

state. I urge birders to photograph Whimbrels in flight, especially noting the pattern on the axillaries, rump, uppertail coverts and tail, so that subspecies identification can be made. This will be helpful in knowing the Whimbrel subspecies occurring here.

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Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe* in Kachchh: a second record for Gujarat

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On 14 April 2022, we went to Modhva Beach, Taluka: Mandvi, Kachchh, for watching waders in breeding plumages. While birding in that area, we saw and photographed a wheatear perched on a wooden pole near a fisherman's hut. At first, we presumed that it was a male Desert Wheatear (*Oenanthe deserti*) in breeding plumage. But, on a closer view and after studying the photographs, we identified it as a male Northern Wheatear (*Oenanthe oenanthe*) in breeding plumage. A brief description is as follows: it had blue-grey upperparts, greyish crown, whitish supercilium, black eye-mask, pale orangish wash on the throat and upper breast, white underparts, blackish wings and short tail. We had taken many photos and there was no doubt that this was a male Northern Wheatear.

The Northern Wheatear is regarded as a rare vagrant to India (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). Abhinav *et al.* (2020) provided an overview of the records of Northern Wheatears from India, including its breeding in the Indian Subcontinent; most of the records given are from northern India, from Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand. For Peninsular India, there is a record from Karnataka and two records from Kerala given by the authors. Based on their study, the Northern Wheatear was stated to be 'not solely a vagrant to India, as noted by previous authors, but a common and regular summer breeder and passage migrant in Gilgit-Baltistan, a rare but regular passage migrant through western Himalayan and trans-Himalayan regions, probably less regular in the eastern Himalaya, and a vagrant in southern India'.

This species is stated to be a vagrant to Gujarat (Ganpule 2016), with only one previous record; Clement Francis had photographed a Northern Wheatear in Banni area in December 2011 (Francis 2014). There was a record claimed from Little Rann of Kachchh (Vyas 2009), but Damle & Inskipp (2014) have disputed this record and stated that the 'original photographs appear to show a Desert Wheatear'. Hence, this record from Little Rann of Kachchh was not considered by Ganpule (2016). Regarding the earlier record from Banni, Kachchh, though this species was included in the Gujarat checklist by Ganpule (2016), it was stated that 'details need to be re-checked' for this record; probably due to this statement by Ganpule (2016), this record has not been included by either Damle & Inskipp (2014) or by Abhinav *et al.* (2020).



The present sighting confirms beyond any doubt the occurrence of the Northern Wheatear in Gujarat and shows that its addition to the Gujarat checklist is correct. This sighting in mid-April suggests that this individual was on its return migration (spring migration) journey, towards its breeding grounds. A majority of the records from India are from the spring migration period, from mid-March to early June (Abhinav *et al.* 2020). However, there are only a few records of the Northern Wheatear from Peninsular India and

hence, this is an important record of this species not only for Gujarat, but also for India.

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