

Jouanin's Petrel in Porbandar: a first record for Gujarat

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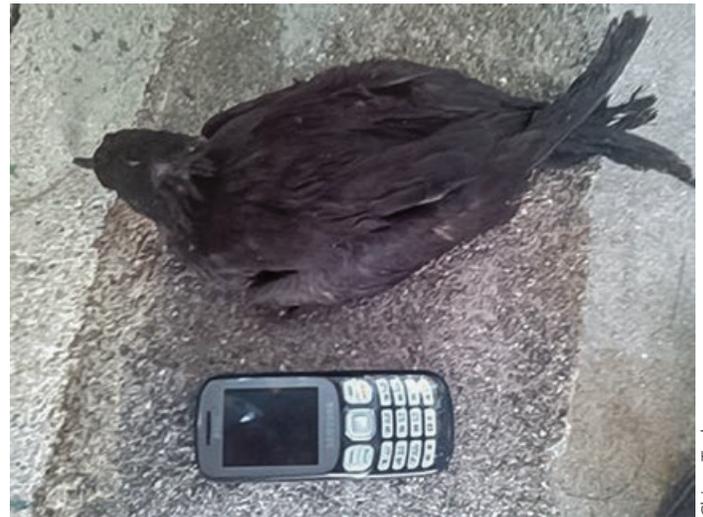
Chirag Tank

The Jouanin's Petrel (*Bulweria fallax*) is a poorly known species of the north-west Indian Ocean, occurring widely offshore in the Arabian Sea and the Gulf of Aden and Gulf of Oman, and it is a 'Near Threatened' species due to its moderately small range (BirdLife International 2017). During the summer monsoon (May-September), it congregates off the Socotra archipelago (Yemen), where a breeding colony of at least c.50 pairs was recently discovered, and where c. 3,000 pairs are now estimated to nest locally on mainland cliffs, and also off the Halaaniyaat islands (southern Oman), where too it may nest (BirdLife International 2017). The Jouanin's Petrel is given as a vagrant to Gujarat (Ganpule 2016), and there are a few well documented records from the western and eastern coast of India (Praveen *et al.* 2013).

On 6 October 2014, a petrel was rescued from the Chowpati area (21° 38' 20.61" N, 69° 35' 30.33" E) of Porbandar city by the second author late in the evening. The bird was very lethargic and survived only for an hour. Some bleeding was visible close to the base of the bill and its feathers were faintly oiled. There was no locally strong wind or poor weather to explain its occurrence. The more robust and dipped bill, relatively larger head, paler feathers in the upperwing greater coverts and the attenuated tail helped to identify it as Jouanin's Petrel. We could not tell whether it was a juvenile or an adult.

Regarding the previous record of the Jouanin's Petrel from Gujarat, five individuals were observed together in the Arabian Sea, by Sinclair (1979). This record is treated by Praveen *et al.* (2013) as 'probably not in India but somewhere close to Karachi, Pakistan', while Ganpule (2016) gives it as 'Gulf of Kachchh'. The ship in which the author made the journey, travelled from Mumbai, India, to Karachi, Pakistan, in November 1974, and it seems it did not visit the Gulf of Kachchh, but passed near it, based on the route and daily birding accounts. The above sighting was reported as

'W. of Gulf of Kachchh' (Robertson 1995) and the GPS location reported by Sinclair (1979) is 21° 36' N 63° 47' E, which falls in the Arabian Sea, close to the Murray Ridge, about 300 NM west of the Gulf of Kachchh, en route from Karachi to Mombasa, Kenya. Considering the above details, the current sighting of Jouanin's Petrel in Porbandar is the first record of the species from Gujarat. The earlier record by Sinclair (1979) needs to be removed from the Gujarat list, as the location lies too far away from our coast.



Chirag Tank

Recently, in September 2016, a pelagic birding trip was conducted off the Veraval coast by a team of birders. They sighted one Jouanin's Petrel (along with eight other pelagic bird species), approximately 25 NM in the Arabian Sea (Naik 2016), which was the second record for Gujarat.

