

Short Birding Notes



Asian Desert Warbler in South Gujarat

On 18 October 2018, Pravin C. Patel and I went for bird watching around Tena village, which is just 12 kms from Surat city. At around 08:00 hrs in the morning, we saw a small warbler-like bird, with light brown coloured upperparts and rufous rump. It was continuously moving from one branch of dried *Prosopis juliflora* to another and in between, it was even hopping on the ground. It was readily identified as an Asian Desert Warbler (*Sylvia nana*), as we had seen it last year at Greater Rann of Kachchh. It gave us plenty of time to take good photographs. It is mainly seen in Kachchh and some parts of Saurashtra (Ganpule 2016). We believe that this is the first record of an Asian Desert Warbler for South Gujarat.

Anil Bhatt: Surat. anilnbhatt@gmail.com



White-bellied Drongo in Kachchh

On 31 March 2018, I saw and photographed a White-bellied Drongo (*Dicrurus caerulescens*) near Dhunai, Ta: Mandavi, Dist: Kachchh. I had recorded the same species on 29 November 2016 and 25 December 2017 in this area previously. According to senior birder Shantilal Varu, this species is rare in Kachchh with only 2-3 previous sightings. All the previous sightings of the White-bellied Drongo from Kachchh are from the winter season and it seems that the species is a rare winter migrant or vagrant to Kachchh in the winter.

Urmi Jani: Kachchh. urmi6420r@gmail.com



Indian Grey Hornbill in Wadhwan, Surendranagar

A single Indian Grey Hornbill (*Ocyrceros birostris*) was seen at my farm near Wadhwan, Surendranagar, on 27 July 2018, at around 18:30 hrs. This bird was first sighted by Dadabapu Bhavanisinhji Mori. The bird was silent and we could see it from a long distance. On the next morning, I visited the site again, but could not find it. This is an important record for Saurashtra region. Ganpule (2016) mentions a record from Gir National Park and other than that record, this is the only recent record from Saurashtra. This record will also be very significant for understanding the distribution and the range extension of the species in Saurashtra.

Devvratsinh Mori: Wadhwan. devvratsinhmori@gmail.com



Oriental Dwarf Kingfisher in Vansada National Park

On 19 October 2018, I visited Vansada National Park with my parents (Suryamani Mishra and Smita Mishra) for bird watching as it was open after the monsoon. We entered the park at around 08:30 hrs and drove to many areas for one whole hour without any bird sightings. It was 09:30 hrs, and I saw a bird sitting on the ground catching a fly/insect (probably a bumblebee). I immediately took a few photos but it flew away. I waited for 15 minutes and saw it again and it was identified as an Oriental Dwarf Kingfisher (*Ceyx erithaca*). It had an insect in its mouth. It perched just in front of me for about half an hour. Later on, my friends Dr Anand Patel, Viren Desai and Dr Pragnesh Patel joined me and after one hour, they saw the bird again. There are previous records of the species from Vansada (Mistri *et al.* 2017) but this sighting in October is too late for the monsoon season and indicates that it may remain in this area probably till the onset of winter.

Saswat Mishra: Silvassa, Dadra & Nagar Haveli (UT). paulmshr@gmail.com



Oriental Scops Owl at Alang, near Bhavnagar

On 16 October 2018, I found a small owl (*Otus* sp.) at my office in Alang, about 40 kms from Bhavnagar. After taking photos and with the help of experts, it was identified as an Oriental Scops Owl (*Otus sunia*) of the rufous morph. Though no injuries were visible, the bird was unable to fly and seemed dehydrated. So I sent it to Vishwadeepsinh Raol at Bhavnagar for further care. After three days of utmost treatment and care, on 19 October 2018, the bird was released and flew away in the wild. The Oriental Scops Owl is rare in Saurashtra with isolated records from Gir National Park and surrounding areas (Ganpule 2016). Thus, this sighting from Bhavnagar is noteworthy.

Shailendrasinh Gohil: Bhavnagar. shail1212@yahoo.com



Striolated Bunting in Khirsara Grassland, Rajkot

On 30 September 2018, we went to Khirsara Grassland, near Rajkot, for our regular weekend birding. I saw an unfamiliar bird, and we observed it with the help of binoculars and were fortunate enough to take some good photographs. When I posted the images on the social media for identification, it was confirmed as a Striolated Bunting (*Emberiza striolata*). There is no recent record of the species from Rajkot area but on enquiring, senior birder Ashok Mashru said that he had seen the bird at Nyari Dam about 10 years back. As the bird is commonly seen in Kachchh, its occurrence in Rajkot is not surprising and it was recently seen near Jamnagar too (Pala & Jhaveri 2017). It was seen again in Rajkot on 23 October 2018 by Rajubhai Karia (*pers. comm.*). We went to the same place 2-3 times to look for this species but were not able to find it.

