

## Short Birding Notes



### Eurasian Scops-Owl *Otus scops* in Bhavnagar

On 23 October, 2020, I was birding in the Malnath Hills, Bhavnagar. Around 09:45 hrs, while observing and photographing a Grey-headed Canary Flycatcher (*Culicicapa ceylonensis*) in a Banyan tree, I saw a small owl fly away and settle in a Mango tree close by. The smaller birds nearby raised the alarm immediately on spotting the tiny predator and I identified the owl as a Eurasian Scops Owl (*Otus scops*). I took photographs and the owl did not seem to be disturbed either by the mobbing birds or by my close presence. I observed it closely for around 90 minutes in the same location, and observed a variety of birds heckling the owl. It flew away when disturbed by cattle and was not seen again. It was identified as a Eurasian Scops Owl by rufous markings above the eyes and on the scapulars, underparts with prominent cross-barring and the overall plumage. The photos were also shown to experts who confirmed the identification. This species has been recently reported from different locations in Gujarat, like Little-, and Greater Rann of Kachchh, Mahuva, Amreli, etc. This sighting makes it the second record near Bhavnagar.

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### Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia* in Girnar Wildlife Sanctuary near Junagadh

On 27 November 2020, I was bird watching at Bordevi, in the Girnar Wildlife Sanctuary near Junagadh. I observed a small bird, which was moving about on the ground. It was olive-brownish in colour, with streaked upperparts. The crown was also streaked blackish and the undertail coverts were distinctly marked. Based on these features, I identified it as a Grasshopper Warbler (*Locustella naevia*). This was the first time I had seen this bird here and it was a surprise sighting since the Grasshopper Warbler has not been documented in Junagadh area so far. It is possible that it is overlooked. It has been reported from Amreli (see photo on the website Oriental Bird Images), which is not far from here and there are recent sightings from other parts of the state. This sighting confirms its occurrence in the Junagadh area.

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### Moustached Warbler *Acrocephalus melanopogon* in Nalsarovar Bird Sanctuary

On 18 January 2020, at around 08:00 hrs, I was at Nalsarovar Bird Sanctuary. While I was observing a Common Grasshopper Warbler (*Locustella naevia*) inside the reeds, I heard a different call. I searched for the bird and found two Moustached Warblers (*Acrocephalus melanopogon*) in the reeds. I identified these warblers as Moustached Warblers based on the typical plumage (streaked upperparts, long and broad white supercilium, thin bill and blackish sides of crown) and structure. I went closer and took some record photographs of one bird while the other bird went into the reeds. There have been recent sightings of Moustached Warbler in Gujarat (Ganpule 2016) but it is uncommon to rare here in Nalsarovar. Further sightings will help in understanding its status in this area.

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### Sighting of Painted Sandgrouse *Pterocles indicus* near Rajkot

On 2 August 2020, in the morning, I was with a few friends and we decided to go for bird watching and photography near Vagudal and Khirasara *vidi* near Rajkot. On the way, near Balasar Village, I saw a bird sitting on a rocks, which I could identify as a sandgrouse but on looking through my camera, I was delighted and surprised to see that it was a beautiful male Painted Sandgrouse (*Pterocles indicus*). It was alone and there was no sign of the female. It was my first sighting of Painted Sandgrouse near Rajkot. Though this species is widely distributed in the state, there are very few records from near Rajkot and this is probably the first photographic record in the past few years for this area.

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