[The authors took only three photos of the bird recovered in Porbandar. Unfortunately, they did not measure or preserve the specimen. But, in one of the photos, a mobile phone was kept near the bird to give an indication of the size of the bird. On further inquiry, the authors informed that the mobile phone was a Samsung Metro 313, the dimensions being 112.7 x 46.4 x 13.1 mm. Hence, the length of the phone kept besides the bird was 11.27 cms. Based on this, an indication of the size of the bird could be obtained, which seemed to indicate a bird smaller than a Jouanin's Petrel, with a length of about 26-27 cms and wing 21-22 cms. Hence, we decided to check and confirm the identification of this petrel since the identification of seabirds is difficult and similar 'all dark' petrels needed to be eliminated before this was confirmed as a Jouanin's Petrel.

We sent the images to various experts for their opinion and to confirm the identification of this individual. Michael Brooke, expert on seabirds, stated that wing length seemed to be around 22 cm,

Jouanin's Petrel...

which seemed too long for Bulwer's Petrel (*Bulweria bulwerii*). Also, the pale wing bar was not clearly seen here. Hence, it was difficult to be sure but that it was most probably a Jouanin's Petrel. Nils van Duivendijk stated that this was definitely not a Storm-petrel, but a *Bulweria* sp. and was mostly a Jouanin's Petrel, while Jens Eriksen stated that this was a Jouanin's Petrel.

A detailed reply regarding the identification was received from Robert (Bob) Flood, well known author and sea bird expert. He explained that as pointed out by Hadoram Shirihai (world renowned authority on seabirds), due to the angle of view of the photos, some corrections were necessary regarding the measurements, and with corrections, the total length would be around 30-31 cms and wing 22-23 cms. These measurements fall within the range for a young Jouanin's Petrel. The bill dimensions and the proportionately longer rear end, structure and jizz of head profile, and uniform carpal area were all good for a young Jouanin's Petrel. Thus, this was confirmed as a young Jouanin's Petrel by experts.

Regarding the earlier record from Gujarat by Sinclair (1979), the authors are correct in stating that this record is from the Arabian Sea and does not fall within Indian limits and hence needs to be removed from the Gujarat list. Accordingly, the current record from Porbandar is considered to be the first record of the Jouanin's Petrel for the state.

I thank Robert (Bob) Flood, Michael Brooke, Nils van Duivendijk, Jens Eriksen, Praveen J and Dipu K. for all their help.

I specially thank Hadoram Shirihai, who in spite of his very busy schedule, took the time to help in the identification of this bird and I am very grateful for his help and support – Prasad Ganpule]

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Sightings of Bristled Grassbird in South Gujarat

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The Bristled Grassbird (*Chaetornis striata*) is a large brown warbler of wet grassland, which is classified as 'Vulnerable' and is endemic to the Indian Subcontinent (BirdLife International 2016). Ali & Ripley (2001) noted it as fairly common in Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar and lower Bengal; distributed over most of the Indian Subcontinent as a resident, subject to local movements. Dharmakumarsinhji (1955) also described it as a fairly common and a resident bird, found in grasslands and lakesides in most parts of India and Gujarat. However, Grimmett *et al.* (2011) show only two isolated records for Gujarat.

There were no recent sightings in Gujarat, till it rediscovered after more than 100 years, at Naliya, Kachchh, in 2010 (Bhatt 2010). Thereafter, it was seen and photographed on 24 September 2015 near Amreli (Joshi 2015), and there is a recent record from Rampura grassland, Dahod (Patel & Joshi 2017).

This note describes the recent sightings of the Bristled Grassbird, in south Gujarat, at Untiyadra, Sisodra and Adadara (small villages of Ta: Ankleshwar and Ta: Mangrol of Bharuch District), just about 3 km & 10 km south of Kosamba Railway