

## Short Birding Notes



### Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus* near Surat

I was bird watching with my friends Pradip Sharan and Neha Joshi Sharan near Olpad, in the outskirts of Surat, on 27 January 2019. At around 10:00 hrs, we were taking photos of a Red Avadavat (*Amandava amandava*) when one harrier (*Circus* sp.) flew in. Without identifying it, I took some photos of the bird. After checking the reference books, I was confused between a Hen Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*) and a Pallid Harrier (*Circus macrourus*) and later, I uploaded the photos in our local birding groups of Surat and also on the 'ask id of indian birds' Facebook page. After some discussion, it was identified as a Hen Harrier based on the five fingered hand, underwing barring and face pattern. It was probably an adult female, but ageing is difficult from only two photos. The Hen Harrier is a vagrant or a rare winter migrant to Gujarat, with a recent record from Nalsarovar (Kini 2018). This is a first record from South Gujarat and the second photographic record for the state.

**Ashok Patel:** Surat. asokpatel.ap@gmail.com



### Marbled Duck *Marmaronetta angustirostris* in Little Rann of Kachchh

On 22 October 2017, I visited the western part of Little Rann of Kachchh. Since the monsoon was good that year, there was lot of water in the Rann. I saw a flock of more than 2000 ducks (*Anas* sp.) in the area. While scanning this flock, I saw a duck which looked different. I took some photographs but the duck was quite far away and I could manage only record photos. The flock then flew and I could not locate this individual again. This duck had a dark greyish mask through the eye, white spotting on the upperparts and was overall sandy-brown in colour. Based on these features, I identified it as a probable Marbled Duck (*Marmaronetta angustirostris*). I posted the photos on 'birdinggujarat' blog where the identification was confirmed by Peter de Rouw. The Marbled Duck is a vagrant / rare winter migrant to Gujarat (Ganpule 2016) and there are very few documented sightings from the state. I thank Peter de Rouw for confirming the identification of this bird.

**Prasad Ganpule:** Morbi. prasadganpule@gmail.com



### Stoliczka's Bushchat *Saxicola macrorhynchus* in Nal Sarovar

On 19 February 2019, at around 17:00 hrs, I saw and photographed a Stoliczka's Bushchat (*Saxicola macrorhynchus*) at Nal Sarovar Bird Sanctuary. I took many photographs, and so it was easily identified. I also saw and photographed the typical 'puff-and-roll' behaviour, which is diagnostic of the species. The bird was seen in a fallow field. The Stoliczka's Bushchat is a regular but uncommon winter migrant, mainly to Kachchh, with scattered and isolated records from Saurashtra (Ganpule 2016). This was the first time I had seen it here in Nalsarovar.

**Abdul Multani:** At Nal Sarovar. multaniabdul123@gmail.com



### White-rumped Munia *Lonchura striata* near Bilimora, Navsari District

On 6 January 2019, I saw and photographed a group of six White-rumped Munia (*Lonchura striata*) at Devsar, near Bilimora, in Dist: Navsari. I had seen a group of about 15 birds earlier in the same area (a few days prior to this sighting) but could not get good photos. The identification was confirmed in the field and all the characteristic features were noted in the photographs too. The White-rumped Munia is known to be resident in the Dang forest and it is given to be an uncommon resident in South Gujarat (Ganpule 2016). This was the first time I had noted it at Devsar, near Bilimora, which is outside the forest area and is very near to the city.

**Mehul D. Patel:** Bilimora. mehul\_01ee@yahoo.com



### Greylag Goose *Anser anser* in Kachchh

On 14 January 2019, we were bird watching at a lake near Chadva Rakhhal area, Ta: Bhuj. There, we saw and photographed a Greylag Goose (*Anser anser*). The Greylag Goose is a regular winter visitor to Gujarat, including in the Little Rann of Kachchh, but it is rare in mainland Kachchh (Ganpule 2016). In the past, the regular hunting of this goose was a common practice by the royal family of Kachchh and the last big shoot was arranged in 1912-13 (Vijayrajji 1912). On 25 November 1990, Asad Akhtar and Jugal Tiwari recorded a Greylag Goose at Chhari Dhandh (Akhtar 1991) and this was a record of this species after a long span of 77 years from mainland Kachchh. Hence, this present sighting of this species comes after almost 29 years and is a significant record for Kachchh.

**Rahul Jethi & Kantilal Doobal:** Bhuj. rahulljethii85@gmail.com, kantilaldoobal@gmail.com



### Spangled Drongo *Dicrurus hottentottus* in Gandhinagar

I was in Gandhinagar with Viren Desai, Pragnesh Patel and Sandeep Patel on 28 November 2018. On the next morning, our friend Chintu Panchal joined us at 06:30 hrs and we went to Indroda Park, and entered the Botanical Garden area. We saw two Spangled Drongos (*Dicrurus hottentottus*) perched on a tree just above and next to us. We saw the birds only for a few moments and did not get good photographs due to the foggy morning and low light. But, we could easily identify the birds by their typical tail and long, down-curved bill. We saw the birds again in the deer park area. The Spangled Drongo is believed to be a rare resident in South Gujarat, with isolated records from elsewhere in the state; it has been noted in Indroda Park in 1992 (Subramanya 2018) but it is rare here.

