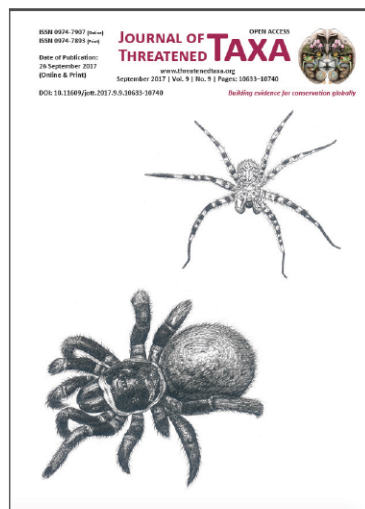


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NOTE

**FIRST RECORD OF RUFOUS-TAILED SCRUB ROBIN
CERCOTRICHAS GALACTOTES (AVES: PASSERIFORMES:
MUSCICAPIDAE) FROM JAMMU & KASHMIR, INDIA**

Neeraj Sharma

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Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin *Cercotrichas galactotes*, a southward passage migrant to India, has an extremely large range (Cramp & Perrins 1977–1994; Birdlife International 2004, 2016; Collar 2016) in Europe, northern and southern Africa, central Asia (Kazakhstan and China), and from the Middle East to northern

Pakistan. Of the five sub-species occurring worldwide, *C. g. familiaris*, is a rare fall (September–October) southward migrant to northwestern India (Punjab, Rajasthan and Gujarat), but has not so far been reported from the state of Jammu & Kashmir (Ali 2002; Ali & Ripley 2001; Grimmett et al. 2011; Rasmussen & Anderton 2012; Grewal et al. 2016). Sporadic sightings of the bird have been reported from Punjab (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012), Rajasthan (Bhatnagar 2004; Grimmett et al. 2011; Rasmussen & Anderton 2012; Saikia 2012, 2015; Mishra 2013; Bhardwaj 2014, 2015; Grewal et al. 2016), and Gujarat (Vang & Dabrowka 2005; Tiwari 2008; Balar 2009; Mishra 2009; Parekh 2009a,b; Turk 2009; Punjabi 2010; Grimmett et al. 2011; Das 2012; Rasmussen & Anderton 2012; Kuriakose 2013; Chudasama 2015; Grewal et al. 2016).

This pale sandy chat has a characteristic white-cornered rufous tail, pale supercilium, dark eye line and whisker-mark, rufous rump and blackish sub-terminal band on tail, and pale bill and legs (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012), buffish-white under parts, paler chin, dark brown flight feathers (Grimmett et al. 2011; Grewal et al. 2016). The bird is commonly found in scrub and tamarisk clumps in semi-arid areas, especially along water courses and gardens. It is often seen on the

FIRST RECORD OF RUFOUS-TAILED SCRUB ROBIN *CERCOTRICHAS GALACTOTES* (AVES: PASSERIFORMES: MUSCICAPIDAE) FROM JAMMU & KASHMIR, INDIA

Neeraj Sharma

Institute of Mountain Environment, Bhaderwah Campus, University of Jammu, Bhaderwah, Jammu & Kashmir 182222, India
nirazsharma@gmail.com

ground frequently spreading and jerking its tail over the back and its drooping wings. It breeds from April to July; the nest is usually concealed on the ground or below a bush (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012).

On 05 August 2016 around 18:30hr, while on a casual walk through the medicinal and aromatic plants (MAP) garden in Bhaderwah campus (32.962 N & 75.723 E, elevation 1,665m; Fig. 1), I spotted a small bird with a rusty tail feeding on the ground. From a distance, I first misidentified it as a Rusty-tailed Flycatcher till I noticed its jerking and fanning its tail and drooping its wings. I then considered it a robin I had never seen before. The bird was observed continuously feeding on larvae and caterpillars along the bed of Clary Sage, *Salvia sclarea* in the MAP garden for about twenty minutes until it vanished in nearby *Prinsepia utilis* and *Berberis lycium* scrub. The bird could not be spotted again despite our intensive surveys, nor did it respond to the repeated call playbacks (www.xenocanto.org) conducted during the next three days in the same location and adjoining areas.

We were able to identify the species on morphological characters such as the rufous tail, drooping wings, pale supercilium, dark eye line and blackish sub-terminal

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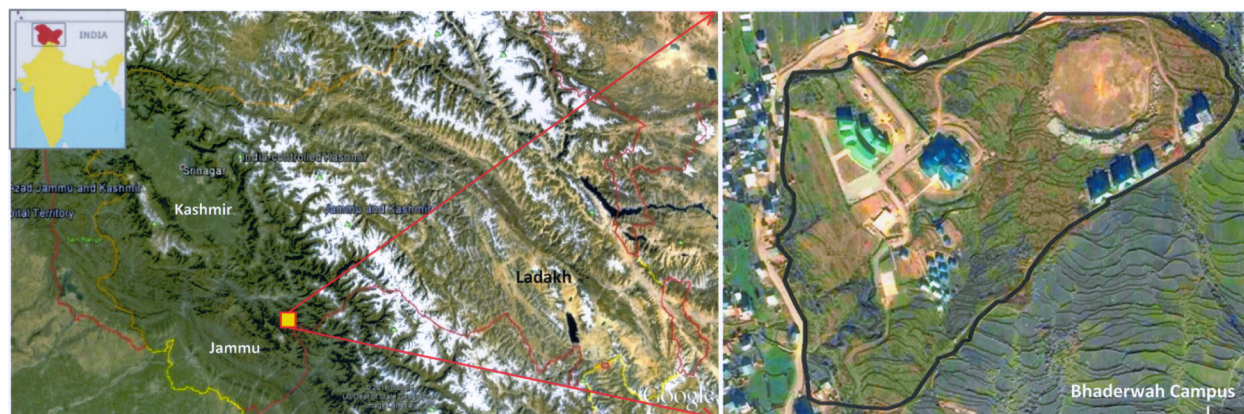


Figure 1. Location map of the bird sighting at Bhaderwah Campus, University of Jammu, Jammu & Kashmir



Images 1–3. 1 - Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin with notable pale supercilium, dark eye line and rufous rump; 2 - raised tail and drooping wings; 3 - tail over back with characteristic blackish sub-terminal band.

band on the tail, which were quite conspicuous for this specimen (Images 1–3). Subsequently, I cross-checked the photographs with sharp images available on online database (Bhatnagar 2004; Vang & Dabrowka 2005; Tiwari 2008; Balar 2009; Mishra 2009; Parekh 2009a,b; Turk 2009; Punjabi 2010; Das 2012; Saikia 2012; Mishra 2013; Bhardwaj 2014; Bhardwaj 2015; Chudasama 2015; Kuriakose 2013; Saikia 2015; www.orientalbirdimages.org) with confirmation from Ali & Ripley (2001), Rasmussen & Anderton (2012), Grimmett et al. (2011), Grewal et al. (2016) to conclude that it was an adult Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin, a new record for the state of Jammu & Kashmir.

Since the bird is a fall migrant, the individual might have arrived in Bhaderwah from a northwestern route via Kashmir and Pakistan occupied Kashmir through Pakistan or Afghanistan towards Gujarat through Jammu & Kashmir, Punjab and Rajasthan, suggesting a previously unknown population of the species. More surveys, therefore, need to be conducted to ascertain the status of this rare bird in this part of India and to

further establish its migratory route in the subcontinent.

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