Jagrut Rindani & Adhish Joshi: Rajkot. jprindani@gmail.com



Grey Partridge preyed upon by Desert Cat

On 2 September 2018, I was looking for nightjars (*Caprimulgus* sp.) near Dhinodhar Hill, Kachchh. I saw two cats there, which were very small in size. I observed that the cats were feeding on some bird. I took photographs and also a video. I observed that the cats were feeding on a Grey Francolin (*Francolinus pondicerianus*). One of the cats was larger while the second one was much smaller. I came back and saw the photos on my computer and identified the cats as a female and juvenile Indian Desert Cat (*Felix libyca*). I went to the same place the next morning and saw feathers of the Grey Francolin and also noted the pugmarks of the cats. While it is not surprising to note that the Grey Francolin is a part of the diet of the Desert Cat, the direct observation of it feeding on the bird was interesting as this cat is quite elusive and it is evidence of it preying on avian species.

Vikramsingh Sodha: Kachchh. kutchkunj@gmail.com



Red-tailed Shrike of karelini morph near Chotila, Surendranagar Dist.

On 16 September 2018, we were on our routine birding trip to 'Wild Paanchal', Anandpur Grassland, near Chotila, Dist. Surendranagar. While walking in the area, we saw many shrikes (*Lanius* sp.), which were common there. But, I found a shrike which looked different and had a light grey head and upperparts, white stripe above eye and white wing patch and underparts. So I took photographs and showed the images to senior birder Ashok Mashru. He and Prasad Ganpule later identified this individual as a Red-tailed Shrike (*Lanius phoenicuroides*) of the *karelini* morph, which is perhaps a first record from this area. One individual of this morph was noted recently in Kachchh (Parekh 2018). But, this morph of the Red-tailed Shrike is rare here.

I am thankful to Shatrughnabhai Jebalia and Ghanshyambhai Jebalia of 'Wild Paanchal' for this beautiful sighting. It would not have been possible to see this bird without their help.

Sejal Daniel: Ahmedabad. sejalvaneet@hotmail.com



Common Shelduck in Rajkot

On 24 November 2018, while bird watching in the outskirts of Rajkot, a duck was seen flying. We noticed the blackish neck and larger size, and after some time, it came above us and tried to perch on the ground in front of us. We took some photos of it in flight and identified it as a Common Shelduck (*Tadorna tadorna*). We then tried to search for it but we saw it only once and then it flew away. On enquiring with some experts and senior birders from Rajkot, we got to know that the species has not been noted in Rajkot before and this was the first photographic record from this area.

Divyesh Ghervada, Prakash Jani, Jaydevsinh Nakum: Rajkot. divyeshghervada@yahoo.com



Striolated Bunting in Navsari

On 22 September 2018, Jay Desai and I visited Navsari outskirts area for regular bird watching. We reached a wetland at approximately 08:00 hrs. We did birding for about 4 hours in that particular area. While returning back, we were lucky to see and photograph a Striolated Bunting (*Emberiza striolata*). We initially thought that it was a lark sp. (*Mirafra* sp.). We then confirmed that it was indeed a Striolated Bunting and managed to take some photographs too. The Striolated Bunting is rare in Navsari area.

Minal Patel: Navsari. minalpatel_forestry@yahoo.in



Brown-breasted Flycatcher at Thol Bird Sanctuary, Ahmedabad

On the morning of 19 February 2017, at Thol Bird Sanctuary, near Ahmedabad, my search for an uncommon winter visitor to Gujarat was finally successful. I got my first glimpse of a Brown-breasted Flycatcher (*Muscicapa muttui*), and the identification was confirmed by its typical plumage and pale legs. This was probably the first recorded sighting at Thol. My gut feeling about the bird being present at Thol proved to be correct. There have been many sightings of this species since 2007 but these sightings have been mostly from Kachchh and Saurashtra (Ganpule 2016). Also, an individual was recently ringed by BNHS at Nal Sarovar, which was confirmed by Shri Uday Vora (*pers. comm.*) and there is a recent sighting from Jessore in Banaskantha (Varde 2018). I saw the bird at Thol from 19 February till 20 March 2017, on every Sunday and on a few Saturdays. On 13 March 2017, a team from BNHS to was there along with me, and we saw it again in the area.

