

Status of Naumann's Thrush *Turdus naumanni* and its hybrids with Dusky Thrush *T. naumanni* x *T. eunomus* in India

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Naumann's Thrush *Turdus naumanni* is a medium-sized, robust-looking thrush; it was formerly considered conspecific with the Dusky Thrush *T. eunomus* (Clement & Hathway 2000; Clements et al. 2021). It has a distinctive appearance. Adult males are grey-brown above, with a pale rufous-buff supercilium, pale rufous tipped scapulars and median upper wing-coverts, and a pale rufous tail. They are predominantly orange-rufous below with whitish scalloping from the lower breast to vent (Collar 2020). Hybridization between Naumann's Thrush and Dusky Thrush is well known, and most of the individuals seen in the Indian Subcontinent have been hybrids (Clement & Hathway 2000; Dalvi et al. 2017). Hybrids show various combinations of features of both species, and thus a wide range of variability is seen among them (Clement & Hathway 2000; Shirihai & Svensson 2018).

Naumann's Thrush mainly breeds in central and eastern Siberia and winters in extreme south-eastern Russia, China, the Korean Peninsula, Taiwan and, rarely, in Japan (Clement & Hathway 2000; Collar 2020). It has been recently included in the checklist of the birds of India (Praveen et al. 2021), following the record of a pure Naumann's Thrush by Hatibaruah et al. (2019). In this note we compile all records of Naumann's Thrush and hybrids of Naumann's x Dusky Thrush *T. naumanni* x *T. eunomus* from India, including historical records, dating back to 1982.

UT Ladakh

Williams & Delany (1986) reported both, Naumann's Thrush, and Dusky Thrush from Thikse in the Upper Indus Valley, Leh District, Union Territory of Ladakh, at 3,300 m asl, during the Southampton University Ladakh Expeditions (hereinafter, SULE). Delany et al. (2014) provided details of nine species previously unrecorded in India that were observed on these expeditions in 1977, 1980, and 1981–1982. During the preparation of that paper, it slipped their notice that Naumann's Thrush *T. naumanni*

had been split from the Dusky Thrush (Knox et al. 2008), and that while the latter was on the Indian list, the recently split Naumann's Thrush had not previously been recorded in India.

The first sighting of a Naumann's Thrush in Ladakh was by SD and CD, between Thikse and Shey in the Upper Indus Valley of Ladakh, about 15 km south-east of Leh, on 16 January 1982. The bird was sitting in a small Willow *Salix* sp., on the edge of a plantation of willow, Poplar *Populus* sp., and Sea-buckthorn *Hippophae rhamnoides*, together with two Black-throated Thrushes *T. atrogularis*. All the thrushes were settled, allowing close observation and note-taking for over 15 m. Unfortunately, the observers did not have a camera at that moment. The following description was taken:

Crown mid-brown; Prominent, broad, creamy supercilium extending from bill nearly to nape; Ear coverts dark brownish grey; Chin and throat whitish; Breast and flanks broadly scalloped chestnut on off-white background; Belly whitish; Vent chestnut and white; Underwings rufous; Nape, mantle and rump warm earth-brown, wings possibly more rufous (above); Tail quite warm rufous; Bill blackish, basal half of lower mandible yellow; Call much as Black-throated Thrush, a double squawk 'qui-quick'; and size, possibly slightly smaller than a Black-throated Thrush.

The extent of reddish brown (chestnut, rufous) in the plumage, and the lack of throat stripes suggest the bird might have been a male, and the creamy, rather than rufous, supercilium possibly pointed to a first-year bird (photographs in Shirihai & Svensson 2018). A second Naumann's Thrush that was considered to be a male was observed at Thikse plantation on 06 May 1982, but no photograph or description were taken, and this record remains unconfirmed. Dusky Thrushes were also recorded on multiple occasions. Individual birds showing mixed characteristics of both Dusky and Naumann's Thrushes, identified as hybrids between

the two forms, were observed, in heavy snow between Thikse and Shey, on 25, 26, and 27 January, and on 29 March 1982. Hybrids were also recorded at Shey on 01 and 17 February, and at Thikse on 07 April 1982.

There is an unconfirmed sight record of a hybrid on 22 November 2010 in the Indus Valley, Ladakh (Andersen 2011).

