

# Sighting of Orange-breasted Green Pigeon *Treron bicinctus* in Gir-Somnath District: An addition to the avifauna of Gujarat

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On 20 January 2014, at about 10:30 hrs, while driving between Sasan – Chitradvad Road (21° 06' 56" N, 70° 31' 43" E), in Gir-Somnath District, I spotted a green pigeon (*Treron* sp.) foraging on a lantana shrub at eye level. I would have ignored this bird if had not been so low and at eye level. With perfect lighting conditions and the chance availability of a camera with me, I was able to take portraits of this pigeon and initially identified it as a Yellow-footed Green Pigeon (*Treron phoenicopterus*). On closer observation, I noticed the pinkish-red feet in this bird but thought it could be an individual in breeding plumage or with some odd features. The thought that it could be another species of green pigeon did not occur to me at that time. This location is a few kilometres from Gir National Park, and is a part of the revenue area. The road is surrounded by agriculture farms, bordered with limestone boulders, which, over a period of time, have got covered with dense vegetation and become a home for many birds.

At first glance, this pigeon resembled the commonly found Yellow-footed Green Pigeon. With the many good photographs that I was able to take, I could easily observe features which were different from the Yellow-footed Green Pigeon; presence of blue-grey nape and yellowish-green crown, yellowish-green underparts and the red feet. The upper tail had central feathers of slaty-grey colour rather than the green colour as normally seen in female of Yellow-footed Green Pigeon. Comparing the photos with field guides, it was identified as a female Orange-breasted Green Pigeon (*Treron bicinctus*). This individual lacked the lilac and orange bands across the breast, which are present in the male and so was identified as a female. No call was heard during my observation and I noted that there were three-four other birds, perched on the adjacent power line, while one female, which was photographed, was foraging on the lantana shrub.

According to Grimmett *et al.* (2011), the Orange-breasted Green Pigeon is a resident in the lower Himalayas, from Uttarakhand, extending to North-east India; it is also resident in the Eastern Ghats, some parts of Central India and in the Western Ghats. Rasmussen & Anderton (2012) show it as a resident in the Himalayas and in large parts of eastern India, Western Ghats and some parts of central India. These authors show an isolated record from Sindh, in Pakistan. However, none of these texts show any record of this species for Gujarat. The Orange-breasted Green Pigeon is not listed in the checklist of birds of Gujarat (Ganpule 2016, 2017) and hence, it is an addition to the avifauna of the state.

This sighting from the Gir National Park area, in the winter, suggests that this species may be nomadic and could be visiting well forested areas, away from its range, in the non-breeding season (winter). The record from Sindh, Pakistan, points to this as it is also a winter record; the author specifically mentioned that the bird in Sindh was not an escapee as the plumage was in perfect condition and the crop contained freshly eaten *peepal* berries (Eates 1938). Similarly, the birds seen here were in a small flock, with one bird feeding on lantana, and were in very good plumage. It is unlikely that these were escapees as the plumage looked very good, it was feeding on a lantana and a group of four birds was present.

It is possible that the Orange-breasted Green Pigeon is overlooked due to its similarity to the Yellow-footed Green Pigeon; the females of both these species are very similar looking. It could occur in the forests of South Gujarat and needs to be looked out for in that area. This species prefers evergreen and moist deciduous forest types; similar to all other green pigeons, it is gregarious, arboreal, and frugivorous (Ali & Ripley 1983). The Orange-breasted Green Pigeon is resident in some parts of Madhya Pradesh and in the Western Ghats; it could visit Gujarat from these areas.

## Acknowledgements

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## Sighting of Indian Swiftlet *Aerodramus unicolor* at Kevdi Campsite, near Surat: a first record for Gujarat

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plumage as none of these matched with what was seen here. This identification was then informed to the administrators of the OBI website; this photograph was checked for identification, corrected and was subsequently uploaded as an Indian Swiftlet on the website.

The Indian Swiftlet is a monotypic species, endemic to the Indian Subcontinent (SW India & Sri Lanka) (Grimmett *et al.* 2011). It prefers hills in forested areas, and roosts gregariously, frequently in caves (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). It is resident in Sri Lanka and in the Western Ghats, up to Maharashtra. There are recent records of the Indian Swiftlet on eBird, with photographs, from Tansa Wildlife Sanctuary, in Thane District near Mumbai, Maharashtra; there are other records north of Mumbai on this website. These locations are quite near to Gujarat. Hence, its occurrence in our state is not very surprising. As such, swifts and martins are ignored by birders since it is very difficult to get good photographs and the identification is often quite challenging. In view of this, the Indian Swiftlet, even if present earlier in Gujarat, was likely to be overlooked. This photographic record confirms its occurrence here in Gujarat. The Indian Swiftlet was not included in the Gujarat checklist (Ganpule 2016, 2017). Hence, it is an addition to the avifauna of Gujarat.

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On 15 April 2017, it was our first visit to the Kevdi Ecotourism Campsite, in Mandvi Taluka, Surat District. As we were coming from Patan, where the Red-whiskered Bulbul (*Pycnonotus jocosus*) is not seen, we stopped on seeing these birds. We saw several Red-whiskered Bulbuls perched on farm hedges, and we took some photographs. After some time, we also scanned the surrounding area. On the opposite side, a few swift-like (*Apus* sp.) birds were hunting over the farms. The structure and hunting style of these birds was similar to swifts, and so we believed they were Little Swifts (*Apus affinis*). Since the Little Swift is a common and resident bird at Patan (in North Gujarat), we took just a single record photograph and went ahead.

After several months, this photograph was uploaded as a Little Swift on the 'Oriental Bird Images' (OBI) database/website. In March 2020, while looking at photos of Little Swift on the website, Prasad Ganpule identified this bird as an Indian Swiftlet (*Aerodramus unicolor*). The main features were grayish-brown underparts with only slightly paler throat, lack of white rump, tail without any significant indentation, and grayish wings with darker (blackish) wing linings led to its identification as an Indian Swiftlet. The Little Swift has much darker underparts, with a prominent pale rump. Other martins and swallows (*Hirundinidae*) could be excluded based on the