuckoos like Common Hawk Cuckoo (*Hierococcyx varius*) and Migratory Pied Crested Cuckoo (*Clamator jacobinus*) are commonly seen in Jodhpur. It was seen in the open shrubs of Jodhpur region which is mainly composed of *Capparis decidua* and *Zizyphus nummularia* shrubs.

It appears that the perennial supply of water to this district of western Rajasthan have attracted several forest dwelling species from the Aravallis and Udaipur region of southern Rajasthan where these birds are in good numbers.

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* see Image in the web supplement at www.zooreach.org



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