



Brood Parasitism in Small Owls: 'The Orphan Owlet' by Meet Vala and Naman Doshi. SAEVUS (Aug. 2015). Pp. 74-75

The authors observed and photographed brood parasitism in small owls. The study was carried out between March-May, 2015, in Girnar area, Dist. Junagadh, Gujarat. A Spotted Owlet (*Athene brama*) pair was observed rearing a chick of Indian Scops Owl (*Otus bakkamoena*). Two Spotted Owlet chicks were seen along with a single Indian Scops Owl chick and the Spotted Owlets were raising the chick as their own, with the Indian Scops Owl chick also having strong affinities with the other chicks. All three chicks fledged and were observed till they flew away from the nest. Such interspecific brood parasitism has not been observed in small owls earlier.



Egyptian Vultures at Palanpur: 'Egyptian Vulture' by Parikshit Acharya. Hornbill (Jan-Mar 2015). Pp. 34-35.

In January 2014, a large flock (approximately 300 plus) of Egyptian Vultures (*Neophron percnopterus*) was recorded by the bird watchers of Palanpur in North Gujarat. This was first reported on 17 January 2014 by Suresh Prajapati, who recorded more than 300 birds in Palanpur district (published in The Times of India, 17 January 2014). However the news did not mention the precise location of this observation. On 26 January 2014, along with Kailash Jani, the author observed a flock of 350-400 Egyptian Vultures near Bajothia Mahadev temple (24°15'20.11"N, 72°33'59.81"E), 20 km from Palanpur city, towards Merwada village. This place is a major carcass dumping site with a few large Neem and Banyan trees, as described by the author in his note. As of today the species is listed as 'Endangered' under the IUCN redlist.



Pied Harrier in South Gujarat: 'Pied Harrier in Bharuch' by Jugalkishor Patel, Newsletter for Birdwatchers (2013) Vol 53 (6): 94-95

On the 14 February 2013, Jugalkishor Patel observed a Pied Harrier (*Circus melanoleucos*) near the village pond of Untiyadra of Ankleshwar taluka in Bharuch district of South Gujarat. He observed the bird from 14 to 26 February 2013. In 1984, Dilhas Jaffery had recorded and photographed a Pied Harrier in the month of October at Nalsarovar, which was the only previous record from Gujarat. The earlier observation of this bird was from October, and from central Gujarat, whereas the current observation is from southern Gujarat and in the month of February. This indicates that there is a need to search for this species in potential areas from October till March.



Forest Owlet in South Gujarat: 'New Distribution Record of the Forest Owlet' by Jenis R. Patel et al., Journal of Threatened Taxa, 26th Oct. 2015, 7(12): 7940-7944

The Forest Owlet (*Heteroglaux blewitti*) is endemic to India and listed as 'Critically Endangered' by IUCN. On 14 November 2014, a team of nature lovers from the various areas of Gujarat visited the Purna Wildlife Sanctuary in Dangs. They observed two Forest Owlets at one place, and took photos. One individual was observed a week later in the same area. This was the first confirmed record of the Forest Owlet from Gujarat. It is suggested that the various Teak dominated forest areas of south Gujarat should be explored for the occurrence of this enigmatic species in Gujarat.

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The salt pans on the broad saline flats bordering the Gulf of Kachchh and Khambhat are extremely important bird habitats and are not adequately recognized as such; perhaps the high concentrations of Black-necked Grebes and Slender-billed Gulls, otherwise considered uncommon species should make us hesitate before considering the salt industry as an unmitigating disaster.

Here we have immense possibilities of interacting with industries involved in resource generation to so modulate their operations so as to optimize avifaunal habitats.

Regular monitoring of the bird concentrations in the salt pans should be carried out. Such monitoring would result in an understanding of the importance of these salt pans and those of other salt industries in Saurashtra and Kachchh as habitats for species dependent on saline water systems. Studies will indicate management practices to optimize utilization of similar habitats which seem to be threatened by increase in human demands especially in the Little Rann of Kachchh Sanctuary.

Raising of mud bunds and islands in the middle of the pans by the owners would provide resting sites for many bird-species and also encourage nesting by species like, terns, plovers, pratincoles and stilts. This should also enhance bird-watching opportunities.

Illustrated waysides along the State Highways would help generate a public awareness of the rich avian assemblages taking place in gulf area.

Charakla demonstration would succeed in defusing the often needless confrontations leading to polarization and hardening of pro and anti 'development' attitude.

- Lavkumar Khachar

(Excerpts from 'Survey of Charakla Salt pans', Tata Chemicals Ltd., Mithapur, Dist. Jamnagar; 16 Feb. 1997)

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