I thank Jignesh Gondaliya for taking the time to explain the habitat where he had seen the bird in Girnar. He was very meticulous in his explanation and that helped a lot in my search for this beautiful species at Thol.

Vipul Trivedi: Ahmedabad. vedi.solutions@gmail.com



Ultramarine Flycatcher in the outskirts of Ahmedabad

It was a pleasant morning on 10 December 2017 and as usual, I was roaming in my weekend destination i.e. Serenity Library and Botanical Garden. While I was observing and taking photographs of birds, a small flycatcher (*Ficedula* sp.) came on a perch quite close to me. I took a few photographs and after post processing, I referred to the field guide (Grimmett *et al.* 2011) and also consulted my birding friend Darshanbhai Parikh. The bird was identified as a first winter male Ultramarine Flycatcher (*Ficedula superciliaris*). This was a first record from this area and later on, I informed my birding friend Umang Dutt, who also took photographs of this bird.

Samir Brahmbhatt: Ahmedabad. c2samir@yahoo.co.in



Ruddy Turnstone from Dhari, Amreli

On 11 November 2018, at around 16:00 hrs, I visited Khodiyar Dam, near Dhari, Dist: Amreli. I reached there and started scanning the area with my binoculars. At the edge of the dam, I saw and photographed a Ruddy Turnstone (*Arenaria interpres*), which was a surprise sighting for me. I confirmed the identification by sending the photos to Ashokbhai Mashru, Viralbhai Joshi and Rameshbhai Vagadiya. This was the first record of a Ruddy Turnstone from Dhari area and it was a first sighting for me also. This species is usually seen on coasts or in coastal areas of our state and I am not aware of any inland records of it here. Grimmett *et al.* (2011) show it as a winter visitor only to the coastal areas of Gujarat and do not give any inland record of this species in the distribution map.

Rohan Joshi: Dhari. rohanjoshi2886@gmail.com



Common Ringed Plover in Porbandar

On 17 April 2016, we were bird watching in coastal areas of Porbandar between 07:00 to 10:30 hrs. We saw and photographed one Common Ringed Plover (*Charadrius hiaticula*) in this area. It seemed to be in breeding plumage, as it had orange legs and bill, and a broad black breast band. On the same day, we also saw 25 Pacific Golden Plovers (*Pluvialis fulva*), 30 Grey Plovers (*Pluvialis squatarola*) and other waders at the same place. The Common Ringed Plover was a surprise sighting here, as the species is a rare to uncommon winter visitor in Gujarat (Ganpule 2016), with regular sightings only from Jamnagar area. There are very few photographic records from Porbandar.

Devvratsinh Mori & Bharat Rughani: Wadhwan. devvratsinhmori@gmail.com



Common Whitethroat in Wadhwan

A Common Whitethroat (*Sylvia communis*) was seen in Wadhwan, near Surendranagar, on 28 August 2014, at around 08:30 hrs. The identification was confirmed by the grayish mantle, wings with rufous fringes to the coverts, breast and flanks showing pinkish wash, and plain faced appearance. I was watching a Rain quail (*Coturnix coromandelica*) and a Rock Bush Quail (*Perdica argoondah*) near Kharva village, when I saw and photographed the Common Whitethroat. I observed the bird for the next 15 minutes from my car. It perched on small bushes in the area. In Gujarat, the Common Whitethroat is an uncommon to rare passage migrant, with sightings mainly from Kachchh and Saurashtra (Ganpule 2016). It is rare in Surendranagar district.

Devvratsinh Mori: Wadhwan. devvratsinhmori@gmail.com

References

- Ganpule, P., 2016. The Birds of Gujarat: Status and Distribution. *Flamingo* 8(3) – 12 (4): 2-40
- Grimmett, R., Inskipp, C., & Inskipp, T. 2011. *Birds of the Indian Subcontinent*. 2nd ed. Christopher Helm & Oxford University Press. London.
- Mistri, V., Rathod, D. M. & Jat, M. U., 2017. Does the Oriental Dwarf Kingfisher *Ceyx erithaca* breed in southern Gujarat? *Indian BIRDS*. 13 (3): 8
- Pala, H. & Jhaveri, U., 2017. Striolated Bunting near Khijadiya, Jamnagar. *Flamingo*. 15 (4): 21
- Parekh, J., 2018. Red-tailed Shrike of *karelini* morph in Kachchh. *Flamingo* 16 (3): 23
- Varde, A., 2018. Brown-breasted Flycatcher in Jessore Sanctuary. *Flamingo*. 16 (1): 23