

Great Knot....

the entire western coast, from Goa. But, it has been noted four times now in Gujarat. It is possible that the Red Knot could be overlooked due to identification difficulties. Birders are urged to look for this species in the coastal areas of Gujarat.

These two important sightings, of a large congregation of Great Knots and a photographic record of Red Knot, are noteworthy records not only for the Jamnagar region, but also for the state.

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Grey Heron preying on a Little Grebe

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On 3 December 2017 at around 07:30 hrs, a fine winter morning, I was at Vibhapar, a wetland near Jamnagar, for bird photography. In addition to the common birds observed in the area, I saw a few ducks (*Anas* sp.) in the wetland. I then noticed that a Grey Heron (*Ardea cinerea*) was hunting and saw it catch an immature or non-breeding Little Grebe (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*). It caught the grebe by its neck and gave a few vigorous shakes till the grebe was dead. It then swallowed the grebe whole. It was amazing to watch the heron swallowing the grebe. I initially identified the prey as a juvenile Great Crested Grebe (*Podiceps cristatus*) but then by careful scrutiny of the photographs, I saw that this grebe had a shorter neck and was smaller in size than a Great Crested Grebe. So, I concluded that this was a Little Grebe. Looking at its plumage, I thought that it was an immature or an adult in non-breeding plumage.

The diet of the Grey Heron is mainly fish, but the species is considered to be highly opportunistic; insects, mammals, birds, plant matter and carrion are taken (Martínez-Vilalta *et al.* 2018). The Grey Heron has been recorded to feed on small birds like Common Kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*), chicks of other birds and ducks (ducklings), and also prey as large as Common Redshank (*Tringa totanus*) and Common Hoopoe (*Upupa epops*) (Greaves 1991, Martínez-Vilalta *et al.* 2018). A previous record from Jamnagar, of a Grey Heron feeding on a Five-striped Palm Squirrel (*Funambulus pennantii*) is known (Trivedi 2013). Thus, it has a very varied diet.

There is an instance of a Grey Heron choking on a Little Grebe; the heron caught the grebe but it could not swallow it, leading to its death by choking (McCanch 2003). But here, I observed that the Grey Heron could swallow the Little Grebe. Thus, this observation confirms that the Grey Heron can prey on the Little Grebe and swallow it successfully.

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