PG saw a thrush among several Black- and Red-throated Thrushes, with rufous underparts at Shey, Leh District (34.06°N, 77.64°E; c.1,740 m asl) on 13 December 2021 [144, 145]. The habitat they were in was a mix of sparse populated Willow and Poplar trees and Sea-buckthorn bushes, where they fed upon the dry berries of *Hippophae* on dried-frozen marshy ground. Initially it was thought to be a Dusky Thrush, which had been recorded at the same place a few weeks previously, but later the rufous underparts were noticed, and the images were posted on the Facebook group 'Ask id of Indian Birds', where it was identified as Naumann's Thrush. It had a pale rufous supercilium, prominent malar stripe, brownish upperparts with pale margins to wing-coverts, rufous streaking and spotting on underparts, with blackish spots on throat and chest (Gyalpo 2021). It was a pure first winter Naumann's Thrush as no feature of hybridization could be seen. The extent of pale tips to the greater coverts was a little surprising, and certainly unusual, but since these pale tips are not found in any of the other species that it could hybridize with, it must be considered as an extreme example of wear, given the date of occurrence. It was identified as a female based on the rather broad blackish malar and sparse dark spotting on the breast, together with the dark centers to the greater coverts not forming a complete pale panel across the wing, as visible in a same age male, and the less extensive amounts of rufous or orange in the inner tail feathers.



Both: Padma Gyalpo

144–145. A pure first winter Naumann's Thrush at Shey, Ladakh on 13 December 2021

Imran Shah photographed a thrush from below during January 2020 at Jutial, Gilgit, Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan administered Kashmir at c.1,500 m asl (Shah 2020; Imran Shah *pers. comm.* dated 23 April 2020). It had a dark head, a prominent, short whitish supercilium and blackish lores and malar stripe. The broad black breast band feathers had narrow pale borders. The orange-rufous markings on the flanks were blotchy anteriorly and posteriorly these were streakier. The belly was white. Due to the black breast feathers this bird must be considered as a hybrid between Naumann's and Dusky Thrushes.

Himachal Pradesh

On 9 January 2020, after heavy snowfall on previous days in the region, CA went to Bangotu village, located on a hill near Dharamsala, Kangra District (32.23°N, 76.34°E; c.1,740 m asl). The top of this hill, and most of the surroundings, are covered with scattered trees, mainly small to medium sized *Pyrus pashia*, and a few village fields. At 0800 hrs, CA saw a *Turdus* thrush through binoculars. It was perched on the top of a *P. pashia* tree along with Black-throated Thrushes. The rufous on its underparts looked prominent in the morning light; however, other features couldn't be seen as it was too distant. When CA approached, it took cover inside a bush. Only a limited part of the bird was seen through the bush, and a photograph was taken [146]. After a few minutes it flew away and couldn't be located, even after an extensive search. It had a prominent supercilium, white moustachial stripes with fine black streaking, and a prominent malar stripe. The breast was boldly streaked with black, with some orange-rufous streaking on the lower breast. The center of the belly was white, and the flanks were prominently streaked with orange rufous. Although these details are insufficient to correctly identify this bird, the orange-rufous of the underparts indicates that it certainly had some attributes of Naumann's Thrush, but without any details on the wing coverts and tail, its specific identity remains inconclusive. The absence of typical, and prominent, orange-rufous arrowhead marking on the underparts, and prominent black streaking on the breast strongly suggest that it could have been a hybrid between *T. naumanni* x *T. eunomus*.



C. Abhinav

146. A probable hybrid on 9 January 2020 at Bangotu, Dharamsala, Kangra District, Himachal Pradesh

After a couple of hours, CA descended the hill and came to village fields at Upper Barol (32.21°N, 76.34°E; c.3,300 m asl), located near the base of this hill. These terraced fields were

located near a stream and had a thin cover of trees, mainly *P. pashia*, on their edges. At 1220 hrs, CA flushed a thrush that was structurally similar to a Black-throated Thrush and had prominent orange-rufous on the underparts [147]. It was clearly a different individual from the one seen earlier at Bangotu, as each had a different pattern of markings. The pale orange-rufous supercilium was short and poorly defined. It had fine, broken, blackish malar stripes, finely streaked white moustachial stripes and a narrow band of black on the throat. The underparts had prominent orange-rufous markings, which were arrowhead shaped on the anterior flanks while streaky and blotchy posteriorly. The undertail coverts and underside of the tail were predominantly orange-rufous. The upperparts were not completely visible as the bird was seen from a single angle. The visible upperparts were brownish. The wing coverts had broad pale golden borders and the flight feathers were blackish with narrower pale golden borders. The prominent orange-rufous on the underparts and undertail are features of Naumann's Thrush; but it was not a pure form as it had a black band on the throat.



