

Great Bittern....

does visit this region and it could be a rare winter migrant here.

References

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Does the Grey Nightjar *Caprimulgus jotaka* occur in Gujarat?

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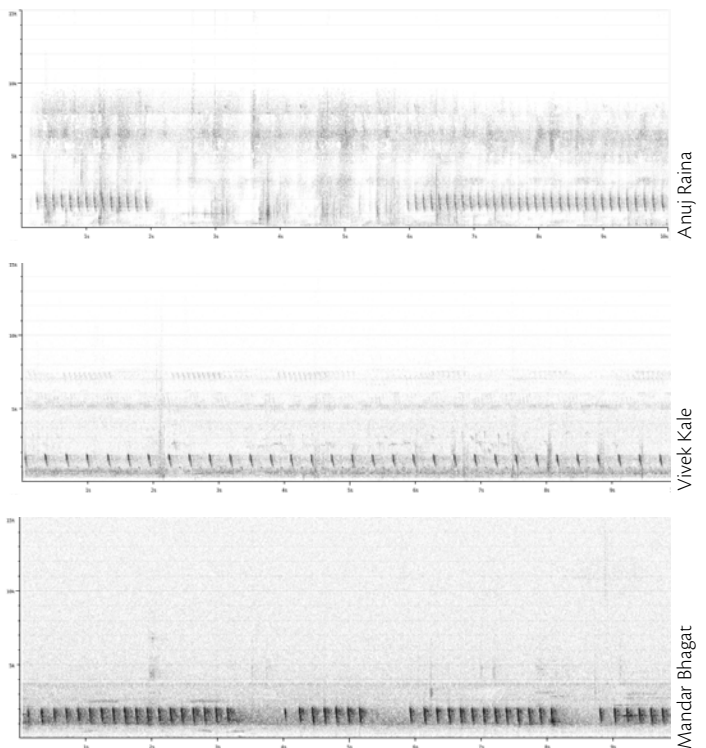
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On 17 June 2018, we visited Kumkotar (20° 53' N, 73° 12' E), near Vansada National Park in South Gujarat. We were mainly doing amphibian surveys in the area as seasonal rains had increased the flora and fauna diversity. At around 04:30 hrs, very early in the morning, we heard a call of a nightjar (*Caprimulgus* sp.). We recorded the call and tried to locate the bird. We saw a nightjar flying away but could not get photos as it was dark and the nightjar was seen briefly and that too only in flight. This call did not match with any amphibian species found in this location and we were sure that this was a call of a nightjar. Two calls were heard from the opposite direction during the survey. The site is near Koskhadi River, a tributary of Ambika River, which connects the secluded forest of Kumkotar (Surat district) with Vansada National Park (Navsari District). The forest land of Kumkotar has similar forest type as Vansada national NP i.e. tropical moist deciduous forests.

We were somewhat confused by this call. Being familiar with the call of the Indian Jungle Nightjar (*Caprimulgus indicus*), we could make out that the call of this bird was faster than the call of the Indian Jungle Nightjar. The first author has birded extensively in the Himalayas and heard the call of the Grey Nightjar (*Caprimulgus jotaka*) and was reminded of that call in pitch and frequency. We generated a sonogram from our recorded call and compared it with the call of a Grey Nightjar from the Himalayas and an Indian Jungle Nightjar from Gujarat. Three sonograms are given here – sonogram of call recorded by us, sonogram of call of Indian Jungle Nightjar (Xeno Canto XC131945 by Vivek Kale) and Grey Nightjar (Xeno Canto XC320019 by Mandar Bhagat).

It can be seen that the call recorded by us matches with the call of the Grey Nightjar more than the call of an Indian Jungle



Nightjar. For call of the Indian Jungle Nightjar, there are around 3 to 4 notes/second. The call of the Grey Nightjar is faster, with 6 to 7 notes/second. The relative pitch also differs slightly, with the Grey Nightjar call being of slightly higher pitch. These differences are slight, but the call recorded by us points to the identification of this individual as a Grey Nightjar rather than an Indian Jungle Nightjar.

