



A blackbird (*Turdus simillimus*) predated on a *Polypedates* frog in Sri Lanka

The Indian blackbird (*Turdus simillimus*) is the only all-black thrush found in Sri Lanka with a reddish-orange beak, feet, and eye rings and both sexes are almost identical in appearance (Harrison 2011). The feeding ecology of the blackbird is described as omnivorous with primarily animal prey, feeding on a wide range of invertebrates such as insects, spiders, snails, and earthworms. They also feed on seeds, berries, and ripened fruits when in season (Elsamol *et al.* 2018).

Observations were made by the first author on 10 April 2023 at around 17.00 h at the Horton Plains National Park near the Pattipola entrance (6°50'21.4224" N, 80°48'44.6976"E). The photographs were taken using a Nikon D7500 fitted with an AF-P DX Nikkor 70-300mm f/4.5-6.3G ED VR lens. The author observed an Indian blackbird on the edge of the pond adjacent to the ticket counter hopping around scratching and probing the ground looking for food. The author then observed the bird motionless for about a second staring into the distance and then it suddenly jumped and grabbed a frog from the edge of the pond. The bird then held the frog in its beak and struck it from side to side onto the ground much like a kingfisher would do to a fish in an attempt to kill it. In the process, the frog was dropped from the beak to the ground several times, and each time the bird would pick it up again and strike it again as described before until the frog was dead (Fig 1).

Swallowing of the prey was not observed as the bird then flew away with the dead frog in its beak. Observations were terminated at that point. The frog was identified to be a *Polypedates* species based on de Silva *et al.* (2022). There are records of common blackbirds feeding on amphibians and frogs in India (Clement & Hathway 2000), but no previous record of this occurring in the blackbird population in Sri Lanka was found in the literature.



Figure 1. The Indian blackbird with the *Polypedates* tree frog in its beak

Literature cited

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