



### **Oriental Scops Owl at Alang, near Bhavnagar**

On 16 October 2018, I found a small owl (*Otus* sp.) at my office in Alang, about 40 kms from Bhavnagar. After taking photos and with the help of experts, it was identified as an Oriental Scops Owl (*Otus sunia*) of the rufous morph. Though no injuries were visible, the bird was unable to fly and seemed dehydrated. So I sent it to Vishwadeepsinh Raol at Bhavnagar for further care. After three days of utmost treatment and care, on 19 October 2018, the bird was released and flew away in the wild. The Oriental Scops Owl is rare in Saurashtra with isolated records from Gir National Park and surrounding areas (Ganpule 2016). Thus, this sighting from Bhavnagar is noteworthy.

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### **Striolated Bunting in Khirsara Grassland, Rajkot**

On 30 September 2018, we went to Khirsara Grassland, near Rajkot, for our regular weekend birding. I saw an unfamiliar bird, and we observed it with the help of binoculars and were fortunate enough to take some good photographs. When I posted the images on the social media for identification, it was confirmed as a Striolated Bunting (*Emberiza striolata*). There is no recent record of the species from Rajkot area but on enquiring, senior birder Ashok Mashru said that he had seen the bird at Nyari Dam about 10 years back. As the bird is commonly seen in Kachchh, its occurrence in Rajkot is not surprising and it was recently seen near Jamnagar too (Pala & Jhaveri 2017). It was seen again in Rajkot on 23 October 2018 by Rajubhai Karia (*pers. comm.*). We went to the same place 2-3 times to look for this species but were not able to find it.

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### **Grey Partridge preyed upon by Desert Cat**

On 2 September 2018, I was looking for nightjars (*Caprimulgus* sp.) near Dhinodhar Hill, Kachchh. I saw two cats there, which were very small in size. I observed that the cats were feeding on some bird. I took photographs and also a video. I observed that the cats were feeding on a Grey Francolin (*Francolinus pondicerianus*). One of the cats was larger while the second one was much smaller. I came back and saw the photos on my computer and identified the cats as a female and juvenile Indian Desert Cat (*Felix libyca*). I went to the same place the next morning and saw feathers of the Grey Francolin and also noted the pugmarks of the cats. While it is not surprising to note that the Grey Francolin is a part of the diet of the Desert Cat, the direct observation of it feeding on the bird was interesting as this cat is quite elusive and it is evidence of it preying on avian species.

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### **Red-tailed Shrike of karelini morph near Chotila, Surendranagar Dist.**

On 16 September 2018, we were on our routine birding trip to 'Wild Paanchal', Anandpur Grassland, near Chotila, Dist. Surendranagar. While walking in the area, we saw many shrikes (*Lanius* sp.), which were common there. But, I found a shrike which looked different and had a light grey head and upperparts, white stripe above eye and white wing patch and underparts. So I took photographs and showed the images to senior birder Ashok Mashru. He and Prasad Ganpule later identified this individual as a Red-tailed Shrike (*Lanius phoenicuroides*) of the *karelini* morph, which is perhaps a first record from this area. One individual of this morph was noted recently in Kachchh (Parekh 2018). But, this morph of the Red-tailed Shrike is rare here.

I am thankful to Shatrughnabhai Jebalia and Ghanshyambhai Jebalia of 'Wild Paanchal' for this beautiful sighting. It would not have been possible to see this bird without their help.

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