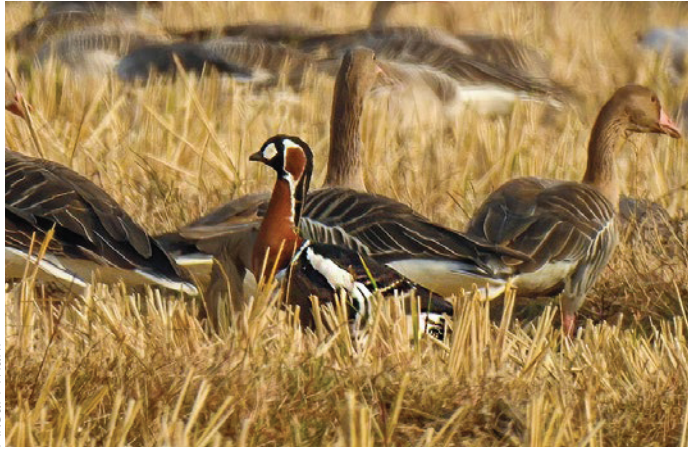
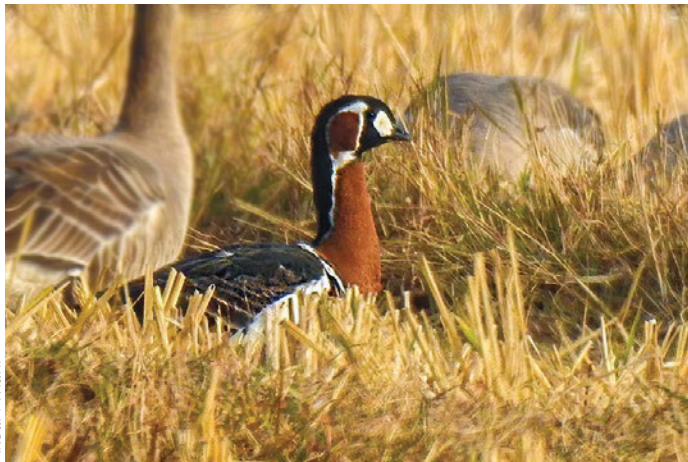


Sighting of Red-breasted Goose *Branta ruficollis* at Nalsarovar: An addition to the avifauna of Gujarat

Akbar Alvani & Mehmud Multani: At – Nalsarovar.



Akbar Alvani



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On 5 January 2021, at around 10:15 hrs, we were birding in Nalsarovar Bird Sanctuary. It was a foggy morning and we had gone to see the Red-naped Shaheen (*Falco pelegrinoides babylonicus*) and the Greater White-fronted Goose (*Anser albifrons*) which were being seen in the area. At around 10:30 hrs, we were scanning a flock of Greylag Geese (*Anser anser*) looking for the Greater White-fronted Goose. We did not find it. While scanning in the area, we saw a different goose, feeding along with the Greylag Geese in a dry paddy field. We took some record photographs and there was only one bird with this plumage in this flock. It was clearly smaller in size compared with the other geese.

Since we could not identify this goose and were seeing it for the first time, we sent the photos to Vijay Shastri, who identified it as a Red-breasted Goose (*Branta ruficollis*) and informed us that it is a vagrant to India and a first record for Gujarat. We kept a watch on the goose and it was seen almost daily for over one month in this area. Bird watchers from all across India came to Nalsarovar to see this rarity. We noted

that this Red-breasted Goose was seen in and around Nalsarovar in locations like Nalsarovar-Bavla Road, near Aniyari Village and also at Vadla Dam. Each time, this Red-breasted Goose was seen with flocks of Bar-headed Goose (*Anser indicus*) and Greylag Goose. It kept changing its location in and around Nalsarovar and was always seen with other goose species.

The Red-breasted Goose is a vagrant to India. Praveen *et al.* (2014) assessed the historical and published records of this species from India. The historical sight records from Assam were considered to be doubtful and the species was included in the Indian Checklist based on a photographic record from Bijnor, Uttar Pradesh in March 2014 (Panwar & Panwar 2014). After this record from Uttar Pradesh, this species was again seen in December 2014 at Pong Lake, Himachal Pradesh (Abhinav *et al.* 2018). There is no record for India after this sighting from Himachal Pradesh and this record from Nalsarovar was made after six years in our country.

For Gujarat, the Red-breasted Goose was not included in the recently published checklist of the birds of Gujarat (Ganpule 2020) and this species had not been recorded in the state. Thus, the Red-breasted Goose is an addition to the avifauna of Gujarat and an important record for the country.

[A Red-breasted Goose, most likely the same individual, was seen in Thol Bird Sanctuary in March 2021, the photos of which were posted on the social media. This suggests that this individual from Nalsarovar moved to Thol. It also shows that the bird remained here till March 2021 – spending more than two months in the state – Eds]

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