

## Distribution and breeding of the Orange-headed Thrush *Geokichla citrina* in Saurashtra

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Photo: Pilu Sitapara

The Orange-headed Thrush (*Geokichla citrina*) is a summer migrant to the Himalayas and is resident in the Northeast, Central and Western India (Grimmet *et al.* 2011). It is a rare resident in South Gujarat forests and is considered to be a vagrant elsewhere in Gujarat (Ganpule 2016).

There are historical records of the Orange-headed Thrush from South Gujarat. Breeding of this species has been recorded in Rajpipala area (Monga & Naoroji 1983) and also in other parts of southern Gujarat. We present here details regarding an attempted breeding by this species near Rajkot and give an update on the sightings of Orange-headed Thrush from Saurashtra.

An Orange-headed Thrush was seen at Bhutnath Mahadev Temple, Halenda, near Rajkot, on 19 June 2017 (Gheravda *et al.* 2017). On 19 June 2022, the first and second authors visited Bhutnath Mahadev Temple for birding. Here, they saw an Orange-headed Thrush pair. They also saw and photographed the courtship behaviour of the pair, with the male giving some food to the female. On 14 August 2022, the first and second authors again visited the same place and observed the pair collecting nesting material from the ground and going inside a tree but they could not find a nest. On 19 August 2022 we visited there for further confirmation of the nest and observed the pair collecting nesting material and dead leaves from the ground and going into the same tree many times. We managed to see the nest on the topmost branches of the tree. Both birds were adding nesting material in the nest.

On 23 August 2022, the third author and Manoj Finava visited the temple area again for observing the nesting activity there. But, they noted with surprise that the nest was abandoned by the Orange-headed Thrush pair and they saw a squirrel in the

nest and a Large Grey Babbler (*Argya malcolmi*) pair was stealing nesting material from this nest. On searching around, no Orange-headed Thrush was seen. It is possible something happened and the thrush pair abandoned the nest and left the area.



Photo: Jignesh Rathod



Photo: Ashok Mashru

We collected records of the Orange-headed Thrush from Saurashtra. The records were collected mainly from 'eBird' website and from published sources. All recent records of this species from Saurashtra are detailed in the table.

### Discussion

There are sightings of the Orange-headed Thrush in the Saurashtra region, mainly from Junagadh, Gir-Somnath, Amreli, Porbandar, Bhavnagar and Rajkot, as can be seen in the table given here. Many records are from Gir Sanctuary and National Park area. However, there are very few breeding records of the Orange-headed Thrush from the Saurashtra region. Looking at the earlier sighting of a fledgling at Gir National Park area (Vaja & Vaghasia 2016) and this attempted nesting near Rajkot (both in the Saurashtra region), it seems that in summers or in

## Thrush....

early monsoon season, the Orange-headed Thrush migrates to the Saurashtra region and probably breeds in suitable areas in favorable conditions. Frequent visits in the rainy season by bird watchers to such places might reveal if the Orange-headed Thrush is a regular breeding bird in Saurashtra region.

There are only two records of this species from November and December while a majority of the sightings are from the monsoon season. So, it can be said that this thrush is primarily a monsoon migrant to Saurashtra and it is very likely that it breeds here in suitable habitat.

