

First Ring: DEH EA 189927, wing-tagged bird, with individual inscription green – 077

Species: Black Kite (*Milvus migrans*)

Age: Nestling

Date of tagging: 08. 07. 2017

Place: 16 km NE of Somon (village) Sharga, Govi-Altai, Mongolia

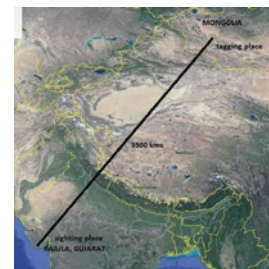
Coordinates: 46° 22' N, 95° 25' E.



Ashvin Italiya

The bird was seen again after 517 days from the date it was ringed and was seen almost 3500 kms south-west from the place of ringing. The subspecies of Black Kite breeding in Mongolia is *M. m. lineatus*, also known as the Black-eared Kite, and it is known that it migrates to the Indian Subcontinent (Orta *et al.* 2019), and it is a winter migrant to Gujarat too.

A Black Kite ringed in Mongolia was recovered in Loktok Lake, Manipur, in October 2001 (Chaudhary 2006); the individual was also ringed by the Hiddensee Bird Ringing Centre, Germany, and this was the first instance of a ringed Black Kite from Mongolia being recovered in India.



But, this record was from north-eastern India. The present record is from Gujarat in the western part of the country. Thus, this is the first time a Black Kite tagged in Mongolia has been photographed in Gujarat. It shows that Black Kite from Mongolia winters as far south-west as Gujarat.

Acknowledgements

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References

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A tale of two ringed birds

1) Eurasian Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus* preying on a ringed Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata*

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Rajni Trivedi

On 7 November 2016, in the morning, I was walking with Kasam Sama in the area of Nal Sarovar Bird Sanctuary (22° 49' 31" N, 72° 03' 07" E), between the main entrance at Vekaria village and the tourist point near the forest guest house and boating facility.

We saw a Eurasian Marsh Harrier (*Circus aeruginosus*) swooping on a large wader standing in the open marsh near the edge of shallow water. The harrier swooped on the wader, gripped

it from the neck and killed it. The wader hardly struggled to escape from the predator. Subsequently, it started peeling the neck, head and back. To confirm the identification of the prey, we slowly approached the hunting site, which made the harrier leave the prey. On a closer look, we could identify it as a Eurasian Curlew (*Numenius arquata*) with the help of photos and reference text (Grimmett *et al.* 2011). The bird was bearing an aluminum ring on its right leg, above the tibia-tarsal joint. The ring had a number, F – 49089, with a write up on second line 'Inform BOMBAY NAT HIST SOCIETY'. After taking photographs, we took out the ring and later informed BNHS about this ring recovery.

In response to the information sent to BNHS, Dr. S. Balachandran, Dy. Director, BNHS, Bird Migration & Ringing Division, sent the following details about the ringed bird – “the bird you found was a Eurasian Curlew ringed at Nalsarovar during first week of November 2016. The bird was rescued by the Forest Department from a bird trapper’s net and had wing injuries”.

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It seems that the curlew was ringed at Nal Sarovar itself by BNHS and staff of the state forest department. It was the first joint bird ringing programme of BNHS and the Gujarat state forest department, organized during 4–10 November 2016. Probably, the curlew was predated within a few hours of its release from the ringing camp. Ideally, this should not happen; we tried to analyze the situation due to which the curlew might have been killed.

The cause of death of this curlew was predation by a Eurasian Marsh Harrier. The curlew was standing alone in the open marsh when it was attacked and it did not make any attempt to escape, and rather, became easy prey. Perhaps it was standing alone with a weak posture which drew the attention of the predator. The inability of the bird to fly strongly after release or to remain stranded around the release place indicates weak health of the bird. This situation probably arose since the bird had injured itself during its struggle to escape from the trap. As mentioned by Dr. Balachandran, the curlew had wing injuries. No one knows the time period for which

the bird was held in the trap before it came in hands of the ringing team! Under such circumstances, ideally, the release of the bird should be delayed till it is stabilized under captivity. Extreme care is usually taken in handling of trapped birds, and during measurements and ringing. The health of the bird and its trapping history should be considered before ringing and release of any individual. If the bird is physically unfit, the risk of predation immediately after release is very high.

Another aspect which was disconcerting was that a close examination of the ring revealed that both the lower and upper edges were sharp, which might injure the skin. Normally, standard bird rings have smooth edges to avoid any injury to birds. It is hoped that all internationally accepted quality standards are maintained in all ringing programmes and extreme care is taken before any ringed bird is released.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Dr. B. M. Parasharya for correspondence with BNHS regarding ring details and for preparation of this note. I thank Kasam Sama Sidani for accompanying me in the field.

