

## A NEW REPORT OF PARTIAL ALBINISM IN A HIMALAYAN BULBUL *PYCNONOTUS LEUCOGENYS* FROM UTTARAKHAND, INDIA

PARAMJIT SINGH<sup>1</sup>, RAJSHEKHAR SINGH<sup>2</sup>, DEVANSHI SINGH<sup>3</sup>, SHANKAR KUMAR<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>PCCF (Retd.)(Uttarakhand Forest Department), 21/II Vasant Vihar, Dehradun, Uttarakhand, 248006, India

[paramjit57@yahoo.com](mailto:paramjit57@yahoo.com)

<sup>2</sup>CEO, A Walk in the Woods, 21/II Vasant Vihar, Dehradun, Uttarakhand, 248006, India

[walkinwoods.india@gmail.com](mailto:walkinwoods.india@gmail.com)

<sup>3</sup>Acturial Analyst, 21/II Vasant Vihar, Dehradun, Uttarakhand, 248006, India

[devanshisingh95@gmail.com](mailto:devanshisingh95@gmail.com)

<sup>4</sup>Asst. Professor, Government Post Graduate College, Ranikhet, Almora, 263645,

[kumarshankar86@gmail.com](mailto:kumarshankar86@gmail.com)

Reviewer: M. Ackram Awan

### Introduction

Uttarakhand is one of the Himalayan states of India, lying to the west of Nepal. It hosts a significant number of India's bird diversity, with many endemic species. Mohan & Sondhi (2015) recorded 693 species of birds from this region. Himalayan Bulbul (*Pycnonotus leucogenys*) is a resident of North Pakistan and the Himalaya. It is a crested bulbul with white cheeks, brownish-grey upper parts and yellow vent. It's prominently forward pointing crest is brown (Grimmet *et al.*, 2011). This bird is found in dry habitats, open dry scrub, hillsides with scattered raspberry and *Berberis* bushes, hedgerows, bushes around towns and villages and secondary growth (Grimmet *et al.*, 2011). A partially albino Himalayan Bulbul was observed in Uttarakhand, India. The albino stage happens due to lack of the pigment melanin in the birds which causes the feathers to become white. Melanin also gives strength to feathers and protects the bird's eyes from the damage caused by ultra violet rays of the sun.

### Observation

Albinism is a rare phenomenon and has been recorded in a few avian species in India. A partially albino Himalayan Bulbul was first

photographed at Skimmer Biodiversity Reserve (30°19'29.2"N and 77°59'57.9"E; 644 m amsl), Vasant Vihar, Dehradun, Uttarakhand, when it was foraging amongst leaf-litter on a compost pit on 30<sup>th</sup> December 2019, at 17:01 hours (IST). The bird was videographed on a mobile phone and photographed with a DSLR camera fitted with a 70–300 mm lens. Identification from photographs was confirmed with the help of Grimmet *et al.* (2011). On 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2019 the partially albino Himalayan Bulbul was again seen at the same place and photographed along with normal Himalayan Bulbuls at 17:35 hours (IST). On noon of 1<sup>st</sup> January 2020 it came to a bird feeder in the immediate vicinity of the location where it was first sighted with the resident flock of normally colored bulbuls. During these three sightings, the bird was with the normally colored bulbuls but it appeared that the other bulbuls were harassing it and they did not allow it to come very near to them. Twice we saw it being chased away by other bulbuls.

