

comments given by the two experts, we are inclined to treat this as a Black Noddy and accept this record from Porbandar as that of a Black Noddy with extremely worn plumage. The Black Noddy is not listed in the checklist of birds of Gujarat (Ganpule 2016) or in the first update to the Gujarat checklist (Ganpule 2017). Thus, this is an addition to the avifauna of Gujarat. Also, this is the first photographic record from India and also a first sighting from the western coastline of the country.

We thank Hadoram Shirihai and Klaus Malling Olsen for helping with the identification. We are grateful to Praveen J. and Jaypalsinh Jadeja for their help – Eds]

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Sighting of Hen Harrier at Nal Sarovar: a first photographic record for Gujarat

Sunil Kini: G-204, 78 @ Gokuldharm, Near Eklavya School, Sanand-Sanathal Road, Ahmedabad 382210. sunil_kini@yahoo.com



show only one sighting of the species from the state, which is from Velavadar National Park. I have seen and photographed a small group of 5 to 7 Hen Harriers in Tal Chappar Wildlife Sanctuary, Churu Dist., Rajasthan, in December 2012 and also learnt that they have been irregular winter visitors to the sanctuary over the last few years. Thus, I had seen the species earlier and was aware of the identification features to look for in this species.

On 1 April 2018, a Sunday, at around 10:40 hrs, while returning back from a routine bird watching trip in the outskirts of Nal Sarovar Bird Sanctuary, I suddenly saw an unusual looking harrier sp. quartering quite low and flying fast towards me as I was walking around the boundary of a castor field. I got a bit curious seeing this bird, which appeared quite different to me at first glance. As it flew closer, I immediately noticed that it appeared a bit big and bulky and had short but broad wings. The facial appearance was owl-like, with paler markings and it looked quite different from a Montagu's or Pallid Harrier, which I have been observing closely for several years. This harrier seemed to be in search of prey and when it saw me, it immediately changed its course, flying towards the other side of the field. Before I could get my camera equipment and take any images, the bird flew quite fast over the field. I tried pursuing it to get some good images. Unfortunately, I managed to just take 3 flight images of the bird but luckily, managed to capture the under-wing markings, which are helpful in identification. I had already realized in the field that this harrier was quite unusual and was very keen to look at the images in detail to identify it. After reaching home, on

The Hen Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*) is an uncommon winter migrant in India, mainly wintering in the North-eastern states, and along the foothills of the Himalayas (Grimmett *et al.* 2011). It is not as widespread as the other wintering harriers like the Pallid Harrier (*Circus macrorous*), Montagu's Harrier (*Circus pygargus*) or the Eurasian Marsh Harrier (*Circus aeruginosus*), which are fairly common and widely distributed in India. The Hen Harrier is also a passage migrant and widespread winter visitor to Nepal and Bhutan. It is a monotypic species and breeds throughout Europe, from northern Spain to the Russian Far East, and also in Central Asia (Orta *et al.* 2018).

For Gujarat, Dharmakumarsinhji (1955) mentions the Hen Harrier for Saurashtra but gives it as 'not common' and does not mention any specific sightings. Grimmett *et al.* (2011)

Hen Harrier...

a closer examination of the images, I realized that the bird clearly showed a prominent dark trailing edge to the wings, along with five barred visible primary fingers, a much broader but less pointed hand, and pale underparts with streaking on breast. These are some of the key features which were helpful in identifying this individual as a Hen Harrier (Forsman 2006, 2016).

To confirm the identification, I later wrote to Dick Forsman, who has done extensive field research on harriers and is considered to be an authority on birds of prey. Dick Forsman, after seeing all the three images, confirmed that the bird was indeed a juvenile Hen Harrier. I was overjoyed when I saw his email and later, was very happy to learn that this is probably the first photographic record of this species from Gujarat. I feel that this juvenile bird was probably a vagrant, which might have lost track during its return migration in April and turned up in Nal Sarovar.

[A study of the three photographs and the identification features mentioned here, along with the confirmation by Dick Forsman, leave no doubt that this is indeed a Hen Harrier. As stated, it appears to be a juvenile, and the plumage points to that.

Regarding its status in Gujarat, Naoroji (2006) gives a sight record from Velavadar National Park (NP) and shows a question mark for coastal Bhavnagar area. Since identification is difficult, it is likely to be overlooked though its presence in Velavadar NP has long been suspected by senior bird watchers here, who think it is a rare winter migrant to this area. There is another reliable sighting from Velavadar NP in January 2008 when a male Hen Harrier was seen by Frank Rheindt, James Eaton and Rob Hutchinson (of birdtour Asia) and the same was confirmed by James Eaton (in litt, by email). Ganpule (2016) gives it as a vagrant or rare winter visitor in

Gujarat, with most reports from Velavadar NP and isolated records from the Little and Greater Rann of Kachchh, and mentions a photographic record from near Rajkot. However, this photo record is of doubtful provenance and could not be verified. Thus, the present photographic record from Nal Sarovar is the first photographic record of the species from Gujarat – Eds]

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Sighting of Large-billed Reed Warbler in Vansada National Park

Pankaj Maheria: 11, Shyam Sundar Society Part 3, Vejalpur, Ahmedabad 380051. drpankajmaheria@gmail.com

Anand Patel: 111, Megh Milap Vatika, B/h Subhash Garden, Jahangirabad, Surat 395005. dranandcpatel@gmail.com

Prasad Ganpule: C/o. Parshuram Pottery Works, Opp. Nazarbuaq Raly Station, Morbi 363642. prasadganpule@gmail.com [Editor's note]



Pankaj Maheria

On 14 April 2017, we went to Vansada National Park (henceforth VNP), in Dangs, for birding with our friends Pragnesh Patel and Viren Desai, as it was a holiday. At that time, the deciduous forest of VNP is dry, almost brown-looking. The water level is too low and natural streams are almost dried out; so birds have to drink water from artificial waterholes made by the Forest Department. We chose to wait under the bushes