[The recording by one of the authors (Anuj Raina) has been uploaded on the website Xeno Canto as the call of a Grey Nighthjar and can be accessed online at <https://www.xeno-canto.org/439948>. The Indian Jungle Nightjar and the Grey Nightjar are now treated as

distinct species based on consistent morphological and vocal differences, different juvenile plumages and eggs are also dissimilar (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012).

The Grey Nightjar is a breeding migrant to the Himalayas, from northern Pakistan to Jammu & Kashmir, till Arunachal Pradesh, and SE Bangladesh; it is a winter migrant to Odisha and NE Ghats and two specimens have been collected from the Andaman Islands, which shows the migrating ability of this species (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). Grimmer et al. (2011) show it as breeding migrant in NW Himalayas and as a resident in NE India and Bangladesh. There are no records shown for Peninsular India in both these reference texts. In contrast, the Indian Jungle Nightjar is resident in Western Ghats, most of central and northern India and also in eastern parts of India. In Gujarat, the Indian Jungle Nightjar is resident in the forest areas from North Gujarat to South Gujarat, in Gir NP and surrounding areas of Saurashtra and also in other well wooded parts of Saurashtra. It is absent in Kachchh. However, the Grey Nightjar is not known to occur here in the state (Ganpule 2016).

The call/song of the Grey Nightjar is described as a loud, evenly spaced, "schruck schruck schruck" together, at rate of 5-6 notes/s, and may last for up to 7 minutes while the call/song of Indian Jungle Nightjar is described as a "fwik-m fwik-m fwik-m", with the two notes evenly spaced, at the rate of two couplets/s, and sometimes ending with a faster "foo foo foo" (rate of 6 notes/s) and often ending at a faster rate of 9 notes/s (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). However, this faster song/call ending (described as "foo foo foo") of Indian Jungle Nightjar described by Rasmussen & Anderton (2012) is not heard in over 80 songs/calls of the species from India on the website 'eBird' and over 20 songs/calls from India on the website 'Xeno Canto'.

For the call recorded by the authors, the rate is about 7-8 notes/s, and it can be described as evenly spaced, "schruck schruck schruck", similar to the call of Grey Nightjar, but somewhat faster; the second note, which is present in song/call of Indian Jungle Nightjar, is not present in the call recorded by the authors. Though this song/call is similar to call/song of Grey Nightjar, there is some uncertainty regarding the faster call of Indian Jungle Nightjar as described by Rasmussen & Anderton (2012) - is it possible that the call/song given

here could be the faster "foo foo foo" of Indian Jungle Nightjar? While it is unlikely that this could be the call of Indian Jungle Nightjar since it is acoustically different, there is less knowledge about the songs and calls of both these species. This can be judged by the fact that the alternative song for Indian Jungle Nightjar, described as "uk-krukroo" by Ali & Ripley (1983) was mistakenly attributed to this species but is the song/call of Oriental Scops Owl (*Otus sunia*) (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). Thus, the entire vocal repertoire of the Indian Jungle Nightjar and the Grey Nightjar needs further study.

This record, in mid-June, is intriguing. Could it be a Grey Nightjar and if yes, is it possible that this species could be migrating to parts of Peninsular India in the winter and could be on its return journey to the Himalayas for breeding when it was seen in Gujarat? Could it be overlooked due to identification difficulties? This is speculation but it is true that not much is known about the wintering range and migration of the Grey Nightjar in India. While it is possible that this could be a Grey Nightjar, till there is more data, both vocal as well as morphological, it is not possible to accept this record as a first for Gujarat – the call heard here is faster and it could be some other nocturnal species or even other taxa or could be a Grey Nightjar too. However, bird watchers are urged to keep a look out and especially record calls and take photographs, of individuals which have a faster song/call than the song/call of an Indian Jungle Nightjar, to ascertain the possibility of the occurrence of Grey Nightjar in Gujarat.

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References

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