

Buff-bellied Pipit....

Acknowledgements

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Recent records of Stork-billed Kingfisher in Gujarat

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The Stork-billed Kingfisher (*Pelargopsis capensis*) is a resident and locally common species found in India; east and south of a line from the Gulf of Khambhat to Dehra Dun (Ali & Ripley 1983). Its occurrence in Gujarat is restricted to the forested area on the eastern fringe of north and south Gujarat (Grimmett *et al.* 2011, Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). Ali (1954) collected nine specimens of the species from the forested area of the eastern fringe of Gujarat. Though the species is listed in the checklist of the birds of Gujarat (Parasharya *et al.* 2004, Ganpule 2016), there is only one published record (Monga &

Naoroji 1984) of the species after Ali (1954). In this paper, I report sightings of the species from three different locations in Gujarat and draw attention towards a published record from north Gujarat.



Observations

During my exploration of forests and less-explored areas of Gujarat, I saw and photographed the Stork-billed Kingfisher at three locations in the south-eastern fringe of Gujarat from 2008 to 2010.

My first sighting was from Balam forest area of Banaskantha District (24°16'11.64" N, 72°30'30.87" E) on 21 March 2008. The kingfisher was perched on a tree at the edge of the river, near a small temple. The Balam forest is on the extreme north-eastern fringe of state. The other two records are along the Narmada River in south Gujarat. One bird was photographed on 10 November 2009 at Gora village (21°51'35.85" N, 73°40'59.90" E), near Kevadia colony in Narmada District. The third sighting was on 14 October 2010 at Uchedia village (21°42'45.66" N, 73°7'8.07" E) near Jagadia, Bharuch District. At Uchediya village, a small rivulet, locally known as 'Kavri', merges with the Narmada River.

Discussion

The Stork-billed Kingfisher is very large (38 cm) compared to the common and wide-spread White-throated Kingfisher (*Halcyon smyrnensis*). It is easily distinguished by its greater size and the enormous blood-red dagger-shaped bill (Ali & Ripley 1983). Every time, these features drew my attention and hence I could take its photographs. However, its plumage is also quite distinct from the White-throated Kingfisher, which made identification easy.

Except the collection of nine specimens by Salim Ali (Ali 1954), there is only one published record of the species from Gujarat. Ali (1954) had collected two specimens from Juna Rajpipla and Dediapada forests around the Narmada River. Monga & Naoroji (1984) suspected its presence in Rajpipla forest based on a call they heard, but its presence was not confirmed visually. The species is not reported from the Shoolpaneshwar Wildlife Sanctuary (Desai *et al.* 1993, Narve *et al.* 1997) and in a study by GEER Foundation (Anon. 2009), it was not found there. Hence, the two present reports along the Narmada River area suggest that the species still exists there.

Ali (1954) had collected one specimen from Balaram area of Banaskantha District. The present report from Balaram confirms the presence of the species there too.

Ali (1954) had collected four specimens from the Dang forest (two from Waghai; one each from Kalibel and Sakalpatal). However, there is no recent sighting of the species from the Vansda National Park or Purna Wildlife Sanctuary in Dang forest by me or others, in spite of the fact that there were several biodiversity studies done in the recent past by GEER Foundation (Anon. 2000, Pandey *et al.* 2004) and others (Trivedi & Soni 2006, Kumar 2015). The species was considered to be locally extinct in Purna Wildlife Sanctuary by Trivedi & Soni (2006). Ganpule (2016) opined that its status is not known in the forested area of south to northern border of Gujarat and that further study was required. It is pertinent to note that there exists one more published record of the species from Polo forest of Aravalli District, in north Gujarat, by Mayur Mistri (Mistri 2008), who observed it for several days in second half of August 2005 and in subsequent years (up 2008 at least) at the same site, from August till February. In fact, there was no recent published record of the species from Gujarat except the sighting by Mistri (2008).

Considering my photographic records and the one recent published record, it appears that the Stork-billed Kingfisher may not be rare in the forest areas on the south and north-eastern fringe of Gujarat.

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