C. Abhinav

147. A hybrid on 9 January 2020 at Upper Barol, Dharamsala, Kangra District, Himachal Pradesh

Uttarakhand Munsyari

On 29 November 2016, JK and RP were birding along the Almor-Bageshwar-Munsyari road in Pithoragarh District. They stopped at a small village, located on a forest clad hillside (30.02°N, 80.18°E; c.2,070 m asl) c.25 km before Munsyari. They saw an unfamiliar thrush near the road, which had rufous underparts and a dark throat [148]. It had a well patterned, dark greyish brown head with dark lores, a prominent, whitish supercilium, which was shorter than the typical supercilium of an adult Dusky or Naumann's Thrush, and white moustachial, and black malar stripes. The upperparts, including the rump, were dark greyish brown. The tail was also dark brown with some orange-rufous visible on the outer feathers at the base of the tail. The wing coverts and flight feathers were greyish brown to dark brownish with pale rufous edges. The chin, throat, and center of the belly were whitish. There was a broad band of extensively black-centered feathers on the breast, which ended abruptly and gave way to orange-rufous centered feathers on the flanks. These markings were arrowhead shaped on the upper flanks, and blotchy and diffuse on the rest of the flanks. The darker face and upperparts, and extensive black on the breast, are features of a Dusky Thrush, while extensive orange rufous on the flanks and

absence of golden-rufous wing panel are features of Naumann's Thrush. Thus, we conclude that this bird was a hybrid.

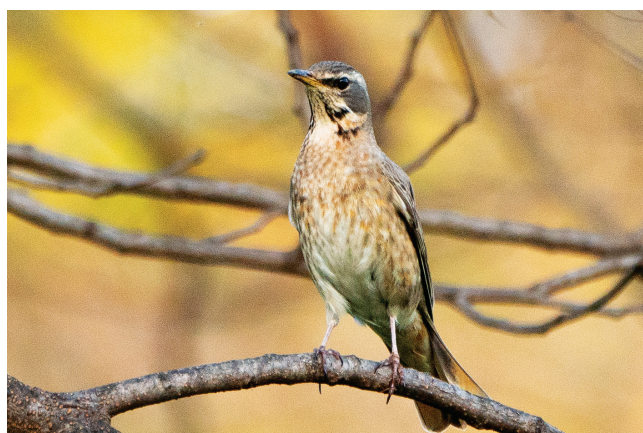


Jainy Kurakose

148. A hybrid on 29 November 2016, near Munsyari, Uttarakhand

Dehradun

On 2 March 2020, DSR saw an unusual looking thrush [149] feeding around termite emergence sites, along with Black-throated Thrushes and several other species of birds at New Forest Campus, Forest Research Institute, Dehradun District (30.34°N, 78.00°E; c.650 m asl) (Rathore 2020). It had a pale rufous wash and blotches on the sides of the neck, and below the ear coverts, breast, flanks, and vent, mixed with some diffuse dark blotches. The center of the belly was white. The undertail was rufous. The crown and ear-coverts were dark, supercilium was prominent and pure white, and lores and malar stripe were black. The dark ear coverts, and dirty orange on the underparts indicated that it was a hybrid between Naumann's and Dusky Thrush.



Digvijay Singh Rathore

149. A hybrid on 2 March 2020 at Forest Research Institute, Dehradun, Uttarakhand

Sikkim

On 27 November 2018, JP was birding near the Lachen Monastery, Lachen, Mangan District (27.72°N, 88.56°E; c.2660 m asl). He spotted a thrush near a small dumping site of discarded construction debris [150], which was surrounded by a patch of mixed vegetation, mainly consisting of pine trees and shrubs on a hill slope. It had a whitish supercilium, prominent malar stripe,

greyish-brown upperparts with prominent pale-rufous wing panel, and pale-rufous markings on underparts. This was also a hybrid.



