

Status of Eurasian Hobby in Gujarat

Nirav Bhatt : H-52, GIDC Residential Plots, Wadhwan 363035. Gujarat. birdwatchernrb@gmail.com

Prasad Ganpule : C/o Parshuram Pottery Works, Nazarbaug, Morbi 363642, Gujarat. prasadganpule@gmail.com

Jay Solanki : Opp. Parmar bungalows, Vadipara, Surendranagar 363001, Gujarat. erjaysolanki@gmail.com



that it is more commonly seen in the winter when 'numbers swollen by extralimital migrants from September to March/April'. Ali (1955) noted it in Kachchh in October and March, and remarked that it was not seen in the plains of Gujarat. Dharmakumarsinhji (1955) gives it as a winter migrant with the comment 'migrates south into most parts of India and Saurashtra' and gives its status as 'uncommon but regular migrant'.

We present here observations of Eurasian Hobby in Little Rann of Kachchh and discuss its status in Gujarat.

Observations: Eurasian Hobby is uncommon in Little Rann of Kachchh (LRK), with a few sightings in the last 3-4 years. Sightings have been reported by the authors from many areas in Gujarat including Little Rann of Kachchh, Surendranagar, Poshitra, Morbi and Charakla (near Jamnagar). Reports from other areas in Kachchh, Saurashtra and Gujarat are also frequent, with images posted on various birding websites from almost all parts of the state. Sightings of Eurasian Hobby from Gujarat in last few years are given below.

Introduction: Eurasian Hobby (*Falco subbuteo*) is a small, migratory falcon breeding mostly in the Himalayas, from Kashmir to at least Nepal and probably Bhutan; it winters mainly in Africa and south-east Asia and is a widespread autumn passage migrant in Gujarat (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). However, it is shown as a winter visitor to Gujarat by Grimmett et al. (2011) and Kazmierczak (2000). Naoroji (2006) also describes it as a winter migrant to Gujarat, stating

Eurasian Hobby sightings in Gujarat

Sr. No.	Date	Year	Location	Observer	No. of Individuals	Reference	Remarks
	AUGUST						
1	29	2011	Amreli outskirts	Viral Joshi	1	Pers. Comm.	-
	SEPTEMBER						
1		2007	Kachchh	Jugal Tiwari	1	OBI Website	Adult
2	29	2010	Rodasar, Kachchh	Subhash Das	1	OBI Website	Subadult
3		2011	Kachchh	Manoj Tank	1	INW Website	Adult
4	25	2011	Vekaria Dhand, Kachchh	Ashwin Pomal	1	OBI Website	Adult
5	24	2014	Morbi	Prasad Ganpule	1	Pers. Obs	Adult
	OCTOBER						
1	10	2002	Surendranagar	G. A. Vora	1	Pers. Comm.	-
2	12	2005	Rajkot	R.Jhala	1		Anon.2007
3	29	2006	Kachchh	S.N.Varu	1		Varu 2009
4	13	2009	Kachchh	Jaysukh Parekh	1	OBI	Subadult
5	31	2009	Kachchh	Vaibhav Mishra	1	OBI	Juv
6		2010	Kachchh	Jaysukh Parekh	1	OBI	
7	21	2010	Banni, Kachchh	Jugal Tiwari	1	OBI Website	Juv
8	24	2010	Positra, Dwarka	Prasad Ganpule	1	Pers. Obs.	Adult
9		2013	Valsad	Dharmesh Patel	1	INW	Adult
10		2013	Ahmedabad	VipulVedi	1	Facebook	Juv
11		2013	Surendranagar	Nirav Bhatt	1	Pers. Obs.	Juv
12	11	2013	Gir National Park	Viral Joshi	6	Pers. Comm.	
13	27	2013	Saldi, Amerli	Viral Joshi	2	Pers. Comm.	Juv
14	11	2014	Kachchh	Yogendra Shah	1	Pers. Comm.	Juv
15	15	2014	Naliya & Jakhau	Manjula Mathur	1	OBI Website	Juv
16	15	2014	Bhavnagar	Shantilal Varu	1	IBC Website	Juv
17	22	2014	Banni, Kachchh	Yash Kothalia	1	OBI Website	Juv

Status of Eurasian Hobby...

