

Photo: H. S. Sangha



Fig. 4. Pale Rock Sparrows occasionally flew up into trees.

the species in the same location on 27 January 2011 and had recorded this as an unconfirmed sighting of a 'petronia-like' bird in his diary.

This sighting of Pale Rock Sparrow is intriguing, as its recorded wintering range is western Saudi Arabia, and north-eastern Africa (Rasmussen & Anderton 2005; del Hoyo *et al.* 2009). However, Swinhoe (1882), and Paludan (1959) have mentioned wintering of the species in Kandhar (Afghanistan). It is possible that birds from the eastern limits of their summer breeding range winter in the Indian Subcontinent, and have probably been overlooked in the past. It is recommended that birdwatchers keep a sharp lookout for the Pale Rock Sparrow to obtain a clear picture of the species' status and distribution range in the Indian Subcontinent.

## References

- Ali, S., & Ripley, S. D., 1987. *Compact handbook of the birds of India and Pakistan together with those of Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan and Sri Lanka*. 2nd ed. Pp. i–xlii, 1–737, 52 ll. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Beaman, M., & Madge, S., 1998. *The handbook of bird identification for Europe and the Western Palearctic*. London: Christopher Helm.
- Clement, P., Harris, A., & Davis, J., 1999. *Finches & sparrows*. 2nd ed. Pp. 1–500. London: Princeton: Christopher Helm; Princeton University Press.
- Cramp, S., Perrins, C. M., Brooks, D., Dunn, E., Gillmor, R., Hall-Craggs, J., Hillcoat, B., Hollom, P. A. D., Nicholson, E. M., Roselaar, C. S., Seale, W. T. C., Sellar, P. J., Simmons, K. E. L., Snow, D. W., Vincent, D., Voous, K. H., Wallace, D. I. M., & Wilson, M. G., 1994. *Handbook of birds of Europe, the Middle-east and North Africa*. Vol. 8. Crows to Finches. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- del Hoyo, J., Elliott, A., & Christie, D., 2009. *Handbook of the birds of the world. Volume 14. Bush-shrikes to Old World Sparrows*. Vol 14. Pp. 1–893. Barcelona: Lynx Edicions.
- Grimmett, R., Inskipp, C., & Inskipp, T., 1998. *Birds of the Indian Subcontinent*. 1st ed. Pp. 1–888. London: Christopher Helm, A & C Black.
- Grimmett, R., Inskipp, C., & Inskipp, T., 2011. *Birds of the Indian Subcontinent*. 2nd ed. Pp. 1–528. London: Oxford University Press & Christopher Helm.
- Inskipp, T., Lindsey, N., & Duckworth, W., 1996. *An annotated checklist of the birds of the Oriental Region*. Pp. 1–294. Bedfordshire, U.K: Oriental Bird Club.
- Kazmierczak, K., 2000. *A field guide to the birds of India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh and the Maldives*. 1st ed. Pp. 1–352. London: Pica Press / Christopher Helm.
- Meinertzhagen, R., 1954. *Birds of Arabia*. London & Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd.
- Paludan, K., 1959. The 3rd Danish Expedition to Central Asia. Zoological results 25. On the birds of Afghanistan. *Videnskabelige Meddelelser Dansk Naturhistorisk Forening* 122: 1–332.
- Rasmussen, P. C., & Anderton, J. C., 2005. *Birds of South Asia: the Ripley guide*. 2 vols. 1st ed. Pp. 1–378, 1–683. Washington, D.C. & Barcelona: Smithsonian Institution & Lynx Edicions.
- Ripley, S. D., 1961. *A synopsis of the birds of India and Pakistan together with those of Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan and Ceylon*. 1st ed. Pp. i–xxxvi, 1–703. Bombay: Bombay Natural History Society.
- Swinhoe, C., 1882. On the birds of southern Afghanistan. *Ibis* 6: 95–126.
- Vielliard, J., 1969. Donnees biogeographiques sur l'avifauna d'Asie occidentale. I. Afghanistan (premiere partie). *Alauda* 37: 274–300.

**Editor's note:** Pale Rock Sparrow *Carpospiza brachydactyla* has also been reported from the Rann of Kachchh, Gujarat, by Jugal Kishore Tiwari, who spotted several birds on 27 January 2012. [Subhas Chandra N. S. in *Deccan Herald* dated 20 February 2012.]