Joydev Pathak

150. A hybrid on 27 November 2018 at Lachen Monastery, Lachen, Mangan District

West Bengal Jalpaiguri

One hybrid with dark ear coverts and crown, white supercilium, and rufous-brown markings on underparts, was seen on 30 December 2010 at Teesta Riverbed in Jalpaiguri, Jalpaiguri District at c.80 m asl. (Ghatak 2010).

Buxa Tiger Reserve

A thrush with mixed features of Naumann's and Dusky was seen on 10 April 2020 at Buxa Tiger Reserve, Alipurduar, Jalpaiguri District (Saha 2020). Although this bird had orange-red markings on flanks, dark rufous-brown marking on throat, and blackish lores, ear coverts, and crown ruled out a pure individual.

Arunachal Pradesh Mishmi Hills

On 23 February 2019, CA was birding with Binanda Hatibaruah, Sheila Castelino, and Sunita Chaudhry around Mayodia Pass, Mishmi Hills, Lower Dibang Valley District. They stopped near a restaurant at 65 km, about 7 kms ahead of the Pass (28.28°N, 95.91°E; c.2,290 m asl). A thrush [151, 152] was seen, feeding on the ground in an open area near the restaurant. It was a bold individual and allowed photographs to be taken from different angles. It had a dark brown crown and ear coverts with a whitish supercilium. The rest of its upperparts including the rump were brownish, with feathers of the scapulars and rump showing rufous borders. It had prominent black malar stripes and black streaking on the upper breast. The underparts had prominent dark rufous markings, except for the center of the belly. These markings were heavier and arrowhead shaped on the sides of the breast and anterior flanks. The crown, ear coverts, upperparts, and tail were too dark for a pure Naumann's Thrush. The rufous-red on the underparts was also darker, and there were no visible orange-rufous fringes on the base of the tail, which also excludes a pure Naumann's. Thus, this was another hybrid of Dusky and Naumann's Thrush. It lingered faithfully at the site during the remaining winter days and was spotted at this location on multiple occasions by several birders, at least until 9 April 2019 (Ash 2019a).



Both: C. Abhinav

151, 152. A hybrid on 23 February 2019, near Mayodia Pass, Mishmi Hills, Lower Dibang Valley District, Arunachal Pradesh by CA

On 28 February 2021, Avinash Bhagat photographed a thrush at Mishmi Hills (photo shared, pers. comm. dated 7 February 2022). It had dark ear coverts and crown, a brownish mantle, golden-rufous wing coverts, and dark rufous-brown markings on underparts. Thus, it was also a hybrid.

Mandala

JK visited Mandala Pass, West Kameng District, on 10 March 2019 and observed the open areas around the Mandala Birding Lodge, which is located at the top of a well forested hill (27.29°N, 92.26°E; c.2,970 m asl). During an evening and a morning birding session, JK observed several Naumann's-type, Dusky, Black, and Red-throated Thrushes *T. ruficollis* dispersed in this open habitat, within one-and-a-half kilometers of the lodge. The birds were feeding on the ground and especially around cattle dung. Although these thrushes were shy, photographs of several individuals were obtained and analyzed later. JK and CA identified at least six different individuals from these photographs, but probably a few individuals remained un-photographed. All of these had features of both, Dusky, and Naumann's Thrushes; none was a pure Naumann's Thrush. We are providing a brief description of these birds.

Individual 1 [153, 154]: This bird had a prominent whitish supercilium, black malar stripes, and the mantle and scapulars were rufous brown. There was a prominent golden-rufous panel on the wings. It had black streaking on the throat and upper breast. The sides of the breast and flanks had arrowhead shape dark-rufous markings. Thus, it was another hybrid with prominent Dusky Thrush features.





Jany Kurakose

153–159. Hybrids on 10-11 March 2019 Mandala Pass, West Kameng District, Arunachal Pradesh

Individual 2 [155]: This bird had a greyish-brown head and upperparts, with no rufous. The greater wing coverts and flight feathers had a golden-rufous border. It had a prominent white supercilium and a prominent malar stripe. The upper breast had some black spotting with negligible rufous, while the sides of breast and flanks had rufous markings. A pure white supercilium, greyish-brown crown, mantle, and scapulars without rufous, and a golden-rufous wing panel are features of Dusky Thrush.

