

Scops Owls....



Rajdeepsinh Jadeja

As per the details we gathered from other birdwatchers, both these owl species have been noted in Khijadiya for the first time. While Indian Scops Owl is regularly seen in the forest areas from north to south Gujarat, and in the Gir/Girnar forest in Saurashtra (Ganpule 2016), there are no sightings reported from any other area of Saurashtra. This is the first time that it

has been noted here in Khijadiya and it is a significant record for Jamnagar District. The Pallid Scops Owl is an uncommon but widespread winter migrant to Kachchh and Saurashtra, with many isolated records from Saurashtra in the past few years (Chauhan 2017, Dave 2017). Hence, its occurrence in Khijadiya is not very surprising. But, this is the first time that it has been photographed here and the sighting of two individuals over a period of more than one month suggests that it could be wintering in this area. The habitat in this sanctuary is indeed suitable for owls and there could be more individuals of both species here.

References

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Rescue of Eurasian Griffon *Gyps fulvus* at Porbandar

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The Eurasian Griffon (*Gyps fulvus*), also known as Griffon Vulture, is an uncommon winter visitor to Gujarat, mainly

seen in the desert areas of Greater Rann of Kachchh, Banni and there are isolated records from Little Rann of Kachchh (Ganpule 2016).

On the evening of 15 November 2013, the second author received a call that a raptor / bird of prey was sitting idle and not showing any movement since last three hours at the farm of Rama Odedara, near Porbandar. Later, we rescued the bird in a dehydrated condition and brought it to the Porbandar Bird Sanctuary.

It was identified as a juvenile or immature Eurasian Griffon based on the cinnamon-brown plumage, bill being completely dark with pale tip, ruff with lanceolated feathers, pointed upperwing coverts and mantle feathers with streaked appearance (Duriez *et al.* 2011). Dr. Parvez Chavda, veterinary doctor at the Porbandar Bird Sanctuary, who joined us on the same day, observed the symptoms and found a pathological infection and thus gave it primary treatment. For further treatment, the bird was immediately sent to Sakkarbaug Zoo, Junagadh. On the next day, we were informed that the bird was out of danger and recovering well.

Since 2000, this was probably the first sighting of any vulture species in Porbandar District. Jaydev Dhadhal had stated that 'two-four vultures seen over Ashapura and Abhapara Hills are seen no more in Barda' (Dhadhal 2000). In a blog, he mentioned White-rumped Vulture (*Gyps bengalensis*) in the checklist of Porbandar but, Eurasian Griffon is not mentioned (Dhadhal 2008). Hence, this is the first photographic record of the species from Porbandar in recent years. It is interesting to note that on 14 November, we had heard about the sighting of two vultures at a dumping site near Kutiyana, which is around 50 km from Porbandar. But, there have been no reports / photographs of vultures after 2013 from Porbandar District that we are aware of. Rescued migratory birds like this vulture should be released before return migration starts and

must not be kept in an aviary permanently if the bird is doing well and capable of flying. If healthy, it would return to its breeding grounds.

References

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Sighting of a flock of Trumpeter Finch *Bucanetes githagineus* near Bhuj, Kachchh

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Tejus Naik

We were on a bird photography trip to Greater Rann of Kachchh, and 28 January 2019 was the fourth day of our trip. In the three days we spent in Kachchh, we had seen and photographed many desert specialties and uncommon birds like White-naped Tit (*Parus nuchalis*), Greater Hoopoe Lark (*Alaemon alaudipes*), Cream-colored Courser (*Cursorius cursor*), Spotted Sandgrouse (*Pterocles senegallus*), Variable Wheatear (*Oenanthe picata ophistholeuca*), Grey Hypocolius (*Hypocolius ampelinus*), and many more bird and mammal species.

During this trip, in the previous three days, we got almost every targeted bird species from our list, except 2-3 species. Now, on the fourth and last day of our trip, one of our remaining target species was the Trumpeter Finch (*Bucanetes githagineus*). We had tried earlier for this finch but failed to find it at the place where it was recorded a few days back. Then, we decided to spend the last day searching for it.

This year, very less rainfall was recorded in Kachchh area (monsoon – 2018) and it was almost like there was no rain and so, almost every wetland, small water bodies and other ponds and lakes, where rainwater generally remains till the winter, were completely dry. In this harsh situation of water scarcity, the only source of water were small puddles seen by the road side, due to leakages in underground water distribution pipe lines, which are used for supply of drinking water to villages. These puddles attracted many birds since there was no water in nearby areas. The Trumpeter Finch was seen earlier this season in one such place, around an arid and stony area besides the Bhuj – Nirona Road. So, on the last day of our trip, we started for the Trumpeter Finch location at around 07:00 hrs and reached at that place at around 08:30 hrs. A small puddle, containing hardly around 20-25 liters of water, was the location where the birds were seen earlier.

We had heard that only 2-3 Trumpeter Finches were recorded at that place and so waited there. At around 08:45 – 09:00 hrs, a small flock of 12-15 Trumpeter Finch landed near the water and on seeing that flock, we were just amazed. Then, after 8-10 seconds, the flock flew away and perched on a *Prosopis juliflora* just around 50 ft behind us. We continued observing and saw that 2-3 other flocks came and perched there. The total flock size was more than 50 birds. We counted 52 birds and one of us was able to take a photograph with more than 40 birds in a single photo. We were very happy see our target species and that too, in such a large flock. We realized the importance of this puddle of water for the Trumpeter Finch