2) Sighting of Indian Skimmer *Rynchops albicollis* injured by ring on its leg

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On 1 October 2018, I visited Dhinchada wetland, approximately 5 kms from Jamnagar, with Chirag Solanki. There we saw a flock of about 50-60 Indian Skimmers

[The observations of the injury to the Indian Skimmer due to ring on its leg and the killing of the Eurasian Curlew by the harrier immediately after it was ringed show that there are negative effects of ringing. In avian research, recognizing individual birds by marking them with plastic or metal rings is one of the main techniques for studying different aspects of avian biology, migration etc. and is one of the most widely used methods for studying birds. However, as seen here, there are some hazards to ringing.

(*Rynchops albicollis*). On our arrival, one bird started flying and soon landed nearby. This was repeated two-three times. It was not able to fly and land properly. So, we suspected that the bird might be injured. I took a few photographs and after watching the photographs at home, a ring was seen on one of its legs (details on that ring could not be read) and at the rim of the ring, some tumour-like growth was visible on that leg. I shared these photos with other friends and posted them on the social media. On 3 October 2018, I got a phone call from BNHS, asking for the details of our sighting. On 4 October 2018, a team from BNHS, which included Parveen Shaikh, Madhumita Panigrahi and Bhavik Patel arrived at Jamnagar to rescue the injured bird. However, they were not successful even after trying for four consecutive days and returned back. This particular individual was ringed by them last winter and the ring on its leg had caused injury to the bird.

In the first case here, the ringed bird was injured earlier and was released after ringing, leading to its death by predation. In the second case, the ring had caused a serious injury to the leg of the Indian Skimmer. It is commendable that the BNHS took prompt action and tried their best to re-capture the injured Indian Skimmer, but were not successful. Recently, a ringed Red-necked Phalarope (*Phalaropus lobatus*) was seen limping the next day after it was ringed near Mumbai and photographs of the seemingly injured

phalarope were widely shared on the social media. To specifically address the problems arising due to ringing, it is important to systematically record both the frequency, and severity of impacts (Griesser et al. 2012). While there is almost no data regarding injuries to birds due to ringing in India, EURING, the European Union for Bird Ringing, has a section about reporting ringing-related damage in birds on their website.

Here, it is important that researchers and birdwatchers communicate both the positive and negative consequences of the techniques used in ringing; a hazard index is proposed to facilitate this and the index is based on a logarithmic increase of hazard points, from minor inflammations (leg partly inflamed), to inflammations (whole leg inflamed), toe loss, leg damage up to the loss of a foot or a whole leg (Griesser et al. 2012). One of the problems which can be identified in the case of the injured Indian Skimmer is that the quality of the rings used is probably not of internationally accepted standards and the sharp edges could cause problems or injuries to the birds.

It is important to note that some problems with ringing become apparent only years after the bird was ringed, making it very difficult to spot injuries caused by ringing. A few solutions are proposed for the different problems which may be caused due to ringing by Griesser et al. (2012) and ringers

should be made aware of these. While most of the ringing in India is done by the BNHS, there are no subsequent studies done to show the impacts – both positive and negative – on the birds which were ringed. As reported earlier by Raval et al. (2018), a large number of waders were ringed near Jamnagar in the last winter by BNHS and these birds were seen in the same general area for 2-3 months. It is now important that we try and spot these birds again to see if there have been any negative effects of ringing on these individuals. The three examples given here show the detrimental effects of ringing on the birds and it is hoped that these will be addressed in the future by the agencies involved – Eds]

References

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A study of prey taken by Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus calidus* in Little Rann of Kachchh

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of prey (White et al. 2013). Winter migrating Peregrine Falcons are widely distributed throughout the Indian Subcontinent, seen in the winter from late September to mid-April, preferring wetlands and coastal habitats, where waterfowl and shorebirds congregate. The Peregrine Falcon may also frequent artificial reservoirs, fringes of forests, and desert regions in the Indian Subcontinent.

The subspecies of Peregrine Falcon known to winter throughout the Indian subcontinent is *F. p. calidus* (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). A good population of Peregrine Falcons is found in the Little Rann of Kachchh, Gujarat. The habitat here consists of saline wetlands and open desert, with some elevated areas with grasslands and shrubs (mostly *Prosopis* sp.), called 'bets', that rise up to 300 feet. The diverse prey base and easily available vantage points are attractive to the wintering Peregrine Falcons. They tend to spend the winter in the same general area, more or less without much movement, unless disturbed due to human activities or prey base decreases due to variation in water level in the wetlands.

Introduction

The Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) is one of the most widespread bird species in the world, inhabiting habitats as varied as the Arctic tundra, deserts, forests, and oceanic islands, up to the South Sea Islands, and is the most widespread bird