**Table 1: List of sightings and breeding details of Orange-headed Thrush in Saurashtra**

Sr No	Place	Date	Observer	Activity	Source
1	Girnar Forest, Junagadh	10 November 2005	Bhavesh Trivedi	Sighting	Vaja & Vaghasiya (2016)
2	Girnar Forest, Junagadh	24 March 2015	Divyaraj Shah	Sighting	eBird
3	Girnar Forest, Junagadh	20 March 2019	Gaurang Bagda & Ravi Patel	Sighting	eBird
4	Jamvala, Dist: Gir-Somnath	5 December 2015	Bhavesh Trivedi	Sighting	Vaja & Vaghasiya (2016)
5	Gir Sanctuary, Gir-Somnath	March 2009	Mukesh Samani & Ashok Mashru	Feeding	Vaja & Vaghasiya (2016)
6	Gir Sanctuary, Gir-Somnath	23 April 2014	Aditya Puntambekar	Sighting	eBird
7	Gir Sanctuary, Gir-Somnath	11 June 17	Divyesh Ghervada	Sighting	eBird
8	Gir Sanctuary, Gir-Somnath	8 June 2019	Hrishikesh Rane	Sighting	eBird
9	Shemardi Check Post, Gir-Sancturay, Gir-Somnath	15 June 2015	Viral Joshi	Sighting	eBird
10	Gir NP, Dist: Gir-Somnath	8 May 2018	Viral Pankaj	Sighting	eBird
11	Gir NP, Dist: Gir-Somnath	25 July 2015 19 June 2016	Abhilash Vaja & Pranav Vaghasiya	Breeding: fledgling sighting	Vaja & Vaghasiya (2016)
12	Galdhara, Dhari, Dist: Amreli	1 July 2019	Kaushal Sharma	Sighting	eBird
13	Ranigala, Bhavnagar	6 July 2014	Batuk Bhil	Sighting	eBird
14	Velavadar N P, Dist: Bhavnagar	14 June 18	Amit Vegad	Sighting	Vegad (2018)
15	Hingolgadh Sancturay, Dist: Rajkot	June, July 2022	10 observations by different birdwatchers	Sightings	eBird
16	Barda, Porbandar	11 June 2017	Dhaval Vargiya	Sighting	eBird
17	Bhutnath Mahadev Temple, Halenda, Dist: Rajkot	19 June 2017	Divyesh Ghervada Nirav Raval Prakash Jani	Sighting	Gheravda <i>et al.</i> (2017)
18		19 June 2022	Krunal Trivedi	Sighting	ebird
19		19 June 2022	Jignesh Rathod, Pilu Sitapara, Sandeep Nandani	Courtship behaviour of a pair	Author's sighting
20		14 August 2022	Jignesh Rathod, Pilu Sitapara	Nest material collection	Author's sighting
21		15 August 2022	Rajesh Radadiya, Hemanya Radadiya	Sighting	eBird
22		19 August 2022	Jignesh Rathod, Pilu Sitapara, Ashok Mashru	Nest material collection and nest building	Author's sighting

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## Purple Sunbird *Cinnyris asiaticus* chick predation by Common Garden Lizard *Calotes versicolor*

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Photo: Vedant Upadhyay

The Purple Sunbird (*Cinnyris asiaticus*) is a small nectar-eating sunbird species belonging to the family Nectariniidae, and it is widely distributed across the Indian Subcontinent and Southeast Asia (Ali & Ripley 1983). This is the most common sunbird species in Gujarat (Ganpule 2016) and India (Grimmett *et al.* 1998). This species occurs abundantly in and around the human populations and is found in the urban gardens of Vadodara, Gujarat (Vyas 2021).

On 23 April 2022, the first author [VU] was moving around in the backyard garden near his home at around 12:00 hrs, in the area surrounding his residence at Vadodara, when he heard some alarm calls from birds. He found a Common Garden Lizard (*Calotes versicolor*) approaching an overhanging sunbird nest in the bush. The nest was of a Purple Sunbird and was at a height of about two meters on a Pink Acacia tree (*Rubinia* sp.). Somehow, the lizard was able to catch a chick from the nest and fell on the ground with its prey. The lizard caught the chick's leg. The chick was small; it was not able to fly and so could not escape. The lizard suddenly ran towards a bush and disappeared into the bush with the chick. We presumed later that the lizard might have swallowed the chick whole. The chick was hardly a few days old. Usually, a sunbird selects a safe site and constructs an overhanging nest that predators cannot reach. But here, this garden lizard somehow got to the nest and was able to predate a chick. This is an unusual prey item and a remarkable hunting tactic for a garden lizard.



Photo: Vedant Upadhyay

The Common Garden Lizard is well known to be an ambush predator and is also known for its versatile camouflage abilities. This diurnal and arboreal lizard is widespread and found in anthropogenic habitats, including home gardens,