



Indian Grey Hornbill *Ocyrceros birostris* at Sundarvan, Ahmedabad

On 2 May 2019, a Thursday, at around 10:00 hrs, I was doing routine bird watching at Sundarvan Nature Discovery Centre, Satellite Road within Ahmedabad city, when a pair of Indian Grey Hornbill (*Ocyrceros birostris*) was seen on a *gunda* tree (*Cordia dichotoma*). I took some photographs of the pair perched in the tree. This was a rare sighting here at Sundarvan as well as in Ahmedabad. Earlier, it was recorded by Bhavik Bhatt on 18 April 2019 in Sundarvan (*pers. comm.*). The species was last recorded in 2008 in this area. The sighting of a pair in Sundarvan is encouraging and indicates that it could breed here.

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Steppe Buzzard *Buteo buteo vulpinus* in Vadodara

On 10 December 2017, at around 10.30 hrs while returning from birding, I saw a medium-sized bird of prey perched on a dead tree in a common plot situated in Gotri area, in the middle of Vadodara. First, I assumed it to be a Long-legged Buzzard (*Buteo rufinus*). I took a few photographs before it flew away due to the disturbance caused by heavy traffic. After coming back, I shared the photos with other senior birdwatchers and it was identified as a Steppe Buzzard (*Buteo buteo vulpinus*). The Steppe Buzzard is a winter visitor to Gujarat, with records from Greater and Little Rann of Kachchh, Saurashtra and isolated records are known from other parts of the state (Ganpule 2016). This is the first time I had seen it in the middle of a large city like Vadodara.

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Hybrid Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* in Jamnagar

It was on 1 April 2018 in the morning, when I started for INS Valsura Salt Pans, near Jamnagar, to look at waders in breeding plumage in the coastal parts of Jamnagar. As I was driving my car slowly in the area, a bright olive-yellow coloured bird perched on a branch of small Acacia drew my attention. It was a Yellow Wagtail (*Motacilla flava*) in breeding plumage, but with a yellow supercilium behind the eye on its dark black head. I had seen the subspecies *feldegg* in Jamnagar earlier, which has a complete black head. So I researched this and it was interesting to find out that it could be 'xanthophrys' morph bird; a rare hybrid between *feldegg* and *lutea*. However, such birds usually have a supercilium in front of eye also but here, the supercilium was seen only behind the eye. The various subspecies of Yellow Wagtails hybridize fairly regularly and this individual seemed to be a result of such hybridization. Detailed DNA study is required to identify such individuals as this did not fit a 'xanthophrys' due to the incomplete supercilium nor was it a pure *feldegg*.

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Watercock *Gallixrex cinerea* at Pariej, Kheda

On 16 July 2018, I was at Pariej Lake, Kheda, with C. B. Modhwadia. It was a cloudy evening and we were photographing a Sarus Crane (*Grus antigone*) when I heard a loud call, which was not known to me. I saw a large, blackish bird outside the reeds. I noticed its striking red crest and yellow-tipped bill and I identified it as a male Watercock (*Gallixrex cinerea*). We took some photographs and confirmed the identification but since we were quite far, we were unable to get good photos. In a few seconds, it again vanished into the reeds. We waited and kept looking for it. The Watercock came out after a few minutes. It was quite shy and flew away after a short time. Mashru (2017), in a comprehensive compilation of records of Watercock from Gujarat, lists records of the species by Uday Vora from Viroja, behind Pariej Lake, in monsoon of 2004. Though this sighting is not unexpected, the Watercock is quite uncommon in this area.

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