

# Lapland Longspur *Calcarius lapponicus* in Bhutan: A first record for the Indian Subcontinent

Tshering Chophel & Sherub

Chopel, T., & Sherub. 2016. Lapland Longspur *Calcarius lapponicus* in Bhutan: A first record for the Indian Subcontinent. *Indian BIRDS* 12 (1): 24.  
Tshering Chophel, Bumdeling Wildlife Sanctuary, Department of Forests and Park Services, Trashi Yangtse. The original observer of the bird.  
Sherub, Ugyen Wangchuck Institute for Conservation and Environment, Lamai Goempa, Bumthang, Bhutan. Email ID: [sherub@uwice.gov.bt](mailto:sherub@uwice.gov.bt).

The Lapland Longspur *Calcarius lapponicus* (aka Lapland Bunting) is a widely distributed migratory passerine. It breeds in moist open grassy and lowland tundra, above the tree line, in the Arctic region of northern Eurasia, Greenland, and northern North America. In winter, it moves southward to southern Canada, and northern, and central USA, sparingly in north-western Europe, and more frequently eastwards from Ukraine, through southern Kazakhstan, Mongolia, and China, where it winters up to the Yangtse River, till c. 30°S (Byers 1995).

On 21 February 2014, a Lapland Longspur was sighted at Dawaling Ju (27.66°N, 91.43°E, c.1960 asl), in Bumdeling Wildlife Sanctuary, at 1100 hrs (local time). Dawaling Ju is located in Ngalmang village, Bumdeling, at Trashi Yangtse in eastern Bhutan. The bird was observed on a drift log on the riverbed, which is also the roosting area of the wintering Black-necked Crane *Grus nigricollis* of Kholongchu. On the ventral side of the log was a resting colony of the migrant Indian Rock Bee *Apis dorsata*. The bird remained for a week at this location.

The bird was initially thought to be a Russet Sparrow *Passer rutilans*. However, the presence of a rich rufous nape, and a prominent whitish supercilium indicated otherwise, and so the bird was examined more carefully. On the first day of sighting, we could not photograph the bird, as it flew away. On 22 February a photograph was shot [29]. The photo was shared with Piet Van Der Poel, who later shared with John D. Farrington: both felt

this could be a Lapland Longspur. Several photographs that were captured later, were unfortunately lost.

In non-breeding plumage the species can be confused with several *Emberiza* buntings, but from the features visible in the photo, it appears bulkier in appearance than others, has whitish wing-bars, and chestnut greater wing-coverts—all pointing towards the Lapland Longspur. It is probably not possible to determine the age, or sex, of this bird from this photograph, however, the richness of the nape colour, and the well-marked face indicate this could be a male.

The closest record of this bird, to Bhutan, is a record from Chengdu, Sichuan (30.66°N, 104.00°E) [Cheng 1987]. There is no previous record of it from the Indian Subcontinent (Grimmett *et al.* 2011; Rasmussen & Anderton 2012).

## References

- Byers, C., Olsson, U., & Curson, J., 1995. *Buntings and sparrows: a guide to the buntings and North American sparrows*. 1st ed. Sussex: Pica Press. Pp. 1–334.  
Cheng, T.-H., 1987. *A synopsis of the avifauna of China*. 1st ed. Beijing; Hamburg and Berlin: Science Press; Paul Parey Scientific Publishers. Pp. i–xvi, 1–1222.  
Grimmett, R., Inskipp, C., & Inskipp, T., 2011. *Birds of the Indian Subcontinent*. 2nd ed. London: Oxford University Press & Christopher Helm. Pp. 1–528.  
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.

## Review



*A pictorial field guide to birds of India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh*

By Bikram Grewal, Sumit Sen, Sarwandeep Singh, Nikhil Devasar & Garima Bhatia

India: Om Books International, India. 2016.

Paperback (21 x 14.5 cm), 791 pages, 4000 bird photographs.

Price: Not mentioned.

Contents: Introduction (Birds of Indian subcontinent) by Carol & Tim Inskipp (pp: 4-13), Descriptive text (pp: 14-711), Vagrants & Doubtful Species (pp: 713-722), Acknowledgements (pp:

724-726), Bibliography (pp: 727-731), Descriptive Parts of a bird (pp: 732), A glossary of ornithological terms (pp: 733-735), Checklist: Birds of the Indian subcontinent following Rasmussen & Anderton (2012) (pp: 736-748), Checklist: Birds of the Indian subcontinent with status (pp: 749-772), Index (pp: 773-788), Maps (pp: 789-791).

My first impression of this book, which I am sure, would be that of any other user, is, *excellent photographs!* This is definitely 'one book' which has the largest collection of photographs of birds from the subcontinent. The artistic layout, including well-clipped flight photographs embedded neatly over a larger base photograph of the species in its habitat—visible for several different species—feels as if all the birds in the panorama were a part of the same scene. This style mimics, to some extent, the pathbreaking design of the *Crossley guide* (Crossley 2011). The book has used space liberally, to showcase the photographs, without compromising on aesthetics. Some species like the



29. Lapland Longspur *Calcarius lapponicus* photographed in Bhutan.