**Dr. Anand Patel:** Surat. dr.anandcpatel@gmail.com



### Grey Hypocolius *Hypocolius ampelinus* near Rajkot

A male Grey Hypocolius (*Hypocolius ampelinus*) was seen and photographed near Sindhavadar, in Ta: Wankaner, about 40 kms from Rajkot, on 26 January 2019 in the morning. We could get a few photographs of the hypocolius before it flew away. The total observation time was only about 10 seconds, and we were unable to find it again. The Grey Hypocolius has been noted at Lalpari Lake, Rajkot, in December 2015 (Bhalodia & Mashru 2016). This location is almost 40 kms from the place where it was seen earlier near Rajkot and it is a new location for this species from Rajkot area.

**Pilu Sitapara, Hitesh Sureja & Jignesh Rathod:** Rajkot. surfer13jignesh@gmail.com



### Woolly-necked Stork *Ciconia episcopus* in Kachchh

On 8 December 2018, I saw and photographed a Woolly-necked Stork (*Ciconia episcopus*) on Kotdi-Poladia Road, Ta: Mandavi, Kachchh. On this road, there is a river which always has some water in the winter. Due to good vegetation around this area, many birds are usually seen here. The Woolly-necked Stork is resident in Gujarat but is vagrant in Kachchh. Salim Ali did not come across this species during his surveys and mentioned that 'Lester observed it only during the cold season and rains' (Ali 1945). Thereafter, there is only one published record of this species in Kachchh till now; J. K. Tiwari had seen it at Tuga Dam in Pach chham area of Kachchh in 1992 (Tiwari 1993). On very next day, 9 December 2018, I revisited this place to watch the Woolly-necked Stork again. This stork was present at the same spot but to my surprise, this time, I also saw a Black Stork (*Ciconia nigra*) there. The Black Stork is an uncommon to rare winter migrant to Kachchh. So, I was very much delighted to find these two rare storks in Kachchh.

**Dipak Goswami:** Bhuj. goswamidpk8@yahoo.com



### **Long-legged Buzzard *Buteo rufinus* in Jamnagar**

On 31 October 2018, we were birding at Ranjit Sagar dam, about 10 kms from Jamnagar. There we saw and photographed a bird of prey perched on a tree. It was identified as a Long-legged buzzard (*Buteo rufinus*). Another sighting of a Long-legged Buzzard was reported from Jamnagar city by Dr. Maulik Varu on 1 December 2018 (*pers. comm.*, verbally). Though the Long-legged Buzzard is a regular winter visitor in Gujarat and also seen in Jamnagar district frequently, it is uncommonly seen near/in Jamnagar city with only a few previous records. These records suggest that the species is also seen in urban areas of Jamnagar.

We thank Dr. Gaurang Bagda and Dr. Maulik Varu for confirming the identification.

**Dr. Bhargav Raval, Umesh Khetani, Anand Prajapati, Ankur Gohil & Bhagirath Gondaliya:** dr.bhargavraval@gmail.com



### **Oriental Scops Owl *Otus sunia* of rufous morph at Thol Bird Sanctuary**

On 23 December 2018, I was bird watching at Thol Bird Sanctuary, near Ahmedabad, when I heard the sound of wing-flapping and a small bird landed a little far away from me. While approaching, I realized that it was some small owl species (*Otus* sp.) and looked quite similar to an Oriental Scops Owl (*Otus sunia*), which I had seen earlier in Indroda Park, Gandhinagar. On a closer look, I saw that it was indeed an Oriental Scops Owl of the rufous morph. The bird perched for a few minutes and then flew away. Later, I visited the same place a few more times, but did not find it again. Though I had seen it earlier in Gandhinagar, which is near to Thol, this was my first sighting of an Oriental Scops Owl from this area.

**Jay Patel:** Ahmedabad. jaynpatel8989@gmail.com



### **Trumpeter Finch *Bucanetes githagineus* in Kachchh**

On 18 October 2018, I visited Dhosa Mahadev Temple, Ta: Bhuj. The area has a freshwater lake and is surrounded by scrub and rocks. There, I saw and photographed five Trumpeter Finch (*Bucanetes githagineus*). This was the first sighting of this species for the winter of 2018-2019. The Trumpeter Finch is a rare winter migrant to Kachchh with recent sightings from Banni area and from near Bhuj (Parekh 2016). However, this is the first time this species was seen in Dhosa Mahadev area. This record indicates that it is possible that the Trumpeter Finch could be visiting other suitable habitats in Kachchh.