# Ernst Schäfer's comprehensive historical bird collection from Sikkim and Tibet at the Museum für Naturkunde Berlin

S. Frahnert, P. Eckhoff & J. Fiebig

Frahnert, S., Eckhoff, P., & Fiebig, J., 2012. Ernst Schäfer's comprehensive historical bird collection from Sikkim and Tibet at the Museum für Naturkunde Berlin. *Indian BIRDS* 7 (6): 160–161.

S. Frahnert, P. Eckhoff & J. Fiebig: Museum für Naturkunde, Leibniz-Institut für Evolutions- und Biodiversitätsforschung, Invalidenstraße 43, D-10115 Berlin, Germany.

The bird collection of the Museum für Naturkunde Berlin (ZMB) is, with more than 200,000 items, the largest in Germany. One collecting focus of this international collection is East and Southeast Asia. The ZMB holds extensive collections by Walter Beick [China: Sichuan, Qinghai, Gansu, 1926–1932; 859 specimens (Stresemann 1937)]; Gerd Heinrich (Iran, Indonesia, Myanmar, 1927–1938; > 3,500 specimens); Rudolf Mell (China: Guangdon, 1915–1921; ~1,200 specimens); and Hugo Weigold (China: different provinces, 1914–1919; ~1,500 specimens).

Beyond this collecting focus, there are only a few small collections from India. Among the oldest collections from India are those of Wilhelm F. G. Behn (coasts, and Nicobar Islands, 1845/1846), M. Lamare-Piquot (Bengal, 1821–1826), as well as the expedition of Prinz Waldemar von Preußen / Werner Hofmeister (India and the Himalayas, 1844–1846).

However, the largest collection of Indian birds in the ZMB is that of Ernst Schäfer, collected in Sikkim 1938/1939. Ernst Schäfer (1910–1992) was a German zoologist and hunter. He took part in three expeditions to Sikkim, and Tibet and adjacent

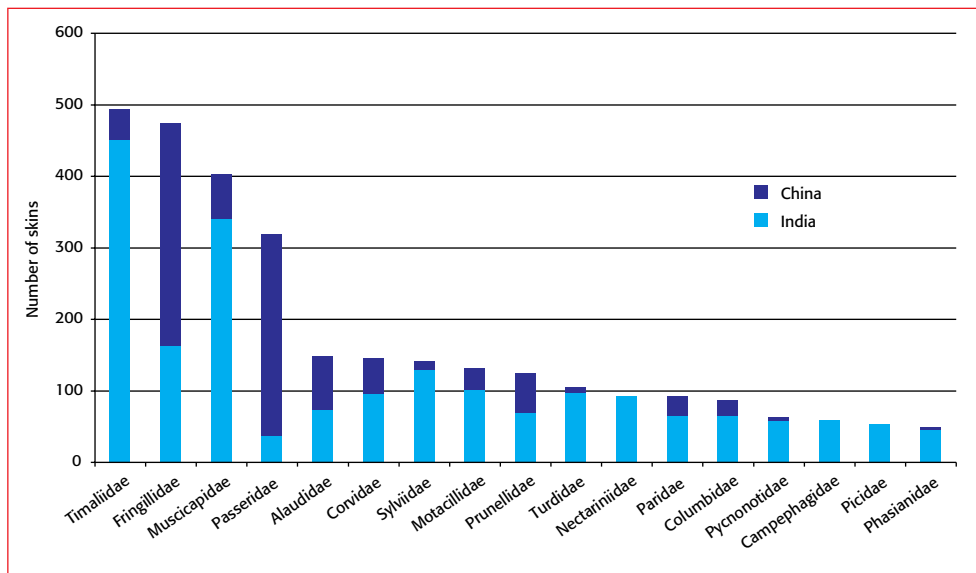


Fig. 1. Distribution of the skins of bird families from the collection of Schäfer's third expedition to Sikkim and Tibet (families with more than 50 skins; diagram modified from Abs *et al.* 2010a).

