

Nesting record of Striolated Bunting (*Emberiza striolata*, Lichtenstein) in mid and southern Rajasthan

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Striolated or House Bunting *Emberiza striolata* (Lichtenstein) is a Passerine bird of family Emberizidae. It is distributed in northwest India up to southern Uttar Pradesh (Etawah), central Madhya Pradesh (Sagar) and central Maharashtra (Daulatabad) (Ali & Ripley 1974).

On 29 March, 2014 in the evening, during our field visit to the Fort of Mandalgarh at Mandalgarh town district Bhilwara of Rajasthan (25° 12' N, 75° 09' E), we observed and photographed a single bird with finely streaked crown with black eye and moustachial stripes. The bird had dark –streaked grey throat and breast. The wings were bright rufous and the belly was fulvous. It was single and feeding on the ground hopping here and there. With the help of the field guides of birds, the bird was identified as male Striolated or House Bunting (*Emberiza striolata*, Lichtenstein). The site where the bird was seen, was stony with small exposed rocks of sand stone having mixed vegetation chiefly shrubs comprising of *Prosopis juliflora*, *Lantana camara*, dry grasses and sparsely placed trees like *Ficus religiosa* and *Azadirachta indica*. An ancient Baori is also there near the site, which was used to store the rain water. Although it is abandoned now a days, but the stored rain water is still a lifeline for wildlife. This site is within the boundary of an ancient fort having a temple and a mosque. This is a historical and communal heritage hence visited by local as well as outside tourists.

After March, 2014 we again saw the same bird in the morning of 19 October, 2014 at the same place. But this time one more male bird was there. One male bird was far away and singing from the top of a ruined part of the fort building. The other male was also singing from a nearby electric wire but after some time it landed on the ground and picked up dry grass. Assuming it must be a nesting material, we traced the bird. It took the material on the roof of a small building. Then it got down along the wall and came out after a few seconds. But this time it had nothing in its beak. After the bird left, we approached the site. We found a nest 3 feet from the ground on the wall. The breeding biology of Striolated Bunting has been studied by (Pandey *et al.* 2006). They observed that the nest was made of dry, thin as well as stout, short twigs at a height of 120cm, and was lined with soft grass inflorescence and a feather or two. A perfect overhang sheltered it from the top. The nest faced north and did not receive direct sunlight at any time. Our finding of the nest was similar to this study. The nest was located in a rectangular chamber in the wall that opened to the

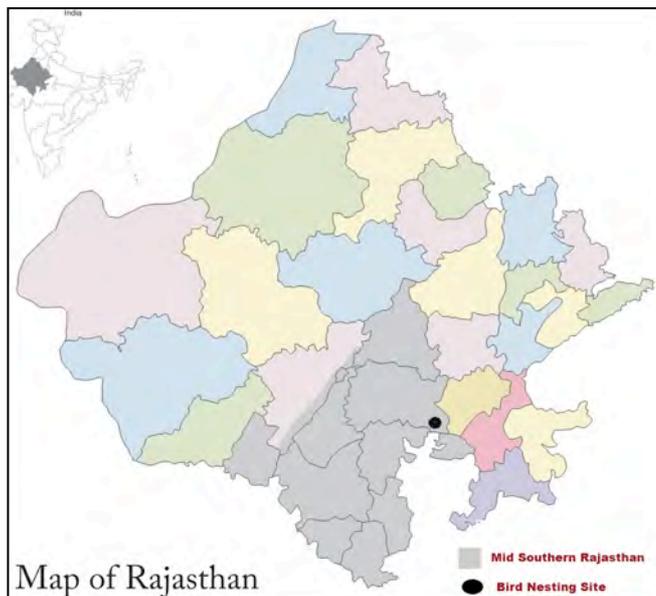


Fig 1. Map of Rajasthan state showing the study area



Fig 2. Striolated Bunting- *Emberiza striolata* (Male) Foraging

north. It was made with dry sticks having grass lining at the top with a feather of peafowl in it.

In Rajasthan, the bird has been reported in Thar desert (Rahmani & Soni 1997) and in Jodhpur (Singh 2009). This specie has not been reported in the bird studies carried out in mid and southern Rajasthan (Sharma & Tehsin 1994; Chhangani 2002; Sanga & Devarshi 2006; Bhatnagar *et al.* 2011; Yaseen *et al.* 2011; Pande 2012; Koli 2014). So this is the first

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Fig 3. Striolated Bunting- *Emberiza striolata* - Roosting on electric wire



Fig 4. Nest of Striolated Bunting

report of the sighting the bird and its nest in mid and southern Rajasthan.

Striolated bunting has been reported from Madhya Pradesh (Chandra & Singh 2013; BNHS-ENVIS) and Gujarat (Munjpara & Gadhvi 2012; Gajera *et al.* 2013; BNHS-ENVIS). The bird is generally resident and shows local movements (Ali & Ripley 1974). Its occurrence and nesting in this area which is 240 to 600 Kms (aerial distance) away from its current distribution limits in Western Rajasthan and neighboring states Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat, is a clear indication of extension of its range.

Richness of the site in shrub vegetation, stony and rocky land, occurrence of a water reservoir and the old heritage monument, is the preferred habitat of

House bunting (Ali & Ripley 1974). Besides, the presence of nearby open agricultural fields also adds to the suitability of the habitat for the bird.

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