



### **Asian Pied Starling *Gracupica contra* in Banaskantha**

During our travel to Nani Bhatamal from Moti Bhatamal (near Dantiwada Dam), Banaskantha, for birding, we spotted two Asian Pied Starlings (*Gracupica contra*) foraging near a field with Millet crop. This bird has not been recorded earlier from our region and there are no published records of the Asian Pied Starling from Banaskantha district. The pair was seen at the location 24° 17' 43.1" N, 72° 24' 48.5" E, on 25 July 2021 at 06:50 hrs. The nearest record for Asian Pied Starling from this location is from Sirohi district, Rajasthan, and from Mehsana district, Gujarat. This species is given as rare in Gujarat with records from many areas though some of these were thought to be of escapees (Ganpule 2016). However, it now seems that some populations could have established in a few areas. This sighting indicates a wider spread of this species in Gujarat.

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### **Lesser Goldenback *Dinopium benghalense* in Jamnagar District**

On 21 July 2021, I visited Churi-Aai Temple, near Jamjodhpur, District: Jamnagar, with Shantilal Varu and Dimple Varu. The area has a temple surrounded by well wooded habitat. There, we saw a Lesser Goldenback (*Dinopium benghalense*). We saw it well and Dimple Varu took many photographs. This is the first time I saw the Lesser Goldenback in Jamnagar district. There is a previous sighting of this species in Barda Forest in June 2017 (Vargia 2017). However, this woodpecker is quite uncommon in this area. Maybe, it could be frequenting well wooded areas in the district.

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### **Amur Falcon *Falco amurensis* near Vadodara**

On 23 April 2022, a Sunday, early morning at 06:30 hrs, I started my birding walk at Sindhrot (near the Nature Education Park), Vadodara. I had specifically gone to photograph the Blue-tailed Bee-eaters (*Merops philippinus*), which have a breeding colony on this road. I took many photographs and went further ahead to see the Spotted Owlets (*Athene brama*), which are seen here. On returning back, I thought of photographing the bee-eaters in flight. While photographing these birds, at around 08:20 hrs, I observed a couple of birds in the sky. They were new for me, and their speed was very fast. I quickly clicked a record photograph of one of the birds, thinking I would check it out later. After a few days, while processing the pictures, I was pleasantly surprised to see that these birds were, in fact, Amur Falcons (*Falco amurensis*). I asked a few experts, and they confirmed the identification. This sighting in late April is indicative of the Amur Falcon being in return migration. This is a rare sighting for Vadodara.

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### **Black-headed Munia *Lonchura malacca* near Rajkot**

On 31 October 2021, we went to Hanumandhara, near Rajkot, for a birding trip early in the morning. We were specifically looking for the Red Munia (*Amandava amandava*) which is seen here regularly. We stayed put for about two hours and during that time, we saw one Black-headed Munia (*Lonchura malacca*) in the swamp where the Red Munias perched. Just a few yards from this location, we found a flock of around 7 to 8 Black-headed Munias feeding. Normally, this species is not sighted in Rajkot area regularly and we saw these birds for the first time. There have been a few previous records of this species around Rajkot (Mashru 2005, Ghervada *et al.* 2018) but the Black-headed Munia is uncommon here. This sighting is after almost three years and is an important record for Rajkot area.

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