

## Great Crested Grebe....

Finally, I succeeded in getting an image in which the moulting of flight feathers can be clearly seen. This image clearly shows the flight feathers (remiges, viz., primaries and secondaries) are in moult and almost all of the primaries have grown but are yet to gain full length. This clearly explained why the grebe was flightless or reluctant to fly. Unfortunately, the image does not show the tail feathers and it is difficult to comment on the moult of the rectrices or tail feathers (which also should be in moult).

In the Netherlands, where this species breeds, these grebes undergo simultaneous moult of flight feathers in the months of August to first half of October (Piersma 1988). It was observed that the growth of secondaries perfectly parallels that of the primaries. Thus, the two tracts are completed (regrown) at the same time. It was also observed that the upper wing coverts are moulted slightly earlier than the underwing coverts.

The Great Crested Grebe is known to breed sporadically in Gujarat (Bulkley 1891); at Khijadiya Bird Sanctuary (Mundkur & Pravez 1986; Himmatsinhji *et. al.* 1992) and at Diu (Chaoji 2010). Recently it has been reported breeding in Srikakulam District, Andhra Pradesh (Sraavan Kumar *et. al.* 2014.) and at Ranjeet Sagar and Menar wetlands (Tripathi & Koli 2020) in Rajasthan. However, now it is known that it breeds fairly commonly around Jamnagar and Kachchh in Gujarat and there are a large number of photographs of adults on nests/

with juveniles on the 'Oriental Bird Images' website (<http://orientalbirdimages.org/>).

Thus, the Great Crested Grebe is a breeding resident species for these parts in India and hence, must be going through a complete moult as many other grebes and geese do in their respective breeding areas. This could be the first photographic record of the Great Crested Grebe going through simultaneous moult of flight feathers in India.

## References

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## Distribution of Indian Grey Hornbill *Ocyrceros birostris* in Mehsana District

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### Introduction

The Indian Grey Hornbill (*Ocyrceros birostris*) is my bird of interest since the beginning of my bird watching days due to its unique looks and nesting style. The Indian Grey Hornbill is a very common hornbill found throughout the Indian Subcontinent and is widely distributed (Grimmett *et al.* 2011). It is mostly arboreal and seldom descends to the ground, except to pick up fallen fruits, dust bathe or to collect mud pellets during the nesting period to seal its nest. It is one the very few hornbill species found in urban area in many cities. Mostly, they use large, tall and old trees to make their nest.

### Observations

During my regular field work and based on my past records, it was observed that Indian Grey Hornbill was regularly seen in Polo forest area of Sabarkantha District. First time, it was



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sighted and photographed by Kailash Jani and myself at Jessore Sloth Bear Sanctuary, Banaskantha District, in June 2012. After that, a number of sightings have been reported by many bird

### Sightings of Indian Hornbill in Mehsana District

Sr. No	Date	Location	No. of Individuals	Remarks
1	13 December 2016	Behind Arbuda Temple, Mehsana-Visnagar Highway	1	Sub Adult
2	28 May 2016	Khandosan Village, Visnagar Taluka	1	Adult
3	19 April 2017	Near Hotel Amrit, Nr. Chhatral	1	Adult
4	4 October 2017	Sundhiya Village, Visnagar Taluka	1	Adult
5	24 June 2018	Near Pilvai Village, Mehsana-Vijpur Highway	1	Adult
6	28 August 2018	Near ICICI Bank, Mehsana City	1	Adult
7	1 September 2018	Author's Home	1	Adult
8	8 September 2018	Author's Home	2	Adult
9	19 September 2018	Circuit House, Mehsana	1	Juvenile
10	30 September 2018	Vadnagar	3	Adult

watchers in the same region, including Balaram Sanctuary and at Dantiwada Dam. A successful nesting was observed by Kailash Jani in Palanpur City on 20 June 2018. My first sighting of Indian Grey Hornbill in Mehsana was on 13 February 2016. Then onwards, the number of sightings, with photographs, noted by me in Mehsana City and District are given here.

#### Conclusion

Earlier, this species was mainly seen in the jungle area only but now, the numbers of sightings noted in urban areas have

increased. It has been known and observed that the hornbills have increased their distribution and have slowly adapted to urban areas. In most of my sightings, I have observed them on large and tall trees where they may easily and safely make their nest. As now hornbills are frequently appearing in city area, it is our duty to protect and maintain their habitat.

#### References

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### Purple Sunbird *Nectarinia asiatica* using snake's moult as nesting material

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The Purple Sunbird (*Nectarinia asiatica*) is a small, nectar-eating species belonging to the family *Nectariniidae*, and is widely distributed across the Indian subcontinent and Southeast Asia (Ali & Ripley 1983). This is the most common sunbird species in Gujarat (Ganpule 2016) and India too (Grimmett *et al.* 1998). The breeding season of the Purple Sunbird

broods in succession and often uses the same nest for breeding (Mishra 2014). This species constructs the nest as an oblong-shaped purse type pocket, using soft grass twigs, plant fibre, small leaves and bark cobweb. The outer surface of the nest is usually covered with pieces of bark, caterpillar droppings, bits of paper, strings and other rubbish material (George 1958, Tayade *et al.* 2014). A typical nest has a porch-like projection over the entrance hole. This species occurs abundantly in and around human habitation, and as a result, one can find other synthetic materials in a sunbird's nest including polythene shreds, and thermocol junk (Mishra 2014). Use of such synthetic materials due to their lightweight property and easy availability can also be interpreted as an urban adaptation by the species in anthropogenic habitats. The species is known to include many unnatural (man-made) items for nest construction, similar to other common bird species (Khacher 2000, Solanki *et al.* 2018).

varies from place to place, generally coinciding with months when flowering is abundant (Gharidian *et al.* 2008). While breeding, the female Purple Sunbird builds a hanging nest and lays 2 to 3 eggs (Terence 1991). The sunbird rears at least two

In February 2020, a pair of Purple Sunbirds was observed, regularly visiting the backyard garden at my residence in Vadodara, Gujarat. This pair then selected an unused metal