

Sighting of Thick-billed Warbler *Arundinax aedon* near Jamnagar

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On 8 October 2021, I was birding with my friend Varun Shah, near Khatiya, Jamnagar. At around 09:15 hrs, some 100-200 meters from the village towards Kalavad, we saw a large-sized warbler near a water body. It was tough to identify it in the field as the bird was perched in the open only for a few seconds and then flew away. But luckily, I got record photographs for identifying the bird. Later, while reviewing images at home, it became clear that the bill looked a bit different from the Clamorous Reed Warbler (*Acrecephalus stentoreus*). The structure also seemed different, as this bird was visibly longer tailed. I asked Prasad Ganpule for identification of this individual, and he informed that this was a Thick-billed Warbler (*Arundinax aedon*) based on the plain-faced appearance, long tail, pale and short blunt bill, and overall plumage. The bird was seen near a water body (water had accumulated at this place due to the monsoon rains, forming a small pond) but was not at the water's edge. Instead,

it was some 50 to 100 meters away, near the boundary of a village house, probably feeding on insects. It was perched in a small tree of about four feet in height. More photos of this individual are posted on eBird at: <https://ebird.org/india/checklist/S95766596>.

For Gujarat, there is one sighting of the Thick-billed Warbler from the Kachchh region reported previously; Dr. Salim Ali collected two specimens near Bhuj in September 1959 (Ali 1960). Dr. Ali speculated whether these birds were vagrants or whether this species has evaded observation in the past; its close resemblance to Clamorous Reed Warbler makes it difficult to identify it in the field. In the recent checklist of the birds of Gujarat (Ganpule 2020), the Thick-billed Warbler is listed as a 'historical' species meaning the record for the state was before 1960 and there have been no documented records since 1 May 1960. However, there is a sight record listed on 'eBird' from Kachchh in March 2008 though a photo is not available. It is possible that since a photo was not available, this sighting was not treated as confirmed by Ganpule (2020). Thus, this is the first photographic record of the Thick-billed Warbler from Gujarat. Now, the 'historical' status for this species given in the recent Gujarat checklist needs to be removed due to this sighting.

References

- Ali, S., 1960. Additions to the birds of Kutch. *Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society* 56 (3): 635
- Ganpule, P., 2020. A checklist of the birds of Gujarat. Bird Conservation Society, Gujarat. Ahmedabad, India. □

Streak-throated Woodpecker *Picus xanthopygaeus* in Hingolghadh Nature Education Sanctuary, Rajkot

Arif Theba: I/C Range Forest Officer (RFO), Hingolghadh, Rajkot District.

On 25 May 2021, I was doing official field work, combined with birding, in the late afternoon, at Hingolghadh near Rajkot. I was with Forest Guards Mepa B. Toliya, Mahesh Dabhi, and Shatrughna Jebalia. At around 16:30 hrs, I saw one green woodpecker climbing on the tree besides a trail. It flew away once it noticed me. I was not able to relocate it for one hour. Then, I saw this individual again and was able to observe it well. From a safe distance, I was able to take some photographs and videos. I concluded that it was a Streak-throated Woodpecker (*Picus xanthopygaeus*). It was pecking on tree trunks, to find insects and worms, and climbed on trees, searching for food. I saw only one individual. After this initial

sighting, this bird was seen in the last week of May 2021, and up to mid-July 2021. It was usually found in the premises of the camp site and beyond 'Bhim-ku' as well. It continuously foraged on dry or soft tree trunks or was seen 'drilling' in the trunks of trees in this area.

The Streak-throated Woodpecker is lime green in colour, with grey face and scaled underparts; the bill is usually dark with yellowish lower mandible. It has blood red crown in male and black crown in female. Its preferred habitat is semi-green moist deciduous, bamboo, teak and sal forests (Kazmierczak 2000). It is usually found in the foothills of the Himalayas, from



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Jammu & Kashmir till Assam, in Central India from Madhya Pradesh to Bihar and in South India (Grimmett *et al.* 2011). In Gujarat, it is an uncommon to rare resident in North Gujarat to South Gujarat forests, and is said to be absent elsewhere in the state (Ganpule 2016). A few recent sightings of this species, compiled from 'eBird' website, sourced from personal communication with birdwatchers and other references, are given in table.

While it is known that the Streak-throated Woodpecker is resident in Gujarat, its exact distribution is not clear. Infrequent and sporadic sightings of this species have been reported from North and Central Gujarat. It is more common in North Gujarat forests, with many sightings reported from

this region on various websites as well as in print – for example, see https://birdsofgujarat.co.in/all_bird_detail.php?name=Streak-throated%20Woodpecker for sightings of this species from North Gujarat. Sightings have been reported from Central Gujarat too. However, it is not clear whether it occurs in South Gujarat. While two or three sightings have been reported from the Dangs, these sightings should be re-checked and re-confirmed as it would mean an extension of its range towards the Dang forest since it is known to be present only till Central Gujarat.

The Hingolghadh sighting is of a vagrant, and was probably due to the Cyclone 'Tauktae', which had hit Gujarat a few days before this sighting. This individual could have been wind-blown or diverted to this area due to the heavy winds. This sighting is far from its known range and is the first record of this species for Saurashtra.

References

- Desai, I. V., 1996. *Studies on Avifauna and Avian Ecology of Shoolpaneshwar Wildlife Sanctuary*. Ph. D. Thesis submitted to M. S. University of Baroda, Vadodara.
- Ganpule, P., 2016. The birds of Gujarat: Status and distribution. *Flamingo* 8(3) – 12 (4): 2-40
- Grimmett, R., Inskipp, C., & Inskipp, T. 2011. *Birds of the Indian Subcontinent*. Second Edition, Oxford University Press, New Delhi.
- Jambu, N., 2013. *Status of Avifauna of Purna Wildlife Sanctuary*. M Sc. Thesis.
- Kazmierczak, K., 2000. *A Field Guide to the Birds of India*. Om Book Services, New Delhi. □

Recent sightings of Streak-throated Woodpecker in Gujarat

No.	Observer(s)	Date	Location	Reference/Source
1	I. V. Desai	1996	Shoolpaneshwar WLS	Desai (1996)
2	Nikunj Jambu	2013	Purna WLS, South Gujarat	Jambu (2013)
3	Devratsinh Mori	21/03/2014	Polo Forest, Sabarkantha	<i>pers. comm</i>
4	Viral Pankaj	01/02/2015	Polo Forest, Sabarkantha	eBird
5	Viral Pankaj	08/11/2015	Jessore WLS, Banaskantha	eBird
6	Jignesh Rathod	12/03/2016	Jessore WLS, Banaskantha	eBird
7	Hiren Patel	13/03/2016	Polo Forest, Sabarkantha	
8	Viral Pankaj	12/11/2017	Jessore WLS, Banaskantha	eBird
9	Ketan Shah & Dhey Shah	09/12/2017	Jessore WLS, Banaskantha	eBird
10	Devratsinh Mori	03/01/2018	Jessore WLS, Banaskantha	
11	Viral Pankaj	07/01/2018	Jessore WLS, Banaskantha	eBird
12	Nishit Soni	14/04/2019	Jessore WLS, Banaskantha	
13	Irshad Theba	04/12/2019	Polo Forest, Sabarkantha	
14	Rakesh Singh & Rahul M.S	02/02/2020	Polo Forest, Sabarkantha	eBird
15	Vishal Mistry	15/01/2021	Dang, Gujarat	eBird
16	Hasmukh Rathod	26/10/2021	Vireshwar Mahadev Temple, Sabarkantha	eBird