

that this bird, due to its weakened condition, had succumbed or the harrier had preyed on it since it was not healthy and became easy prey.

This sighting is unusual because the habitat of the Watercock includes reed beds and dense vegetation around water and it is not seen in desert areas. It is possible that this individual, probably on migration, and disoriented and due to its weak condition, was resting on the mud-flats. This sighting of Watercock inside the rann is quite surprising, because previous records of this species from Gujarat are not from desert areas. Ganpule (2016) stated that the Watercock was an uncommon to rare monsoon migrant to Gujarat with a few records from the winter months. Mashru (2017) gave details regarding the previous sightings of Watercock from Gujarat but gives no record from any desert areas in the state. After this publication, more records of Watercock have been published /

noted (photographed) but there is no record of this species from the Little Rann of Kachchh. This is probably the first photographic record of the species from this area.

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### References

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## Sighting of Black Eagle *Ictinaetus malaiensis* and Black Shaheen *Falco peregrinus peregrinator* in Gandhinagar

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of the Black Eagle from Gujarat till 2010. This species is given as a rare winter visitor to Gujarat by Ganpule (2016). In eBird, the records of Black Eagle are from the forest areas from north to south Gujarat and from Gir / Girnar and Rajkot in Saurashtra. It is now known that this species is an uncommon but regular winter migrant to Gujarat. However, there are no records of the Black Eagle from Gandhinagar area so far and this sighting shows that the Black Eagle could frequent well wooded areas around Gandhinagar too.



On 27 October 2019, while birding in Sant Sarovar, in the Gandhinagar outskirts area, I saw a large raptor soaring in the sky. I observed that three to four Black Kites (*Milvus migrans*) suddenly appeared and began to mob this large raptor. I took some photographs and observed that this bird stayed in the area for almost 10 to 15 minutes. I could not identify this bird of prey and hence posted the photos on the 'Ask ID of Indian Birds' facebook page. Many bird watchers and experts commented that this was a Black Eagle (*Ictinaetus malaiensis*) and local bird watchers opined that this was a rare sighting for Gandhinagar. Parasharya (2010) listed more than 15 records

On 22 August 2020, I decided to go for birding and I visited Sant Sarovar area. It was the monsoon season and so the day

was cloudy with some intermittent rain. I saw that a flock of Common Pigeons (*Columba livia*) was flying here and there. I observed that this flock was being chased by a falcon and decided to watch the event. In the field, the bird of prey was looking dark and as the light was low, I could not identify it. But, I noted that it had powerful flight. I took some photographs and saw that it was unsuccessfully chasing and attacking the pigeons. A few attempts were made by the falcon which did not succeed. After a few minutes, it gained height and flew away, disappearing in the cloudy sky.

After coming back home, I saw the photos on the computer and noted that this falcon had a black head, rufous underparts and blackish wings. I shared the photos with other birdwatchers and raptor experts Nirav Bhatt and Devvratsinh Mori confirmed that this was a Black Shaheen (*Falco peregrinus peregrinator*), also known as the Shaheen Falcon or

the Indian Shaheen. Mori & Joshi (2017) have given the status and distribution of the Black Shaheen in Gujarat; records from almost all parts of the state are listed. There is a previous record of this species from Indroda Park in Gandhinagar. But, the Black Shaheen is quite uncommon around Gandhinagar.

The sightings of these two birds of prey in Gandhinagar are interesting and add to our knowledge of the distribution of these species in Gujarat.

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## Which subspecies of Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus* occur in Gujarat?

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*phaeopus*, while *variegatus* has been thought to be a winter vagrant to NE India and Andaman & Nicobars; *alboaxillaris* is thought to winter in the SW of the Subcontinent.



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The Whimbrel (*Numenius phaeopus*) is a widespread and common winter visitor to the coasts of India (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). In Gujarat, it is present along the coast, with sightings from all coastal areas of the state (Ganpule 2016). Five subspecies of Whimbrel are usually recognized; four subspecies breed in the Palearctic while the fifth breeds in the Nearctic (Skeel & Mallory 2020). The four subspecies breeding in the Palearctic are *N. p. phaeopus*, *N. p. variegatus*, *N. p. alboaxillaris* and *N. p. rogachevae* (Skeel & Mallory 2020). According to Rasmussen & Anderton (2012), the subspecies *alboaxillaris* is not always recognized - these authors state that examined regional specimens are closer to the nominate

On 1 November 2019, I arranged a trip with my son Nirav to visit the Banni area in Great Rann of Kachchh near Dhordo, as I got a message that there were many temporary water bodies and the migratory birds had started arriving there since October. On arriving at the site, I saw that the water body was about 1 sq. km in size, with very shallow water and surrounded by medium-sized grass. Cattle were feeding and resting around it. A huge flock of Collared Pratincole (*Glareola pratincola*) and Oriental Pratincole (*G. maldivarum*) was seen there by us. Good numbers of gulls and terns, mainly Slender-billed Gull (*Chroicocephalus genei*), Whiskered Tern (*Chlidonias hybrida*) and Gull-billed Tern (*Gelochelidon nilotica*) were