

Flamingo

Newsletter of the Bird Conservation Society, Gujarat



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Habitat Concerns....

Plight of tropical Thorn forest

Thorn forests, locally known as 'Rakhals', are under threat. The scrub forests of Kachchh are fragile and represent a very precious ecosystem. Dominated by *Acacia senegal*, *A. leucophloea*, *A. nilotica*, *C. rothii*, *Balanites* sp., *Capparis* sp., *Ziziphus* sp. and bushes and trees of medium height, the thorn forests of Kachchh are the back bone of all life in the area.

The Maldharis (cattle herders) fall back on the thorn forest for feeding their cattle. The endangered and endemic fauna finds a safe refuge for their survival in this habitat. The Chinkara, Caracal, Pangolin, 2 species of Hedgehogs; Long-eared and Pale Hedgehog, Wolf, Desert Cat, Jungle Cat, etc all survive in these thorny jungles. This habitat also supports birds like White-bellied Minivet, White-naped Tit, Marshall's lora and many other resident and wintering species.

Stone quarries, cutting trees for charcoal, over grazing, wood for fuel, lopping for cattle and agriculture farm fencing are some threats to this habitat. The most dangerous threats are conversion of thorn forests to agriculture land (illegally), and grant of this land for windmill installations.

Defining an ecologically fragile habitat as barren, useless and fit for windmills, stone quarries or converting it to agriculture are some of the activities that are happening in such an ecosystem. It is a must that the decision makers value this ecosystem and help to preserve it.

- Jugal Tiwari

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Jugal Tiwari



Jugal Tiwari

White-naped Tit



Veervatbhav Mishra

Marshall's lora



Jugal Tiwari

White-bellied Minivet

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Contents:

Gujarat tourism – the need for paradigm shifts - Lavkumar Khachar	2
Photo-essay : Habitat and Avifauna of the Dangs	4
Ruddy-breasted Crane: Status and Distribution in Gujarat	8
Sighting of Large-billed Reed Warbler in Nal sarovar	12
Audubon's Shearwater in Surat: An addition to the avifauna of India	14
Breeding of Clamorous Reed Warbler at Nal sarovar	15
Specimen of Lesser Fish Eagle from Sasan, Junagadh	16
Sighting of aberrant coloured Little Cormorant near Junagadh	17
Tagged Greater Sand Plover from Kachchh	18
Sightings of rufous morph Oriental Scops Owl	19
Great Bittern at Porbandar	20

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BCSG brings out a quarterly newsletter – 'Flamingo'. Articles, notes on bird-life of Gujarat, interesting bird sightings, knowledge about important bird areas, information / appeal regarding conservation issues, reports on society's events and activities are published in 'Flamingo'. For publication of articles/notes in the Flamingo, both the common English and scientific names must be given when a bird species is mentioned for the first time and later references, common English name only. Common English and scientific names should follow Richard Grimmett, Carol Inskipp and Tim Inskipp (2011), Birds of Indian Subcontinent, Second edition. Oxford University Press, New Delhi. If the nomenclature is adopted from other source, full reference should be given.

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Editorial....

Please accept our greetings ! This issue carries notes on a couple of interesting bird encounters; Large-billed Reed Warbler (LRW) and Audubon's Shearwater (AS), and unearth one intriguing historical record about the Lesser Fish Eagle.

Nalsarovar has great potential to spawn surprises. Its vast expanses and myriad of micro habitats attract a huge variety of water-birds in great numbers. Rajani Trivedi, who spotted the (LRW) along with Kasam Sama Sidani - a local and a boat-man with a difference, loves to explore this complex wetland, which never disappoints him!

Awareness about pelagic birds is on the rise. Gujarat, with its longest coast-line on the western edge of peninsular India, tends to receive an array of deep-sea bird specimens, which get caught in the cyclones cropping up periodically in the Indian Ocean, and eventually drift to the shores. The check-list of pelagic birds is increasing. While confirming the identification of AS, Prasad Ganpule aptly cautions bird-watchers in taking pictures, physical measurements and blood samples (where possible) while rescuing such specimens, to make identification of the species easier. Deep sea birding, off the coast of Gujarat, too needs to be encouraged and promoted, to increase our understanding of pelagic birds.

The Dang forest in south Gujarat marks the uppermost extension of Western Ghats. It showcases some of the bird species of that region, which otherwise would look quite outlandish for the dry and arid image of Gujarat. Dr. Jayesh Joshi, a radiologist and a bird-photographer from the neighbouring district of Navsari, has beautifully captured the spirit of Dang and the essence of its bird-life through his lenses.

Gujarat has many awesome birding destinations to show-off. The Eco-tourism drive has inspired the Forest Department to raise eco-campuses at some of these picturesque locations. But to give a thrust to sustained eco-tourism activity, we need to look beyond impulsive 'Van-mahotsavs'. It's very essential for these eco-sites to have robust infrastructure, to be well-equipped with a knowledgeable, trained and committed staff to satiate the expectations of the eco-sensitive tourist. Involving local stakeholders and engaging them actively in the process is the backbone of eco-tourism. Sh. Lavkumar Khachar's ruminations on the issue are quite telling even in the present scenario.

In the end, I invite more and more authors from here in Gujarat, and from out of the state, to share their significant birding experiences from Gujarat with 'Flamingo', a national-level bird-magazine focused exclusively on one state, the only one of its kind.

- **Bakul Trivedi, M.S.**