

## An incidence of brood parasitism: Rufous Treepie *Dendrocitta vagabunda* feeding a juvenile Asian Koel *Eudynamys scolopaceus* at Rajkot

**Deepali Dave:** Rajkot. deepalidave955@gmail.com

Brood parasitism in Cuculidae family is very common (Praveen & Lowther 2020). Here, I witnessed an incidence of brood parasitism of Asian Koel (*Eudynamys scolopaceus*) on Rufous Treepie (*Dendrocitta vagabunda*). On 14 May 2021, in the morning at around 08:45 hrs, I was watching birds near University Road, Rajkot (22° 17' 7.53" N, 70° 44' 35.75" E). I heard the call of an Asian Koel from a nearby tree. There were three individuals. On one branch, I saw a young koel perched. Within a short time, a Rufous Treepie came to the tree. As soon as the Rufous Treepie arrived, the koel young opened its mouth, begging for food, and was fed by the Rufous Treepie. The incident was quite surprising for me. I came back home and looked for more references of such brood parasitism, but brood parasitism of Asian Koel was mostly by hosts like Black Drongo (*Dicrurus macrocercus*), Long-tailed Shrike (*Lanius schach*), House Crow (*Corvus splendens*), Large-billed Crow (*Corvus macrorhynchos*), Red-vented Bulbul (*Pycnonotus cafer*) and Common Myna (*Acridotheres tristis*) (Praveen & Lowther 2020).

The series of photographs shows the arrival of Rufous Treepie, and feeding of the koel juvenile. The Rufous Treepie as a foster parent of Asian Koel is quite unusual. Although, crows and treepies belong to the same family, Corvidae, the Rufous Treepie as a host for Asian Koel has not been noted before. It is possible that other species of Corvidae family could be hosts for Asian Koel. Further sightings of such incidents will be helpful in knowing the hosts for Asian Koel.

### References

Praveen, J., & Lowther, P., 2020. Avian brood parasitism in South Asia. *Indian BIRDS* 16 (4): 103–119 □



Deepali Dave



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## Co-operative hunting by Rufous Treepie *Dendrocitta vagabunda* pair

**Ashok Mashru:** A-7, Alap Heritage, Kalavad Road, Rajkot. mashruashok@gmail.com

On 5 October 2019, in the morning, I was on my routine morning walk in a garden near my residence at Rajkot. I observed a pair of Rufous Treepie (*Dendrocitta vagabunda*) attacking something on the ground near the boundary wall. I approached closer and I found the pair attacking and trying to kill a Garden Lizard there. I immediately started to record a video of this incident with my mobile phone. The fight between the treepies and the Garden Lizard continued for more than eight minutes. Both the Rufous Treepies were

attacking the lizard simultaneously from either side. The lizard was also rushing on to them, attacking and trying to bite the birds with its teeth. The treepies were moving back when the lizard attacked them. Once, a treepie caught the lizard by its tail and was trying to pull it from a depression in the ground. Then, another treepie succeeded in catching the lizard by its neck. But, the lizard also tried very hard to escape and succeeded. The lizard found some opening in the depression in the ground and managed to go inside the hole but one treepie

caught its tail and tried very hard to pull it out from the ground. The tail of the lizard broke off and the treepie got only a small piece of its broken tail in its bill. When the other treepie saw this, it tried to snatch this piece but the first treepie swallowed the piece of tail immediately. After that, both the birds tried to dig out the lizard from the hole but could not succeed. The lizard thus escaped from the cooperative hunting of the treepies.

I tried to get further details of this behavior by the Rufous Treepie pair and searched online to see if such behaviour had been reported earlier. But, I could not find any references for

such behaviour where treepies were observed hunting a Garden Lizard. It is well known that Rufous Treepies are often part of mixed hunting parties (or bird 'waves') in forests and take advantage of hunting with other birds (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). However, it is possible that pairs often hunt together and cooperate when attacking prey which is large for a single bird.

### References

Rasmussen, P. C., & Anderton, J. C., 2012. *Birds of South Asia: The Ripley guide*. 2nd Ed. Smithsonian Institution and Lynx Edicions. Washington, D. C. and Barcelona. □

## Sighting of Hume's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus humei* in Bhuj, Kachchh

**Jaysukh Parekh Suman:** Suman Remedies, C/17 R. T. O. Relocation Site, Bhuj 370001, Kachchh. nisusuman@gmail.com



Jaysukh Parekh Suman

The Hume's Leaf Warbler (*Phylloscopus humei*) is a very agile, old world leaf warbler. It is a small warbler, which can be confused with Yellow-browed Warbler (*Phylloscopus inornatus*), Greenish Warbler (*Phylloscopus trochiloides*) and Green Warbler (*Phylloscopus nitidus*). The Hume's Leaf Warbler has greyish-olive upperparts, with whitish supercilium, ear-coverts and greater-covert wing bar; the median-covert wing bar is usually poorly defined while the tertials have whitish edges (Grimmett *et al.* 2011). Its call is diagnostic, a sparrow-like *chwee*, which helps in separating it from other similar warblers.

It is usually found in medium to high trees, feeding between leaves. I saw and photographed a Hume's Leaf Warbler near my home in Bhuj, Kachchh, on 18 November 2020. Since I was able to see it well, I noted all its features and also confirmed the identification by its call. The bird kept changing its perch very quickly and was feeding on very small insects from stems and leaves of trees. I kept a track of this individual and

photographed it many times near my home. It was last seen in the first week of March 2021. It stayed here for more than four months and wintered here.

There is only one previously published record of Hume's Leaf Warbler from Kachchh; a bird was seen at Chadva *Rakhal*, near Bhuj (Bhopale 2010). Dr. Salim Ali did not find this species during his many visits to Kachchh. The Hume's Leaf Warbler has been given as 'common winter visitor in South Gujarat and Saurashtra; probably widespread but overlooked' by Ganpule (2016). Thus, it is possible that the Hume's Leaf Warbler may be more widespread than what the records suggest. Identification of warblers is challenging and it may be missed among the Greenish Warblers and Green Warblers occurring here. Its status in Kachchh is not well known. I saw this individual during the winter and it stayed in the same area over a long period. There are other similar well wooded areas in Kachchh and it is likely that the Hume's Leaf Warbler may be occurring in such places in the winter. Bird watchers are requested to lookout for this species in Kachchh so that we can get a better idea of its distribution here in Kachchh.

### References

Bhopale, N., 2010. First record of the Hume's Leaf-warbler *Phylloscopus humei* from Kachchh, Gujarat, India. *Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society* 107 (1): 61-62

Ganpule, P., 2016. The birds of Gujarat: Status and distribution. *Flamingo* 8(3) – 12 (4): 2-40

Grimmett, R., Inskipp, C., & Inskipp, T., 2011. *Birds of the Indian Subcontinent*. 2nd ed. Oxford University Press & Christopher Helm. London. □