

Ashy Woodswallow *Artamus fuscus* near Vadodara

Arvind Ghode: B15, Oasis Flats, B/h. Essar Petrol Pump, Opp. GEB Sub station, Sama Savli Road, Vadodara 390024. arvind_ghode@rediffmail.com



Arvind Ghode

On 8 September 2019, I was birding with my friends Pratik Nagrecha, Ranjitsingh Sahota and Bhargav Vyas and we decided to go to Jawla Lake at Savli, near Vadodara. We reached our destination at about 06:45 hrs and started looking at the birds there. We could find some Red Avadavats (*Amandava amandava*), Baya Weavers (*Ploceus philippinus*) and a couple of Black-headed Munias (*Lonchura malacca*). While walking along the bank of the lake, we also saw a solitary Scaly-breasted Munia (*Lonchura punctulata*).

After some time, as the sightings reduced and the sky was overcast, we decided to walk further. After about one km, towards a bend on the road and perched on an electric wire, Pratik called me to look at a different looking bird. On seeing it through the camera lens, we identified it as an Ashy Woodswallow (*Artamus fuscus*). We confirmed the identification by referring to Grimmett *et al.* (2011). We took

pictures and sent them to Ayaz Mansuri for confirmation – he confirmed that it was an Ashy Woodswallow. We saw many individuals but they were perched high on the electric wires. We did not think of getting a better picture and stayed at the same place so as not to disturb the birds. But still, they slowly started drifting towards an electric cable tower and we counted a total of around 20 individuals in this group. We went to another location and after about an hour, when the sun came up, we returned back to check but the Ashy Woodswallows had gone by then.

The Ashy Woodswallow is resident in Gujarat – there are previous records of the species breeding in Vadodara and Dahod Districts (Vyas & Upadhyay 2015). Regarding its distribution, it is thought to be distributed in Central and South Gujarat, in various types of habitats, from deciduous forests, thorny scrub to agricultural lands. The species also breeds in these areas during March to May. However, it is not very common here around Vadodara.

Acknowledgements

I thank Ayaz Mansuri for helping confirm the identification.

References

- Grimmett, R., Inskipp, C., & Inskipp, T., 2011. *Birds of the Indian Subcontinent*. 2nd ed. Oxford University Press & Christopher Helm. London.
- Vyas, R., & Upadhyay, K., 2015. Some notes on the breeding of Ashy Woodswallow *Artamus fuscus* in Gujarat, India. *Indian BIRDS* 10 (1): 19–21 □

Pallid Scops Owl *Otus brucei* at Ambla, near Bhavnagar

Bhartendu Dave: Gram Dakshinamurti Lokshala Campus, Ambla 364210, P. O. Amargadh, Near Sanosara, Dist. Bhavnagar, Gujarat. bhartndradave@gmail.com

The Pallid Scops Owl (*Otus brucei*) is a small-sized owl, known to winter in Sindh (Pakistan), Gujarat and Maharashtra (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012) and even up to Kerala (Chandran *et al.* 2016). Within Gujarat state, it is known to occur in Great Rann of Kachchh and Little Rann of Kachchh, with isolated records in Saurashtra and Kachchh and one record near Ahmedabad (Ganpule 2016). Though its record from Bhavnagar district by Dharmakumarsinhji (1955) is quite old, there are few recent sighting records from Surendranagar (Sangha & Malik 2010, Dave 2017), Rajkot (Mundkur 1986, Rajput 2015), Gir-Somnath (Chauhan 2017) and Jamnagar (Jadeja *et al.* 2019) districts of Saurashtra region of Gujarat. In this note, I report a recent record of the Pallid Scops Owl

from Ambla Village, near Sanosara, Dist. Bhavnagar (21° 42' 47.88" N, 71° 50' 31.47" E).