Individual 3 [156]: This bird had a whitish face with blackish crown, lores, ear coverts, and malar stripes. The mantle, and wing coverts were creamy rufous with minimal contrast. The

underparts had rufous markings on a whitish base with a narrow band of black markings on the lower breast and a few blackish spots on the side of the breast. The undertail and vent were rufous. The golden-rufous wing panel and very dark crown and ear coverts ruled out the possibility of a pure Naumann's Thrush.

Individual 4 [157]: This bird had a dark crown and ear coverts and a very prominent black malar patch. The markings on the underparts were dark-rufous to rufous-brown and their pattern was different from other individuals. These markings were too dark for a pure Naumann's Thrush.

Individual 5 [158]: This bird had a blackish crown, and blackish ear coverts with white spots. There were small black spots on a white moustachial region. The upperparts were dark with black spotting and prominent orange-rufous on the feather margins. The tail was black with orange-rufous uppertail coverts. The sides of the throat and breast had black blotches while the rest of the breast had smaller black markings. The rest of the underparts, except the center of the belly, had rufous arrowhead markings. The blackish crown, ear coverts, and tail ruled out a pure Naumann's Thrush.

Individual 6 [159]: This bird had dark ear coverts and a whitish supercilium. It had dark-brownish upperparts, including the crown, with minimal rufous on the scapulars. The wing coverts and flight feathers had pale golden-brown borders. The throat and upper breast had black blotches while the rest of the underparts, except the center of the belly, had prominent arrowhead and blotchy-rufous markings. It was another hybrid because of darker face and upperparts, and less warm rufous on underparts.

Table 1. Records of Naumann's Thrush *T. naumanni* and Naumann's x Dusky Thrush *T. naumanni* x *T. eunomus* hybrids in India

State / UT	S. No.	Date	Location	Altitude in m asl	Reference/ Observer	Comments*
UT Ladakh	1	16 January 1982	between Thikse and Shey, Leh District	3,300	SD & CD	Sight record of a pure Naumann's Thrush (first winter)
	2	25, 26, 27 January, and 29 March 1982	between Thikse and Shey, Leh District	3,300	SD & CD	Sight record of hybrids
	3	1 and 17 February 1982	Shey, Leh District	3,300	SD & CD	Sight record of hybrids
	4	7 April 1982	Thikse, Leh District	3,300	SD & CD	Sight record of a hybrid
	5	6 May 1982	Thikse, Leh District	3,300	SD & CD	Sight record of unconfirmed pure Naumann's Thrush (male)
	6	22 November 2010	Indus Valley	—	Andersen 2011	Unconfirmed sight record of a hybrid
	7	January 2020	Jutial, Gilgit, Gilgit-Baltistan	1,500	Shah 2020	Hybrid
	8	13–15 December 2021	Shey, Leh District	3,300	PG, Gyalpo 2021	Pure Naumann's Thrush (first winter female)
Himachal Pradesh	1	9 January 2020	Bangotu, near Dharamsala, Kangra District	1,740	CA	Hybrid
	2	9 January 2020	Upper Barol, near Dharamsala, Kangra District	1,180	CA	Hybrid
Uttarakhand	1	29 November 2016	near Munsyari, Pithoragarh District	2,070	JK & RP	Hybrid
	2	2 March 2020	FRI, Dehradun, Dehradun District	650	DSR	Hybrid
Sikkim	1	27 November 2018	Lachen Monastery, Lachen, Mangan District	2,650	JP	Hybrid
West Bengal	1	30 December 2010	Teesta Riverbed at Jalpaiguri, Jalpaiguri District	80	Ghatak 2010	Hybrid
	2	10 April 2020	Buxa Tiger Reserve, Jalpaiguri District	—	Saha 2020	Hybrid
Assam	1	6 January 2006	Manas National Park, Baksa District	60	Dalvi et al. 2017	Sight record
	2	17 December 2018	Digboi Oil Fields, Tinsukia District	165	Hatibaruah et al. 2019	Hybrid

