



Common Whitethroat *Sylvia communis* near Rajkot

Dr. Rajesh Bhalodia and I visited Khirasara Vidi, near Rajkot, on 3 September 2019 for birding, especially to look out for passage migrants which occur in our area. There, I saw a small warbler (*Sylvia* sp.) in the scrub which we could not identify in the field. However, we were able to take a few record shots. The bird had a white throat, brownish wings and pinkish legs. It was identified as a Common Whitethroat (*Sylvia communis*) by Shivam Bhatt on the social media. This was later confirmed by Ashok Mashru and Prasad Ganpule. Normally, this species is an autumn passage migrant and is regularly seen in Kachchh and is known to occur in other areas of Saurashtra. But, there are few documented records. This sighting near Rajkot is thus of interest and confirms its occurrence in the district.

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Forest Wagtail *Dendronanthus indicus* in Rajkot

On 14 February 2020, in the evening at around 17:00 hrs, near Randarda Lake, Rajkot, I observed a bird perched on a tree branch. I took some pictures but it was perched for only about five seconds. On seeing its plumage, I found it to be different than the common wagtails (*Motacilla* sp.) here and I identified it as a Forest Wagtail (*Dendronanthus indicus*). As this bird was shy and sitting far away, I could take only a few images before the bird flew away. I tried to follow it but it had disappeared. Later, I confirmed the identification with senior birder Ashok Mashru, and as per his opinion, this was probably a first photographic record of Forest Wagtail for Rajkot District. This species is generally uncommon for Saurashtra, but sightings from Gir NP, Jamnagar & few other areas are known. During this short birding trip, my friends Pinkesh Tanna, Jaymin Panchasara, Jayson Dholariya & Parth Bhatt were with me.

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Indian Pitta *Pitta brachyura* in Sabarkantha District

On 20 June 2020, I was birding near Ranasan Village, located in Sabarkantha District, which is about 65 kms from Gandhinagar. In the morning, roughly at around 09:00 hrs, after photographing a Striated Heron (*Butorides striata*), I went to a different place and saw a Marshall's lora (*Aegithina nigrolutea*). After 1-2 minutes, I heard a *wheet-tieu* call and then the trademark triple note, *hhwit-wiyu*, of Indian Pitta (*Pitta brachyuran*). The bird came out and I observed it for almost two hours, and enjoyed by taking a series of behavioral photographs of this Indian Pitta. I was surprised to observe many other species at this location and discovered that it was very rich for birding and the area was undisturbed. There are multiple nesting and sighting records of the India Pitta from the Aravalli Range i.e. from Polo, Jessore, Bakor and Panchmahal, but this record, in this patch of Sabarkantha, was something new for me.

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