

Biology News

The first record of European roller *Coracias garrulus* Linnaeus, 1758 for Nepal

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European roller *Coracias garrulus*, 29 August, 2021, at Kekighan, Lomanthang Rural Municipality Ward-5, Upper Mustang, Nepal (29° 10.779' N, 83°58.218'E), 3781 m asl)

European roller *Coracias garrulus* was recorded and photographed for the first time in Nepal on 29 August 2021 at Kekighan, Lomanthang Rural Municipality Ward Number-5, Upper Mustang (29° 10.779' N, 83° 58.218'E) at an elevation of 3781 m in the Annapurna Conservation Area by the first author who considered it was an immature bird. Later, a photograph of the bird was shared with the second author for confirmation of its identification. Hem Sagar Baral, Som G. C., Carol Inskipp and Tim Inskipp also confirmed the bird's identification and that the record was a new species for Nepal (Carol Inskipp in litt. 19 September, 2021).

European rollers have brightly colored plumage and a hooked bill which are striking in their strong direct flight, with the brilliant blue contrasting with black flight feathers. Males and females are similar, but the juvenile is a drabber version of the adult. Immature

European and Indian rollers are similar, and the best feature is the turquoise-blue cast to the ear coverts which contrasts with the browner mantle (Grimmett et al. 2011). In addition, the bird shows a long primary projection, whereas Indian roller *Coracias benghalensis* has a short primary projection, making the wings look more rounded.

There are two subspecies of the European roller. The nominate subspecies occurs in NW Africa, SW, SC and E Europe and Asia Minor E through NW Iran to SW Siberia. The other subspecies *C. semenowi* occurs in Iraq and Iran (except NW) E to Kashmir, N to Turkmenistan, C Kazakhstan and possibly NW China. Both subspecies winter in Africa south of the Sahara (Fry et al. 2020).

European Roller favors open and semi-open country with scattered trees and wooded patches (eBird 2021). It is insectivorous feeding on large invertebrates

(grasshoppers, bush-crickets, beetles) as well as small vertebrates and smaller insects (e.g. winged ants) opportunistically (Sosnowski & Chmielewski 1996; Avilés & Parejo 2002; Kiss et al. 2014). The species' occurrence in Nepal was not unexpected as it has been recorded to the west and east of the country, not far from the border. It is a very rare passage migrant in the western Himalayas near Nepal e.g., Pong wetland, Himachal Pradesh in August 2018 and a vagrant to the east of Nepal e.g., in October 2017 at Kalyani in Nadia, West Bengal and at Lhuentse Tangmachu, Bhutan (Carol Inskipp in litt. to Rishi Baral, 13 December 2022). It may be a vagrant or rare passage migrant to Nepal. Further research is needed to confirm its status in Nepal.

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Conflicts of interest

Authors declare no conflict of interest.

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