

neck as half hood and the very short legs are visible. Though similar to Mew Gull (*Larus canus*), the above features help to confirm its identification as a Black-legged Kittiwake and there remains no doubt regarding its identification. It is an adult, in non-breeding plumage, based on its bill and plumage, which is similar to that described for adults in winter plumage by Olsen & Larsson (2004). It is not known which subspecies occurs here; two subspecies are known – the nominate *R. t. tridactyla* and *R. t. pollicaris* (Olsen & Larsson 2004). Praveen et al. (2014) speculate that birds occurring here are likely to be of the nominate subspecies. For this individual seen in Kachchh, we are unable to comment on the subspecies based on these two photographs.



Rishi Mehta

The Black-legged Kittiwake is a vagrant to India; Praveen et al. (2014) list six records from the country, till February 2013, from Rajasthan, Goa, Kerala, Maharashtra and Assam. More records from Rajasthan (Lawrence 2014), West Bengal (photos

on the website Oriental Bird Images) and Odisha (Bhujbal et al. 2015) are now known. As noted by Praveen et al. (2014), all birds recorded here were juveniles or first-winter birds, including the birds seen subsequently. This individual, noted in Kachchh, is an adult and this is different from the other records so far. Looking at the number of records from India, it is quite possible that the species is a rare straggler to the country.

For Gujarat, this species is not included in the earlier state checklist (Parasharya et al. 2004) nor in the latest checklist by Ganpule (2016). This is the first record of the species from the state. Hence, the Black-legged Kittiwake is an addition to the avifauna of Gujarat – Eds]

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## Status of Red-tailed Shrike in Kachchh

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The Red-tailed Shrike (*Lanius phoenicuroides*) is now treated as a separate species from Isabelline Shrike (*Lanius isabellinus*) (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). It is given as a rare autumn passage migrant in Kachchh and Saurashtra, with a few individuals noted in September during the autumn passage migration season (Ganpule 2017).

This year, I visited the Banni area in Kachchh from 24 to 26 September 2017 with my friends to search for passage migrants. Senior ornithologist Jugal Tiwari, from the Centre for Desert and Ocean (CEDO), at Moti-Virani, near Nakhatrana, kindly accompanied us in the field. In the course of three days, we saw at least three adult Red-tailed Shrikes and many first winter birds. The first-winter birds could not be conclusively identified as Red-tailed Shrikes as their separation from

Isabelline Shrike in first-winter plumages is quite difficult (Worfolk 2000). But, for adults, it was fairly easy, and the birds were typical Red-tailed Shrikes. One individual, which was seen very closely and gave very good views, showed all the typical features of *phoenicuroides*: red crown contrasting with brown back (which is diagnostic), blackish wings with very prominent primary patch, red tail, white underparts, prominent face mask and supercilium. I could get very good photos and two images of the same individual are given here. It can be seen that sometimes, when the bird is perched, the white primary patch is not visible.

There is no doubt that the Red-tailed Shrike is a passage migrant in Kachchh. In addition to our sightings and sightings of Red-tailed Shrike given in Ganpule (2017), a sighting was

## Red-tailed Shrike....

reported from eastern Banni (Kapdi 2017) in September 2017 and more sightings from this year were reported from Banni on the website 'eBird' too. All these birds are typical *phoenicuroides* and show all the characteristics of the species as described in Worfolk (2000) for 'classic' birds. Jugal Tiwari also confirmed that Red-tailed Shrike is uncommon but has been noted by him in the Banni area regularly during the autumn passage migration season.



Prasad Ganpule

For Red-tailed Shrike, Rasmussen & Anderton (2012) have erred in stating that 'those reported from extreme W India (mostly Kutch = Kachchh) are closer to Isabelline; pure *phoenicuroides* winter extralimittally'. This statement is probably based on specimens collected by Ali (1955) in Gujarat, where no 'typical' or 'classic' plumaged birds were noted, and these specimens, identified by Col R. Meinertzhagen, were stated to be intermediates between *L. isabellinus* and *L. phoenicuriodes*. Though the Red-tailed Shrike does not winter here in Gujarat and is only an autumn passage migrant (*pers. observation*), pure *phoenicuroides* type birds do occur in Kachchh. It is correctly stated in Grimmett *et al.* (2011) that small numbers migrate through NW subcontinent and the authors show it as an autumn passage migrant in Kachchh and Saurashtra. It is quite possible that some intermediates could also be occurring in Gujarat, and it is well known that there are areas in the breeding ranges of *L. isabellinus* and *L. phoenicuroides*, where hybrids occur. Recently, a probable hybrid shrike was seen and photographed in Kachchh (Gohil 2017).



Prasad Ganpule

For Gujarat, it can be confirmed that Red-tailed Shrike is an uncommon autumn passage migrant in Kachchh. It is possible that many of the first-winter birds noted by us could also be pure *phoenicuroides*, as the plumage was similar to what is described in literature (Worfolk 2000, Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). However, it is difficult to confirm the identification in first-winter plumage unless seen closely and plumage details noted. Towards this, first-winter birds should be specially studied in this area as it is quite probable that a few first-winter Red-tailed Shrikes may also occur in Kachchh during the autumn passage migration season.

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