

Mew Gull *Larus canus heinei* in Gujarat in January 2006

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The Mew Gull (*Larus canus*), also known as the Common Gull, breeds across the northern Palearctic. It was stated by Rasmussen & Anderton (2005) that the species is a vagrant in South Asia, including in NW India, but with no specimens known and had only been sight-recorded in the region, mentioning the 'probable occurrence' of Central Russian breeding subspecies *heinei* here in South Asia.

During gull-watching (*Larus* sp.) in Gujarat in January 2006, I came across two birds in a group of larger gulls at the harbour of Nava Bandar, near Una, in Gujarat. The two smaller gulls immediately caught my eye by being about 70% smaller than the larger gulls present and, as can be seen in the photos, had a much gentler appearance with smaller, rounded head, larger eyes and a smallish bill. One of the birds had some damage in the wing, as can be seen from the photos. Both the birds were readily identified as Mew Gulls. From the photos, it was possible to identify the birds as belonging to the subspecies *heinei*, which breeds from Central Russia and eastwards, and winters mainly in the Black Sea and Caspian Sea areas, with regular occurrence eastwards to Eastern China and westwards to Western Europe.

The subspecies identification of Mew Gull has been treated in detail by Malling Olsen & Larsson (2004), Adriaens & Gibbins (2016), and Malling Olsen (2018). The identification to subspecies *heinei* was possible here based on the almost

unmarked head and underbody, as well as just faint dark markings on the underwings. Albeit with some variation, the western subspecies *L. c. canus* (Europe to Moscow, wintering mainly within Europe) shows more extensive dark markings on head and underbody, as well as being on average slightly smaller, with slightly paler grey upperparts/mantle in first winter plumage.

This was the first photographic record of a Mew Gull from Gujarat, and possibly India too. In Gujarat, there are just two further records (Prasad Ganpule, *pers comm.*, by e-mail), but it is suspected it may be a regular winter visitor, at least in NW India, and especially in Gujarat.

[The Mew Gull is also known as the Common Gull. Rasmussen & Anderton (2012) and Praveen et al. (2014) use Mew Gull for *Larus canus* and the same is followed here. Praveen et al. (2014) list only 10 records of Mew Gull from India till 2014, including the above record. For Gujarat, and also India, this was probably the first photographic documentation of Mew Gull. For Gujarat, as stated by the author, two more records are known; a sighting (with photograph) by James Eaton from Bhuj (Eaton 2013) and a record from Little Rann of Kachchh in October 2015 by Prasad Ganpule (P. Ganpule, in print). It is likely that the Mew Gull is more common than believed and could be overlooked in the flocks of gulls seen here. Bird watchers are requested to look out for Mew Gull here in Gujarat – Eds]

References

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Tagged Black Kite *Milvus migrans* near Rajula, Amreli District

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On 7 December 2018, I saw and photographed a wing-tagged Black Kite (*Milvus migrans*) near Rajula, in Dist: Amreli. The Black Kite was having a green wing tag on its left wing, with '077' printed on the tag. A metal ring was visible on its left leg but the numbers on the ring were not readable. I was very intrigued to see this tagged bird and took some photographs.

I posted the photos on Facebook and tried to find out the tagging details. The photos were widely circulated and the following tagging information was obtained from the Hiddensee Bird Ringing Centre, Guestrow, Germany:

First Ring: DEH EA 189927, wing-tagged bird, with individual inscription green – 077

Species: Black Kite (*Milvus migrans*)

Age: Nestling

Date of tagging: 08. 07. 2017

Place: 16 km NE of Somon (village) Sharga, Govi-Altai, Mongolia

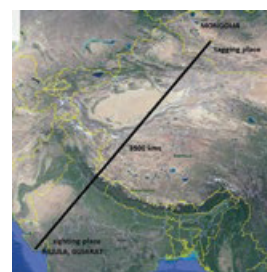
Coordinates: 46° 22' N, 95° 25' E.



Ashvin Italiya

The bird was seen again after 517 days from the date it was ringed and was seen almost 3500 kms south-west from the place of ringing. The subspecies of Black Kite breeding in Mongolia is *M. m. lineatus*, also known as the Black-eared Kite, and it is known that it migrates to the Indian Subcontinent (Orta *et al.* 2019), and it is a winter migrant to Gujarat too.

A Black Kite ringed in Mongolia was recovered in Loktok Lake, Manipur, in October 2001 (Chaudhary 2006); the individual was also ringed by the Hiddensee Bird Ringing Centre, Germany, and this was the first instance of a ringed Black Kite from Mongolia being recovered in India.



But, this record was from north-eastern India. The present record is from Gujarat in the western part of the country. Thus, this is the first time a Black Kite tagged in Mongolia has been photographed in Gujarat. It shows that Black Kite from Mongolia winters as far south-west as Gujarat.

Acknowledgements

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References

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A tale of two ringed birds

1) Eurasian Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus* preying on a ringed Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata*

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On 7 November 2016, in the morning, I was walking with Kasam Sama in the area of Nal Sarovar Bird Sanctuary (22° 49' 31" N, 72° 03' 07" E), between the main entrance at Vekaria village and the tourist point near the forest guest house and boating facility.

We saw a Eurasian Marsh Harrier (*Circus aeruginosus*) swooping on a large wader standing in the open marsh near the edge of shallow water. The harrier swooped on the wader, gripped

it from the neck and killed it. The wader hardly struggled to escape from the predator. Subsequently, it started peeling the neck, head and back. To confirm the identification of the prey, we slowly approached the hunting site, which made the harrier leave the prey. On a closer look, we could identify it as a Eurasian Curlew (*Numenius arquata*) with the help of photos and reference text (Grimmett *et al.* 2011). The bird was bearing an aluminum ring on its right leg, above the tibia-tarsal joint. The ring had a number, F – 49089, with a write up on second line 'Inform BOMBAY NAT HIST SOCIETY'. After taking photographs, we took out the ring and later informed BNHS about this ring recovery.

In response to the information sent to BNHS, Dr. S. Balachandran, Dy. Director, BNHS, Bird Migration & Ringing Division, sent the following details about the ringed bird – “the bird you found was a Eurasian Curlew ringed at Nalsarovar during first week of November 2016. The bird was rescued by the Forest Department from a bird trapper’s net and had wing injuries”.