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## 21. OBSERVATIONS ON THE RUSTY-RUMPED GRASSHOPPER-WARBLER *LOCUSTELLA CERTHIOLA* (PALLAS) AT MYSORE, KARNATAKA

The Rusty-rumped Grasshopper-Warbler *Locustella certhiola*, formerly known as the Pallas' Grasshopper Warbler, was observed at Lingambudhi lake (12° 16' N, 76° 37' E), in Mysore (12° 18' N, 76° 39' E), between November 1999 and March 2000. It was first noted on November 10, 1999 in a two acre plot of tall grass near the lake. The bird, an adult, was identified by the presence of a rufous rump, a greyish crown heavily striped with black, a distinctive white supercilium and dark brown tail with white-tip. Bold, black streaks on the back were restricted and did not extend to the rump which was relatively clear of marks. Throat and underparts were white and unmarked, with a rufous wash on the flanks and vent. The Streaked Grasshopper-Warbler *Locustella lanceolata* and Pale Grasshopper-Warbler *Locustella naevia* are both heavily streaked on the chest, flanks, undertail coverts and rump, and lacking the rufous rump and white-tipped tail. The former also differs in being smaller and having streaks on throat while the latter is more or less the same size, but much paler and less accentuated streaks.

Over five months of surveillance resulted in the almost daily observation of the bird in the same locality and we familiarized ourselves with its activities. The bird was not difficult to observe in the early morning between 0700 hrs, around when it would first appear, and 0830 hrs. It would move through the grasses during the rest of the day, seldom making an appearance on the top or elsewhere. It would be visible again in the evenings, but for a short period, between 1715 to 1745 hrs that advanced further with the season and daylight conditions. Although the *Locustella* warblers are known to be "great skulkers" (Ali and Ripley 1987), the bird would often rise to the top of tall grasses and keep a look-out for a few seconds before disappearing deep into the grass again. It would do this quite often, and would sometimes hunt keeping to the top of the grasses. It was twice observed to go up to c. 8 m on a *Casuarina* tree to feed, although this was unusual and infrequent. On the whole, the bird could be observed fairly well, once located, as it was restricted to a small area in the grassland.

Ali and Ripley (1987), on the vocalization of the species, note "In winter only an occasional "chi-chirr" is uttered." But the bird was noted to have three other calls; a low "tit, tit" occasionally heard when feeding, a babbler-like chatter "kat kat kat kat" repeated in a frenzy when excited, especially once when the bird was seen chasing a Indian Great Reed-Warbler *Acrocephalus stentoreus*, and an occasional, somewhat loud "chirr". The second of these calls was heard towards mid-March when the bird was noticed to become somewhat territorial, chasing other large warblers and even bushchats from the grass patch.

The Rusty-rumped Grasshopper-Warbler is recorded as a locally common winter visitor (Ali and Ripley 1987). It has been recorded only once from southern India, a specimen netted at Kuttanad in the Alleppey district of Kerala in May 1963 (George and Matthew 1965). Sugathan and Varghese (1996) record it from the Thattakad Bird Sanctuary in Kerala, but see Santharam (2000). The Streaked Grasshopper-Warbler is recorded as a scarce winter visitor from parts of eastern and northern India (Ali and Ripley 1987) with a recent record from Sri Lanka (Hoffmann 1996), while the Pale Grasshopper-Warbler is a widespread winter visitor in India, especially the Western Ghats and has also been observed at the same site as the Rusty-rumped in Mysore. This observation from Mysore is the second from southern India and provides details of vocalization hitherto not recorded.

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## 22. A SIGHT RECORD OF TYTLER'S LEAF-WARBLER *PHYLLOSCOPUS TYTLERI* FROM THE NILGIRIS, SOUTHERN INDIA

Tytler's Leaf-Warbler *Phylloscopus tytleri* Brooks, 1872, is listed as a 'Near Threatened' species by BirdLife International (2001). The winter range of this species according to Ali and Ripley (1987) is "little known, records very scanty..." A recent update (Rasmussen 1998) includes the complete Western Ghats in general and Mahabaleshwar in the northern Western Ghats of Maharashtra in particular in the winter range of the species. It is possible that it has been infrequently recorded in the winter range due to identification difficulties (BirdLife International 2001, Rasmussen 1998). In southern India, the only records of this species are one each from Goa (Price 1980) and Londa (Koelz 1942), two old records from the Nilgiris (Ali and Ripley 1987), one each from the Palni Hills (Baker and Inglis 1930), Wynaad (Zacharias and Gaston 1993) and Munnar (Harrap and Redman 1989). The habitat preference of the species in winter has been imperfectly recorded, with a few records from the middle storey of *sholas* and broadleaved forest (Grimmett *et al.* 1998).

A Tytler's Leaf-Warbler *Phylloscopus tytleri* was observed at the *Tiashola* (c. 2,200 m) in the south-eastern part of the Upper Nilgiris Plateau on April 25, 2002. *Tiashola* is perhaps the largest tract of intact *shola* (Montane Wet Temperate Forest) left on the Upper Nilgiris Plateau. The bird was seen on the edge of the *shola*, at 0900 hrs in an open area beside a road, on a wattle (*Acacia dealbata*) tree at c. 5 m. It was engaged in feeding while perched on branches, moving horizontally along branches and then vertically up to the next. Identity of the bird was confirmed by a long, lean and dark beak, an extended whitish supercilium and dark eye-stripe, olive green upperparts tending to grey, absence of any wing-

bar, white underparts washed grey and short tail. The bird also appeared very fat, like most warblers at the time of the year when they are preparing to leave for their breeding grounds. The characteristic call clinched the identification; an extended, somewhat loud, mournful 'szooeet' repeated often, rendered by Kazmierczak (2000) as a "plaintive, drawn-out (p)ssooooeet". Three Tickell's Warblers, *Phylloscopus affinis* were also present on the tree.

This record of the Tytler's Leaf-Warbler, along with the recent records from elsewhere in the Western Ghats reinforces the suggestion that the species does occur in the south, but has been perhaps overlooked owing to confusion with identification. This record corroborates previous records of the bird from *shola* habitat which are probably the preferred wintering habitat in the southern Western Ghats. A special look-out should be kept for the bird in field.

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