Table 1. Records of Naumann's Thrush *T. naumanni* and Naumann's x Dusky Thrush *T. naumanni* x *T. eunomus* hybrids in India

State / UT	S. No.	Date	Location	Altitude in m asl	Reference/ Observer	Comments*
Arunachal Pradesh	1	15 March 2008	Sangti Valley, West Kameng District	1,800	Dalvi et al. 2017	Hybrid
	2	2, 27 March 2016	Mandala Pass, West Kameng District	3,000	Dalvi et al. 2017	Hybrid
	3	11 February 2019	-do-	2,800	Hatibaruah et al. 2019	Pure Naumann's Thrush (first winter female)
	4	3 March 2019	-do-	3,500	Taylor 2019	Two possibly pure Naumann's Thrushes or hybrids (undetermined) and one definite hybrid
	5	10–11 March 2019	-do-	3,000	JK	At least six hybrids
	6	23 February to 9 April 2019	Mayodia Pass, Mishmi Hills, Lower Dibang Valley District	2,290	CA; Ash 2109a	Hybrid
	7	27 March 2019	Jaswantgarh near Sela Pass, Tawang District	3,300	Ash 2019b	Hybrid
	8	28 February 2021	Tiwari Gaon, Mishmi Hills, Lower Dibang Valley District	1,700	Avinash Bhagat	Hybrid

* All are photographic records, unless mentioned as sight record

Taylor (2019) observed two, possibly pure, Naumann's Thrushes, and one hybrid in the Mandala Pass region on 3 March 2019. However, the single photograph of the two possible pure thrushes, taken [160] from a distance, is insufficient to eliminate the possibility of their being hybrids, especially in the light of known hybrids being present in the area (see above).



160. A couple of possible hybrids and a Dusky Thrush on 3 March 2019 at Mandala Pass, West Kameng District, Arunachal Pradesh by Jonathan Taylor

Tawang

There is a record of a hybrid from Jaswantgarh near Sela Pass, Tawang on 27 March 2019 (Ash 2019b). It predominantly showed features of Dusky Thrush: dark ear coverts, lores, and crown, a pure white supercilium, and prominent rufous on the wing panel, while the underparts had rufous-brown spotting.

The records of pure Naumann's Thrush, and Naumann's x Dusky Thrush hybrids from India are presented in Table 1. All records with photographs, were confirmed as hybrids or pure Naumann's Thrush by PC.

Discussion

Stuart Baker (1924) and Ali & Ripley (1987) did not mention Naumann's Thrush as having occurred in the Indian Subcontinent. Rasmussen & Anderton (2012), Grimmett et al. (1998, 2011), and Dalvi et al. (2017), all published after Williams & Delany (1986), have overlooked or ignored this record, and did not mention Naumann's Thrush. Kazmierczak (2000) has given an illustration of an intermediate *T. naumanni* x *T. eunomus* under Dusky Thrush, but not of pure Naumann's Thrush. Apart from the records from India summarized above, there have been two records of hybrids and one pure Naumann's Thrush from Bhutan (Dalvi et al. 2017), and two unconfirmed sight records from Nepal; one near Jomosom between 27 March and 1 April 1983 (Alström & Olsson 1983), and another at Jolbari on 19 January 1989 (Halliday 1989).

The records presented in this note, of at least six individuals from Mandala, one each from Mishmi Hills and Sikkim, are a valuable addition to the handful of existing records from north-eastern India. The two records by Hatibaruah et al. (2019), one by Ash (2019b), and all the individuals recorded by the authors in Arunachal Pradesh, were observed during the winter of 2018–2019, when there were at least six different hybrids and one pure Naumann's Thrush at Mandala Pass. It seems that there was an influx of this thrush in north-eastern India, during this winter. The multiple recent records of this bird from north-eastern India and West Bengal, indicate that it might be more frequent in this region than previously thought, especially in severe winters, and at high altitudes.

Naumann's Thrush, Dusky Thrush and their hybrids, were all recorded during the SULE in 1982. The record of Naumann's Thrush in Ladakh, that is supported by the description above, antedates existing published records and appears to be the first record of Naumann's Thrush in India. Mallon (1987) did not record Naumann's or Dusky Thrush wintering in Ladakh in four consecutive winters between 1981 and 1984. There have been no studies of wintering birds in Ladakh since the early

