

Short-toed Lark....

a rufous breast band, with light streaking on breast and faint patches on breast side, and a whitish belly. I identified it as a Sykes's Short-toed Lark based on these features.

For Gujarat, the range of Sykes's Short-toed Lark is shown to touch south Gujarat, but no records are shown for the state. As stated before, Rasmussen & Anderton (2012) give the wintering range of Sykes's Short-toed Lark as mostly south and east India. Grimmett *et al.* (2011) also give it as mainly in south and east India. Ali (1954) collected specimens of only Greater Short-toed Lark from Gujarat, giving it as a common and abundant winter visitor, which is true even today.

However, there are two museum specimens of Sykes's Short-toed Lark from Gujarat, collected from Awha, in the Dangs, in October 1954, by E. M. Shull and currently housed in the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH – skin 778685 and 778686). Thus, there are specimen records from south Gujarat. The above sighting from the Little Rann of Kachchh shows that it could be occurring in the desert and semi-desert areas of Kachchh and Saurashtra too and is perhaps overlooked since birdwatchers are not aware of the presence of this species in Gujarat. A careful scrutiny of images of Greater Short-toed Larks from Gujarat, posted on popular birding websites, is needed to see whether there are more records of the species from Gujarat.

Now, with the Sykes's Short-toed Lark treated as a distinct species and this treatment being widely accepted, this species should be included in the Gujarat checklist as and when

the taxonomy is updated. In absence of more data, it can be currently considered to be a rare winter migrant or a vagrant to Gujarat.

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Tagged Great Knot from Jamnagar

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We visited the saltpans near INS Valsura, Jamnagar, on 7 October 2018. There, we saw a group of 300 Great Knots (*Calidris tenuirostris*) and 70 Bar-tailed Godwits (*Limosa lapponica*). We took a few photographs. After returning home and watching the photos on laptop, we found that one Great Knot was tagged with a yellow and black coloured flag, with 'VM' written on the flag on its left tibia. To get the tagging details, we forwarded the photos to Prasad Ganpule. After searching on the internet, he informed that the bird was probably tagged at Kamchatka Peninsula, located in the Russian Far East. However, to confirm this and obtain further details, he had forwarded the photos to Dmitry Dorofeev, who is a senior researcher in All-Russian Research Institute for Environmental Protection. His reply is as follows: 'Yes, this is our bird, from our banding place. Thank you very much for this resight! It is really great and this is the first re-sighting of our flags in India'.

The tagging details of this Great Knot as provided by Dmitry Dorofeev are as follows:

Date: 5 August 2017

Age: Juvenile

Mark on flag: VM

Place: Khairusova-Belogolovaya Estuary, Kamchatka, Russia (57.07° N, 156.69° E)

Usually, the birds tagged at this location are re-sighted in China, Japan, Korea and Australia as these countries fall under the East Asian–Australian Flyway. However, this was the first sighting from the Indian subcontinent. This bird might have flown more than 7500 kms to reach Jamnagar. It is also noteworthy that this is the second ever recovery/re-sighting from a region far south-west of the tagging place. On 20 January 2017, a Great Knot with a flag marked 'E1' was

photographed by Oscar Campbell at Khor-al Beida in the UAE (OSME 2017), which had established for the first time a migratory link between the Russian Far East and the Middle East. Thus, the present sighting by us from India further supports this migratory link and points to a few birds from the Russian Far East wintering in the Indian Subcontinent and the Middle East.



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Purple Heron preying on a Barred Buttonquail

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On 28 June 2018, at 17:30 hrs, we went for birding and photography in Navsari outskirts area, mainly looking for birds seen in the early monsoon season. We observed few egrets (*Egretta* sp.) in the grass near a wetland. We then spotted a Purple Heron (*Ardea purpurea*) and later we saw through our binoculars that it was hunting and had caught a Barred Buttonquail (*Turnix suscitator*). We identified the buttonquail as a Barred Buttonquail as its typical plumage was seen and photographed. The Purple Heron was trying to swallow the buttonquail while we were watching it. Unfortunately, some cattle in the area disturbed it and the heron flew away in a

dense *Prosopis juliflora* patch. After that we could not find it again.

The Purple Heron has a varied diet with fish, small mammals, amphibians (frogs and salamanders), nestlings or small birds, reptiles (snakes, lizards and skinks), crustaceans, mollusks (water snails), and insects (*Hemiptera* sp., grasshoppers, dragonflies, bees, flies, spiders, beetles, and aquatic larvae) taken (Kushlan & Hancock 2005, Martínez-Vilalta *et al.* 2018). In India, stomach contents of 70 adult specimens of Purple Herons, collected in the Sundarbans, in West Bengal, showed that their diet mainly comprised of fish (57%), but reptiles