

# Rescue of Red-breasted Parakeet *Psittacula alexandri* from Surat

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## Introduction

Gujarat is home to three species of parakeets, namely Alexandrine Parakeet (*Psittacula eupatria*), Rose-ringed Parakeet (*Psittacula krameri*), and Plum-headed Parakeet (*Psittacula cyanocephala*) (Ganpule 2016).

The Red-Breasted Parakeet (*Psittacula alexandri*) is listed as a 'Near Threatened (NT)' species by IUCN (BirdLife International 2013). It is resident along the foothills of Himalayas, and in Northeast India (Grimmett et al., 2011). Feral populations are known to occur in cities like Mumbai, Chennai, and Bangalore. This species was recently recorded near Tena Village, Surat (Parikh & Patel 2017) and at Vadodra (Patel *et al.* 2019) in Gujarat. We report the sighting of a Red-Breasted Parakeet from Surat City, Gujarat.

## Observation

A Red-Breasted Parakeet was observed by a volunteer of 'Prayas', a non-governmental organization, near his house located at Aagam Wildflower, VIP Road, of Surat City (21° 08' 12" N, 72° 46' 01" E). The sighting was on 2 and 3 August 2020. On 4 August 2020, the activity of this bird was observed from a close distance and it seemed friendly and habituated to humans. When the observer offered food to the bird, it came closer to the observer. It had a purplish-grey face, with narrow black forehead stripe running over to the eyes, and broad black stripes from the lower mandible to sides of the head. The throat, breast, and belly were dull greenish; vent and under tail-coverts dull green. It was an immature bird. On the same day, it was handed over to 'Prayas' NGO for further treatment and rehabilitation.

## Discussion

According to Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB), of the 12 native species of parakeets and parrots found in the Indian Subcontinent, seven are regularly found being illegally traded. These include Alexandrine Parakeet, Rose-ringed Parakeet, Plum-headed Parakeet, Red-breasted Parakeet, Malabar Parakeet (*Psittacula columboides*), Slaty-headed Parakeet (*Psittacula himalayana*), and Vernal Hanging-Parrot (*Loriculus vernalis*). The Red-breasted Parakeet is listed as 'Near Threatened' due to various threats like on-going trapping pressure, persecution, habitat loss owing to extensive agriculture, etc. Parakeets are listed in Schedule IV Entry 50 of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. Therefore, they are protected and cannot be trapped, kept in captivity, or sold. The punishment for such offenses is imprisonment for a term up to three years or a fine of INR 25,000, or both.

In Gujarat, the Red-breasted Parakeet has not been listed in the state checklist as its breeding population is not known to occur in Gujarat and sightings are likely of escapees (Ganpule 2020). Also, the behavior of the observed bird suggests that this bird also came from captivity. Therefore, it is necessary to address the issue of pet trade and impose serious checks on the import of exotic species. There is no evidence of a feral population establishing here yet and it remains to be seen if more escapees are seen in the state.

## References

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