18	28	2014	Surendranagar	Nirav Bhatt	1	Pers. Obs.	Juv
19	29	2014	Gir National Park	Yogendra Shah	1	Ppers. Comm.	Adult
20		2014	Velavadar	Sunil Kini	1	Facebook	Juv
NOVEMBER							
1	06	2002	LRK	G. A. Vora	2	Pers. Comm.	
2	05	2012	Kachchh	Vaibhav Mishra	1	OBI website	Adult
3	08	2012	LRK	Nirav Bhatt	1	Pers. Obs.	Juv
4	02	2013	LRK	Nirav Bhatt	1	Pers. Obs.	Juv
5	05	2013	LRK	Jayesh Joshi	1	Pers. Comm.	-
6	06	2013	Banni, Kachchh	Jugal Tiwari	1	OBI Website	Subadult
7	09	2013	Kachchh	Vaibhav Mishra	1	OBI Birding Group	
8	21	2014	Chhari - Dhand	Pankaj Maheria	1	OBI Website	Juv
9	-	2014	Madhavpur, Porbander	Dhaivat Hathi	1	Pers. Comm.	Juv
10	-	2014	Rajkot	Bhavya Joshi	1	INW	Juv
DECEMBER							
1	24	2006	Kachchh	S.N.Varu	1		Varu 2009
2	12	2009	Velavadar	Devvratsinh Mori	1	Pers Comm.	Adult
3	24	2009	Kachchh	S.N.Varu	1		Varu 2010
4	21	2014	Ahmedabad outskirts	Dhairya Dixit	1	Pers comm.	
JANUARY							
1	15	2011	Kachchh	Vaibhav Mishra	1	OBI	-
2	5	2012	Saldi, Amerli	Viral Joshi	1	Pers. Comm	Adult
3	26	2013	Saldi, Amerli	Viral Joshi	1	Pers. Comm	Adult
4	9	2014	Amreli Outskirts	Viral Joshi	1	Pers. Comm	Adult
FEBRUARY							
1	5	2012	Amerli outskirts	Viral Joshi	1	Pers. Comm	Juv
2	16	2015	LRK	Yogendra Shah	1	Pers. Comm	Adult
APRIL							
1	03	2012	Wadhwan	Devvratsinh Mori	1	Pers. Comm	Juvenile
2	24	2014	Amerli outskirts	Viral Joshi	1	Pers. Comm	Adult
3	12	2015	LRK	Jay Solanki & Dhairya Dixit	1	Pers. Comm	Adult
4	19	2015	Charakla, Jamnagar	Prasad Ganpule	1	Pers. Obs	Adult
5	22	2015	Wadhwan	Devvratsinh Mori	1	Pers. Comm	
MAY							
1	24	2008	Mount Abu	Nirav Bhatt	5	Pers. Obs.	Adults
2	30	2015	Mount Abu	Shwetal Pandya	5	Pers. Comm.	Adults
3	-	2015	LRK	Yogendra Shah	1	Pers. Comm.	Adult
JUNE							
1	2	2015	Girnar	Pranav Vaghashiya	1	Pers. Comm.	



Nirav Bhatt

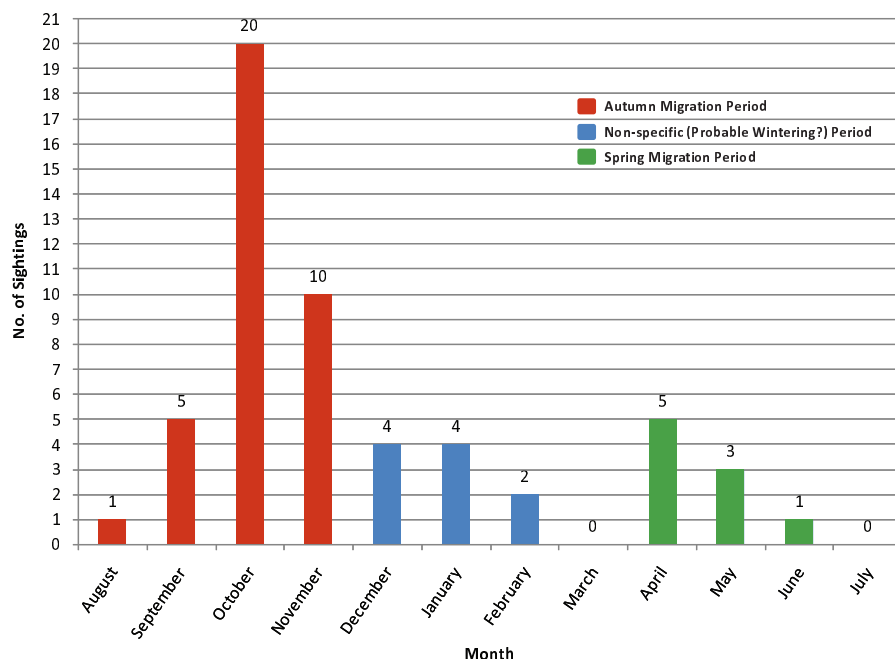
Discussion: As can be seen from the above records, Eurasian Hobby is uncommon in the Little Rann of Kachchh, with scattered records from the area. It is fairly easily seen in October in Banni and Naliya in Kachchh, and there are regular reports from almost all parts of Gujarat.

