

## New bird family from the eastern Himalayas



The Spotted Elachura *Elachura formosa*, newly elevated to single-family status. (c) James Eaton / BirdtourASIA

DNA molecular analysis has revealed that the Spotted Wren-babbler is a unique species, unrelated to wren-babblers and is best placed in its own family, the Elachuridae.

Henceforth the species will be called the Spotted Elachura *Elachura formosa*.

The discovery, by Professor Per Alström and co-workers, is published in the Royal Society journal *Biology Letters*.

Molecular analysis of passerine families identified 10 separate evolutionary branches, one of which was unique to the Spotted Elachura, the only living representative of one of the earliest off-shoots within the passeriformes

The Spotted Elachura is extremely secretive and difficult to observe, usually staying hidden within dense tangled undergrowth in subtropical mountain forests.

The male's high-pitched song doesn't resemble any other continental Asian bird song. The close resemblance in appearance to wren-babbler species is thought due either to pure chance or convergent evolution.

Source: <http://orientalbirdclub.org/2014/03/10/spotted-elachura>