

identify the bird in the photograph only after I read Deomurari's (2012) note. Arpit Deomurari (*pers. com.*) again saw it at the same place on 03 January 2013. Three records from the same area during last four years indicate that it may be a regular winter visitor to the area.

### Acknowledgements

I thank B. M. Parasharya for compiling my records in the form of a scientific note. I also acknowledge Ashok Mashru, Arpit Deomurari, and Trupti Vyas for sharing some of their records. I gratefully acknowledge the help rendered by Kasam Sama Sidani, during my visits to Nalsarovar Bird Sanctuary.

### References

- Ali, S., 1954. The birds of Gujarat. Part I. *Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society* 52 (2&3): 374–458.
- Anonymous. 1887. Waters of western India. Part IV. - Gujarat - (continued). (By a member of the Society). *Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society* 2 (4): 221–228.
- Anonymous. 2009. Some interesting bird sightings. *Flamingo* 7 (1&2): 24.
- Bhojwala, J., 2011. *Bharatiy Neeldevchakalinee Gujaratma pratham nondh. Vihang* 5 (4): 28–29. [In Gujarati.]
- Butler, E. A., 1877. The avifauna of Mount Aboo and North Guzerat. Addenda. Parts I–III. *Stray Feathers* 5 (3&4): 207–236.
- Deomurari, A., 2012. Tickell's Thrush *Turdus unicolor*: a new bird for Gujarat, India. *Indian BIRDS* 7 (6): 168.
- Dharmakumarsinhji, R. S., [1955] *Birds of Saurashtra, India: With additional notes on the birds of Kutch and Gujerat*. 1st ed. Bhavnagar, Saurashtra: Published by the author. Pp. i–liii, 1–561.
- Grimmett, R., Inskipp, C., & Inskipp, T., 2011. *Birds of the Indian Subcontinent*. 2nd ed. London: Oxford University Press & Christopher Helm. Pp. 1–528.
- Hancock, J., & Kushlan, J., 1984. *The herons handbook*. London & Sydney: Croom Helm. Pp. 1–288.
- Kazmierczak, K., 2000. *A field guide to the birds of India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh and the Maldives*. 1st ed. New Delhi: Om Book Service. Pp. 1–352.
- Khacher, L., 1996. The birds of Gujarat - a Salim Ali centenary year overview. *Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society* 93 (3): 331–373.
- Naik R. M., Murthy M. S., Rao Y. N., Mundkur, T., & Pravez, R., 1990. *Ecology of Hingolghat Nature Education Sanctuary*. (Final report submitted to WWF-India), Dept. Biosciences, Saurashtra University, Rajkot, India.
- Parasharya, B. M., Borad, C. K., & Rank, D. N., 2004. *A checklist of the birds of Gujarat*. 1st ed. Gujarat: Bird Conservation Society. Pp. 1–27.
- Rasmussen, P. C., & Anderton, J. C., 2012. *Birds of South Asia: the Ripley guide*. 2nd ed. Washington, D.C. and Barcelona: Smithsonian Institution and Lynx Edicions. 2 vols. Pp. 1–378; 1–683.
- Sidani, K. S., 2009a. *Nalsarovarma Nani Panbagali. Vihang* 3 (3): 27. [In Gujarati.]
- Sidani, K. S., 2009b. *Nalsarovarma Shiyalu Panbagali. Vihang* 3 (3): 28. [In Gujarati.]
- Trivedi, R., 2012. *Ratanmalma Teekkalno Kasturo. Vihang* 6 (1): 22 [In Gujarati.]

## A Yellow-browed Tit *Sylviparus modestus* nest from Kedarnath Wildlife Sanctuary, Uttarakhand, India

Sahas Barve & André A. Dhondt

Barve, S., & Dhondt, A. A., 2015. A Yellow-browed Tit *Sylviparus modestus* nest from Kedarnath Wildlife Sanctuary, Uttarakhand, India. *Indian BIRDS* 10 (3&4): 110–111.

Sahas S. Barve, A 407, Corson and Mudd Hall. 215, Tower Road. Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853, U.S.A. Email : [sahasbarve@gmail.com](mailto:sahasbarve@gmail.com)  
[Corresponding author.]

André A. Dhondt, *Cornell Lab of Ornithology, 159 Sapsucker Woods Rd. Ithaca, NY 14850. U.S.A.* Email: [aad4@cornell.edu](mailto:aad4@cornell.edu).

*Manuscript received on 12 January 2014.*

Temperate species of the family Paridae are some of the best studied wild birds in the world (Lambrechts *et al.* 2010), yet tropical species and sub-species of this family remain understudied (Gosler & Clement 2007). We report here the description of a nest of the Yellow-browed Tit *Sylviparus modestus* from the Kedarnath Wildlife Sanctuary in Uttarakhand, India.

The Yellow-browed Tit is a basal species in the parid clade (Gill *et al.* 2005). Knowledge of its ecology is hence crucial in understanding the evolution of traits in this geographically widespread family. It is a fairly common bird of the oak (*Quercus* species) forests of the Himalayas. Here, it is known to occur between 1950 m and 3600 m (Gosler & Clement 2007). In the Kedarnath region, it is most commonly seen between 2300 m and 3300 m in the breeding season but winters down to 1600 m (Sahas Barve, *pers. obs.*). It is easily overlooked as its coloration and size resemble the abundant and speciose *Phylloscopus* warblers and it is a difficult species to observe in the mixed-species flocks that it often participates in. Although described in 1836, the first two cavity nests of this species were not described until 1973 (Fleming Jr. 1974). In the 41 years since

then, only one other nest has been described by Löhrl in 1981 (Löhrl 1981, Martens & Eck 1995). All three nests were from central Nepal and from the Phulchowki region, with the highest nest at 2378 m (Fleming Jr. 1974). We describe here a nest of this species, the fourth published description till date, and the first from the Indian Himalayas, c. 1000 km north-west of the previous nest observations.

