

if the main features are visible and noted in photographs, can it be separated from Blyth's Reed Warbler. Fortunately, here, the observers took many good photographs of this individual and so the identification could be confirmed.

This is a significant record of the Large-billed Reed Warbler from VNP. It shows that the species could be occurring in other areas of Gujarat but is probably overlooked due to identification difficulties. More sightings will help in understanding the status and distribution of the Large-billed Reed Warbler in Gujarat.

I am very grateful to Lars Svensson for helping with the identification – Prasad Ganpule]

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Sighting of Barn Swallow of subspecies *tytleri* - a noteworthy record from Gujarat

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The Barn Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*), breeds in the Pakistan hills, Himalayas and Northeast India; it is a widespread winter visitor to most parts of the Indian Subcontinent (Grimmett *et al.* 2011, Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). In the Indian Subcontinent, the most widespread and common subspecies of Barn Swallow are *H. r. rustica* and *H. r. gutturalis* (Ali & Ripley 2001). Adults have bright red forehead and throat, blue-black breast band and upperparts, and long tail streamers; underparts vary from white in *rustica* to pale creamy or white in *gutturalis*, whereas the subspecies *tytleri* has uniform rufous-chestnut underparts and narrow broken breast-band (Turner 2006). The subspecies *tytleri* breeds in south-central Siberia (River Yenisey, east to Yakutskaya), south to northern-inner Mongolia; it winters to eastern India and southeast Asia (Turner & Christie 2016). For India, winter records of this subspecies are limited to the northeastern states. The subspecies *saturata* also has rufous underparts, described as 'rusty-ochre', but it winters in southeast Asia and is not known to occur in India (Turner & Christie 2016). The situation is further complicated by the occurrence of intergrades, as there are areas of overlap in breeding territories wherein individuals with characteristics of two subspecies are known to occur. Hence, taxonomy is complicated.

We saw flocks of Barn Swallows at several places in north Gujarat during one of our field surveys in September 2010. Amongst the Barn Swallows perching on the roadside electric wires, we saw one swallow with dark rufous underparts on

24 September 2010, near Prantij town (23° 27' 0.17" N, 72° 49' 31.63" E), in Sabarkantha District. This bird, along with other swallows, was photographed, and based on the rufous underparts, was identified as a Barn Swallow, possibly of the subspecies *tytleri*. After six years, while examining our old photographs, we realized that it is important to get the identification confirmed from experts. Dr. Rebecca Safran and Dr. Elizabeth Scordato (*pers.comm.*, email dated 18 May 2016) opined that this individual was similar to a *tytleri*, but the possibility of a dark *gutturalis* (which sometimes includes *saturata*, which is rusty-ochre below) could not be ruled out. The phenotypically variable *gutturalis* has sometimes been divided into as many as four different subspecies throughout its range (Scordato & Safran 2014). Also, there is quite a bit of overlap in the color distributions between *gutturalis* and *tytleri*, with darker *gutturalis* the same color as paler *tytleri* (Dr. Elizabeth Scordato, *pers.comm.*, email dated 19 May 2016). Thus, without morphometric measurements, it is difficult to be sure. However, the darker forms of *gutturalis* breed in the Russian far-east, and are not known to winter in the Indian Subcontinent, and thus, this individual can be identified as a Barn Swallow of the *tytleri* subspecies.

Ali (1955) recorded two subspecies of Barn Swallow from Gujarat; *rustica* and *gutturalis*, and both were listed in the checklist of birds of Gujarat (Parasharya *et al.* 2004). The subspecies *tytleri* is known to occur only in north-eastern states of India (Grimmett *et al.* 2011; Rasmussen & Anderton 2012; Turner & Christie 2016). It has not been reported west of West Bengal (Ali & Ripley 2001). Hence, this is an important record for western India as well as for Gujarat. Moreover, the first date of sighting of Barn Swallow during winter is also very important as Ali (1955) records its earliest arrival date as 27 October in Gujarat. The fact is that wintering birds arrive much earlier in Gujarat, and one of us (BMP, the second author) have seen them as early as the second week of July (in 1993) near Tarapur (22° 28' N, 72° 37' E), in Anand District, Gujarat.

Acknowledgements

We thank Dr. Rebecca Safran and Dr Elizabeth Scordato for helping with the identification. We are thankful to Prasad Ganpule for helping with the references.

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Sighting of Spangled Drongo at Junagadh Agricultural University, Junagadh

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to my familiarity with the species around Bangalore, where they are not uncommon. The Silk Cotton Tree on which the birds settled and started vocalizing, was back lit against the hazy morning sky. I could only manage a few silhouette photos of the pair whose largish head and bill that looks long and down-curved, besides a long, squarish tail-end, with lower outer-edges curved-up and inwards, were very characteristic to indicate and confirm the identity. The birds flew away as I tried to approach closer for a better photo.

The Spangled Drongo is known to be a resident in India, found from the Himalayan foothills to north-eastern India and down to southern India, encompassing both the Eastern and the Western Ghats, with a noticeable absence in western and north-western India – namely Gujarat, Rajasthan, Haryana and Punjab (Ali & Ripley 1987, Rasmussen & Anderton 2012).

In Gujarat, it is given to be a rare resident in south Gujarat, with an isolated record from Kachchh (Ganpule 2016). Recent sightings of the species from the Shoolpaneshwar Wildlife Sanctuary, Narmada District, by Viral Joshi on 9 March 2012 (Joshi 2012) and from Dangs, south Gujarat (Theba 2017) are known. Earlier, it had been noted in Mandvi, Kachchh, many times over a period of a few years from 1948 to 1966 (Himmatsinhji 1998).

It has also been sighted at Indroda Park near Gandhinagar, central Gujarat, in 1992 by Bakul Trivedi and Uday Vora in separate visits. (*pers. comm*)

In this regard, the present sighting assumes importance as the first record of the species in Saurashtra. This sighting indicates that there may be other locations where the species could possibly occur in the right season, coinciding with

I happened to be at the Junagadh Agricultural University (JAU), Junagadh, between 23 January 2018 to 25 January 2018 to take part in an official meeting, and I did not want to miss-out on the birding opportunity that the University Campus offered. Even before I arrived at the Campus, I had picked my birding spots based on Google Earth, as JAU appeared to be a very poorly birded area as per data on the website 'eBird'. On 23rd morning, while I made my way towards a large constructed pond, the Pari Talav area (21° 29' 54.24" N, 70° 27' 2.70" E), which is surrounded by a garden and orchards, I observed a Indian Peafowl (*Pavo cristatus*) pair making their way away from me. I watched over half a dozen Asian Palm Swifts (*Cypsiurus balasensis*) milling around a Palmyra Palm (*Borassus flabellifer*) found around Pari Talav, and my attention was drawn to a pair of drongos (*Dicrurus* sp.) flying towards a Silk Cotton (*Bombax ceiba*), locally called as 'Shimalo'. The birds were readily identified as Spangled Drongo (*Dicrurus hottentottus*) pair, also known as Hair-crested Drongo, owing

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