Since there is some confusion about whether it is a passage migrant or a winter visitor to Gujarat, we decided to make a detailed survey of sightings of Eurasian Hobby in Gujarat. To get an idea about its status in Gujarat, we collected monthly sightings from Gujarat, mainly from 2010 till June 2015. We collected the sightings data from three websites – www.orientalbirdimages.org, www.indianaturewatch.net and www.ibc.lynxeds.com. We also collected data from sightings posted on the social media (mainly on Facebook and other birding groups). We checked and tried to ensure that the data was not duplicated and individual sightings were verified as far as possible. We also contacted birdwatchers for their sightings and tried to collect as many sightings as possible. All the sightings are presented above in Table 1. Of course, it is not possible to collect each and every sighting from Gujarat, hence we might have missed some personal sightings from other

birdwatchers, but this data can give us an idea regarding its status in Gujarat.

The numbers of sightings for each month were counted and a bar graph is prepared to get an idea of its occurrence in Gujarat.

Month wise sightings of Eurasian Hobby in Gujarat



As can be seen from the graph, majority of the sightings are from October and November. If we consider sightings from August to November as during autumn migration and from March to May as during spring migration season, then 36 out of the 55 (66%) sightings from Gujarat are in the autumn passage migration season. There are only 10 (18%) sightings in the winter months from December to February, while there are only 9 (16%) sightings in spring passage migration. Effectively 82% of sightings are in the autumn and spring migration season. On checking Eurasian Hobby sightings data from 'eBird' website, a similar result was obtained, where in 16 out of 18 (88%) sightings were from the autumn/spring migration season and only 2 sightings in December were reported. This is by no means a scientific study, but is based on empirical evidence, and is used to get an idea regarding the status of Eurasian Hobby in Gujarat.

Hence, it is possible that like the Amur Falcons (*Falco amurensis*) that take a different route for return migration, and which has been proved lately with the help of satellite tagging, the Eurasian Hobby also might be taking a different route during the return migration.

Anecdotal evidence to support the idea that the Eurasian Hobby is mainly a passage migrant in Gujarat is that it is not

seen in the same area for a longer duration. Unlike other wintering raptors like the Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus ssp.*) and Merlin (*F.columbarius*), which are seen in a particular area for the whole season (especially in the Little Rann of Kachchh, for up to 2-3 months, in the winter), Eurasian Hobby is a wandering bird and we have not observed it in the same area for more than 2-3 days. It is not truly a 'wintering' bird. It is mainly a passage migrant here. Thus its status can be given as 'uncommon passage migrant'. Regarding its distribution in Gujarat, as can be seen from the sightings, it is widely distributed with sightings from entire Kachchh and Saurashtra. But it is more common in Kachchh. It is surprising that only one sighting from South Gujarat is reported in last few years.

Another surprising observation is that 5 individuals were seen at Mt. Abu on 28 May 2008 by the first author. Another observation of 5 individuals from the same place at Mt. Abu was made by Shwetal Pandya on 30 May 2015. These sightings are surprising as the birds should be in their breeding area by this time. These sightings are from the border of Gujarat and are worth reporting. Sightings in groups twice from the same area suggest that the birds might be in spring passage migration, returning to their breeding area, probably somewhere in the Himalayas and Mt. Abu might be in their regular passage migration route. Since Mt. Abu is very near to Gujarat, it is possible that such groups might be passing through Gujarat also and birdwatchers should search for Eurasian Hobby in summer. The sighting in June is probably of an individual in very late spring migration. It is worthy to note that besides 2 sightings of groups of 5 in spring migration, 6 individuals were seen together in Gir forest even during autumn migration (by Viral Joshi – *Pers. Comm.*) which is indicative that like Amur Falcons, Eurasian Hobby also sometimes migrates in flocks.



