

more widespread eruption this autumn to southern India and more individuals could turn up¹. However, it is unclear whether the warblers would have survived, or attempt an ocean crossing as there has not been any previously reported instance of such a migratory route.

While these birds would turn out to be the first definitive records of Willow Warbler for the Indian Subcontinent, these records are not that surprising. A widespread breeder in the eastern Palearctic eventually will turn up in the Indian Subcontinent, and the first winter bird illustrates how easily it can be overlooked as a slightly atypical individual of regularly occurring species like Tickell's Leaf Warbler or Green Warbler. Birders may focus on leaf warblers found in non-wooded habitats and make efforts to document them with photographs to establish a strong ID.

A large number of people have been involved in helping us identify this atypical leaf warbler, either directly providing identification keys, or helping us (or our images) reach experts who could advise. We are grateful to all of them- Abhinand Chandran, Andy Stoddart, Ankit Vikrant, Ashwin Viswanathan, Biju P. B., Chris Bowden, Chris Kehoe, Dave Bakewell, Francis Buner, Govind Girija, James Eaton, Lars Svensson, Mike Prince, Nick Lethaby, Oscar Campbell, Pam Rasmussen, Per Alström, Peter Clement, Prasad Ganpule, Rajah Jayapal, Satyan Meppayur, Shashank Dalvi, Staffan Bensch, Tim Inskipp, and Tim Walker. Our thanks to an anonymous referee for greatly improving the manuscript and confirming our ID. We would like to thank members of the *Trivandrum Birding Team* who kept a constant watch at the spot during the week.

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The Desert Finch *Rhodospiza obsoleta* in Sirsa, Haryana, India

On 22 November 2020, we photographed a Desert Finch *Rhodospiza obsoleta* [17, 18] in the western part of Haryana, at Village Nathusari Chopta (29.37°N, 75.12°E) near Sirsa [19]. The presence of pink and white feathers on the otherwise sandy brown plumage helped us identify it as a Desert Finch. The bird we saw was a female, because of the absence of a black frontal mask that is present in a male. We recorded only a single bird, which constantly feeding on the ground. The bird was in a small flock of Laughing Doves *Spilopelia senegalensis* and Pied Bushchats *Saxicola caprata* and soon flew away after 8-10 minutes of observation.



17.

1 Editor's note: After this note was submitted, a Willow Warbler with similar features was reported from Changam wetlands, Alappuzha District, Kerala, c. 200 km northwards of this site (<https://ebird.org/india/view/checklist/S76838617>).



Both: Sanjeev K. Goyal

17–19. Desert Finch at Nathusari Chopta, Sirsa, Haryana. November 2020.

Praveen et al. (2017) listed it as a bird, not recorded from India, while it is found in the Indian Subcontinent. However, there is one other record of the Desert Finch from within the political boundaries of India, as one photographed by Imran Shah at Borit Lake, Ghoyal, Gilgit, Ladakh (Shah 2018), and cited by Praveen & Kichloo (2020) and added to the India Checklist (Praveen et al. 2020). (Fig. 1)

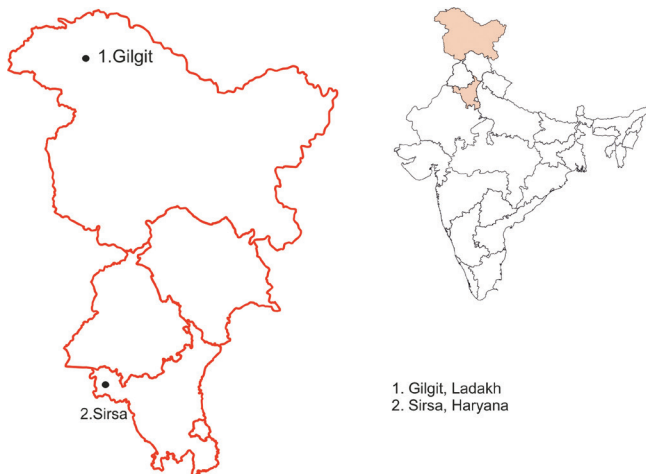


Fig. 1. Observations of Desert Finch from India.

