



### First record of White-capped Bunting *Emberiza stewarti* from Kachchh

On 16 December 2020, I visited Tapkeshwari area, about 7 kms from Bhuj, with Bhanubhai Adhvaryu. The area has hilly terrain with scattered scrub and rocks. There, we saw White-naped Tit (*Machlolophus nuchalis*) and White-bellied Minivet (*Pericrocotus erythropygus*), and took good photos. At a small pond, a few birds were busy drinking water. Among them, one bird was looking slightly different. So I took a few record photos. I sent the photos to Prasad Ganpule. He replied that this was a male White-capped Bunting (*Emberiza stewarti*). We revisited the same location on 19 December 2020. After a wait of one and half hours, a female White-capped Bunting came and perched on a *Prosopis juliflora* tree. I got a chance to take a few photos before it went away in two minutes. I came to know from senior birders Shantilal Varu and Jugal Kishore Tiwari that there is no previous record of this species from Kachchh. Hence, this is the first record of this species from Kachchh.

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### Sighting of Brown Fish-Owl *Ketupa zeylonensis* in Malnath Hills, Bhavnagar

On 10 November 2020, while birding in the Malnath Hills area, Bhavnagar, at around 10:45 hrs, a large bird flew out from a mango tree. I was approaching near the tree and saw that it settled in another tree close by. Alarm calls were raised by smaller birds and on locating the large bird, I were thrilled to see that it was a Brown Fish-Owl (*Ketupa zeylonensis*). I observed and photographed the owl for some time and it seemed quite comfortable with my presence after the initial disturbance. After 13:00 hrs, Kandarp Andharia and Prashant Andharia joined me and took some good photographs of the owl. I followed up the next day to check on its presence but it was not seen there. The Brown Fish Owl has been recorded frequently from Gir Forest and Junagadh area but this is the first photographic record from Bhavnagar District. It seems that this owl could be a vagrant to other nearby districts and needs to be looked out for well wooded areas outside Gir-Girnar/Junagadh.

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### Colour aberrant Crested Lark *Galerida cristata* in Little Rann of Kachchh

On 23 December 2020, I was with Vaneet Daniel, C. Modhwadia and guide Becharbhai Rabari and we went for bird watching at Little Rann of Kachchh, near Dasada. After finishing our morning birding session, we were coming out from near the last patch of a water body of the sanctuary. We spotted a few Crested Larks (*Galerida cristata*) in which one bird was a colour aberrant bird. As per our guide Becharbhai, last year also it was sighted by another guide Gopalbhai around the same place. We took some photos. The lark looked entirely white but on a closer look, a few brownish patches could be seen on the head and around the wings. We identified the colour mutation as either progressive greying or dilution, but it was difficult to be sure of the correct colour mutation. This is another record of a colour aberrant bird from Gujarat.

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### Egyptian Vultures *Neophron percnopterus* at Vasna Barrage, Ahmedabad

On 23 February 2020, a Sunday, at around 18:00 hrs, I was bird watching at Vasna Barrage on the Riverfront side, Ahmedabad, when I saw a group of around seven Egyptian Vultures (*Neophron percnopterus*) on a large electric pole. The group included mainly adult birds. There are records of this vulture near Panjarpol dumping site (at Sanand) (see 'birds of Gujarat' website: [http://birdsofgujarat.co.in/bird\\_detail.php?id=12660](http://birdsofgujarat.co.in/bird_detail.php?id=12660)) but there are no recent records from the city area. The Egyptian Vulture is resident in Gujarat and it is now a threatened species. This is the first time I had seen this rare species in the middle of a large city like Ahmedabad. It is possible that small groups may still be visiting Ahmedabad area. Bird watchers are requested to be on the lookout for this species in Ahmedabad area.

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