On 23 March 2019, I noticed a small owl struggling to walk along the compound wall of our campus at about 15:00 hrs. On a closer approach, the bird did not try to fly away. Probably, it was too weak to fly. With the help of some students, we took photographs with mobile phone and identified it as a Pallid Scops Owl by referring to field guides. In all the pictures, its eyes were closed. Initially, we suspected some eye infection/injury. With an intention to treat its eyes with some eye drops, we captured the owl and brought it to my home. As the bird was struggling on the ground for several

winter in our area at least from 15 October till beginning of February (Sangha & Malik 2010) or 3 February (Jadeja *et al.* 2019). Its present record on 23 March further extends its known wintering period in our area.

[There are photos of Pallid Scops Owl from Mahuva, Rajula and Bhavnagar, in Bhavnagar District, posted on the 'Birds of Gujarat' (BOG) website (<http://birdsofgujarat.co.in/>). Thus, it is known to occur in the area. As stated by the author, this sighting, in late March, is interesting and suggests that this species remains in our region till almost the end of March – Eds]

References

- Chandran, A., Rasmussen, P. C., Jahan, S. & Praveen, J., 2016. The Pallid Scops Owl *Otus brucei* in south-western India, with notes on its identification. *Indian BIRDS* 12 (2&3): 56-63
- Chauhan, D. 2017. Pallid Scops Owl in Gir. *Flamingo* 15 (2): 22
- Dave, J. N. 2017. Pallid Scops Owl near Bhaskarpara, Surendranagar. *Flamingo* 15 (1): 22
- Dharmakumarsinghji, R. S., Undated (=1955). *Birds of Saurashtra, India with additional notes on the birds of Kutch and Gujarat*. Bhavnagar, Saurashtra, Published by author.
- Ganpule P. 2016. The birds of Gujarat: Status and distribution. *Flamingo* 8 (3) –12: 2-40
- Jadeja J., Trivedi M., Rindani J., Trivedi A. & Trivedi K. 2019. Indian Scops Owl *Otus bakkamoena* and Pallid Scops Owl *Otus brucei* in Khijadiya Bird Sanctuary, Jamnagar. *Flamingo Gujarat* 17 (2): 17-18
- Mundkur, T., 1986. Occurrence of Pallid Scops Owl *Otus brucei* (Hume) in Rajkot, Gujarat. *Newsletter for Birdwatchers* 26 (1-2): 10-11
- Rajput, B. S., 2015. <https://birdingugujarat.wordpress.com/2015/02/03/sighting-of-pallid-scops-owl-in-rajkot-gujarat/> [Accessed on 30 March 2020]
- Rasmussen, P. C., & Anderton, J. C., 2012. *Birds of South Asia: the Ripley guide*. 2nd ed. 2 vols. Washington, D.C. and Barcelona: Smithsonian Institution and Lynx Edicions.
- Sangha, H. S. & Malik D. 2010. Observations on wintering Pallid Scops Owl *Otus brucei* at Zainabad, Little Rann of Kachchh, Surendranagar district, Gujarat. *Indian Birds* 5 (6): 176-177

Bhartendu Dave



hours in the hot sun, we offered water using a dropper. Slowly, water drops were kept on the junction of two mandibles and the bird sucked the drops. It consumed almost 20 ml of water. Then suddenly, it gave a jerk and escaped from the hands of the person who was holding it. It flew out of the door and perched on a Neem tree nearby. Our plan to treat its eyes could not be executed. On the Neem tree, it perched too high from where, re-capturing it was not possible. Till night, we could see it on the tree. In the morning on the next day, we searched for it on the Neem and in nearby area but could not find it.

On 23 March 2019, the daily maximum temperature had risen up to 38° C. It seems that after consuming 20 ml of water, the owl recovered from heat stress. I hope that it completed its return migration successfully. With the present record at Ambla, the past record from Bhavnagar is reconfirmed and it further supports its wide spread distribution, at least in Saurashtra region of Gujarat. The Pallid Scops Owl is known to