

Short Birding Notes



Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus* near Jamnagar

On 30 July 2021, Chirag Shah, Ashish Pankhaniya and I were searching for early migrating waders and shorebirds at a pond near Balachhadi, Jamnagar. It was a very cloudy morning with light sprinkle of rain and heavy wind. Ashish spotted a dark bird sitting in between few Greater Flamingos (*Phoenicopterus roseus*). We identified it as a skua (*Stercorarius*) species. We crawled near to the bird, which was a difficult task. But, seeing a pelagic bird a few meters in front of us was thrilling indeed. We took some good photographs of the skua perched and in flight. It was identified as a Pomarine Skua (*Stercorarius pomarinus*) based on the heavy bill with dark tip, bright yellow neck, dark flank barring and more prominent breast markings. It was tolerant of our presence and we were able to get quite close to it. Later, the same bird was spotted twice by Ashish Pankhaniya, Yashodhan Bhatia & Dr. Mehul Bhadania at Rozy Port, Jamnagar. It was seen once in the same week and then again in the next week – so this individual stayed here for about 10-12 days. The sighting of this pelagic species near Jamnagar was very unexpected. There are few records of Pomarine Skua from Gujarat but it is vagrant here. It could have been blown towards land by the monsoon winds.

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Sighting of Bridled Tern *Onychoprion anaethetus* near Valsad

There are countless prawn farms situated around the wetlands of Dharasana, near Valsad. Lots of birds, especially terns, are attracted to this area for fishing/hunting. During monsoon, these farms are inactive. On 16 August 2020, we visited the prawn farms and saw many terns flying over an inactive prawn farm. Generally, River Tern (*Sterna aurantia*), Gull-billed Tern (*Gelochelidon nilotica*), and Caspian Tern (*Hydroprogne caspia*) are seen in our area, but, one tern among these flying birds looked different in colour - it had dark upper parts and dark wings. When we noticed the difference, we focused our attention on that particular bird and took some photos. We assumed that it was as a juvenile of some tern species. After returning home, we referred to the field guides and identified it as a juvenile Bridled Tern (*Onychoprion anaethetus*). This was a surprise sighting for this area as the Bridled Tern is mainly pelagic, and is rarely seen near the shore. More photos of Bridled Tern from this area are posted on eBird.

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Tickell's Thrush *Turdus unicolor* in Shoolpaneshwar WLS

I was at Shoolpaneshwar Wildlife Sanctuary with Viren Desai, Abhay Naik and Dr. Pragnesh Patel on 27 January 2018. We had a good morning birding session where we had photographed many species. We took a lunch break at Sagai Campsite. At around 14:30 hrs, we decided to go towards Ninayi Waterfalls. At about 16:00 hrs, one km before the falls, we stopped and Abhay Naik saw a group of birds, which looked like Indian Blackbirds (*Turdus merula*). We took some photos and later, when processing the photos, realized that this was not a blackbird but a Tickell's Thrush (*Turdus unicolor*) based on the greyish upperparts, whitish belly and vent and pale legs. I sent the photos to Chintu Panchal, who confirmed that this was a Tickell's Thrush. The Tickell's Thrush has been noted in Ratanmahal, Vansada NP in Dang and from Girnar WLS (Deomurari 2012, Trivedi 2015, Bagda 2016). This sighting from Shoolpaneshwar WLS suggests that this species is probably more widely distributed in the forest areas of Gujarat.

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