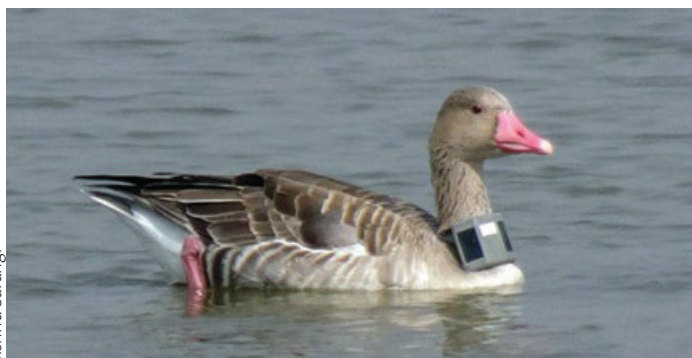


Greylag Goose (*Anser anser*), Bar-headed Goose (*Anser indicus*) Common Crane (*Grus grus*), Demoiselle Crane (*Grus virgo*), Northern Shoveler (*Anas clypeata*), Ruddy Shelduck (*Tadorna ferruginea*), Common Teal (*Anas crecca*), Eurasian Coot (*Fulica atra*), Grey Heron (*Ardea cinerea*) and many other common birds.



Bishnu Sarangi

The Demoiselle Cranes were in thousands. There were about twenty Bar-headed Geese and about fifty Greylag Geese. I spent about two hours taking photographs. On my return to Rajkot, I downloaded the photos on my computer. I was surprised to see that one of the Greylag Goose had a neck band. In order to share this discovery with other birdwatchers, I posted the photograph on Facebook. Very soon, I started receiving comments from other bird watchers. There was a

general consensus that the band on the neck of the goose was a solar-powered radio transmitter.

It was Dr. Taej Mundkur, Programme Manager at Wetlands International, Ede, Netherlands, who noted the post and referred it to Dr. Nyambayar Batbayer in Mongolia. In no time, he confirmed that the bird was radio-collared on 23 June 2018 at Lake Dorgon, in the province of Khovd, in western Mongolia. Dr. Batbayer, from his data, also confirmed that one of the radio-collared birds was indeed in our area, i.e., at Vadla, in Gujarat. This site is about 3350 kms from the radio collaring site and he further confirmed that this individual was not marked with coloured / numbered bands.

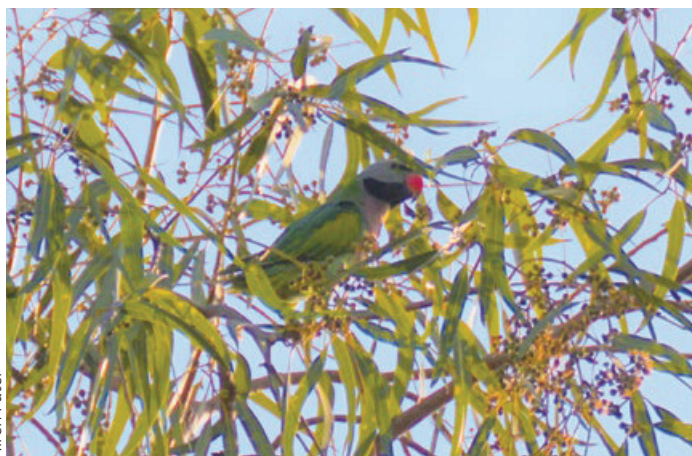
This is the first time a radio-collared Greylag Goose has been observed in Gujarat. From this observation, it is interesting to note that the birds visiting us fly over the Himalayas, all the way from Mongolia. More such observations and interactions with birdwatchers from all over the world can help in knowing about the migration route and conservation requirements of many of these migratory species which winter in India.

Acknowledgements

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Sighting of Red-breasted Parakeet *Psittacula alexandri* in Vadodara

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Hiren Patel

Introduction

The Red-breasted Parakeet (*Psittacula alexandri*) is a resident species of the foothills of the Himalayas, from Uttaranchal to Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Assam and Andaman & Nicobar Islands (Grimmett *et al.* 2011, Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). It is now a 'Near Threatened' species (Birdlife

International 2018). It usually occurs in small flocks of 6-10 individuals, but much larger flocks are found where food is plentiful (Ali 2002, Arlott 2014). We report its occurrence in the Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda arboretum (22.320° N, 73.179° E), located in Vadodara city, Gujarat.

