c.20 m away at the glade periphery to wait for the male's return.

Rufous-breasted Bush Robin occurs locally frequent in Nepal as far west as the Annapurna Himal (Inskipp and Inskipp 1991), and as our observations in the Sankhuwa and elsewhere in Nepal in summer attest, is not shy (Grimmett *et al.* 2000). Prior to the observation detailed here, nesting of the species was undocumented (Rasmussen and Anderton 2005; personal search of literature).

Several breeding records are known, all of these from the Helambu region of central Nepal. A pair was observed feeding young on 24 and 25 May 1979 at c.3500 m on the west side of the Gandak-Kosi watershed. The nest was not located but was on or near the ground at the edge of a shady, wooded ravine (Redman *et al.* 1984). Most other records are from the Gapte Cave area. A pair was observed on 13 May 1980 alarm-calling and flying into a hole on a grassy slope. The hole was not checked for fear of causing the birds to abandon a presumed nest with eggs (Inskipp and Inskipp 1980). On 14 May 1980 a different pair was recorded, with the male seen carrying food to a nest hole in a shady and watered but inaccessible ravine (Inskipp and Inskipp 1980). In May 1982 a pair was observed feeding young (Fairbanks 1982). The only other breeding record is of young just able to fly on 3 June at c.3,200 m in Helambu (Fleming 1984).

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Black Baza *Aviceda leuphotes*: first confirmed record for Bhutan

ANWARUDDIN CHOUDHURY

The Black Baza *Aviceda leuphotes* is distributed from north-eastern India to South-East Asia, with disjunct populations in south India and Sri Lanka (Ali and Ripley 1987, Grewal *et al.* 2002). In north-eastern India, it is largely an uncommon resident although in some pockets of Assam it is fairly common (Choudhury 2000, 2006a). In Assam, the bird has been recorded from areas close to the India-Bhutan border, especially in Manas National Park (Choudhury 2006b). The Black Baza was listed for Bhutan by Inskipp *et al.* (1999) but subsequently deleted as the observers withdrew their records (Inskipp *et al.* 2004). Ali *et al.* (1996), Choudhury (2006c) and Spierenburg (2005) also did not record it from Bhutan.

I here report a confirmation that this species occurs in Bhutan. At about 15h15 on 5 June 2007, while driving from Panbari to Gabhorukunda in the Manas National Park, Assam, I observed a Black Baza perched in a tree c.50 m south of Boundary Pillar number 194/3 on the India-Bhutan border. The site (26°47′N 90°50′E) was not far from the Gabhorukunda River, a tributary of the Manas River. The terrain was almost flat with low undulations, with an altitude of about 250 m. When we drove closer, the bird took off and flew in a northerly direction into Bhutan. It was visible for c.15–20 m into Bhutan before I lost sight of it. The Bhutanese side of the border lies in the Royal Manas National Park in Sarpang district.

When first observed, the Black Baza was perched c.5–6 m high in a *Dillenia pentagyna* tree in open mixed woodland containing other tree species such as *Lagerstroemia parviflora* and *Bombax ceiba*, and some tall grass on the ground. At first sight the bird looked like a medium-sized raptor. When observed with a 14× monocular, it was easily identifiable by its black upperparts and crested head, and chestnut and buff barrings on the underparts. On the perched bird, the white upper-breast band followed by black and then chestnut bands could clearly be seen. The barring on the underparts was more conspicuous when the bird took flight. The wings were

broad and moderately rounded. Its upright crest, however, was initially overlooked owing to the light conditions. Bird surveys in southern Bhutan have not been exhaustive and one might expect that other species typical of the plains and lower foothills will eventually be added to the Bhutan list.

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An appraisal of recent taxonomic reappraisals based on character scoring systems

A. T. PETERSON and R. G. MOYLE

Three recent papers (Collar 2006a, b, 2007b) present taxonomic reappraisals of a significant swath of Asian bird diversity, recommending elevation of numerous populations and subspecies to species rank (Collar and Pilgrim 2007). Certainly, attention to patterns of variation and differentiation and their implications for species limits in Asian birds is both welcome and badly needed, but several concerns arise from the methodology employed. This note aims to clarify the nature of this system in the context of modern species concepts, and to examine what actually it achieves and what it leaves unassessed. Although the methodology has yet to be formally described (listed as in preparation in 2006), the large number of taxonomic changes recommended (Collar 2006a, b, 2007b) and now codified in a standard ornithological reference (del Hoyo *et al.* 2007) begs careful discussion by the ornithological community, as wrong decisions can make for bad taxonomy and bad conservation action.

The scoring system (Collar 2006a) involves tallying differences between populations as major (3 points), medium (2 points), or minor (1 point), summing these scores, and using 7 as a criterion for species status. One publication (Collar 2006a) carries the caveat that species status cannot be achieved based solely on minor or mensural characters, and that 'all mensural characters, no matter how highly statistically significant, are scored as minor characters.' However, a more recent publication states 'In Collar (2006a) I only allowed morphometric differences to count as minor characters, for reasons of complexity of material and inadequately developed criteria, but here I regard this restraint as unnecessary' (Collar 2007b). Curiously, in this more recent paper, which treats *Loriculus* hanging parrots in the Moluccas and Sulawesi, the split that is recommended depends on the size difference between *L. sclateri* and *L. amabilis* counting as a major difference (3 points)—were Collar to have followed his previous caveats, this pair of forms would differ only by 7–8 points, and would be more ambiguous as to whether it merits splitting.

GEOGRAPHY

A first question is the species concept on which this method is founded, as species concepts are the critical basis for these decisions (Zink and McKitrick 1995, Remsen 2005, Peterson and Navarro-Sigüenza 2006). Collar has on numerous occasions (Collar 1996, Collar and Spottiswoode 2005, Collar 2007a) expressed his dislike for the Phylogenetic Species Concept (PSC, which defines species based on diagnosability and monophyly). Although he has not (to our knowledge) referred explicitly to the Biological Species Concept (BSC) as the basis for the scoring system, it appears that the BSC forms the