

Purple Heron....

(21%), crustaceans (14%), and insects (8%) were also taken (Mukherjee 1971).



Minal Patel

In Bharatpur, Rajasthan, a Purple Hereon was noted swallowing a full grown Jungle Babbler (*Turdoides striata*), which it had presumably killed (Johnson 1988). It has been noted feeding on a White-throated Kingfisher (*Halcyon smyrnensis*) also

(Patel 1998). Recently, the Purple Heron was seen hunting a lark (*Alaudidae*) species in Gujarat (Mistry & Patel 2018). The Purple Heron has not been noted feeding on a Barred Buttonquail and it is an addition to the already varied diet of this heron.

References

- Johnson, J. M., 1988. Purple Heron (*Ardea purpurea*) swallowing a Jungle Babbler. *J. Bombay Nat Hist Soc.* 85 (1): 190
- Kushlan, J. A., & Hancock, J. A., 2005. *Heron. Bird families of the World.* 1st ed. Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK.
- Martínez-Vilalta, A., Motis, A. & Kirwan, G. M. 2018. Purple Heron (*Ardea purpurea*). *Handbook of the Birds of the World Alive.* Lynx Edicions, Barcelona. (retrieved from).
- Mukherjee, Ajit Kumar 1971. Food-habits of water-birds of the Sundarban, 24-Parganas District, West Bengal, India-II. Herons and Bitterns. *J. Bombay Nat Hist Soc.* 68 (1): 37–64
- Mistry V., & Patel, N. S., 2018. Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea* hunts a lark. *Indian BIRDS* 14 (3): 87-88
- Patel, P. 1998. Purple Heron eating White-breasted Kingfisher. *Newsletter for Birdwatchers* 38 (2): 37–38 □

Golden Eagle near Palanpur: an addition to the avifauna of Gujarat

Dr. Suresh H. Prajapati: Head of Zoology Dept., R. R. Mehta College of Science, Palanpur. shprajapati1970@gmail.com

Kailash Jani: At-Palanpur. kailashjani007@yahoo.co.in,

Nemi Prajapati: BAMS Student, G J Patel Ayurvedic College, Vallabh Vidyanagar.

Mayank Judal: Zoology student: RR Mehta College of Science, Palanpur.



Kailash Jani

The areas around Palanpur and Deesa, north Gujarat, are very good for bird watching. We regularly visit areas like Balaram-Ambaji Sanctuary, Jessore Sloth Bear Sanctuary, etc. and record the birds in these areas. These areas are especially good for raptors – we have recorded good numbers of Egyptian Vultures (*Neopron percnopterus*) and also other vulture species (*Gyps* sp.). Falcons (*Falco* sp.) and eagles (*Aquila* sp.) are also commonly seen in these areas.

On 7 December 2018, we had gone for birding at a 'panjrapole' (cattle enclosure) (41° 14' 24" N, 72° 35' 18" E), about 20 kms east of Palanpur, north Gujarat. While watching and photographing Egyptian Vultures, at around 09: 30 hrs, we saw an unidentified eagle perched on a *Butea monosperma*. Two House Crows (*Corvus splendens*) were harassing the eagle. We took some photographs. The third author took some photos with a DSLR camera and 200-500 mm lens, wherein the bird was seen more clearly in the photos.

After coming home, we tried to identify the eagle but were confused. We posted the photos of the eagle on the 'North

Gujarat Bird Watchers Group' on Whatsapp. Nirav Bhatt, who has studied raptors in Gujarat, replied that this was very interesting and requested all photos of this bird, especially of it in flight, to confirm the identification. I then realized that this could be something important and so we visited the area again with some zoology students of the college on 9 December 2018 at around 15:00 hrs. We saw the eagle sitting on the same tree at around 15:30 hrs, in front of Egyptian Vultures and some House Crows. We slowly approached it and took some photos of it perched. The crows and the vultures flew and with them, the eagle also flew away and we were able to get good photos showing the underwing. We shared all these photos with Nirav and he confirmed that this was a Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*). This was a very important sighting for our area and it is the first record of the species for Gujarat.



Kailash Jani

[The authors took very good photos of this eagle. All the characteristic features of the Golden Eagle are seen here. The underwings showed white bases to flight feathers, golden feathers on the nape were noted, the powerful legs and the large bill were seen. There remains no doubt that this was indeed a Golden Eagle. It was probably a juvenile or immature, as the tail showed a white base with dark terminal band. This individual was reported from this area a few more times and many birders were able to see and photograph it, at least till 14 December 2018. Good photographs of this individual were posted widely on the social media.

In India, the Golden Eagle is resident in the higher Himalayas (Grimmett et al. 2011); it is very rare in the plains and no records are shown for Peninsular India but it is resident in Baluchistan and adjoining areas in Pakistan, which are near to Rajasthan and Gujarat. There is a photographic record of a juvenile Golden Eagle from Desert National Park, Rajasthan, in December 2013 (Bharadwaj 2013). Thus, one record of the species from the desert areas of Rajasthan is known. The species is usually sedentary but northern populations are known to migrate when prey becomes scarce or inaccessible in the winter (Orta et al. 2018). Hence, it is

possible that a few individuals, especially juvenile and immature birds, could wander down to the plains in the winter.

As stated by the authors, this is the first record of a Golden Eagle from Gujarat. The species has not been mentioned in the recent Gujarat checklist (Ganpule 2016) or in the first update to the Gujarat checklist (Ganpule 2017). Thus, this is an addition to the avifauna of Gujarat and the southern-most sighting of the species from India – Eds]

Acknowledgements

We thank Nirav Bhatt for helping with the identification of this eagle.

References

- Bharadwaj, D., 2013. *Delhibirdpix*. [https://groups.google.com/forum/#!searchin/delhibirdpix/golden\\$20eagle%7Csort:date/delhibirdpix/1eqxLOzzCTc/JzpBelvGcO4j](https://groups.google.com/forum/#!searchin/delhibirdpix/golden$20eagle%7Csort:date/delhibirdpix/1eqxLOzzCTc/JzpBelvGcO4j) [Accessed on 10 December 2018]
- Ganpule, P. 2016. The Birds of Gujarat: Status and distribution. *Flamingo* 8 (3) – 12 (4): 2 - 40`
- Ganpule, P., 2017. First update to the Gujarat checklist: December 2017. *Flamingo* 15 (4): 17-20
- Grimmett, R., Inskipp, C., & Inskipp, T. 2011. *Birds of the Indian Subcontinent*. 2nd ed. Christopher Helm & Oxford University Press. London.
- Orta, J., Kirwan, G.M., Boesman, P., Garcia, E.F.J. & Marks, J.S. 2018. Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*). Handbook of the Birds of the World Alive. Lynx Edicions, Barcelona. (retrieved from <https://www.hbw.com/node/53162> on 14 December 2018). □



Kailash Jani