

Sighting of Red Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius* in Nal Sarovar: an addition to the avifauna of Gujarat

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On 25 October 2019, we visited the Nal Sarovar Bird Sanctuary. At around 11:00 hrs, we saw a bird which looked different from the other birds in the area. It was moving between Black-winged Stilt (*Himantopus himantopus*) and Ruff (*Philomachus pugnax*), and was busy feeding. We identified it as a phalarope (*Phalaropus* sp.). In 2018, we had seen a Red-necked Phalarope (*Phalaropus lobatus*) in Nal Sarovar but this bird looked different from a Red-necked Phalarope. It had a much thicker beak, with a pale yellowish base to the lower mandible. It had uniform pale grey upperparts, lacking prominent white edges to upperpart feathers. Based on these features, it was identified as a Red Phalarope (*Phalaropus fulicarius*) in non-breeding plumage. We took many photographs and shared them on the social media, where the identification was confirmed by senior birders. We were very happy to know that this was the first record of the species for Gujarat.

[The Red Phalarope has a circumpolar distribution, breeding on the coasts of the Arctic Ocean in Alaska, Canada, W Greenland, Iceland, Bear Island, Svalbard, Novaya Zemlya and C & E Siberia and it winters pelagically, mainly off W South America and W & SW Africa (Van Gils et al. 2019). For the Indian Sub-continent, it is a very rare vagrant, with only a handful of records; for India, it has been recorded from West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra (Rawal et al. 2013, Sangha et al. 2013, Raju 2016). There are less than ten records of this species from India.

The authors took many photographs of this individual and there remains no doubt that it is a Red Phalarope. All the characteristic features of this species are seen and it is either a first-winter or

non-breeding plumaged bird. The sightings in India suggest that this species is a vagrant during passage migration here, and is usually seen only for a few days. The sightings are mainly during the autumn or spring passage migration season, which was also seen in this case. The Red Phalarope is not included in the Gujarat checklist (Parasharya et al. 2004, Ganpule 2016, 2017). Thus, as stated by the authors, the Red Phalarope is an addition to the avifauna of Gujarat and our state can be added to the list of states where the Red Phalarope has been seen in our country – Eds]

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