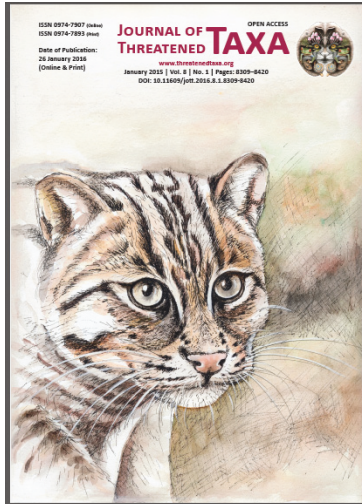


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NOTE

DUSKY WARBLER *PHYLLOSCOPUS FUSCATUS* (AVES: PASSERIFORMES: SYLVIIDAE) IN SANJAY GANDHI NATIONAL PARK, MAHARASHTRA - A RARE RECORD FOR PENINSULAR INDIA

Parvish Pandya, Vikrant Choursiya & Jyoti James

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Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus* is a winter visitor to India, including certain Asian and European countries (Rasmussen & Anderton 2005; Grimmet et al. 2011). It is a common winter migrant in eastern and northeastern parts of India, with occasional sporadic sightings across peninsular India (Grimmet et al. 2011) and a rare winter visitor in the western parts of Maharashtra (Prasad 2003). In Maharashtra, the species has been reported from Poona (now Pune) (Alexander 1948), Mahabaleshwar, Satara District (Dymond 2003) and Tadoba, Chandrapur District (Joshi 2012).

While on a casual bird watching session in Sanjay Gandhi National Park (19°13'44.55"N & 72°52'13.25"E; Fig. 1), Mumbai on 15 December 2013, VC and JJ observed a grayish-brown warbler at 12:20 h, with a fairly long supercilium extending beyond the eyes, which eliminated some of the common warblers recorded in the said location. The individual was observed calling and foraging, for about 30 minutes at a distance of c. 3.5m among a few bushes along a water stream. A photograph (Image 1) was captured using a digital camera for confirming the identification later.

Subsequent visits were made on 16 February 2014 and on 23 February 2014 to the same location in the Sanjay Gandhi National Park, near the Borivali-Kanheri caves road (19°13'27.82"N & 72°53'0.48"E, elevation c. 43m) to spot the species. On the said dates, solitary individuals of the same species were observed by authors and other birdwatchers. On both the occasions, identification was confirmed by observations as well as by "call play-back" technique, in which the call was

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obtained from www.xeno-canto.org/asia, to which each individual responded. The bird was observed among low bushes as well as in the tree canopy adjoining the stream up to a height of approximately c. 6m. Sightings were possible after long gaps since the bird used to disappear for a fair amount of time, only to return for a short while.

From the recorded observations and by using the photograph clicked on 15 December 2013, the bird was identified as Dusky Warbler, using the following distinctive characters: (1) absence of wing bar; (2) legs pale and not dark as seen in some warblers (ex. *Phylloscopus collybita*, *P. trochiloides*); (3) upper parts brown and buff along the flanks; (4) buff colored supercilium and strong dark eye band, against bright yellow supercilium (thereby eliminating *P. griseolus*); and 5. dark upper mandible and pale lower mandible.

During all three observations, Dusky warblers were sighted at the same location, in a habitat which mainly consisted of a semi-dried fresh-water stream, with clusters of *Polygonum glabrum* on the stream-bed and

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Figure 1. Map of the Sanjay Gandhi National Park, Mumbai, India showing the sighting location of Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus*.



Image 1. An individual Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus* photographed on 15 December 2013 in Sanjay Gandhi National Park, Mumbai, Maharashtra, India.

with evergreen riverine forest mainly of composed of *Millettia pinnata* and *Dendrocalamus* sp. on the either banks. The individuals were observed to frequent branches and foliage of all the above plant species.

Popular field guides do not mark this place as a location for sighting this bird. This sighting is not a first record for Sanjay Gandhi National Park since it was sighted c. 2002 (Shashank Dalvi, pers. comm. January

2014) almost at the same place where the present individual was recorded. It is therefore possible that although this bird may be wintering in low numbers in its favoured habitats within this national park, it is possible that the bird may have been overlooked. Other reasons for no regular records being available for this bird could be since individuals evade detection as they move about in infrequented areas of the park, its cryptic behavior, and due to the similarity of its call with other warblers that occur here.

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