Description of birds identified as White-capped Snow Finch, Yala Peak, Longtang, 24 Oct. 90. STEELE (1990)

A flock of c. 35 birds, feeding on a steep grassy slope amongst boulders, not far below the summit of Yala Peak.

The birds were strikingly pale. The uppersparts were fairly uniform pale buff-brown, very lightly streaked. Paler edges to tertials and a broad pale (and well marked) band formed by rufous to greater coverts. A small rufous mark noted on the alula/greater primary coverts. The primaries were long and pale fringed. Head very pale, with a small rufous area at bases – otherwise unmarked and chin/throat certainly white. Underparts very pale buffish-white, perhaps with very faint motting/streaking on breast. The bill, in some birds at least, was noted as being pale and with a yellowish/orangy tint recalling winter plumage Snow Bunting.

In flight from above (viewed against the hillside) they looked almost uniform pale brown – no extensive white showed in wings. Rump looked slightly paler, but not obviously white. On some views tail showed white sides (described as "blazes").

Flight call noted as a rather shrill "chirrip."
Rough sketch of birds identified as White-rumped Snowfinch; Yala Peak, Longtang, 24.10.90. Drawn from field notes.

These birds seem most closely to resemble White-rumped Snowfinch, as illustrated both in Fleming and in Alti et al. White tail side seems to rule out Plain Mountain Finch, which in any case we saw and they looked quite different to these birds. Could Brandt's Mountain Finch be a possibility? We would be grateful for your opinion on these birds!

David Steele '91