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PART

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RUFIOUS-BREASTED BUSH ROBIN (*Tarsiger hyperythrus*)
AT PHULCHOWKI, KATHMANDU VALLEY, NEPAL

Early on the morning of 5 February, Mike Turnbull and I were walking down the road from the summit of Phulchowki. At about 0900 hours we noticed a chat hopping about in the road (about 200 meters below the summit) superficially like a Red-flanked Bluetail (*T. cyanurus*) of which we had already seen several that morning. There were however several plumage differences from that species and we concluded the bird must be a male Rufous-breasted Bush Robin in first winter plumage.

Description

Superficially similar to a Red-flanked Bluetail but immediately separated by its dull greyish orange underparts. This colour was uniform across the breast, belly and flanks. The undertail coverts were white. Very striking was the throat patch which was bright orange and contrasted with the duller orange underparts.

The upperparts also differed from those of a Red-flanked Bluetail. The whole of the mantle was greyish with a blue tinge, very different to the brown coloured upperparts of female/immature Red-flanked Bluetail. The nape and head were a similar colour. Most striking however was the iridescent blue supercillium which reached to the rear of the ear coverts. The bend of the closed wing was also a similar iridescent blue colour. The rump was a brighter blue than the mantle and slightly brighter than the tail. Tail slightly brighter than female R-f. Blue-tails.

The eye was marked by a white-eye ring, broadest behind the eye and much more obvious than a Red-flanked Bluetail's.

The bill and legs were black.

In size it was marginally smaller than a Red-flanked Bluetail but appeared 'rounder' since it was fluffing out its feathers due to the extremely cold weather (@ -10 C).

In all other aspects, it resembled a Red-flanked Bluetail - which were very common on the Phulchowki; we estimated we saw approximately 40 individuals during the day, mostly in the morning on the upper slopes.

We returned to the summit of Phulchowki on 16 February and found the bird again about 100 meters (vertically) lower down the hill. It was unconcerned by our presence and we were able to watch it for a period of 30 minutes, at distances down to 5 meters as it fed along the side of the road.

We are both very familiar with Red-flanked Bluetail in Hong Kong where it is a regular winter visitor. I have also seen several hundred Blue-tails during the course of the last 4 months in Taiwan, Yunnan (P.R. China); Nepal, Japan and Hong Kong and I have not seen

any which resembled this individual.

While not having seen an illustration of Rufous-bellied Bush Robin in a similar plumage we are confident that this individual could belong to no other species.

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