

Sighting of Black Eagle *Ictinaetus malaiensis* near Rajkot

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The first author has been bird watching in areas near Rajkot since the last 25 years but this is the first time he saw a Black Eagle (*Ictinaetus malaiensis*) here. On 23 December 2020, we were with Prakash Kallol in the Khambala *Vidi* area for birding. Outside Rajkot, we were near Munjka Village, on the new 150 feet Ring Road, when we noticed an eagle in the sky. The large

sized bird of prey was being mobbed by a Black-shouldered Kite (*Elanus caeruleus*). We took some photographs and identified the eagle as a Black Eagle. We saw the Black Eagle again behind Christ College, near the same area, on 26 December 2020 and 27 December 2020.

This is a surprise sighting of a Black Eagle in Rajkot. The Black Eagle is given as a rare winter visitor with isolated records from North and South Gujarat, and as a regular winter migrant in Gir National Park (Ganpule 2016). Parasharya (2010) gave details of sightings of Black Eagle from Gujarat, and stated that this species is not as uncommon as believed. However, all previous sightings are from forest areas while this sighting from Rajkot is from scrub / thorn forest. It is possible that this individual could have strayed to Rajkot. This area is not very far from Gir National Park but the habitat here is different from its preferred habitat.

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On 21 February 2021, in the morning at around 10:20 hrs, near Nyari – 2 Dam, I observed that a Black Drongo (*Dicrurus macrocercus*) was mobbing one raptor. From distance, I thought it was Black Kite (*Milvus migrans*) and I wanted to photograph that moment and behaviour. Later, when the birds reached near me, I observed that it was not a Black Kite but rather an eagle, based on its features like wing shape and body size. It was black in colour, with longish tail. So, I waited

there for some minutes and I observed the eagle in flight and was able to take good photographs of it. After coming back home, I checked the photos on the computer and identified the eagle as a Black Eagle (*Ictinaetus malaiensis*). I further discussed the identification with senior birder Ashok Mashru and confirmed that this was indeed a Black Eagle. This was a surprise sighting of the Black Eagle from Rajkot. It has been noted regularly in Gir National Park and in Girnar WLS in the winter. But, it has not been noted in Rajkot before and this is an important sighting from our area.

References

Ganpule, P., 2016. The birds of Gujarat: Status and distribution. *Flamingo* 8(3)-12(4): 2-40

Parasharya, B. M., 2010. Black Eagle *Ictinaetus malayensis* at Narmada Dam, Gujarat. *Indian BIRDS* 6 (4&5): 95-96 □