

COUNTRY FIRSTS

The first record of Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush *Monticola saxatilis* for Nepal

NARESH KUSI, TSHIRING LHAMU LAMA, PEMA RIKZIN LAMA & GERALDINE WERHAHN

We report here the first record of Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush *Monticola saxatilis* for Nepal. At 16h42 on 27 May 2016, a single bird was seen in upper Dolpa district, Province 6, Nepal, near the renowned Shey monastery in Shey Phoksundo National Park (29.351°N 82.960°E), on a north-east-facing hill-slope (4,781 m) consisting of alpine grassland locally known as Fapchang Fawrang. At the time we were carrying out research on Himalayan Wolf *Canis* sp., Wild Yak *Bos mutus* and Snow Leopard *Panthera uncia*.

We obtained images of the bird which assisted in its identification, later verified by experts. The front view (Plate 1) showed bright chestnut underparts and a dull blue hood, which suggested that it was either a male Blue-capped Rock Thrush *M. cinclorhynchus* or Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush. On careful observation, it was noted that the bird had a rufous-coloured tail, which eliminated Blue-capped Rock Thrush as that species has a blue-black tail (Grimmett *et al.* 1998). The upperparts of the bird (Plate 2) showed a white patch on the lower back and rump, further confirmation that it was a male Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush (Grimmett *et al.* 1998). This identification was

later confirmed by Carol Inskipp and Hem Sagar Baral (*in litt.* email 2016).

The Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush is considered to be an autumn passage migrant in Pakistan and Ladakh, India (Grimmett *et al.* 1998). Its status as a passage migrant in this region is further supported by more recent records of the species from various parts of south and east India during autumn migration (Balar *et al.* 2016). Our observation of a single Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush is insufficient evidence to confirm that it is a passage migrant in Nepal. As our sighting was in late May, well into the breeding season (Collar & Bonan 2017) and it was in breeding plumage, there is a possibility that the species may be breeding in Nepal. The location where it was seen is very remote and is rarely visited by ornithologists. This indicates the need to further investigate the status of Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush in Nepal.

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Plate 1. Male Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush *Monticola saxatilis*, upper Dolpa, Nepal, 27 May 2016.





NARESH KUSI

Plate 2. Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush, dorsal view of male in breeding plumage, upper Dolpa, Nepal, 27 May 2016.

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Naresh KUSI

Friends of Nature, Kathmandu, Nepal
Email: naresh.kusi@gmail.com

Tshiring Lhamu LAMA

Pokhara University, Nepal
Email: tshiringlama@gmail.com

Pema Rikzin LAMA

Expedition cook, Humla, Nepal

Geraldine WERHAHN

Wildlife Conservation Research Unit
Department of Zoology, Oxford University, Oxford, UK
Email: geraldine.werhahn@zoo.ox.ac.uk

First record of Brent Goose *Branta bernicla* for the Philippines

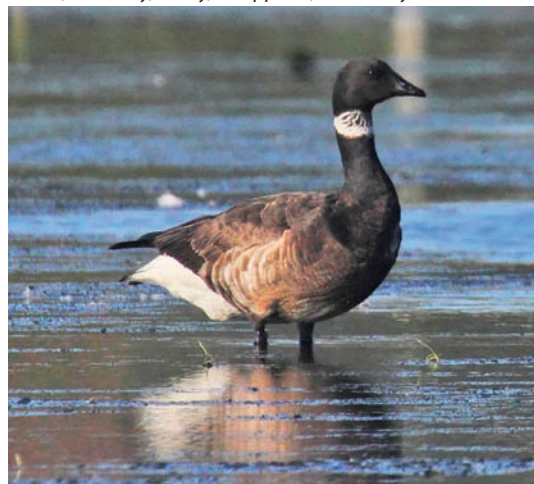
LISA J. PAGUNTALAN, PHILIP GODFREY C. JAKOALEM & RACHEL CASIO

On 4 February 2017, an adult Brent Goose *Branta bernicla nigricans* (also known as Black Brant or Pacific Brant) was observed on one of the fishponds in the coastal wetlands of Hinactacan, La Paz, Iloilo City, Panay Island, Philippines (10.735°N 122.587°E). This is the first documented record of Brent Goose in the country (Kennedy *et al.* 2000).

The bird was first noted by RC on a fishpond adjacent to coastal mangroves. It was feeding on aquatic vegetation in the company of Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*, Long-toed Stint *Calidris subminuta*, Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*, Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*, Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*, Common Greenshank *T. nebularia* and Common Redshank *T. totanus*. The bird was seen to move from the fishpond to the coastal mangroves. It was on the same pond the next day and remained in the area until 25 February.

Identification of the bird was fairly straightforward. It stood out by virtue of its size, shape and colouration. The head and neck were black, with a large white patch streaked with black on the throat and side of the neck. The rest of the body was dark

Plate 1. Brent Goose *Branta bernicla nigricans*, Hinactacan, La Paz, Iloilo City, Panay, Philippines, 4 February 2017.



LISA J. PAGUNTALAN