

## Indian Cuckoo....

and Gujarat (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). As the species is known to wander up to Pakistan (Roberts 1989, Rasmussen & Anderton 2012), the present record of the species ca. 200 kms north of the Narmada River is not surprising. If it can turn up in Pakistan, it may turn up any where in Gujarat, but, we need to have proper documentary proof of its occurrence in the arid regions of the state.

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## Nesting of Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea* in a small water body near Gandhinagar

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The present observations started with the random photo of a Purple Heron (*Ardea purpurea*) I took almost five years ago, when I saw a pair in a small water body. This location was near Uvarsad, Gandhinagar, when I was returning from my village on the way from Ahmedabad to Gandhinagar. This lake is very small in size (about 50×150 mts) and is located near Uvarsad Village Road, which is very crowded and there is a constant traffic of small and heavy vehicles. I used to visit my village every month and as I am passionate about nature and birds, I observed the habitat here. This small lake has been

overlooked and is not known to many birders. Breeding and nesting of Purple Heron was observed in the rainy season at this particular site. A single nest was observed at this location for the past five years in a large heronry.

Many *Acacia* trees and few tiny 'bets' (small islands in the lake) are present in this lake. Along with the nest of the Purple Heron, nesting of many other heronry birds was observed on trees in this lake. The nesting of Black-headed Ibis (*Threskiornis melanocephalus*), Red-naped Ibis (*Pseudibid papillosa*), Indian Pond Heron (*Ardeola grayii*), Black-crowned Night Heron (*Nycticorax nycticorax*), Little Egret (*Egretta garzetta*), and Cattle Egret (*Bubulcus ibis*) was observed at this site. In the midst of this heronry, a single nest of Purple heron was seen on an *Acacia* tree. This nest was the only nest of this species observed in the almost 350-400 other nests in the same lake. Both birds were involved in building the nest and the male actively participated in collection of nesting material whereas the female built and shaped the nest. I visited this site regularly and I observed the incubation period and egg hatching. An incubation period of around 25-30 days was observed. On 15 August 2017, I observed three juveniles in the nest and nesting was successful that year with the juveniles fledging. On 14 July

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2019, the nest was located in an *Acacia*, and was surrounded by nests of Indian Pond Herons. The actual distance of the nest from road was about 25 mts. More than 20 other heron nests were seen in the immediate vicinity of this nest.

The Purple Heron is a common resident and quite widespread in Gujarat (Ganpule 2016). It is frequently seen in suitable habitats in the state in good numbers. It is surprising that this heronry consistently contained only one nest of the Purple Heron for the 5 years I observed it since this species is fairly well distributed all over the state. The Purple Heron is known to nest colonially, usually in small loose groups but large colonies have been observed (Martínez-Vilalta *et al.* 2020). It is known to nest along with other species of herons and egrets. Hence, the nesting here in a colony where other heronry species were present is not surprising but the observation of only one nest in this nesting colony over 5 years is odd. It is obvious that this area has a good heronry with lots of nests of other birds. Also,

the Purple Heron, being widespread, is resident in and around this area. So, it is a mystery as to why this species does not nest in more numbers here. Another interesting and unanswered question is whether the same pair nested in this area over the past five years? If yes, then it would suggest nest site fidelity in the Purple Heron. However, without tagging the birds, it would not be possible to confirm this. This location has a good heronry with many species nesting here even though it is a crowded area with vehicular traffic. This site needs to be monitored in the monsoon season regularly.

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## An unusual incident of a Brown Fish Owl *Ketupa zeylonensis* predated by an Indian Python

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of water in the tank during the summer months, we often see good bird life and other wildlife near the tank. We had regularly seen a pair of Brown Fish Owl (*Ketupa zeylonensis*) in the area as it usually nests here and is seen around streams, rivers and water tanks. The Brown Fish Owl is resident in and around Gir National Park.

On reaching there, we heard a fluttering sound and quickly rushed towards it and saw that a bird was drowning in the water tank. At first, it seemed like the bird was injured and had probably fallen down from the tree. On a closer look, we realized that the predator had become prey! A Brown Fish Owl was caught by an Indian Python (*Python molurus*). I did not have a DSLR camera but took a few pictures with my mobile phone.

The python was totally camouflaged with the dry leaves which had fallen from the tree. For a moment, I thought about helping the bird as it was still alive when we reached there. But, I decided against interfering in this predator-prey interaction and so I did not disturb the python. Instead, we saw the entire event for about one-and-a-half hours. The python gradually constricted the bird to death. Every time the owl exhaled, the python tightened its grip on the bird and also simultaneously was drowning it. We had seen a pair of Brown Fish Owls here before and to our surprise, after some time, a second owl

On 27 April 2019, I was at my farm in Itvaya Village, near Girgadhada, around Gir National Park, with my cousin Chintan Dudhat, and we went for an evening walk about 18:30 hrs to a nearby place that has a huge Banyan tree and a water tank. Being close to the sanctuary and because of availability