

Since 2000, this was probably the first sighting of any vulture species in Porbandar District. Jaydev Dhadhal had stated that 'two-four vultures seen over Ashapura and Abhapara Hills are seen no more in Barda' (Dhadhal 2000). In a blog, he mentioned White-rumped Vulture (*Gyps bengalensis*) in the checklist of Porbandar but, Eurasian Griffon is not mentioned (Dhadhal 2008). Hence, this is the first photographic record of the species from Porbandar in recent years. It is interesting to note that on 14 November, we had heard about the sighting of two vultures at a dumping site near Kutiyana, which is around 50 km from Porbandar. But, there have been no reports / photographs of vultures after 2013 from Porbandar District that we are aware of. Rescued migratory birds like this vulture should be released before return migration starts and

must not be kept in an aviary permanently if the bird is doing well and capable of flying. If healthy, it would return to its breeding grounds.

References

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Sighting of a flock of Trumpeter Finch *Bucanetes githagineus* near Bhuj, Kachchh

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We were on a bird photography trip to Greater Rann of Kachchh, and 28 January 2019 was the fourth day of our trip. In the three days we spent in Kachchh, we had seen and photographed many desert specialties and uncommon birds like White-naped Tit (*Parus nuchalis*), Greater Hoopoe Lark (*Alaemon alaudipes*), Cream-colored Courser (*Cursorius cursor*), Spotted Sandgrouse (*Pterocles senegallus*), Variable Wheatear (*Oenanthe picata ophistholeuca*), Grey Hypocolius (*Hypocolius ampelinus*), and many more bird and mammal species.

During this trip, in the previous three days, we got almost every targeted bird species from our list, except 2-3 species. Now, on the fourth and last day of our trip, one of our remaining target species was the Trumpeter Finch (*Bucanetes githagineus*). We had tried earlier for this finch but failed to find it at the place where it was recorded a few days back. Then, we decided to spend the last day searching for it.

This year, very less rainfall was recorded in Kachchh area (monsoon – 2018) and it was almost like there was no rain and so, almost every wetland, small water bodies and other ponds and lakes, where rainwater generally remains till the winter, were completely dry. In this harsh situation of water scarcity, the only source of water were small puddles seen by the road side, due to leakages in underground water distribution pipe lines, which are used for supply of drinking water to villages. These puddles attracted many birds since there was no water in nearby areas. The Trumpeter Finch was seen earlier this season in one such place, around an arid and stony area besides the Bhuj – Nirona Road. So, on the last day of our trip, we started for the Trumpeter Finch location at around 07:00 hrs and reached at that place at around 08:30 hrs. A small puddle, containing hardly around 20-25 liters of water, was the location where the birds were seen earlier.

We had heard that only 2-3 Trumpeter Finches were recorded at that place and so waited there. At around 08:45 – 09:00 hrs, a small flock of 12-15 Trumpeter Finch landed near the water and on seeing that flock, we were just amazed. Then, after 8-10 seconds, the flock flew away and perched on a *Prosopis juliflora* just around 50 ft behind us. We continued observing and saw that 2-3 other flocks came and perched there. The total flock size was more than 50 birds. We counted 52 birds and one of us was able to take a photograph with more than 40 birds in a single photo. We were very happy see our target species and that too, in such a large flock. We realized the importance of this puddle of water for the Trumpeter Finch

Trumpeter Finch....

here. At that time, we had around 5 liters of drinking water with us and we decided to fill that small puddle. After adding water to that puddle, we waited there for around an hour and recorded the behaviour of the Trumpeter Finch and took many photographs.

While the Trumpeter Finch is known to occur in Kachchh, and flocks of up to 25 birds have been recorded previously (Parekh 2016), this was the first time that more than 50 birds had

been seen together. It is likely that due to the unavailability of water at other places, the birds had congregated here from surrounding areas.

References

Parekh, J., 2016. Trumpeter Finch in Kachchh. *Flamingo* 14 (3): 1-3 □

Sighting of Black Stork *Ciconia nigra* and Black-capped Kingfisher *Halcyon pileata* in Kevdi Forest, near Mandvi, Surat

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A program on inculcating scientific approach towards bird watching was held at Kevdi Eco Campsite, near Mandvi, in Surat District, on 24 and 25 February 2018. It was organized by BCSG in association with Nature Club Surat, and saw the participation of bird watchers from all over the state.

As a part of the program, we went for bird watching with Pratik Parmar on a route on the morning of 25 February 2018. Another birdwatcher friend met us while we were returning to the campsite. Near the campsite, we saw two birds flying overhead. The second author immediately identified the birds as Black Storks (*Ciconia nigra*) from the typical triangular white patch which is seen from below in flight in this species. It seemed like the birds were immature as the bill was brownish and legs were pale yellowish (both are red in adults). We took some photographs and confirmed the identification.

In another sighting on 25 February 2018, at around 08:45 hrs, the second author, with another group of bird watchers comprising of Kaushal Modi, Kiran Shah and Mallikarjun, sighted a Black-capped Kingfisher (*Halcyon pileata*) near a small valley. The bird was perched on a tree and could be seen clearly. We could observe it for some time and took some good photographs.

Both these species are uncommon in this area. While the Black Stork is an uncommon to rare winter migrant to Gujarat (Ganpule 2016), it is quite rare in southern Gujarat. There are very few documented sightings of Black Stork from this region. The Black-capped Kingfisher is also an uncommon to rare resident and local migrant in Gujarat (Ganpule 2016). Hence, the sighting of the Black-capped Kingfisher from Kevdi area in late winter is surprising. In general, this area is not visited frequently by birders. These two sightings indicate that the area could be a promising place for bird watching.

References

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