

Gujarat checklist....

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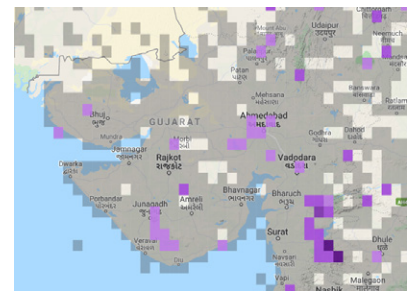
A photographic record of Ultramarine Flycatcher *Ficedula superciliaris* from Thol Bird Sanctuary and an update on its status and distribution in Gujarat

Jagrut Shah: 11, Park view, near Hasubhai Park, Jodhpur, Ahmedabad 380015. jagrutshah7@gmail.com



Jagrut Shah

Prasad Ganpule and Naushad Theba. They confirmed the bird as a female or first-winter Ultramarine Flycatcher. The photos showed an individual with greyish-brown underparts and



whitish underparts, with blue-cast to uppertail-coverts and tail, which matched with the description given in Grimmett *et al.* (2011) for the species. Further, the call also matched with the call of Ultramarine Flycatcher. Thus, it was confirmed as an Ultramarine Flycatcher, and was the probably the first photographic record for Thol Bird Sanctuary. There is a record of this species from Ahmedabad, which is near to Thol, by Kedar Champhekar, who photographed it in Centre of Environment Education (CEE); the photos are posted on eBird. There are records from other parts of Central Gujarat, from Gandhinagar and Anand Districts but I could not trace any previous record for Thol.

For Gujarat, Mashru (2012) provided the distribution of Ultramarine Flycatcher in Gujarat, listing sightings from different regions of the state. After this, there have been many records from different parts of Gujarat. A map showing the sightings of Ultramarine Flycatcher from Gujarat, based on records from 'eBird' is given here (Map 1). Based on these records, it can be seen that the Ultramarine Flycatcher is fairly widespread in Gujarat, occurring in almost all parts of the state. Though the records from eBird are fairly comprehensive, there are personal records by bird watchers which have not been uploaded on eBird. These records are mainly from Saurashtra, Kachchh and from other well forested parts of the state (from the forests of northern Gujarat to the Dangs in southern Gujarat).

This shows that the Ultramarine Flycatcher is not rare, but is somewhat uncommon in Gujarat, and is distributed widely in

The Ultramarine Flycatcher (*Ficedula superciliaris*) is a small, compact, arboreal flycatcher and it breeds in the Himalayas, from Jammu & Kashmir to Assam, is resident in Northeast India, and is a winter migrant to Central India, Western Ghats and eastern parts of India (Grimmett *et al.* 2011). It is a winter migrant to Gujarat, but is uncommon and rare, with sightings from Saurashtra, Kachchh and northern Gujarat, and there are isolated records from other parts of the state (Ganpule 2016).

A small flycatcher was photographed at 10:00 hrs at Thol Bird Sanctuary, in Mehsana District, Gujarat, on 23 November 2018. I was photographing a Common Woodshrike (*Tephrodornis pondicerianus*) on a tree and I spotted a small bird, which was foraging on the twigs of Dodder (*Cuscuta epithimum*). The site was a likely habitat for different species of birds such as flycatchers, sunbirds, warblers and tits. At first sight, I considered it as the female of Taiga Flycatcher (*Ficedula albicilla*) but after hearing the call, I realized it was something different. I managed to take two to three record photographs as it was foraging very quickly in the trees and did not perch for a longer time. Within five to six seconds, it flew away.

While preparing a checklist of my sightings for the day, I checked the photos and shared them with Ashok Mashru,

the state, with sightings from almost all parts of the state except in the desert areas of Kachchh.

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Sighting of Marbled Duck *Marmaronetta angustirostris* in Kachchh

Vikramsinh Sodha: Kunj Homestay, Kachchh. kutchkunj@gmail.com



site for this species), as well as in isolated pockets in Armenia, Azerbaijan, south European Russia, western India and western China. It is a winter migrant to India.

In general, the species has nomadic tendencies. In some areas, birds disperse from the breeding grounds, and have been encountered in the winter period in the Sahel zone, south of the Sahara (Birdlife International 2021). Its preferred breeding habitat is temporary and shallow fresh, brackish or alkaline waters with densely vegetated shores in regions that otherwise are fairly dry. It may also breed in coastal lagoons, along slow rivers or man-made waters like reservoirs. They are common in captive collections but are a nervous and flighty bird.

For Gujarat, the Marbled Duck is given as a vagrant / rare winter visitor, with many historical records and recent sightings from Nalsarovar and Porbandar (Ganpule 2016). There have been sightings from Nalsarovar and Little Rann of Kachchh in the past few years. These Marbled Ducks in Kachchh remained in the same area for two weeks. Many birders visited this location and saw these birds. There were about 8 to 10 individuals in this area, but there could have been more as the area is very large and it was not possible to scan the entire waterbody. After heavy rainfall in the end of September, these birds were not seen again. For mainland Kachchh, a flock of about 200 Marbled Ducks was seen in Chhari-Dhand in February 1990 (Akhtar *et al.* 1992). Thus, this sighting in Kachchh is after 30 years and is an important record of this species for Gujarat.

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On 7 September 2021, I was with Kunan Naik, Esha Munshi and Ashwin Vishwanathan, and we saw Marbled Ducks (*Marmaronetta angustirostris*) in Vekariya Dhand, at Banni Grassland in Kachchh. We were going from Loriya to Khavda, to explore the region in the passage migration period. We saw five Marbled Ducks swimming in shallow water. The birds were around 100 meters away from the road. In the wetland, the water level was not very deep and the birds were then seen walking on one small mud mound, which had some grass. We saw Northern Shoveler (*Anas clypeata*), Northern Pintail (*Anas acuta*), and Eurasian Coot (*Fulica atra*) along with Marbled Ducks at the same place. We saw these birds properly with a spotting scope and took some photographs, which confirmed the identification.

The Marbled Duck (also known as Marbled Teal) is a threatened species and listed as 'Vulnerable'; it is a medium-sized duck, which is seen from southern Europe, northern Africa, and western and Central Asia (Birdlife International 2021). This duck formerly bred in large numbers in the Mediterranean region, but is now restricted to a few sites in southern Spain, southern Italy, northwest Africa and the broader Levant (Birdlife International 2021). Further east, it survives in the Mesopotamian marshlands in southern Iraq and in Iran (Shadegan Marshes is the world's most important