provinces in China. The first two expeditions (1931/1932, and 1934–1936) to Tibet and adjacent Chinese provinces were organised by the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia and guided by Brook Dolan (1908–1945). The third expedition (1938/1939) to Sikkim and Tibet was guided by E. Schäfer himself, and is burdened by its support from, and connections with, the political aims of the Third Reich (Haffer *et al.* 2000; Nowak 2005). While most of the birds collected during the first and second expeditions were integrated into the collections of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia (~ 3,000 skins), the entire collection of birds (besides eggs) from the third expedition was sent to the Museum für Naturkunde Berlin (~3,500 skins). Two-thirds of the birds, from all three expeditions, housed in the ZMB, comprising 2,400 skins of 278 species, were collected in India (especially Sikkim) in 1938, and in the first half of 1939 (Fig. 1). Due to the separation of the collecting routes of the individual expedition members the avifauna around Gangtok could be sampled throughout an entire year (nearly 1,000 skins).

The collection in Berlin has remained almost unknown due to the political circumstances of the expedition, and the

accession time of the collection at the museum, i.e., World War II. Erwin Stresemann, the curator of the ornithological collection that time, was especially interested in the taxonomy of Asian birds. He analysed the birds of the Schäfer expedition, described new subspecies (Stresemann 1939, 1940) for Sikkim, and prepared a manuscript of more than 100 pages about the entire collection. This manuscript was neither completed nor published (Haffer *et al.* 2000), but the data were cited by Ali (1962) for Sikkim, and Vaurie (1972) for Tibet. The collection of the about 3,500 skins remained stored separately for more than 60 years and it was catalogued to only a very small degree.

Recently the collections of Ernst Schäfer, from Sikkim and Tibet, at the Museum für Naturkunde Berlin, were completely catalogued, labelled, and systematically integrated into the main ornithological collection (Fig. 2). A catalogue was published in *Zoosystematics and Evolution* (Abs *et al.* 2010a, b). The catalogue provides detailed information about the species, sex, and age; as well as collecting locality and date of the skins. Species determination and locality names have been updated and geographical coordinates for the localities published for the first time. The specimens, as well as the manuscript of E. Stresemann, are now available for scientific studies in the Museum für Naturkunde Berlin.

## References

- Abs, M., Eckhoff, P., Fiebig, J., & Frahnert, S., 2010a. The bird collections in the Museum für Naturkunde Berlin resulting from Ernst Schäfer's three expeditions to Tibet and Sikkim. *Zoosystematics and Evolution* 86 (1) 49–80. DOI 10.1002/zoos.200900014.
- Abs, M., Eckhoff, P., Fiebig, J., & Frahnert, S., 2010b. Erratum - The bird collections in the Museum für Naturkunde Berlin resulting from Ernst Schäfer's three expeditions to Tibet and Sikkim. *Zoosystematics and Evolution* 86, 1: 49–80. DOI 10.1002/zoos.200900014. *Zoosystematics and Evolution* 86 (2): 351–354. DOI 10.1002/zoos.201000018.
- Ali, S., 1962. *The birds of Sikkim*. 1st ed. Pp. i–xxx, 1–414. Madras, India: Oxford University Press.
- Haffer, J., Rutschke, E., & Wunderlich, K., 2000. Erwin Stresemann (1889–1972) – Leben und Werk eines Pioniers der wissenschaftlichen Ornithologie. *Deutsche Akademie der Naturforscher Leopoldina, Halle (Saale): Acta Historica Leopoldina*, 34: 1–465.
- Nowak, E., 2005. *Wissenschaftler in turbulenten Zeiten: Erinnerungen an Ornithologen, Naturschützer und andere Naturkundler*. Schwerin: Stock & Stein: 1–432.
- Stresemann, E., 1937. Aves Beickiana. Beiträge zur Ornithologie von Nordwest-Kansu nach den Forschungen von Walter Beick (†) in den Jahren 1926–1933. *Journal für Ornithologie* 85 (3): 375–576.
- Stresemann, E., 1939. Zwei neue Rassen aus Süd-Tibet und Nord-Sikkim. *Ornithologische Monatsberichte* 47 (6): 176–177.
- Stresemann, E., 1940. Welche Rasse von *Hirundo rustica* brütet in Sikkim? *Ornithologische Monatsberichte* 48 (3): 88–89.
- Vaurie, C., 1972. *Tibet and its birds*. Pp. i–xv, 1–407. London: H.F. & G. Witherby Ltd.

Fig. 2. A view of the collection of birds from the Schäfer expedition.