**Sachin Dave:** Bhuj. sachindave2110@gmail.com



### **Pin-tailed Snipe *Gallinago stenura* in Jamnagar**

On 13 January 2018, we visited the saltpans and marshy areas near INS Valsura, on the outskirts of Jamnagar. We saw four snipes (*Gallinago* sp.) there. Three snipes were identified as Common Snipes (*Gallinago gallinago*). However, one snipe was different from the others. It had a short bill, short legs, a bulging supercilium in front of eye, narrow and poorly defined stripes in front of eye. We took a few photographs. It was identified as a Pin-tailed Snipe (*Gallinago stenura*). Although Pin-tailed Snipe is an uncommon but regular winter visitor to Gujarat (Ganpule 2016), it is quite likely that it is overlooked and hence, there are only a few recent records from the state. A Pin-tailed Snipe was seen in Ranjitsagar Dam, near Jamnagar, by Ashwin Trivedi in January 2019 (*pers comm.*, verbally).

[The field identification and separation of Pin-tailed Snipe from Swinhoe's Snipe (*Gallinago megala*) is considered impossible unless the spread tail is seen well or photographed. The identification here as Pin-tailed Snipe is based mainly on the locality. Birders are urged to photograph the spread tail in such snipes – Eds]

**Bhargav Raval & Nirav Raval:** Jamnagar. dr.bhargavraval@gmail.com



### Congregation of White Storks *Ciconia ciconia* in Little Rann of Kachchh

On 13 November 2013, at Bajana Wetland (23° 09' N, 71° 43' E) in the Little Rann of Kachchh, we observed a flock of White Storks (*Ciconia ciconia*), along with Painted Storks (*Mycteria leucocephala*) and Asian Openbills (*Anastomus oscitans*), in a mixed flock of storks feeding in a small water body at around 07:15 hrs. We also noted a flock of about 120 White Storks overhead. A second flock of around an equal number of birds was seen at the same place. In all, we estimated that about 250 White Storks were present. On the following couple of days, the large flocks seen previously were not observed again. This was an unusually large number of White Storks recorded here. It is possible that these birds could be in migration and had congregated here in the Rann.

**Devvratsinh Mori & Amish Patel:** Wadhwan. devvratsinhmori@gmail.com



### Unusual feeding behaviour of Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*

On 2 December 2018, we were returning with from Jakhau Salt Pans, in Kachchh, after photographing birds there. We saw very strange feeding behaviour of Ruddy Turnstone (*Arenaria interpres*). We observed that three birds were walking on the cement roof of a constructed room near the coastal area. They were feeding on some insects, possibly some species of flies, which were present on the wall of the room. The birds were bending towards the wall and picking the insects from the wall and feeding on them. The insects which were within reach of the birds were being caught by them. The Ruddy Turnstone usually flips stones and other objects near the sea shore while feeding on insects, crustaceans, molluscs etc. (Van Gils *et al.* 2019). This was a new feeding method observed by us where the birds were catching insects from walls of a constructed room.

**Jaysukh Parekh & Nirav Parekh:** Bhuj. nisusuman@gmail.com



### Asian Pied Starling *Gracupica contra* at Wadhwana, Vadodara

On 6 January 2019, I visited Wadhwana Lake, near Vadodara, with my friends Vasav and Rohit Markanday. At around 09:30 hrs, we saw and photographed a pair of Asian Pied Starlings (*Gracupica contra*) on top of the trees with Bank Mynas (*Acridotheres ginginianus*). We spent some time to observe and photograph this uncommon bird here. This pair was not shy, and was mostly seen foraging near the farms in the area. The Asian Pied Starling is regularly seen in Dahod area and there are isolated records from Jamnagar and South Gujarat (Ganpule 2016). This is the first time I had seen it at Wadhwana.

**Bhavya Joshi:** Rajkot. joshibhavya100@gmail.com

### References

- Akhtar, A. & Tiwari, J. K., 1991. Notes from Kutch. *Newsletter for Birdwatchers*. 31 (11-12): 10–11
- Ali, S. 1945. *The Birds of Kutch*. Oxford University Press. Published for the Govt. of Kutch.
- Bhalodia, R., & Mashru, A., 2016. Sighting of Grey Hypocolius in Rajkot and its records from outside Fulya, Kachchh. *Flamingo*. 14: (3) 7
- Ganpule, P., 2016. The birds of Gujarat: Status and distribution. *Flamingo* 8(3) – 12(4): 2–40
- Kini, S., 2018. Sighting of Hen Harrier at Nal Sarovar: a first photographic record for Gujarat. *Flamingo* 16 (3): 9-10
- Parekh, J., 2016. Trumpeter Finch in Kachchh. *Flamingo* 14 (3): 1-3
- Subramanya, S., 2018. Sighting of Spangled Drongo at Junagadh Agricultural University, Junagadh. *Flamingo* 16 (3): 13-14

Tiwari, J. K., 1993. Occurrence of *Ciconia episcopus* (Boddaert) in Kutch. *Bird Conservation: Strategies for the Nineties and Beyond*. Ornithological Society of India. Bangalore. (Book Section)

Van Gils, J., Wiersma, P. & Kirwan, G.M. 2019. Ruddy Turnstone (*Arenaria interpres*). *Handbook of the Birds of the World Alive*. Lynx Edicions, Barcelona. (retrieved from <https://www.hbw.com/node/53918> on 2 February 2019).

Vijayrajji, M. K. S., 1912. Goose shooting in Kutch. *J. Bombay Nat Hist Soc.* 21: 678-679 □