

A rare colour aberrant Common Crane *Grus grus* in Kachchh

Pratik V. Joshi: At – Kachchh. pratikjoshi123@gmail.com



Pratik Joshi



Pratik Joshi

On 10 December 2020, I was visiting a friend's house near Gandhidham, Kachchh. As per my habit, I was carrying my camera and binoculars. While travelling in the area, about 7 km from Gandhidham City, I stopped and went near an elevated part of a farm so that I could see the surroundings. I saw a flock of Common Cranes (*Grus grus*) feeding in an abandoned farm where the crop had been harvested and a few *Prosopis juliflora* trees were present. I noticed a white coloured bird in this flock. At first, I thought it could be an egret (*Egretta* sp.) but as I went closer and saw the bird properly, it was a white coloured Common Crane. This crane was entirely white, except for a black patch on the lores and crown. It was quite

shy, and remained within the flock. I took some photographs. The flock took flight and I could see that this white coloured crane had completely white wings.

This sighting of a colour aberrant Common Crane here is quite unusual. There has been only one previous sighting of a colour aberrant Common Crane from Gujarat – a bird was seen on 14 February 2020 in Banni area, Kachchh, by scientists of Wildlife Institute of India (WII) which was reported in the Times of India, dated 20 February 2020 (ToI 2020). In an extensive review of colour aberrations in Indian birds by Mahabal *et al.* (2016), there is no mention of colour aberration in any crane species. Thus, it seems that colour aberration in cranes is rare. I could not identify the exact colour mutation.

[We sent the photos of the colour aberrant Common Crane to Hein van Grouw for confirming the exact colour mutation. He replied (in litt., email dated 16 December 2020) that 'The aberration involved with the Crane I cannot be sure of as the photos, unfortunately, do not show enough detail. It is, obviously, not Albino and also not Leucism or Ino. It may be Brown but bleached strongly further by the sunlight'. Hein van Grouw further stated that it could also be a different mutation wherein the bird is at first colour aberrant but gradually becomes 'normal' plumaged. Hence, since the details were not visible in the photos, the exact colour mutation could not be determined. This is a rare sighting of a colour aberrant Common Crane from Gujarat.

We are extremely grateful to Hein van Grouw for his help in providing inputs about the colour mutation in this bird – Eds]

References

Mahabal, A., Van Grouw, H., Sharma, R. M., & Thakur, S., 2016. How common is albinism really? Colour aberrations in Indian birds reviewed. *Dutch Birding* 38: 301-309

ToI, 2020. Link: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/ahmedabad/amid-shades-of-grey-a-rare-white-crane-spotted-in-kutch/articleshow/74210798.cms> □