

Short Birding Notes



Probable nesting of Cream-coloured Courser at Nalsarovar

On 28 June 2018, at around 14:00 hrs, I was at Nalsarovar Bird Sanctuary. I saw and photographed a juvenile Cream-colored Courser (*Cursorius cursor*), near an Indian Courser (*Cursorius coromandelicus*) group. The adult Indian Courser was mobbing this juvenile bird, which flew away a short distance. Adult Cream-coloured Coursers were not seen. The juvenile Cream-coloured Courser was identified by its pale sandy upperparts with faint barring, prominent white supercilium, grey patch on crown and buffy underparts. Though Ali & Ripley (1983) state that there is circumstantial evidence of the species breeding in Kachchh, there are no recent reports of it nesting in Gujarat. The Cream-coloured Courser is considered to be mainly a winter migrant to Kachchh, with isolated records elsewhere (Ganpule 2016). Thus, the sighting of a recently fledged juvenile in Nalsarovar in late June is indicative of its nesting here.

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Black Bittern in Rajkot

On 8 August 2018, I was bird watching in the outskirts of Rajkot, in an area with reeds. I was trying to get a good photo of Cinnamon Bittern (*Ixobrychus cinnamomeus*), which is known to occur in the area. It was late in the evening when I saw and photographed a Black Bittern (*Dupetor flavicollis*) flying over the reeds. I saw it fly away and was unable to see where it landed. It could be easily identified based on its size and plumage; the yellow neck stripe and black underparts were seen. According to senior birder Ashok Mashru, the Black Bittern has not been noted in Rajkot before and this was the first photographic record from this area.

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Chestnut-tailed Starling near Rajkot

On 9 June 2018, early in the morning, Niravbhai Mehta, Bhavya Joshi and I visited Lalpari Lake, Rajkot. We saw and photographed a Chestnut-tailed starling (*Sturnia malabarica*) near the lake. It was perched on a *Prosopis juliflora*. We were surprised to see it here as it is not known to occur in Rajkot. Though there have been recent sightings from Hingolghadh, near Rajkot, this was the first time we had seen it here. According to senior birder Ashok Mashru, this species is quite rare in Rajkot area.

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Nesting of Black-headed Munia near Rajkot

On 22 July 2018, while birding at Baghi village, near Rajkot, we saw a pair of Black-headed Munia (*Lonchura malacca*) with nesting material in its beak in an area with dense reeds. After observing closely, we found the nest. We also searched nearby areas for more nests but did not find any. We took some photos and video. After a couple of days, we visited the place twice but not find the nest or the birds. It seemed that the birds had left the area. This nesting of Black-headed Munia was seen almost after 16 years in Rajkot area; successful breeding of the species was observed here by Ashok Mashru in 2001 (Mashru 2002). On enquiring, Ashok Mashru informed us that he had seen a single bird in 2015 and recently in February 2018 in Rajkot area but had not observed its breeding after 2001 & 2002. It is possible that the Black-headed Munia might be nesting in Rajkot area in small numbers regularly but has not been noted by birders since the nest is usually in very dense reeds.

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