

NEW SPECIES FROM ARUNACHAL ADDED TO INDIA'S BIRD LIST

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First look: The new species was found during a survey of finches across the Eastern Himalayas.

A bird spotted in Arunachal Pradesh at an altitude higher than its recorded perch in adjoining China has become the 1,340th species of the bird family in India.

The three-banded rosefinch is a resident of southern China and a vagrant in Bhutan. A team of scientists from Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) spotted and photographed this rare species of bird in Arunachal Pradesh on February 8.

The team comprising BNHS assistant director Girish Jathar and researchers Atharva Singh and Himadri Sekhar Mondal published their finding in the latest issue of the journal *Indian Birds*.

The new species of bird was found during an intensive survey of finches across the Eastern Himalayas as a part of an ongoing study. The survey team members spotted the three-banded rosefinch with a flock of white-browed rosefinch, a species commonly seen in this landscape.

"A male and a female three-banded rosefinch were seen at Sela (mountain pass on the border between Tawang and West Kameng districts of Arunachal Pradesh) at an altitude of 3,852 metres above sea level," Dr. Jathar said.

"The altitudinal record of the sighting of this species from India is higher than its previous known altitudinal record from China. This has opened up interesting ecological research on this species," he added.

The three-banded rosefinch belongs to the family Fringillidae, which are seed-eating passerine birds with a distinctively conical bill.

"The three-banded rosefinch may be using the high altitude temperate coniferous forest of Arunachal Pradesh as a passage while migrating from China to Bhutan," said Mr. Singh, the lead author of the paper on the new species.

"Little information is available on the ecology of this species," Mr Mondal said.

Prior to the addition of the three-banded rosefinch in the bird list of India, there were 1,339 avian species reported from across the country.

Since 2016, the bird checklist has increased by 104 species new to India. There were three additions to the checklist of India while the three-banded rosefinch was the fifth new species recorded during the current year.

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