

Breeding of Orange-headed Thrush in Gir National Park

Abhilash Vaja : 37, Old Forest Colony, Sasan-362135, Tal. Mendarda, Dist. Junagadh. vajaabhilash@gmail.com

Pranav Vaghasiya: 'Amrutam', Block no. 193, Joshipura, Junagadh-362002. pranav4940@gmail.com



Orange-headed Thrush (*Zosterops citrina*) is a summer migrant to the Himalayas and is resident in northeast, central and western India (Grimmett *et al.* 2011). For Gujarat, Ali (1955) collected only one specimen in Navsari District and remarked that it was not seen elsewhere in Saurashtra and Kachchh. Shull (1962) collected two more specimens from south Gujarat and described it as an uncommon resident in the Dangs. This thrush was found to be common in Rajpipla and recorded breeding in the area (Monga & Naoroji 1983) and is known to be resident in south Gujarat (Ganpule 2016). The subspecies seen in Gujarat is *Z. c. cyanotus*, which has vertical black stripes across the ear coverts and white throat. However, there are no records of this thrush from Saurashtra in the reference books (Grimmett *et al.* 2011) or in recent published literature. We report its sighting and a record of its breeding in Gir National Park.

On 25 July 2015, the first author (AV), who had special permission to visit the park in the monsoon, saw and photographed a fledgling Orange-headed Thrush on the Andhari-Sasan Road (known as route 5-6) in Gir National Park. The fledgling was identified as an Orange-headed Thrush based on its face pattern, which can be seen in the accompanying photo. It could not fly and was seen perched on a branch of a tree. It seemed like it had recently come out of the nest. The adult birds were not seen around even after a fifteen minute wait. It was quite surprising to see this thrush breeding in Gir National Park as there is no previous record of its breeding here.

On 19 June 2016, the second author (PV) saw and photographed an adult Orange-headed Thrush at Kankai Mata Temple, in Gir National Park. It was seen briefly, photographed and was identified as Orange-headed Thrush. This sighting was also in the monsoon season. The birds seen here are of the race

cyanotus, which is resident in south Gujarat. These records of Orange-headed Thrush from Gir are significant and confirm the presence of this thrush in Saurashtra.

[Since Gir NP is closed from 15 June to 15 October every year, it is possible that the occurrence and breeding of Orange-headed Thrush in this area has been overlooked. Another factor is that a very few birdwatchers visit the surrounding area in the rainy season. Thus, there is hardly any data on birds in these months. There are sightings of Orange-headed Thrush from Saurashtra: in Gir, Uday Vora had seen it thrice in January 1987 and once in January 1988, while Ashok Mashru and Mukesh Samani had seen it in March 2009. Bhavesh Trivedi saw it in Girnar on 10-11-2005 as well as Jamvala, Gir on 5-12-2015 and there is a record from Surendranagar also. The Orange-headed Thrush could be breeding in Gir area regularly but these sightings are insufficient to make any comments regarding its status in Gir. It would be worthwhile for birdwatchers to visit the area in the monsoon season to check for its breeding – Eds]



References:

- Ali, S. 1955. The birds of Gujarat - Part II. *J. Bom. Nat. Hist. Soc.* 52 (4): 735–802
- Ganpule, P. 2016. The birds of Gujarat: Status and Distribution. *Flamingo* 8 (3) – 12 (4): 2-40
- Grimmett, R., Inskipp, C., & Inskipp, T. 2011. *Birds of the Indian Subcontinent*. 2nd ed. Oxford University Press & Christopher Helm, London.
- Monga, S. G. & Naoroji, R. K. 1984. Birds of the Rajpipla forests - South Gujarat. With notes on nests found and breeding recorded and some new observations. *J. Bom. Nat. Hist. Soc.* 80 (3): 575–612
- Shull, E. M. 1962. Supplementary notes on 'The birds of Gujarat' from birds collected in the Surat Dangs. *J. Bom. Nat. Hist. Soc.* 59 (2): 658–660