

## Sighting of Black Tern in breeding plumage at Charakla Salt Pans

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discharged, taking a route of 100 to 200 meters. When it caught hold of prey, it flew quite far; often beyond the binocular range. It fed while in flight and did not perch during the time we observed it.



There is one previous record of a first summer Black Tern from Nalsarovar Bird Sanctuary (Bhatt *et al.* 2014), but this is the first time that a breeding plumaged bird has been recorded here.

[This sighting is significant since the Black Tern was considered to be a vagrant to India with the sighting from Nalsarovar being the only confirmed record from India (Praveen *et al.* 2014). In addition to this sighting, another sighting of a Black Tern in breeding plumage was recently reported, in July 2016, from Karwar, Karnataka (Jamalabad 2016). The sightings at Nalsarovar were also in mid-May and June. Birdwatchers should look out for this tern in the summer months in Gujarat – Eds]

On 8 May 2016, I was on a birding trip to Charakla Salt Pans (22° 10' N, 69° 09' E), near Jamnagar, with Chirag Solanki and Mehul Bhadania. We were searching for Red-necked Phalarope (*Phalaropus lobatus*) in breeding plumage. I had seen them here as late as mid-May, in the summer of 2013, when they were almost in full breeding plumage.

We were driving along the salt pans, scouting for some bird activity, but saw only a few waders and Greater Flamingos (*Phoenicopterus roseus*). Deep inside the area, we observed that one of the pumps at the end of the pans was operational and filling up the salt pans. This discharge from the pump churned the water and attracted some birds. Through binoculars, we saw a few terns and proceeded towards the spot in the hope of getting some pictures. As we approached the location, Chirag pointed out that one tern was looking really different. We jumped out of the jeep to watch it. We saw a silvery-black tern; with black head, almost fully dark grayish underbody and white underwings. We identified it as a Black Tern (*Chlidonias niger*) in breeding plumage. We confirmed its identification by taking several pictures.

We observed and photographed it for nearly one hour. It foraged in flight, hovering a few meters above the water and then dipping to the surface to pick up small fish and crustaceans. It rarely plunged into the water to catch its prey. It repeatedly flew towards the spot where water was being



### References:

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