

ABP and regeneration of lost biotic communities provide habitats for diverse bird species. It is anticipated that in future many other bird species, which were sighted in Delhi in the past, will once again be found in ABP.

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## A futile nesting attempt by endemic Wynaad Laughing-thrush *Garrulax delesserti* in Silent Valley National Park, Kerala, with a comment on its altitudinal distribution

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The Wynaad Laughing-thrush *Garrulax delesserti* is a Western Ghats endemic, found up to Goa in the north (Ali & Ripley 1987), between an altitudinal range that varies from 155 to 1220 m asl (Collar & Robson 2007; Rasmussen & Anderton 2012), but most commonly between 300–900 m—with a single record from 1800 m (Sashikumar *et al.* 2011a). Its habitat is mainly confined to humid rainforest with thick understory (Ali & Ripley 1987). The global population of this species has not been estimated, but it has been described as uncommon to common throughout its range (Collar & Robson 2007; BirdLife



Photos: M. Divin Murukesh

123. Breeding pair of Wynaad Laughing-thrush observed at Silent Valley National Park.



124. A Wynaad Laughing-thrush carrying fine fibre-like nest material.

International 2014). The birds are noisy but difficult to locate in the undergrowth. They are gregarious, and form groups of up to 30 individuals (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). They nest mainly during the monsoon (April–September). The nest is a semi-domed cup made up of rootlets or creeper stems, on a bush or saplings. The clutch size comprises three–four, unmarked white eggs (Ali & Ripley 1987). The species has been reported from many protected areas of Kerala (Islam & Rahmani 2004). However, despite its wide distribution, ‘surprisingly there are no recent breeding records from Kerala’ (Sashikumar *et al.* 2011a),

except that of a juvenile at Vellarimala on 07 March 2011, being fed by adults (Sashikumar *et al.* 2011b).

We observed the nesting behaviour of the Wynaad Laughing-thrush on 08 March 2014, at Sairandhri (11.83°N, 76.43°E; 1017 m asl), Silent Valley National Park, Kerala [123]. Two birds were seen carrying fine fibre-like nest material from the undergrowth [124], a *Strobilanthes* patch, to the nesting tree, *Mesua ferrea* with a height of 9.5 m. The pair was observed at this activity for more than an hour; 1100–1230 hrs, making 11 trips altogether to the nest, at intervals of three to fifteen minutes. After this, the pair disappeared into same undergrowth. There were no activities at the nest site in the afternoon.

On the next day, nest construction lasted for about 20 min., with the birds bringing nest material to the nest site only three times.

On the third day we did not see the birds at the site.

On the fourth day, one bird was sitting on a top branch of the 'nest' tree, for about ten minutes before it disappeared.

We continued our observations for the next five days, but did not spot the birds there, which indicates that they deserted the nest for unknown reason.

Ali & Ripley (1987) reported the breeding season of the Wynaad Laughing-thrush as April to August in Kerala, and found their nests in bushes, saplings, and *Strobilanthes*, within a couple of meters from the ground. However, our observation of the nesting activity, and the sighting of the juvenile bird by Sashikumar *et al.* (2011b), was in early March. Zacharias (1997) reported a possible communal nesting behaviour of the species from Periyar Tiger Reserve where the birds built the nest at a height of three meters on an *Actinodaphne hirsuta* tree. However, during our observations, the nest platform—an irregularly arranged clump of fibres—that the birds constructed was placed nine meters above the ground.

Although 11 sightings, of 39 Wynaad Laughing-thrushes were made in the Silent Valley National Park, from March 2013 to May

2014, no other breeding activity of the species was observed. Of these, nine observations were from the elevation range already stated, while two were from 2004 m at Sispara, close to the Mukurthi National Park. This may probably be the highest altitudinal record for this species.

The lack of observations on the breeding activities suggests the need of a systematic study on the breeding status and productivity of this endemic species.

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## First record of European Roller *Coracias garrulus* from Tamil Nadu

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### Introduction

The European Roller *Coracias garrulus* is a fall migrant through much of north-western-, and central- India, occasionally reaching the eastern parts of southern peninsular India (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). Its nearest breeding population is in Central Asia; its entire global population winters in Africa. Two subspecies are recognised: *C. g. semenowi* breeds from Iraq eastwards, through Kashmir, to north-western China, and is believed to pass through the Indian Subcontinent during autumn.

### Migration records for southern India

During the autumn/fall migration, this species occurs widely as a passage migrant throughout Pakistan, and the north-western

Indian states like Punjab, Rajasthan, and Gujarat. The peninsular Indian region, not being in the direct flight path to the wintering grounds in Africa, only attracts a few stragglers; mostly young birds. Narayanan *et al.* (2008) summarise the records for the southern states of Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka, and the undivided erstwhile Andhra Pradesh from where this species has been recorded, till 2008, on 18 instances from 15 locations. Kerala records are from: the Irupathinalayiram Kayal area, Alappuzha District on 29 October 2002 (Narayanan *et al.* 2008), and from Chinnar Wildlife Sanctuary on 28 November 2002 by Eldhouse (Sashikumar *et al.* 2011). Subsequently, there are several records for the European Roller from northern Kerala (Keralabirder). The most recent sighting from southern India was from the Union Territory of Puducherry on 10 January 2014 by Lekshmi (2014).