

# Sighting of Moustached Warbler, Red-throated Pipit and Grasshopper Warbler in the Little Rann of Kachchh

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I present here sight records of Moustached Warbler (*Acrocephalus melanopogon*), Red-throated Pipit (*Anthus cervinus*) and Grasshopper Warbler (*Locustella naevia*) from the Little Rann of Kachchh. All the above records are from the western part of Little Rann of Kachchh. There is a large area with reeds in this part of the Rann. The reeds have grown due to the leakage of water from the Narmada canal nearby, and have developed in the last ten years. The area with reeds and grasses is now quite large, and covers more than one sq. km. It is located at the edge of the Rann.

## Moustached Warbler

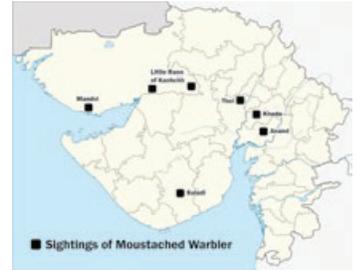
It is mainly a winter visitor to north and northwestern India (Grimmett *et al.* 2011). There are only two isolated records of Moustached Warbler shown for Gujarat in Kazmierczak (2000) and Grimmett *et al.* (2011), while Rasmussen & Anderton (2012) do not show any record for Gujarat. These two previous records are as follows: a record from Sihor, near Bhavnagar by W. Koelz and a record of six birds trapped in Wanoti, near Mandvi, Kachchh by a BNHS/WHO migration study team, and it is stated that 'it is not an uncommon winter visitor to kachchh [=kutch], but escapes notice in the thick reed beds it frequents' (Shivraj Kumar 1961).



Prasad Ganpule

On 14 January 2016, at the edge of the reeds, I saw a Moustached Warbler. It was identified by its broad white supercilium (which is broader behind the eye), long pointed blackish bill, streaked upperparts, blackish sides of crown and by its distinctive habit of cocking its tail. Though seen well, I was able to take only a record photograph, which is given here. It was also calling frequently and its call was a loud 'tchat'.

There have been sightings of Moustached Warbler in Gujarat in the last few years. These sightings are posted on the website 'ebird.org'. A total of six sightings are reported. These are as follows: from Kheda and Anand Districts (Deomurari 2014a, 2015, Dalvi 2015), from Thol Bird Sanctuary (Naik 2014), from Saladi, Dist: Amreli (Deomurari 2014b) and from the Little Rann of Kachchh (Prince 2004). A photograph of a Moustached Warbler from Kheda, taken on 14 January 2015, is posted on the website www.wildart.in. However, there are no photographs of this warbler from Gujarat on popular birding websites like Oriental Bird Images, India nature watch and Internet Bird Collection.



Looking at the records of Moustached Warbler from Gujarat in the past few years, it seems it is not rare. It is possible that since it is shy and skulking, there are very few reports of its sightings/photographs from Gujarat. It is also possible that it is misidentified since it is similar to the Paddyfield Warbler (*Acrocephalus agricola*). Hence this warbler should be looked out for in suitable habitats, like areas with reeds/tamarisk.

## Red-throated Pipit



Prasad Ganpule

There are very few records of the Red-throated Pipit from Gujarat, with recent records only from Kachchh (Deomurari 2009, Varu & Varu 2016). On 21 March 2017, a Red-throated Pipit pair was seen and photographed in this part of Little Rann

of Kachchh. The birds were almost in full breeding plumage, with red throat and upper breast, and only few black streaks remaining on the belly. It was surprising to note a pair in late March and almost in full breeding plumage, as the previous records are from early winter.



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### Grasshopper Warbler



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On 26 February 2017, two Grasshopper Warblers were seen and photographed in the reeds. The birds were moving in the reeds and grass, and came out to perch on a dried *Prosopis juliflora* tree for a few seconds. On another trip to the same area on 5 March 2017, three individuals were noted and on

26 March 2017, a total of four individuals were seen. I could get good images and the birds were readily identified based on the typical plumage (streaked upperparts, plain yellowish underparts with streaking confined to the flanks, large bill, and typical *Locustella* structure). It is interesting to note that the birds were seen here for more than one month, and it is possible that these were winter visitors to the area. There have been many recent records of the Grasshopper Warbler from Saurashtra; from Amreli (Joshi 2015), Porbandar (V. Zala, reported in this issue) and near Dwarka (*pers. observation*). It seems that the Grasshopper Warbler is more common than believed and is probably overlooked.

This area in the Little Rann of Kachchh harbours good populations of Graceful Prinia (*Prinia gracilis*), many species of Pipits (*Anthus* sp.) and other birds. Though the reeds were not there earlier and have developed recently, the bird life has definitely become richer. This change in habitat (for this small area) is very interesting and further observations are required to study its long term impact on the bird life here.

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