

## Sighting of an aberrant coloured Western Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* at Chandlai Dam, Jaipur



An aberrant coloured Western Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*.

Chandlai (26.695°N & 75.876°E) is a small lake about 3km away from the Jaipur-Kota Road, in the outskirts of Jaipur, Rajasthan, India. It is a waste water pond, but is like a haven for water birds. Around 10,000 migratory birds can be seen at the Chandlai Lake. Since October 2009, our team has made regular visits to this pond for making an avian checklist. On 2 November 2009 we saw a different bird species near the pond in the agricultural field being ploughed by a tractor. Some birds usually take their food

from the ploughed field and chase the tractor like drongos, Cattle Egrets, mynas, Indian Roller, pipits, and wagtails. With a telephoto lens, I was taking photos of different activities near this pond, when around 60m away, I saw a different type of bird which was very actively engaged in feeding from the field and speedily moving with the movement of a tractor. It was an aberrant coloured wagtail. Aberrantly coloured birds are easy to spot and are generally referred to as “albino”. Aberrantly coloured birds can be described in

seven separate aberration categories based on lack or excessive melanin deposition (Vargiya 2018). Generally, overall colour of plumage is the result of biological pigments (mostly melanins and carotenoids), structural colour or a combination of the two (Mahabal et al. 2016).

It was probably the first known published record of leucism in Western Yellow Wagtail from India (Source: [www.orientalbirdimages.org](http://www.orientalbirdimages.org)). Records of colour aberrations in Indian birds between 1886~2015 have been already published but do not include Wagtail species (Mahabal et al. 2016).

**Leucism:** In leucistic birds, affected plumage lacks melanin pigment due to the cells responsible for melanin production being absent. This results in a white feathers, unless the normal plumage colour also comprises carotenoids (e.g. yellows), which remain unaffected by the condition. Although leucism is inherited, the extent and positioning of the white colouration can vary between adults and their young, and can also skip generations if leucistic genes are recessive.

The reduction of pigment in leucistic birds causes feathers to weaken and be more prone to wear. In some situations this can hinder flight, which, in addition to leucistic birds usually being more conspicuous, can heighten risk of predation. There is also evidence that leucistic birds might, on occasion, not be recognized or accepted by a potential mate.

Class: Aves

Order: Passiriformes

Family: Motacillidae

*Motacilla flava* Linn.1758 (Western Yellow Wagtail)

**Auriculars:** White; Back: little yellow with some white spots in-between; Belly: little yellow with some white spots in-between; Breast: little yellow with more white spots in-between; Chin: Yellow; Crissum: Yellow; Crown: Pale yellow with more whiteness; Ear coverts: Almost white; Eye-ring: Upper area is white and lower one pale yellow. A black dot at the joint of upper and lower ring part towards crown; Flanks: mostly yellow; Forehead (front): White; Greater coverts: Off white; Lesser coverts: Off white; Lower mandible: Pinkish with some blackness; Mantle: yellow; Median coverts: Off white; Nape: yellow; Primaries: off white; Remiges: off white; Rump: yellow; Scapulars: Yellow; Secondary wings: off white; Semi-palmated: having half webbing between the toes; Side: Yellow; Supercilium: Pale Yellow; Tail: Almost off white; Tarsus: Pinkish black; Tertiary wings: White; Thigh: Yellow; Throat: Yellow; Undertail coverts: Yellow; Uppertail coverts: Yellow; Upper mandible: Pinkish black; Vent: yellow. This sighting is the first report of colour aberration in Western Yellow Wagtail from Indian subcontinent with photo in Oriental Bird Images (Bhardwaj 2009).

#### References

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