

Short Birding Notes



Red-naped Shaheen *Falco pelegrinoides babylonicus* in Dhari, near Amreli

We went for birding to Galdhara dam, Dhari, near Amreli, on 9 December 2018 in the evening. It is a good place for seeing waterfowl, wagtails (*Motacilla* sp.), pipits (*Anthus* sp.) and birds of prey. This year, wagtails and pipits were seen in very good numbers. At around 17:00 hrs, we saw a small falcon (*Falco* sp.) perched on a rock. We initially identified it as a Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) of the *calidus* subspecies. It then flew away for hunting. At home, we saw our photographs and noted that this bird had pale grey-blue upperparts, rufous on crown and nape, almost unmarked underparts with faint pink wash and dark moustachial stripe. We confirmed it as a Red-naped Shaheen (*Falco pelegrinoides babylonicus*). We went there on the next day and saw it again. On 16 December 2018, we saw this bird in the evening at the same place with two other Peregrine Falcons. It was seen roosting during the daytime and at night on a telephone tower for 20 days. The Red-naped Shaheen is now quite rare in Saurashtra and this sighting from Dhari is important.

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Colour aberrant dove *Stigmatopelia* sp. in Vadodara

In November 2018, I saw and photographed a colour aberrant dove (*Stigmatopelia* sp.) in Vadodara. This individual was completely white, with pink bill and feet. The eyes were normal coloured. Since this individual was completely white, I could not identify it with certainty but it was, as per my opinion, either a Laughing Dove (*Stigmatopelia senegalensis*) or a Spotted Dove (*Stigmatopelia chinensis*) based on the longer tail and beak. As per criteria given in van Grouw (2013), the mutation in this case might be either Ino or Leucism. The identification of the correct mutation in the field is quite difficult. This individual shows how challenging it is to identify the mutation and even the species when the bird is all white and no distinguishing features are visible. [We sent the photo to Hein van Grouw, who opined that 'based on the length of the tail in comparison to the length of the primaries, I reckon it is *S. senegalensis*, but from the photo, we cannot be sure. Regarding the mutation, he said 'I reckon it is Leucism, and totally white *senegalensis* due to leucism are known in captivity. Also, if it was Ino, the eye colour would have been lighter in *senegalensis*. If the bird is *S. chinensis* and Ino, then the eye colour would have been totally different from that of the bird photographed, and so, a Leucistic *senegalensis* is the most likely identification'. We thank Hein van Grouw for all his help – Eds]

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Colour aberrant White-eared Bulbul *Pycnonotus leucotis* near Nal Sarovar

On 28 December 2018, I was birding around Aniyari village near Nal Sarovar Bird Sanctuary. At about 09:30 hrs, I saw a very unusual looking, white bird, in the bushes from a distance. As I got closer and took a few images, I realised that it was an aberrant coloured White-eared Bulbul (*Pycnonotus leucotis*). The identification was confirmed by its more bulky body, short crest, stouter bill and importantly, the prominent yellow vent was visible. This individual was seen moving around and foraging in a small group with three other White-eared Bulguls. I also happened to see this bird again in the mid-January 2019 and again in early February 2019 at the same place. It was probably a resident in that area. I could not identify the correct mutation. [We sent the photos to Hein van Grouw, who opined that 'the bird clearly has pure white feathers next to completely normal coloured feathers! This bird is, in my opinion, a typical case of Progressive Greying. It may be inheritable Leucism, but certainly not Dilution. Progressive greying, however, is the most likely cause of this bird's aberrant white feathers'. We thank Hein van Grouw for helping with the identification of the correct mutation – Eds]

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