Observation

On 12 March 2018, at 08:45 hrs, while birding at the arboretum of M. S. University of Baroda, Vadodara, a loud squeaky call of a parakeet (*Psittacula* sp.) caught our attention. It was being chased by a House Crow (*Corvus splendens*). The chase continued for about five minutes till the parakeet could find a safer place to conceal itself in a nearby bush. Intrigued by the unusual calls of the parakeet, we saw, on closer observation through binoculars, that it looked different from the Rose-ringed Parakeet (*Psittacula krameri*), a common species in the region. We thought it to be an Alexandrine Parakeet (*Psittacula eupatria*), which has been observed here occasionally. However, when it shifted to the nearby *Eucalyptus* sp. tree, the breast colour was different from an Alexandrine Parakeet. The clear

Red-breasted Parakeet....

pink-red wash on the breast and other features confirmed its identity as a Red-breasted Parakeet. On further observation, we saw that it had very few tail feathers, suggesting that it was most likely to be an escapee.

Again on 28 March 2018 at 18:45 hrs, while birding at the arboretum, the distinct call was heard from a nearby tree and probably the same individual was seen feeding. After some time, it came out and perched on a barren branch and started calling for 60 to 90 seconds, but due to poor evening light, identification was difficult. On the next day, we heard the call just for about 30 seconds and the bird flew away. After comparing the call with calls on 'xeno-canto' website, it was confirmed to be a Red-breasted Parakeet. Finally, on 2 April 2018, at 18:35 hrs, we could see it through binoculars and photograph it clearly and confirm the identity as a Red-breasted Parakeet.

Discussion

The Red-breasted Parakeet is listed as 'Near Threatened' (Birdlife International 2018) due to various threats like on-going trapping pressure, persecution, habitat loss owing to extensive agriculture, etc. The species is regarded to be the easiest parakeet to catch for the pet-trade because of its flocking behaviour and relatively sluggish nature (Inskipp *et al.* 2016). Decline and local extinctions in recent decades have been attributed largely to the capture of birds for trade (Juniper & Parr 1998). Abrar Ahmed, of TRAFFIC India, in a joint programme of WWF and IUCN, says that of all the ten species of parakeets and one species of parrot from India, eight species have regularly been recorded in Indian markets and one of them is the Red-breasted Parakeet (Anonymous 2012). Hunting and trade of all Indian parrot/parakeet species is prohibited under the Wildlife Protection Act 1972. All Indian parakeet species are in Appendix II of CITES, except the Rose-ringed Parakeet. According to him, despite the blanket ban since 1990-91, hundreds of parrots/parakeets are collected and traded annually in India.

This species uses a variety of forest and wooded habitats, including human-altered areas (Juniper & Parr 1998). These habitats include dry forest, moist deciduous secondary forest, mangroves, cultivated areas with trees and human settlements. The M.S. University arboretum is having a good collection of tree species in a 0.1 km² area in the heart of the city. The escaped/freed individual probably got shelter in this small wooded area. Its diet includes wild and cultivated fruits, berries, flowers, nectar, nuts and seeds, leaves and cereals such as rice and maize (Ali 2002), all of which are available in the arboretum, and cereals could be obtained from the neighbouring storage space of Food Corporation of India (FCI),

which is hardly 200-300 meters away across the railway line in the southwest direction.

Feral populations of Red-breasted Parakeet have now established themselves in cities like Mumbai and small numbers occur in other cities such as Chennai and Bengaluru. Rasmussen & Anderton (2012) state that a small flock of escapees may have established themselves in Mumbai and there are many reports of its sightings from areas like Colaba, Borivali etc. For Gujarat, a single individual has been reported earlier from Tena village, near Surat (Parikh & Patel 2017). In the checklist of birds of Gujarat (Parasharya *et al.* 2004, Ganpule 2016), the Red-breasted Parakeet is not listed as its breeding population is not known to occur here and sightings are most probably of escapees. In the present case, the species needs to be monitored in Vadodara to check if it has established itself in this area.

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