

The first documented nest of Rufous-breasted Bush Robin *Tarsiger hyperythrus*, from east Nepal

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On 3 June 2002 at about 06h20, DSR observed a male and a female Rufous-breasted Bush Robin *Tarsiger hyperythrus* repeatedly carrying food to a gap in stony soil, and soon thereafter located a nest in a small glade on Bukur Danda (= Bukur Ridge) in the Sankhuwa Khola watershed, east Nepal at c.3,710 m (27°30.781'N 86°56.657'E) (Plate 1a).

The nest site glade, located slightly above the treeline, featured barberry *Berberis* sp., *Rhododendron* sp. and other bushes. The site is at the ecotone of alpine shrubberies and a nearly pristine, densely forested section of the Makalu-Barun Buffer Zone that adjoins Makalu-Barun National Park to the north. Birch, with an understorey of dwarf rhododendron, was the primary forest type in the immediate vicinity, which is consistent with the summer habitat type reported for Rufous-breasted Bush Robin (Grimmett *et al.* 1998). Scattered Himalayan silver fir *Abies spectabilis* formed the treeline at c.3,675 m.

DR was joined by JC for further observations from 06h45 to 07h30. Closer inspection revealed that the nest, concealed by a thin cascade of dried herb stalks and wildflower sprigs, held three nestlings, each naked except for tufts of down around the head, and eyes yet unopened. The nest was situated under a mossy stone, recessed 4.5 cm from the outer edge of the gap (Plate 1b).

Live moss formed an enlarged base to the buttressed nest cup. The nest sides were loosely stitched with dried strands of thin grass 4–6 cm in length, bits of brown leaves, fern pinnae and black rhizomes (Plates 1b and 1c). The rim of the cup was oval and measured c.9×11 cm. Rim diameter was smaller at the rear (2 cm) than the front (c.4 cm). Nestling presence obstructed direct measurement of cup depth, which was estimated as 5 cm. The cup was lined with soft whitish filaments (Plate 1c) which have been identified as hair of a wild ungulate, probably musk deer *Moschus moschiferous* (H. S. Nepali, personal communication).

Birds on the ground usually carried food and kept 15–25 m from the nest. The male ventured occasionally to within 10 m, where at one point he stood motionless and reflected magnificently in the early morning sun and dew. While nest measurements and photographs were taken during a 4 min inspection near the end of observations, the male waited at the edge of the glade and gave a monotonous *plip...plip...plip* alarm. He immediately returned to the nest carrying winged insects upon retreat of the authors. No other vocalisations were heard. We sought to minimise disturbance by obtaining nest measurements and photographs as quickly as possible, and withdrew to a crouched position



Plate 1. Nest of Rufous-breasted Bush Robin: (A) Nesting hole and surrounding vegetation; (B) View of nest and chicks after parting the cascade of dried vegetation; (C) Hair-lined nest cup and nestlings.

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

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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