Jay Solanki

Conclusion:

From the available data presented, it is safe to say that the Eurasian Hobby is mainly a passage migrant (autumn) in Gujarat with a few individuals seen in the winter months and in return (spring) migration season. Further sightings, especially in the winter, will help in understanding its status in Gujarat and with regards to where most of the birds are actually wintering. A detailed study using satellite tagging can throw more light in understanding the migration pattern and route.

Acknowledgements:

We would like to thank Dr. J. Pranay Rao for the help and guidance in preparation of the manuscript. We would also like to extend sincere thanks to Viral Joshi, Dhairya Dixit, Yogendra Shah, G. A. Vora, Devratsinh Mori, Dhaivat Hathi, Jayesh Joshi, Pranav Vaghashiya, Ankit Shukla & Shwetal Pandya for sharing the sightings along with dates. We would also like to thank Bhavik Shah for helping with graph.

References:

- Ali. S. 1955. The birds of Gujarat – Part I. *J. Bom. Nat. Hist. Soc.* 52(2): Pp 374-458
- Jhala, R. 2006. Some interesting bird sightings. *Flamingo* 4: (1&2): Pp 21–22
- Dharmakumarsinhji, R.S. Undated (=1955) *Birds of Saurashtra, India with additional notes on the birds of Kutch and Gujarat.* Bhavnagar, Saurashtra. Published by the Author
- Grimmett, R., Inskipp, C., & Inskipp, T., 2011. *Birds of the Indian Subcontinent.* 2nd ed. London: Oxford University Press & Christopher Helm.
- Kazmierczak, K., 2000. *A Field Guide to the Birds of India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh and the Maldives.* 1st ed. London: Pica Press / Christopher Helm.
- Naoroji, R. 2006. *Birds of Prey of the Indian Subcontinent.* New Delhi. Om Books International. New Delhi
- Rasmussen, P. C., & Anderton, J. C., 2012. *Birds of South Asia: the Ripley Guide.* 2nd ed. Washington, D.C. and Barcelona: Smithsonian Institution and Lynx Edicions. 2 vols.
- Varu, S. N. 2009. Some rare sighting from Kachchh during 2006–2007. *Flamingo* 7(1&2): Pp 9–12
- Varu, S. N. 2010. Some rare sightings from Kachchh during April 2008 to February 2010. *Flamingo* 8 (1&2): Pp 15–18 □

James bond a fictional spy name originated from famous ornithologist's name, an author of book "Birds of West Indies". Ian Fleming the British author created the fictional character in 1953 for his series of spy novel. Ian Fleming himself a keen bird watcher referred the book as a reference guide. Birds of the West Indies is a book containing exhaustive coverage of the 400+ species of birds found in the Caribbean Sea, excluding the ABC islands, and Trinidad and Tobago, which are considered biogeographically as part of South America. Mr. Bond made his first scientific expedition in 1925 when he travelled up the Amazon River. He visited more than 100 Caribbean islands, collected 294 of the 300 bird species living there and wrote more than 100 books and scientific papers on Caribbean birds.

He was the leading authority on birds of the West Indies for more than half a century and is best known among scientists for proving that birds of the Caribbean originated in North America, not South America. The book written by James bond is widely referred in West Indies Island and is still in print by the Peterson field guide company. Bond won the Institute of Jamaica's Musgrave Medal in 1952; the Brewster Medal of the American Ornithologists' Union in 1954; and the Leidy Award of the Academy of Natural Sciences in 1975.

Ian Fleming quotes for The New Yorker magazine in April 1962 – "When I wrote the first one in 1953, I wanted Bond to be an extremely dull, uninteresting man to whom things happened; I wanted him to be a blunt instrument ... when I was casting around for a name for my protagonist I thought by God, 'James Bond' is the dullest name I ever heard." Inside the front cover of his book 'You Only Live Twice' in 1964, Fleming has written: "To the real James Bond from the thief of his identity. Ian Fleming, Feb 5, 1964 (a great day)." The book was given as a present to American ornithologist James Bond, who died shortly after he received the gift. The book with Ian Fleming message was auctioned in Dec 2008 for £ 50,000.