

## Short Birding Notes



### Bar-headed Goose in Rajkot

On 15 March 2016, we went for bird watching to Lalpari Lake, on out-skirts of Rajkot city. We saw 10 to 12 Bar-headed Geese (*Anser indicus*) in the farms near the lake. The birds were habituated to the presence of farmers and their vehicles and so we could approach them and take photos from a short distance. They were seen for 15 days in the area, with a maximum of 30 individuals noted. Bar-headed Goose is rare in Rajkot area and has not been noted here in the last few years. It was last seen in Rajkot in March 1996 by Bhavesh Trivedi and Vinod Pandya (*pers. comm.*)

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### Crested Hawk Eagle preying on Mottled Wood Owl

During my visit to Gir forest in May 2016 with my friends, we saw a Crested Hawk Eagle (*Nisaetus cirrhatus*) with a Mottled Wood Owl (*Strix ocellata*) kill. Though we did not witness the eagle killing the owl, we saw that it was a fresh kill and that the eagle had just started to feed on the owl. The Crested Hawk Eagle has been recorded taking large birds like Indian Peafowl (*Pavo cristatus*), Junglefowls and Pheasants (Naoraji 2006). However, there is no record of it preying on a Mottled Wood Owl, and hence this sighting is significant.

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### Himalayan Griffon and Cinereous Vulture in Little Rann of Kachchh

On a visit to Little Rann of Kachchh on 29 November 2015, we (Niyati Kukadia, Pavan Patel, Muzahid Malik and me) visited the Kharaghoda/Dasada area for bird watching. In the evening at around 17:45 hrs, we saw a group of Vultures, consisting of six Himalayan Griffons (*Gyps himalayensis*), eleven Eurasian Griffons (*Gyps fulvus*) and one Cinereous Vulture (*Aegypius monachus*). Himalayan Griffon is vagrant to Gujarat, with a few records from Greater Rann of Kachchh and near Dabhla, Ahmedabad (Varu & Khatri 2015). The Eurasian Griffon and Cinereous Vulture are uncommon / rare winter migrants to Gujarat.

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### A ringed Lesser Crested Tern in Jamnagar

On 17 April, 2016, I visited Balachhadi beach, near Jamnagar, with Mehul Bhadania and Chirag Solanki. There we saw and photographed a Lesser Crested Tern (*Thalasseus bengalensis*) with a metal ring on its right leg. Unfortunately, the number / markings on the ring could not be deciphered. But it was interesting to note the ringed Lesser Crested Tern in Jamnagar.

[We sent the images to Brendan Kavanagh and Graham Prole, who have ringed Lesser Crested Terns in Bahrain. They opined that though the markings were not readable, based on the ratio of width to height of the ring, it looked similar to a BTO ring. These rings were used for ringing the terns in Bahrain and it is possible that this individual was ringed in Bahrain. However, the exact ringing details could not be obtained as the ring was not readable – Eds]

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### Sighting of aberrant coloured Red-wattled Lapwing in LRK

On 3 January 2016, we visited Little Rann of Kachchh. We were searching for the birds near Zinzuwada area (23019' 05.1"N; 71038' 03.6"E), when we spotted an aberrant coloured Red-wattled Lapwing (*Vanellus indicus*) besides a water source. We were surprised to see that the bird had a normal coloured head, but completely white upperparts and underparts. It was identified as an individual with the mutation 'Brown', based on the criteria given by Van Grouw (2013), which is defined as a qualitative reduction of eumelanin. Further details of the mutation 'Brown' are given in this reference. This sighting is an addition to our knowledge of such birds.

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### Stoliczka's Bushchat in Little Rann of Kachchh

Stoliczka's or White-browed Bushchat (*Saxicola macrorhynchus*) is a Vulnerable species (BirdLife International 2015). It is scarce and local in dry semi-deserts of Gujarat, with regular sightings in the winter only from the grasslands of Kachchh and Velavadar National Park. On 21 December 2014, I participated in the Wild Ass Census, along with Bhavanisinhji, in the Little Rann of Kachchh. Early in the morning, we saw one Stoliczka's Bushchat, which was catching small insects. We took some photos and confirmed its identity. [There are very few records of this species from the Little Rann of Kachchh and it is rare in this area—Eds]

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### White-capped Bunting near Nalsarovar Bird Sanctuary

On 1 August 2008, I photographed a White-capped Bunting (*Emberiza stewarti*) at Aniyari village (22°49' N, 72° 05' E), near Nalsarovar Bird Sanctuary in central Gujarat. The bird was foraging on ground.

The White-capped Bunting (*Emberiza stewarti*) is a resident bird in mountains of Pakistan and Western Himalayas. It winters in foothills and valleys of Pakistan and North-central India (Grimmett *et al.* 2011). Isolated sight records of this species are shown in Gujarat (Grimmett *et al.* 2011, Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). The White-capped Bunting was observed twice at Hingolghadh in Rajkot District (Khacher 1963, Khacher & Mundkur 1988) and recently in Jamnagar, where two pairs were noted (Deomurari 2009). It was also included in the checklist of the birds of Gujarat (Parasharya *et al.* 2004). Here, its occurrence at Aniyari village near Nalsarovar Bird Sanctuary in central Gujarat indicates its wider distribution.

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