The Variable Wheatear *Oenanthe picata* (Muscicapidae: Passeriformes) is a bird of arid and semi-arid region, and is locally abundant in barren rocky areas, sand dunes with scrub vegetation, cultivation, ravines, outside villages and nomadic encampments. It is a winter visitor to northwestern India, mainly the arid zones of Rajasthan and Gujarat, up to Madhya Pradesh and northern Maharashtra (Ali & Ripley 1983; Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). Further, there are sightings of this bird from Leh-Alchi (Jammu and Kashmir), Kangra (Himachal Pradesh), Haripur (Punjab), Chandigarh, South Delhi, Jhajjar (Haryana), Chambal (Uttar Pradesh), Gwalior (Madhya Pradesh), Raipur and Patan (Chhattisgarh) besides the number of records from Gujarat and Rajasthan (Ebird 2015; Migrantwatch 2015). Prasad (2003) has compiled some records of this bird from western Maharashtra particularly from Dhole, Nasik and Pune districts. Recently, Kasambe & Wadatkar (2007) reported a single bird from Amravati University campus, Amravati, Maharashtra.

A project has been undertaken by us since 2013 to study the bird diversity of Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), Tuljapur Campus and surroundings, a semi-arid area of Osmanabad District, Maharashtra. During the winter, we sighted a single male Variable Wheatear on 29 December 2014 at 08.30hr, near stone crusher (18°02’15.5”N & 76°03’15.7”E) close to TISS (Image 1).

The species has not been reported from Osmanabad District by Narwade & Fartade (2011) or from the neighbouring districts of Solapur by Mahabal (1989) and Ahmednagar by Kurhade (1991, 1996) and by Jathar (2014). The present sighting of Variable Wheatear *Oenanthe picata* is the first record from Osmanabad District, Maharashtra and constitutes a range extension to southeastern India.
Variable Wheatear from Osmanabad

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References


Image 1. Variable Wheatear *Oenanthe picata* close to TISS Tuljapur Campus, Osmanabad District, Maharashtra, India. © Rajiv Pandit