

20 BISNEY ROAD
POKFULAM
HONG KONG

TEL. 5-8189651

SMITH, S. (1988)

BY AIRMAIL

9th May 1988

Ms. Carol Inskipp,
c/o Oriental Bird Club,
c/o The Lodge,
Sandy,
Beds. SG 19 2 DL
United Kingdom.

Dear Carol,

I was lucky enough to be able to visit Nepal in February and in particular to spend time at the Karnali River. I enclose a copy of a note of one record I had there which perhaps merits passing on, and I assume you are the best person to pass it on to. I can let you have copies/a loan of the slides if you wish; I'm afraid you rather have to hunt for the bird.

I shall not be offended if it is rejected. I appreciate you don't know me, but David Melville, Mike Chalmers or any of the others here will speak to my bona fides, if not competence.

Other records which, to judge from your book, may be of interest are (adopting your English names) :

1. Black-necked Stork At Karnali 1 on 10.2.88, 5 on 11.2.88 and 1 on 12.2.88
2. White-tailed Eagle 1 at Karnali on 11.2.88 and 13.2.88
3. Lammergeier 1 at Chisapani Gorge on 13.2.88 (with 2 there on 12.2.88 according to the manager of the tented camp)
4. Greater Spotted Eagle 1 on Nagarkot road (Kathmandu Valley) on 15.2.88

../2

Send this to you this to Kay. just like

was when not in the field

Carol Inskipp

9th May 1988

5. Steppe Eagle 1 roosting at phanta grassland at Karnali on 12.2.88
6. Rufous-bellied Eagle 2 over phanta grassland at Karnali on 10.2.88
7. Changeable Hawk Eagle 1 at Karnali on 12.2.88 and possibly also on 10.2.88 and 11.2.88
8. Northern Stone Curlew 2 in thin scrub/woodland on the track from Nepalgunj to Bardia on 9.2.88
9. Great Stone Curlew 2, and up to 10 (one party), on Karnali River on 11.2.88
10. Great Black-headed Gull Present throughout our stay at Karnali (10-13.2.88 full days), with 2 on 10.2.88, 5 on 11.2.88, 1 on 12.2.88 and 1 on 13.2.88. Also 1 at Babai River on 14.2.88
11. Chestnut-crowned Warbler 1 (?2) and 1 at Karnali on 12.2.88 and 1 at Chisapani Gorge on 13.2.88. (I feel sure these 3, which were at different locations, were different birds).

If you want any further details (so far as I have them), or would like a copy of my full list - still "in. prep." - please let me know.

Can I also say how informative and helpful your book was before, during and after our trip. Many thanks.

Yours sincerely,



Stewart Smith

Chisapani Gorge, W. Nepal : 13 February 1988

I was walking in the Chisapani Gorge, Karnali River, W. Nepal on 13th February 1988 when I saw a black wheatear (*Oenanthe*) sp. on boulders (with thin vegetation and small mud pools) in the bottom of the gorge. I was able to watch it at eye level at various distances from c.20 to c.80 metres and for as long as I wished, always in excellent light and through 10x40 binoculars. I was accompanied by Jitender Kumar Chaudhari (? spelling), one of the guides from the Karnali tented camp. I was able to take some photographs, but these are rather inadequate as I did not have any sufficiently long lens with me at the time. I am familiar with the (Northern) Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe* but with no other wheatears. I had no authorities with me at the time except Fleming. A look at A Pictorial Guide to the Birds of the Indian Subcontinent that evening satisfied me that the bird was *O. picata opistholeuca*, in spite of its absence from Inskipp. On my return to Hong Kong and was able to consult Ali & Ripley and Clement (Brit. Birds 80 : 137-157 and 187-238), which seemed to me to confirm my view. If I am right, this would seem to be a first record for Nepal.

There follows a transcription of my field notes made at the time with some interpolations and two later emendations of the same day.

"Almost instant [diagnosis] as "Wheatear". On open rocks/bed in [Chisapani] gorge : up on rock tops and in small open tree/sapling. Upright stance, thin build with elongated appearance. Bobbed regularly when standing and tail dipped slightly. Overall head, chin, nape, crown, mantle and upper tail dark greyish black with? some brownish tinge in certain lights (cf. Sooty Flycatcher [*Muscicapa sibirica*]). Lores and ? eye black. Less obvious wheatear face than I would expect from a "black" wheatear. Breast and centre belly rather dirty and imprecise grey - untidy - similar colour to rest but lighter. [Note : there was some degree of darker colouring as a breastband in mid breast]. Flanks whitish grey. Upper leg brownish grey. [Undertail] coverts and undertail white with broad black terminal band. Uppertail wheatear T pattern. No means of measuring extent of [white]/black but extensive white appearance in flight. Could not see top of black T when at rest, [therefore] appearance of white sides only. [Note : on later views top of black T and white above could be seen at

rest]. Bill/legs dark greyish black. ? longer/taller than
"English" Wheatear. 1425-1420/5 [hrs.]. No call heard.
[Chisapani] Gorge, W. Nepal. 13.2.88. With Sandy Smith [my
wife], [Jitender - see above] [Tiger Mountain] Guide."

Stewart Smith
Flat 3,
20 Bisney Road,
Hong Kong.

3rd-8th Floors,
Alexandra House
Hong Kong

8th May 1988

SPS 3488B