The Desert Finch is a resident of south-central and south-eastern Turkey, Syria, Israel, north-eastern Egypt (Sinai), eastwards to central Jordan, northern and central Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Kuwait, Iran, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and north-western and northern China (Xinjiang eastwards to Inner Mongolia and Gansu). Its breeding range includes central, southern eastern Kazakhstan. The bird winters southwards up to northern Afghanistan, western Pakistan (Baluchistan), and northern Pakistan (Chitral) (Clement 2020).

Oates (1890) predicted the likelihood of finding the *Rhodospiza obsoleta* in undivided India while describing the finches of the genus *Erythrospiza*. Sharpe (1891) reported its occurrence from Yarkland, Sanju, and Kashghar, Xinjiang China—all lying just north of Kashmir. Finn (1897) collected a specimen of the Desert Finch on the Afghan–Baluchistan border. Walton (1900) described the Desert Finches collected from Datta Kehel, Tochi Valley, northern Waziristan, Pakistan. Comber (1901) found the bird resident at Chaman, Baluchistan. Perreau (1910) described the Desert Finch from the junction of Shishi River to Chitral River at Chitral, Pakistan. Meinertzhagen (1914, 1920), and Ticehurst (1927) observed the eggs and young Desert Finches from Quetta to Kandahar and described it as common resident bird there. Delme Radcliffe (1915) found the bird, and its eggs in Quetta Valley. Williams (1929) mentioned it as most common bird from March to September in Quetta Valley. The Bombay Natural History Society's Collection has eight specimens (5 male and 3 female) collected between 1902–1926 from Iraq (1), Pakistan (4), and China (3) (Unnithan 2005).

The present record from Sirsa could be considered as a vagrant record as it was not reported earlier and could not be traced again on subsequent trips. However, the species may not be entirely unexpected as there is a sight report from adjoining Punjab, in Pakistan, from Sazgar Game Birds Farms, Kasur (31.26°N, 74.19°E) on 27 November 2019 (Naseer 2019), which is c.250 km north-westwards of the present location.

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A Japanese Thrush *Turdus cardis* in Walong, Arunachal Pradesh: An addition to South Asian avifauna

On 26 December 2020, while birding enroute to Tilam Top (28.15°N, 97.02°E; c.1,200 m asl), Walong, Arunachal Pradesh, we encountered a peculiar-looking thrush *Turdus* sp., feeding along with Alpine Thrushes *Zoothera mollissima* at 0600 h. The bird had black upperparts, and white lowerparts, with black 'inverted heart' like spots on its upper belly and flanks [20, 21]. On further observation, the thrush had a dull yellowish-orange bill. The surrounding habitat was a coniferous forest with small, shady 'gullies' into which, hardly any light entered. We concluded from the above pointers that this was a Japanese Thrush *T. cardis*—a species that had not been listed for South Asia (Praveen et al. 2020).

The Japanese Thrush mainly winters in south-eastern China (including south-eastern Yunnan), Hainan, and northern Indochina (Collar & Bonan 2020). The nearest records of the sighting of a Japanese Thrush, to the current site are listed in Table 1. The closest report being less than 400 km away.

| Place | Country | Date | Altitude in m asl | Aerial distance in km |
|--------------------|---------|------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| Baihualing, Yunnan | China | 27 November 2020 | 1,500 (?) | 360 |
| Bagan, Mandalay | Myanmar | 14 February 2018 | 45–70 | 800 |
| Kunming, Yunnan | China | 02 March 2013 | 1950 (?) | 660 |

The preferred winter habitat of Japanese Thrushes is woodland with cultivated surroundings, lightly wooded areas including urban parks (Collar & Bonan 2020)—in contrast to the thickly wooded area where we saw it. The Walong area in north-eastern Arunachal Pradesh has shown several affinities to the Yunnan region of China, and the Japanese Thrush is another addition to this growing list.



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20, 21. Japanese Thrush in Walong, Arunachal Pradesh.

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Presence of Sichuan Leaf Warblers *Phylloscopus forresti* in Anjaw District, Arunachal Pradesh

The known winter range of the Sichuan Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus forresti* extends from south-eastern Xizang and southern Sichuan, southwards to eastern Myanmar, north-western Thailand, and northern Vietnam (del Hoyo et al. 2020). In Anjaw District, there is a high probability of Sichuan Leaf Warblers being present here.

In Anjaw District, we had observed many *Phylloscopus* warblers between 25–27 December 2020, some of which