

Sighting of Orange-breasted Green Pigeon *Treron bicinctus* in Gir-Somnath District: An addition to the avifauna of Gujarat

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On 20 January 2014, at about 10:30 hrs, while driving between Sasan – Chitradvad Road (21° 06' 56" N, 70° 31' 43" E), in Gir-Somnath District, I spotted a green pigeon (*Treron* sp.) foraging on a lantana shrub at eye level. I would have ignored this bird if had not been so low and at eye level. With perfect lighting conditions and the chance availability of a camera with me, I was able to take portraits of this pigeon and initially identified it as a Yellow-footed Green Pigeon (*Treron phoenicopterus*). On closer observation, I noticed the pinkish-red feet in this bird but thought it could be an individual in breeding plumage or with some odd features. The thought that it could be another species of green pigeon did not occur to me at that time. This location is a few kilometres from Gir National Park, and is a part of the revenue area. The road is surrounded by agriculture farms, bordered with limestone boulders, which, over a period of time, have got covered with dense vegetation and become a home for many birds.

At first glance, this pigeon resembled the commonly found Yellow-footed Green Pigeon. With the many good photographs that I was able to take, I could easily observe features which were different from the Yellow-footed Green Pigeon; presence of blue-grey nape and yellowish-green crown, yellowish-green underparts and the red feet. The upper tail had central feathers of slaty-grey colour rather than the green colour as normally seen in female of Yellow-footed Green Pigeon. Comparing the photos with field guides, it was identified as a female Orange-breasted Green Pigeon (*Treron bicinctus*). This individual lacked the lilac and orange bands across the breast, which are present in the male and so was identified as a female. No call was heard during my observation and I noted that there were three-four other birds, perched on the adjacent power line, while one female, which was photographed, was foraging on the lantana shrub.

According to Grimmett *et al.* (2011), the Orange-breasted Green Pigeon is a resident in the lower Himalayas, from Uttarakhand, extending to North-east India; it is also resident in the Eastern Ghats, some parts of Central India and in the Western Ghats. Rasmussen & Anderton (2012) show it as a resident in the Himalayas and in large parts of eastern India, Western Ghats and some parts of central India. These authors show an isolated record from Sindh, in Pakistan. However, none of these texts show any record of this species for Gujarat. The Orange-breasted Green Pigeon is not listed in the checklist of birds of Gujarat (Ganpule 2016, 2017) and hence, it is an addition to the avifauna of the state.

This sighting from the Gir National Park area, in the winter, suggests that this species may be nomadic and could be visiting well forested areas, away from its range, in the non-breeding season (winter). The record from Sindh, Pakistan, points to this as it is also a winter record; the author specifically mentioned that the bird in Sindh was not an escapee as the plumage was in perfect condition and the crop contained freshly eaten *peepal* berries (Eates 1938). Similarly, the birds seen here were in a small flock, with one bird feeding on lantana, and were in very good plumage. It is unlikely that these were escapees as the plumage looked very good, it was feeding on a lantana and a group of four birds was present.

It is possible that the Orange-breasted Green Pigeon is overlooked due to its similarity to the Yellow-footed Green Pigeon; the females of both these species are very similar looking. It could occur in the forests of South Gujarat and needs to be looked out for in that area. This species prefers evergreen and moist deciduous forest types; similar to all other green pigeons, it is gregarious, arboreal, and frugivorous (Ali & Ripley 1983). The Orange-breasted Green Pigeon is resident in some parts of Madhya Pradesh and in the Western Ghats; it could visit Gujarat from these areas.

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References

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