

Porbandar....

The first time we recorded breeding of Collared Pratincoles was in May 2015. That year, we observed one sub-adult bird with its parents. After that, we observed them breeding in a colony in April 2017; we saw approximately five birds in a colony and in the last week of April, we saw and photographed a freshly fledged bird with an adult.

The records given here are interesting and provide more information about these species in Gujarat. Porbandar and its surrounding areas should be explored more so that we get more information about the status and distribution of some lesser known birds here. The records of Grey Hypocolius and Great Crested Tern, along with the breeding records of Saunder's Tern and Collared Pratincoles are important. We will continue exploring these areas and report more such records in the future.

References

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An unusual colour aberrant Western Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* in Jamnagar

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On 2 April 2021, I, along with three friends, Ashish Pankhaniya, Chirag Shah & Varun Shah, visited Rangmati Dam, near Jamnagar, Gujarat, for routine birding and saw an unusual coloured Western Yellow Wagtail (*Motacilla flava*), with white a head. A brief description of the bird is given here: this individual had an all white head, bill had dark upper mandible and pink-orange lower mandible, the neck and underparts were yellow, the upperparts were olive-greenish, the wings had a whitish patch near the alula and the legs were entirely pink-orange.

This individual was looking distinctly different from other wagtails in the area; there were more than 100 Western Yellow Wagtails there. As this bird did not give much time on that day and flew away in just 10 minutes, we thought that it could

be a Western Yellow Wagtail of the subspecies *leucocephala*, which is a white-headed subspecies. But, the same bird was seen again on the next day by other birders and photographers who went there searching for this bird. On later days, the bird gave enough time to document it properly and we could get good photographs and found that it had pinkish-orange legs and beak, contrary to black legs of other Western Yellow Wagtails present in the area. So, I thought that it could be a colour aberrant Western Yellow Wagtail. The bird was last seen on 6 April 2021, and remained in this area for five days. I observed, in the field, that its vision and eyes were not affected as it was easily catching insects and also showing antagonistic behaviour towards swallows (*Hirundo* sp.) present in the area.

The subspecies *leucocephala*, also known as the 'White-headed' Yellow Wagtail, is known in our region (in India) by spring records from N Punjab and from specimens collected in spring from Garo Hills, Meghalaya (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). The breeding male of this subspecies has an unmarked white chin, crown and face, often grading into grey on nape, olive-yellow upperparts with two wing bars, and yellow underparts. I carried out a literature search but could not find any records of this subspecies from Gujarat. However, since this individual was colour aberrant, the subspecies identification could not be confirmed.

[We sent the photographs to Hein Van Grouw for his opinion. He replied in detail as follows:

Whether it is subspecies leucocephala I do not know, but the white head, and pale bill and feet are the result of a colour aberration.

Even the lightest coloured individuals of *leucocephala* still have a greyish head as the feathers still contain melanin pigment. This bird has bright white feathers without any melanin left. Two sorts of aberrations can cause feathers without any melanin next to normal pigmented feathers; Leucism and Progressive Greying.

Progressive Greying will affect plumage all over the individual, and most forms do not affect the skin colour much. An example of such a bird you can find on this website: <https://www.shanghaibirding.com/wagtail-shanghai/>

This bird from Shanghai is not a *leucocephala*. The yellow feathers on the bird's back are feathers without melanin but, obviously still with the yellow carotenoid pigment (the melanin together with the carotenoid gives the green colour). However, Leucism often affects the 'extremities' of the body and it affects both the melanin pigmentation of the feathers and the skin. As the melanin pigments are missing in the head area both the plumage and the bill are (almost) without it. Also, the feet, what are extremities have no melanin pigment due to the mutation and even the feathers just above the heel (above the bare part of the feet) are without melanin. Normally these feathers are dark coloured (melanin), but in this individual they are bright white. I would not be surprised if this bird also had a few white feathers in the outer wing area (the 'hand'). The 'alula area' also seems to have some white feathers, indicating that it is indeed an aberration.

Due to the mutation it looks like a White-headed (*leucocephala*) Yellow Wagtail. It may be that subspecies, but then also, affected by Leucism. However, as it seems that the neck of this bird is also very bright yellow, suggesting that the melanin is also lacking in the neck area and therefore the remaining yellow carotenoid pigments show brighter, it is more likely that this is an aberrant individual of the subspecies what is most likely to occur in Gujarat.

The mutation here is likely Leucism but could also be probably Progressive Greying'.

Looking at the detailed reply received from Hein Van Grouw, it was confirmed that this individual was colour aberrant and the likely mutation was Leucism or Progressive Greying. However, due to the mutation, it could not be confirmed whether this bird was of the subspecies *leucocephala*. However, this is an interesting record of a colour aberrant Western Yellow Wagtail from Gujarat and it is surprising that if this individual was not of the subspecies *leucocephala*, then the aberration caused it to look very similar to individuals of this subspecies.

We are extremely grateful to Hein Van Grouw for explaining the identification of this bird in detail – Eds].

References

Rasmussen, P. C., & Anderton, J. C., 2012. *Birds of South Asia: The Ripley guide*. 2 nd Ed. Smithsonian Institution and Lynx Edicions. Washington, D.C. and Barcelona. □

Sighting of Oriental Pied Hornbill *Anthracoceros albirostris* in Surat

Vidhi Patel: Surat.



upperparts and I identified it as a female Oriental Pied Hornbill (*Anthracoceros albirostris*) based on the bill with extensive black on upper mandible and black cutting edges. It soon took an elegant flight through the street, from which I confirmed its plumage and black-tipped casque. After 20 minutes, it was dusk and it vanished in the back streets. The next morning, at around 07:30 hrs, it was last sighted in the same region, feeding on *Asopalav* (*Polyalthia longifolia*) fruits. I took some photographs of this bird and confirmed the identification.

The Oriental Pied Hornbill belongs to the *Bucerotidae* family. According to IUCN Red list of Threatened species, it is a least concerned species. It can be identified by its black tail with white tips on all except the central tail feathers. It has a black-tipped casque, black cutting edges to bill, and black of neck extending to centre of breast (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). It is quite similar to the Malabar Pied Hornbill (*Anthracoceros coronatus*), which has a forward pointing casque, all white outer retrices and elongated black central tail feathers.

On 21 March 2020, at around 19:00 hrs, in Adajan area of Surat (21° 11' 47" N, 72° 47' 16" E), I chanced upon an odd-looking, large, blackish bird in the canopy of a rain tree, being chased by a group of crows (*Corvus* sp.). It was a hornbill with black