

## Sighting of Broad-billed Sandpiper *Calidris falcinellus* in South Gujarat

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On 13 September 2018, in the morning, I visited Aaliya bet for watching waders (*Calidris* sp.). Aaliya bet is a saline area adjoining Hansot village of Dist: Bharuch, located at the estuary of Narmada River and is spread over approximately 200 sq km. While returning back, I photographed a wader at location 21° 34' 11" N, 72° 43' 18" E, but did not identify it in the field. The bird was alone and foraging in shallow, brackish water. When I checked the photographs at home, I was surprised to see that it was a Broad-billed Sandpiper (*Calidris falcinellus*). The Broad-billed Sandpiper is a winter migrant to India. Looking at the plumage of this individual, it looked like it was moulting out of breeding plumage.

There are no published records of Broad-billed Sandpiper from the coastal areas of southern Gujarat (Ganpule *et al.* 2015, Ganpule 2016). There is no photo or any published data

regarding the species from South Gujarat on popular birding websites – [www.orientalbirdimages.org](http://www.orientalbirdimages.org) and [www.ebird.org](http://www.ebird.org) (accessed on 16 September 2018).

However, Rasmussen & Anderton (2012) show its distribution in the coastal regions of the entire state, including South Gujarat, while Ganpule *et al.* (2015) suggested that as there appears to be suitable habitat, there is no reason why the Broad-billed Sandpiper would not be occurring in South Gujarat. Ganpule (2016) gives it as 'rare in South Gujarat area?' This is the first photographic record from South Gujarat and confirms its occurrence in the area and hence is important. It is possible that it does occur here, but is not seen and photographed by birders because the coastal areas of South Gujarat are not easily accessible due to muddy sea shore, dense *Prosopis juliflora* in many places and a number of muddy creeks. Bird watchers are requested to search for the Broad-billed Sandpiper in suitable areas in South Gujarat.

### References

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## Re-sighting of Blue-throated Blue Flycatcher *Cyornis rubeculoides* in Porbandar: a third record for Gujarat

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The Blue-throated Blue Flycatcher (*Cyornis rubeculoides*) belongs to the family *Muscicapidae*. The species is a summer (breeding) visitor to the Himalayas and resident in NE India; it winters in Eastern Himalayas, south to Bangladesh, and in SW India and Sri Lanka (Grimmett *et al.* 2011). The species is vagrant to Gujarat with only two previous records - from Morbi in 2008 and Porbandar in 2015 (Ganpule 2009, 2016, and Vargiya & Jethva 2016).

The male Blue-throated Flycatcher is similar to a Tickell's Blue Flycatcher (*Cyornis tickelliae*) but, is distinguished by its blue throat (rufous-orange throat in Tickell's Blue Flycatcher) and the female is brown above, with more rufous on rump and tail, and with pale orange throat and upper breast (Grimmett *et al.* 2011).

## Blue-throated Blue Flycatcher...

On 14 January 2018, the second author, along with Dr Ankit Dey and Dr Terrance Makwan, were invited for treatment of birds injured during the kite flying festival day 2018 (i.e. 14 January) at Porbandar Bird Sanctuary. The first author, through Rapid Action Project of Wildlife Trust of India and International Fund for Animal Welfare, was involved in this project. The second author saw a flycatcher during the lunch break and could take some photographs. Later, he showed the photos to the first author and both visited the site and found the bird. It was identified as female Blue-throated Blue Flycatcher. It is interesting to note that a female of Blue-throated Blue Flycatcher was also seen on 5 December 2015 at Porbandar, on the same tree and at almost same time of the day (Vargiya & Jethva 2016). This sighting makes it a third sighting from Gujarat and the second from the same place in Porbandar.

Sightings of species which are vagrant to a particular region are very important to ornithology and such records add to our understating of species distribution and behaviour. When a vagrant species returns to the same tree in its wintering area, it usually means that the habitat is suitable and must be conserved. It is possible that this was the same individual which was seen here in 2015 and we speculate wintering site fidelity in the Blue-throated Blue Flycatcher. But, we

understand that to prove this, the individual must be ringed and re-trapped to be sure.

Wintering site fidelity is known in birds. For example, a ringed Grey Wagtail (*Motacilla cinerea*) returned to the same garden in Mumbai for five years in succession (Wooley Smith 1947). There are many other instances of wintering site fidelity in different species and many studies have been carried out regarding this. We will continue to monitor this area to see if the flycatcher is seen here again.

### References

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## Observations on nesting of Indian Pitta *Pitta brachyura* at Hingolghadh Nature Education Sanctuary, near Rajkot

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We happened to be at Hingolghadh Nature Education Sanctuary, Dist: Rajkot, many times during July-August 2018. The sanctuary is spread over about 654 ha. and was notified in August 1980. It is situated in Ta: Vinchhiya of Rajkot. It is an open thorny scrub forest, with patches of grasslands, interspersed with some large trees, and is dominated by *gorad* (*Acacia senegal*). The sanctuary is surrounded by agricultural farms and waste lands. Some parts of the sanctuary are hilly and undulating. The area provides a good habitat for resident and migratory birds. We took this opportunity to observe the nesting activity of Indian Pitta (*Pitta brachyura*), which is known to breed here in the monsoon season. The birds usually arrive in the month of May, and are silent when they arrive. As the rainy season approaches, they become vocal and start their breeding activities. This year, we observed a total of 14 nests in the sanctuary area. Out of these 14 nests, we monitored four nests closely and noted various details, which are as follows:

### Nest 1:

Location: Near a stream, in a *gorad*. The nest was built by repairing an old nest made the previous year, in 2017. The nest was at a height of approximately 14 feet.

3 July 2018: Incubation started.

17 July 2018: Three chicks were seen.

25 July 2018: Four chicks were seen putting their heads outside the nest. Both parent birds were feeding them, mainly with earthworms, millipedes and other insects. We noted that they came 11 times to feed the chicks in 34 minutes of observation.

28 July 2018: Same feeding activity as noted on 25 July 2018.

29 July 2018: All four chicks were outside the nest and seen wandering nearby.

1 August 2018: Same activity as noted on 29 July 2018. At roosting time, both the parent birds were calling the chicks,