We found the nest at 3025 m in *Quercus semicarpifolia*–*Rhododendron arboreum* dominated sub-alpine forests of the Kedarnath Wildlife Sanctuary (30.478886°N, 79.215325°E) on 30 May 2013 at around 0730 hrs. It was located in a cavity, about 6 m above the ground, in a *R. arboreum* tree. The cavity had a circular entrance, about 30 mm in diameter and appeared to be one made by another bird, probably a woodpecker. Since no woodpecker of that size is found in the area, it might have been a cavity that was abandoned by its excavator.

We observed the adult(s) entering and leaving the nest. As observed by Löhrl (1981), the adult flew directly into the nest through the opening. Only a single prey item was brought to the nest on every visit. The prey items were difficult to identify but

did include small hair-less caterpillars. The consistent small size of the prey suggested that the chicks were very small. We did not attempt to investigate the number of chicks or the size of the cavity, as the nest was inaccessible.

This is, to the best of our knowledge, the western-most nesting record, and the highest elevational nest reported for this species. The nest we describe here, and those described by Fleming Jr., and Löhrl, suggest that this species is a secondary cavity nester, adopting either natural cavities, or those made by other birds; an ancestral trait in tits (Dhondt 2007).

The species shows a large variation in the height at which the nest is placed (0.5–7 m) but is partial to small entrances to the nest, sometimes merely a split in the tree. However, other aspects of its breeding biology, like the number of eggs per clutch, colour and size of the eggs, incubation period, nestling period, and behaviour of adults during nesting remains poorly known. We had many observations of the Yellow-browed Tit joining mixed-species foraging flocks in May. Mixed-species foraging flocks often form in the non-breeding seasons, when birds are not territorial, and there is a shortage of food resources making each individual range over a large area (Graves & Gotelli 1993). Presence of Yellow-browed Tits in mixed-species flocks in the breeding season was thus an interesting behavior.

Montane habitats in the Himalayas contain many species like the Yellow-browed Tit, the natural history of which is poorly understood. Knowledge of the ecology of these species is however essential for conservation of these threatened habitats.

### Acknowledgements

We thank Keila Dhondt, Sartaj Singh Ghuman, Himani Nautiyal, and Supriya for help in fieldwork. We thank the Uttarakhand Forest Department, and the Wildlife Institute of India for facilitating this research. Funds for this research came through the Athena

Fund, and the Atkinson Sustainable Biodiversity Fund.

### References

- Dhondt, A., 2007. What drives differences between North American and Eurasian tit studies? In: *Ecology and behavior of chickadees and titmice: an integrated approach*. Otter, K., (ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press. Pp. 299–310.
- Fleming, R. L., 1974. Notes on the nest and behaviour of the Yellowbrowed Titmouse, *Parus modestus* (Burton). *Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society* 70 (2): 326–329.
- Gill, F., Slikas, B., & Sheldon, F., 2005. Phylogeny of Titmice (Paridae): II. Species relationships based on sequences of the mitochondrial cytochrome-B Gene. *The Auk* 122 (3): 1023–1023.
- Gosler, A. G., & Clement, P., 2007. Family Paridae (Tits and chickadees). In: *Handbook of the birds of the world. Volume 12. Picathartes to tits and chickadees*. del Hoyo, J., Elliott, A., & Christie, D., (eds.). Barcelona: Lynx Edicions. 12 of 16 vols. Pp. 662–750.
- Graves, G. R., & Gotelli, N. J., 1993. Assembly of Avian Mixed-Species Flocks in Amazonia. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 90 (4): 1388–1391.
- Lambrechts, M. M., Adriaensen, F., Ardia, D. R., Artemyev, A. V., Atiénzar, F., Banbura, J., Barba, E., Bouvier, J.-C., Camprodon, J., Cooper, C. B., Dawson, R. D., Eens, M., Eeva, T., Faivre, B., Garamszegi, L.Z., Goodenough, A. E., Gosler, A. G., Grégoire, A., Griffith, S. C., Gustafsson, L., Scott, J. L., Kania, W., Keiss, O., Llambias, P. E., Mainwaring, M. C., Mänd, R., Massa, B., Mazgajski, T. D., Møller, A. P., Moreno, J., Naef-Daenzer, B., Nilsson, J.-A., Norte, A. C., Orell, M., Otter, K. A., Park, C. R., Perrins, C. M., Pinowski, J., Porkert, J., Potti, J., Remes, V., Richner, H., Rytönen, S., Shiao, M.-T., Silverin, B., Slagsvold, T., Smith, H. G., Sorace, A., Stenning, M. J., Stewart, I., Thompson, C. F., Török, J., Tryjanowski, P., van Noordwijk, A. J., Winkler, D. W., Ziane, N., 2010. The design of artificial nestboxes for the study of secondary hole-nesting birds: a review of methodological inconsistencies and potential biases. *Acta Ornithologica* 45: 1–26.
- Löhrl, H., 1981. Zur Kenntnis der Laubmeise, *Sylviparus modestus*. *Journal für Ornithologie* 122 (1): 89–92.
- Martens, J., & Eck, S., 1995. Towards an ornithology of the Himalayas: systematics, ecology and vocalisations of Nepal birds. *Bonner Zoologische Monographien* 38: 1–445.

With the compliments of

**G.B.K. CHARITABLE TRUST**

B-1/504, Marathon Innova, Ganapatrao Kadam Marg, Lower Parel, Mumbai 400013.