



Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* preying on a bird

On 21 August 2021, in the evening, I was on a regular birding visit to the grasslands near Rajkot. There were many cattle and Blue Bulls grazing. There were Cattle Egrets (*Bubulcus ibis*) near these animals. I saw a Cattle Egret with a large prey in its bill. I took a few photographs. On zooming in the camera, I found that there was a small bird in its bill. The egret was moving away and flew nearby to be safe from other birds trying to snatch its prey. It tried to swallow the prey two-three times but could not do it as the prey was big. I tried to identify the prey in its bill by looking at the photos in the computer but could not identify it. On asking my birder friends, they opined the possibility of the prey being a Zitting Cisticola (*Cisticola juncidis*) or maybe a juvenile of some lark or pipit. The Cattle Egret has varied diet consisting of frogs, snakes, worms, insects etc. but I have not observed or seen it preying on a bird. This was an interesting observation, showing that the Cattle Egret is opportunistic and can prey on birds.

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Ashy Prinia *Prinia socialis* nesting near Bhuj, Kachchh

On 10 July 2022, I had gone to photograph Black-headed Munia (*Lonchura malacca*) which are seen in the farmlands around Madhapar-Bhuj, in Kachchh. In the long Napier grass, I saw more than 10 munias busy in nest building. This munia is somewhat uncommon in Kachchh and so I was observing their activities. During this time I saw a pair of Plain Prinias (*Prinia inornata*). A little further, I saw a pair of Ashy Prinias (*Prinia socialis*) building a nest, which was a surprise sighting for this area. As per senior birder Shantibhai Varu, the Ashy Prinia is vagrant in mainland Kachchh with only one previous record near Bhuj. It is thought to be absent in mainland Kachchh though it is seen in some parts of the Little Rann of Kachchh. This nesting record is thus important and shows that the Ashy Prinia does occur here and also nests in this area.

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Spring passage sighting of Eurasian Hobby *Falco subbuteo* near Bhavnagar

I was photographing kingfishers on 12 April 2020, early in the morning, in the Shetrunji River, near Bhavnagar. I saw a small falcon fly in the north-east direction and thought it might be the Amur Falcon (*Falco amurensis*) which I had seen a few days ago in this area. I took some photos and saw that there was another falcon which was also seen flying at considerable height. I managed to get better photos of this bird. I saw that these were a pair of Eurasian Hobby (*Falco subbuteo*). The birds seemed to be in their return migration flight and did not perch or come down but continued flying onwards. I continued to visit the area but did not see it again. The Eurasian Hobby is a fairly common autumn passage migrant in Gujarat but is somewhat rare during the spring passage migration season.

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Painted Sandgrouse *Pterocles indicus* near Jamnagar

On 28 November 2021, I was on a birding trip on Jamnagar-Samana Road with Ashvin Trivedi, Jaypalsinh Jadeja and Swadeepsinh Jadeja. We stopped for a while near Vadpanchasaara Village to explore the hilly area with scrubs which surrounds this village. There, Swadeepsinh Jadeja encountered a male Painted Sandgrouse (*Pterocles indicus*) resting on the ground. On careful observation with binoculars, we also found a female nearby. Both the birds were highly camouflaged in the grass and stones. They allowed us to approach very close and we got good photographs. This is for the first time I have seen this species in Jamnagar District.

I thank Swadeepsinh Jadeja for contributing the photograph given here.

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