

Indian Blue Robin near Porbandar

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The Indian Blue Robin (*Luscinia brunnea*) {previously known as Indian Blue Chat or Blue Chat (*Erithacus brunneus*) and now also as (*Larvivora brunnea*)} is a small passerine bird that was formerly classified as a member of *Turdidae* (Thrush), but is now considered to be an Old World Flycatcher (*Muscicapidae*). The species has been categorized as Least Concern in the IUCN RedList (BirdLife International 2016). The Indian Blue Robin is a resident and breeds during May-September in the Himalayas, NE India and Myanmar. The Himalayan population winters in south India, around the Western Ghats and Sri Lanka (Grimmett *et al.* 2011).

On the afternoon of 26 November 2016, while birding near Khambhala village (21° 45' N, 69° 47' E) (situated at an elevation 90 mts above sea level), on the outskirts of Barda Wildlife Sanctuary near Porbandar, the first author spotted a bluish bird, similar to a Tickell's Blue Flycatcher (*Cyornis tickelliae*) in the undergrowth of *Prosopis juliflora*. The bird had a distinct white supercilium, which became more visible when the bird came into sunlight, leading to its identification as a male Indian Blue Robin. The bird was observed close to a farm, on the edge of a shallow water habitat. The bird was very active and always on the move, hopping around and digging the soil for insects. The surrounding area was full of human activities but the bird was searching for insects, oblivious of the traffic. We observed the same individual at three different locations in the undergrowth of *P. juliflora* and *Bougainvillea* sp;

two of the locations were very close to the waterhole. The bird remained silent during the observation period. We could not observe it on our second visit at the same place on the next morning. But, a male Indian Blue Robin was reported from Sasan Gir, near Junagadh (about 175 km away from the current location) three days later, on 29 November, by Abhilash Vaja and Dinesh Sadiya while they were on a birding trip (*pers. comm.*).



Distribution of the Indian Blue Robin in Gujarat

Salim Ali did not report the Indian Blue Robin in Gujarat (Ali 1955). The Indian Blue Robin (a female) was first recorded at Hingolghadh in September in the early 1990s (Khachar 1996). The reference books give only one isolated passage migration record for Gujarat (Kazmierczak 2000, Grimmett *et al.* 2011). But, there are several records from Gujarat. The species was sighted at Dang in February 2007, Mandavi – Surat in March 2011, Madhavpur in November 2012 and Junagadh in March & April 2013 (Mashru 2014). There is also a record from Thol, near Ahmedabad, in March 2012 (Trivedi 2012).

It is possible that the species could occur as a spring and autumn passage migrant in Gujarat where there is suitable habitat but, as of now, the Indian Blue Robin is best regarded as a vagrant, until further observations.

References

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