

THE COLOURFUL GROSBEAKS

#3 THE SOUTH ASIAN GROSBEAKS

BLACK & YELLOW GROSBEAK



Photo: J.M. Garg

The Black & Yellow Grosbeak, *Mycerobas icterioides*, is a species of finch in the Fringillidae family. It is found in Afghanistan, India, Nepal, and Pakistan.

This species is found in all types of forest, both deciduous and evergreen, but favours Silver Firs, *Abies alba*, and Deodars, *Cedrus deodara*. It usually feeds in the undergrowth and on the ground, and is often seen on roadsides. When not feeding it stays high in the trees, so is more often heard than seen.

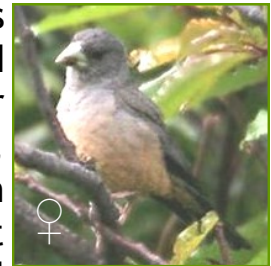


Photo: J.M. Garg

The Black & Yellow Grosbeak's food consists of pine shoots and seeds, berries and the fruits of the understory shrubs and plants. They vary this diet with some insects, and have been observed catching, shaking and devouring caterpillars of 5cm (2") in length.

The breeding season is April to August. The nest is cup-shaped and consists of moss, rootlets and some lichen. The usual clutch is from two to four greenish-grey eggs speckled with blackish-brown lines and spots.

COLLARED GROSBEAK

The Collared Grosbeak, *Mycerobas affinis*, ranges from the Himalayas into north-east Myanmar (Burma) and southern China. It inhabits similar vegetation to the Black and Yellow Grosbeak, mainly between 2,000 and 4,000 metres.

They have a bouncing flight, alternating flapping with gliding on closed wings, and like most of their genus have a melodious song.



The male has a black head, throat wings and tail and is otherwise yellow. The bill is massive and horn coloured.

The female is olive-green rather than yellow, and greyish rather than black.

SPOT-WINGED GROSBEAK



The Spot-winged Grosbeak, *Mycerobas melanozanthos*, is native to Bhutan, China, India, Laos, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Thailand, and Vietnam. It inhabits subtropical or tropical dry forests, it is also found in moist mountain forests.

In Nepal they occur the North of the country, but wander into the central region in summer in search of ripe stony fruits. An account by a Captain Hutton states the species “comes to Mussooree in flocks during March and April, and remains as long as it can find plenty of cherry stones to crack, after which it disappears. They have a curious chattering note, and love to sit in the tops of the tallest trees. When at work on a wild cherry tree they are easily detected by the constant cracking sound of the cherrystones, which they never break, but open most dexterously at the joining of the halves. The ground beneath the trees is strewed with the opened shells”.



WHITE-WINGED GROSBEAK



The White-winged Grosbeak, *Mycerobas carnipes*, is found in Afghanistan, Bhutan, China, India, Iran, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan; where it inhabits boreal (northern) forests.



This wide-spread and rather attractive 22cm species receives little mention in the literature available on the various Grosbeak species; it is relatively unknown in aviculture.

Series to be continued