

## Great Snipe....

Snipe for many years and identified this individual as a female Great Snipe, helped us in arriving at our decision. If further research indicates that identification features in Great Snipe and 'Swintail' Snipe are overlapping, especially with respect to thigh barring, then we will have a relook at this record and take more expert opinions / re-check with experts again if required. At present, we accept this record as a first record of the Great Snipe for Gujarat.

We are very thankful to Nils Van Duivendijk, Bill Harvey, Yoav Perlman, Andrea Corso, Rob Van Bemmelen, Paul Leader, and many other experts for their help. We are grateful to Praveen J. for his inputs. We specially thank Jacob Höglund and his colleagues for their help in the identification of this bird – Eds]

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## Sighting of Spot-bellied Eagle Owl *Bubo nipalensis* in Shoolpaneshwar Wildlife Sanctuary: an addition to the avifauna of Gujarat

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On 4 June 2019, I was in Shoolpaneshwar Wildlife Sanctuary, near Rajpipla, with Hardik Singh and Ashish Chaudhary. We went to meet my friend Mittal Chaudhary, who is a beat guard in the sanctuary. It was around 19:00 hrs, when RFO Pravinbhai Prajapati also came there and suggested that we visit the forest areas. We then went on to the forest trails and started observing the wildlife. After some time, we heard some noises and on inquiring found that some villagers were passing through the area. We then moved ahead and after about one and a half kms, Hardik remarked that there was a large owl (*Bubo* sp.) perched on a tree. It was about 20:00 hrs and due to the darkness, the owl was not clearly seen. Ashish then took a torch, focussed it on the owl and we could see it clearly in the light. The owl was looking towards us for a few moments and then was searching for prey. None of us had seen this owl before and so I informed RFO Pravinbhai that this owl was something different. We took some photographs and observed that it had long ear-tufts, chevron-shaped markings on white underparts, dark brown upperparts with pale buff edges to feathers, white facial disk and large eyes. It was easily identified as a Spot-bellied Eagle Owl (*Bubo nipalensis*). I informed Pravinbhai that this was a rare owl which is usually seen in Northeast India and in the Western Ghats.

We then moved onwards with the aim of not disturbing the owl further. We visited two villages and interacted with the villagers regarding the sanctuary and its wildlife. We returned back to Sagai Campsite later. After returning back, I searched the literature for records of this owl and confirmed that this was the first record of the species from Gujarat. I was very happy to see this bird here.

[The observers took good photographs of this owl and there is no doubt regarding its identification and it is indeed a Spot-bellied Eagle Owl, which is also known as Forest Eagle Owl. In India, the Spot-bellied Eagle Owl is resident in Northeast India, in forests of the Himalayan Foothills and in the Western Ghats (Grimmett et al. 2011). There are isolated records from forests of Central India, mainly from Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh (Deshmukh 2008, Majumder et al. 2011, Rai 2018).

For Gujarat, the Spot-bellied Eagle Owl has not been included in the Gujarat Checklist (Parasharya et al. 2004, Ganpule 2016) or in the first update to the Gujarat Checklist (Ganpule 2017). As stated here earlier, this is the first record of the Spot-bellied Eagle Owl from Gujarat and it is an addition to the avifauna of the state – Eds]

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## Sighting of Red-necked Stint *Calidris ruficollis* near Mahuva, Bhavnagar District – a first photographic record from Gujarat

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sides of neck and upper breast. This bird was seen standing alone, slightly away from Little Stints. I initially thought that it could be a Red Knot (*Calidris canutus*) and so picked out my camera (a Nikon P-900), and took a few photographs. On seeing the photographs in detail, I was overjoyed to see that it was a Red-necked Stint (*Calidris ruficollis*) in breeding plumage. I approached nearer to take some better photographs, but the bird flew away.

Since I had never seen a Red-necked Stint before, I thought that, it would be better to get the identification confirmed by experts. So, after coming home in the evening, I shared the photographs with senior birders and they confirmed that this was a Red-necked Stint in breeding plumage. I was further informed that this was the first photographic record of a Red-necked Stint from Gujarat. I visited this location the next evening, but I did not find the bird again.

[The author took a few photographs of this bird and the rufous-orange or chestnut throat, upper breast and sides of neck are clearly visible. The bill is short and deep-based, and shows white at the base. A Little Stint is seen besides this Red-necked Stint and both can be compared in the photograph. Thus, there is no doubt that this is a Red-necked Stint in breeding plumage.

On 16 May 2019, I visited the salt pans near Victor Port (20° 58' 44" N, 71° 33' 25" E), Victor Village, on the road towards Rajula, near Mahuva, Bhavnagar District. I reached the salt pans at around 17:30 hrs and saw that there were very few birds in the area. I travelled about one km in the area and saw a group of Little Stints (*Calidris minuta*) spread in the area. I stopped in the hope of seeing some rare /uncommon waders in this group. While scanning this group, I noticed a wader slightly larger than Little Stints, which had orange-red throat,