### Discussion

The Skimmer Biodiversity Reserve has a

variety of grasses, bushes, trees and flowering plants (Fig. 1, Map of Skimmer Biodiversity Reserve) and harbours a range of faunal, especially avifaunal, diversity in a semi-urban setting. It is spread over an area of 800 square metres. In the past two years, we have sighted 60 species of birds from this area. Besides the Himalayan Bulbuls, other interesting birds sighted here are Brahminy Myna *Sturnia pagodarum*, Indian Grey Hornbill *Ocyrceros birostris*, Shikra *Accipiter badius*, Lineated Barbet *Psilopogon lineatus*, Asian Koel *Eudynamys scolopaceus*, Black-crested Bulbul *Pycnonotus melanicterus*, Scaly Breasted Munia *Lonchura punctulata*, Purple Sunbird *Cinnyris asiaticus*, Baya Weaver *Ploceus philippinus*, Rufous Treepie *Dendrocitta vagabunda*, Indian Silverbill *Euodice malabarica*, Oriental Magpie-robin *Copsychus saularis*, Jacobin Cuckoo *Clamator jacobinus*, Common Hoopoe *Upupa epops*, Greater Coucal *Centropus sinensis*, Pale billed Flowerpecker *Dicaeum erythrorhynchos* and Grey-headed Woodpecker *Picus canus*. Every year, House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*, Oriental White-eye *Zosterops palpebrosus*, Common Tailorbird *Orthotomus sutorius*, Spotted Dove *Streptopelia chinensis*, Oriental Magpie-robin *Copsychus saularis* and Baya Weaver *Ploceus philippinus* breed in this area. A literature review on albinism indicates that this is the first record of partial albinism in Himalayan Bulbul (Van Grouw *et al.*, 2016). There have been reports of full or partially albino birds from India. A partially albino Common House Crow *Corvus splendens* was documented from central Aravalli foothills, Ajmer, Rajasthan by Sharma *et al.* (2015). Partial albinism in a Red-vented Bulbul *Pycnonotus cafer* was also reported from the central Aravalli foothills, Rajasthan by Sharma *et al.*, (2018). Total albinism in a Red-vented Bulbul was recorded

from Sri Lanka by Gabadage *et al.* (2015). Koul (2019) observed pure and partial albino House Crows (*Corvus splendens*) in Jammu in 2019.

#### Acknowledgement

The authors are thankful to Mrs. Kamla Singh for letting us make observations in her Reserve and for providing encouragement.

#### References

- Gabadage, D. E., W. M. S. Botejue, A. S. Dias, T. D. Surasinghe & D. M. S. S. Karunarathna. 2015. A case of total albinism in a Red-vented Bulbul *Pycnonotus cafer*. *Indian Birds* 10(6): 162-163.
- Grimmet, R., C. Inskipp & T. Inskipp. 2011. *Birds of the Indian Subcontinent*. 2nd ed. Oxford University Press & Christopher Helm, London. 528 pp.
- Koul, S. 2019. First Report of Pure and Partial Albino House Crow (*Corvus splendens*) From Jammu (J. & K.). *International Journal of Recent Scientific Research* 10(02): 30712-30714. DOI:<http://dx.doi.org/10.24327/ijrsr.2019.1002.3108>
- Mohan, D. & S. Sondhi. 2015. An Updated Checklist of the Birds of Uttarakhand. Revised second edition. Uttarakhand Forest Department, Dehradun. vi + 92 pp.
- Sharma, V., L. Sharma, R. K. Kumawat & K.K. Sharma. 2015. Sighting of Partial albino Common House Crow *Corvus splendens* from central Aravalli foothills, Ajmer, Rajasthan, India. *Journal on New Biological Reports* 4(2): 162-163.
- Sharma, V., D. Yadav, M. Kumari, A. Verma & S. B. Sheikh. 2018. A case of partial Albinism in Red-vented Bulbul (*Pycnonotus cafer*) from Central Aravalli Foothills, Rajasthan. *Journal on New Biological Reports* 7(2): 56-59.
- Van Grouw, H., A. Mahabal, R.M. Sharma & S. Thakur. 2016. How common is albinism

really? Colour aberrations in Indian birds reviewed. *Dutch Birding*. 38: 301-309.



**Fig. 1:** Map of the Skimmer Biodiversity Reserve, Vasant Vihar. Courtesy- Google Earth ©2018 Google. Image©2019 Maxar Technologies.



**Fig. 2:** A partially albino individual of Himalayan bulbul *Pycnonotus leucogenys* (A); a normal plumaged Himalayan bulbul can be seen left side close to it (B).