

Sighting of A Rare Colour Intermediary in an Indian Paradise Flycatcher in Uttarakhand, India

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Commentary Article

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DESCRIPTION

The Indian paradise flycatcher (*Terpsiphone paradise*), a forest-living bird species, is native to Asia and widely distributed in the Indian subcontinent. Earlier the Paradise flycatchers used to be classified with Old World flycatcher family Muscicapidae, but now it is placed in the family Monarchidae along with monarch flycatcher [1-5].

The species show sexual plumage dimorphism, males have elongated central tail feathers, and a black and rufous plumage in some populations, while others have white plumage. Females are short-tailed with rufous wings and a black head [6]. However, some rufous-coloured males do not have long central feathers and resembles like females. Young males look very much like females but males have black throat and blue-ringed eyes. Adult males can be easily identified by blue eye rings [7-9].

In June 2019 while observing birds on the main road near Rathuwadhab village, in the outskirts of North Zone boundary of the Corbett Tiger Reserve, Uttarakhand, India, early in the morning we came across of a rare coloration of a male Indian paradise flycatcher [10].

Along with this rare color male we also found three other different phenetic males from the same location. The rare colored male was predominately rufous in color with elongated white central tail feather while other recorded males were rufous male (RM), white male and short tailed rufous male.

Observations of previous studies have shown that along with rufous and

white colors of Indian paradise flycatcher there are some intermediate color pattern as well. These intermediate colour variants are broadly divided into eight different types, as mentioned hereunder.

- Predominantly rufous birds with some white in wings and tail, recorded in Turkestan, Kashmir, northern India, Punjab, Maharashtra, Sikkim and in Sri Lanka (Figure 1).



Figure 1: Rufous male with elongated white central tail feather (RWT) Photo by Sibadatt Rath.

- Predominantly rufous birds with some white in wings, recorded in Iran, Afghanistan, Baluchistan, Punjab, Kashmir, northern and central India, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Bihar and Nepal.
- Predominantly rufous birds with some white in tail, recorded in Punjab, northern and central India, Kolkata, Sri Lanka and in the Upper Yangtze Valley in China (Figure 2).



Figure 2: White male (WM) Photo by Sibadatt Rath.

- Predominantly white birds with some rufous in tail and wings, recorded in Kashmir, Maharashtra, Sichuan and North China.
- Predominantly white birds with some rufous in tail, recorded in Maharashtra and Fuzhou, China (Figure 3).



Figure 3: Short-tailed rufous male (SRM) Photo by Sibadatt Rath

- Predominantly white birds with back partly rufous recorded in Punjab and Chennai.
- Predominantly white birds with wings and tail washed with rufous in places recorded in Alor island and Sumba.
- Moulting from rufous into white plumage, recorded in North Bihar.

The recorded Indian paradise flycatcher is different from all other previously reported intermediates colorations. It is a new colour variant, male predominantly rufous with totally white elongated central tail feather (Image 1a & 1b). Based on literature review and interactions with experts this is the first record of such a colouration of Indian paradise flycatcher.

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