



Slaty-breasted Rail *Gallirallus striatus* near Valsad

We went for birding at the wetlands on the periphery of Valsad, in South Gujarat, on 13 February 2022. These wetlands are mostly full of grass/reeds. We observed one greyish bird foraging deeper in this grass. At first, we just got a glimpse but we were able to take 2-3 photographs. While looking at the images, it looked different than a crane which is frequently seen in the area. Later on, we identified this bird as a Slaty-breasted Rail (*Gallirallus striatus*) which is quite uncommon here although it is a resident bird in our state. Previously, it has been seen at Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Porbandar, Vansda and Navsari. There are also breeding records from this area. We observed two birds at that time. They kept fighting and trying to push out each other from the area. The birds we observed were adults. After sometime, one bird came to the edge of the reeds to forage and also called several times. This is another record of this species for our area in the winter season.

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Painted Sandgrouse *Pterocles indicus* near Rajkot

It was 2 April 2022, a Saturday, and so I decided to go to Khirasara-vidi (a very good grassland in the monsoon, but in April, a dry area), which is about 18 kms from Rajkot. I intended to photograph Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse (*Pterocles exustus*) since I had attempted to photograph these during my previous visit but did not succeed. I was in my car, driving slowly on the road, and I noticed sandgrouse about 25 feet besides the road. To my surprise, it was a family of Painted Sandgrouse (*Pterocles indicus*). They were feeding on the rocky ground in the middle of the dried out grass, with the bright sun looming above – the temperature was around 42° C. The adults were hiding the young behind rocks. I could get good photographs. The Painted Sandgrouse is uncommon in Rajkot and there are only a few sightings from this area.

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Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio* at Nalsarovar

On 3 September 2021, I was birding in the Nalsarovar area. There, I saw one Shrike perched on a *Prosopis juliflora* tree. I went closer to take a record photograph but it flew away and settled on a *Salvadora* sp. tree. This time, I managed to take few record photos from a distance. After sharing the photos with experts, I came to know that it was an adult male Red-backed Shrike (*Lanius collurio*). This species is an autumn passage migrant in Gujarat with records mainly from Kachchh and some parts of Saurashtra. The present sighting from Nalsarovar adds to the sightings of this species from Gujarat.

Mehmud: At – Nalsarovar.

References

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