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Sighting of Lesser Noddy *Anous tenuirostris* at Mahuva near Bhavnagar – a first record for Gujarat

Batuk Bhil: At – Nikol, near Mahuva, Bhavnagar 364290.

Mahendra Bhil: At – Nikol, near Mahuva, Bhavnagar 364290.



Photo: Batuk Bhil

Due to a low pressure created in the Arabian Sea during the onset of the monsoon season in 2022, there was a heavy wind and a rough sea around Mahuva, Bhavnagar, for four to five days. The sea was very rough during that time, with big waves lashing the coast. During that time, on 16 June 2022, at around 17:00 hrs, we received a message from a local fisherman that a sea bird was seen near the shore. We had discussed the types of birds occurring in the sea around Mahuva with him and so, he was aware of our interest in birds. He described it as a blackish bird with a greyish head. Thinking that it could be a Sooty Gull (*Ichthyetaetus hemprichii*), we immediately left to see that bird. We reached the site and saw that it was a noddy species. Initially, we thought that it could be a Brown Noddy (*Anous stolidus*). It was perched on a dried *Prosopis juliflora* and seemed to be weak or injured. We approached nearer to it

and took some photographs with our mobile phones. On closer approach, it flew and perched on a nearby tree. After that, it took off and went towards the west, into the sea. The location where we saw it was 21° 04' 40.1874" N, 71° 50' 29.7594" E.



Photo: Batuk Bhil

After coming back home, we carefully checked the photographs. We observed that this noddy had whitish head with pale lores, dark brownish upperparts and a slim bill. Compared to a Brown Noddy, it was slimmer and had a smaller and slimmer bill. Based on the pale lores, slim build and slim, short beak, we identified it as a Lesser Noddy (*A. tenuirostris*). We sent the photos to Prasad Ganpule, who confirmed that it was indeed a Lesser Noddy.

Lesser Noddy...

The Lesser Noddy is a pelagic species and a non-breeding visitor to Sri Lanka; it is very local and rare in Sri Lanka and in the Bay of Bengal (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). For India, there are a few records from South India, mainly from Kerala, on 'eBird'. The Lesser Noddy has not been recorded from Gujarat earlier and it is not given in the checklist of the birds of Gujarat (Ganpule 2016, 2020). Thus, this is the first record of the Lesser Noddy from Gujarat and it is an addition to the avifauna of the state.

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Sighting of Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos* at Pariej: an addition to the avifauna of Gujarat

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Photo: Aniket Patel

I travelled to Pariej, near Kheda, for bird photography on the 27 December 2020. Pariej is a wetland which is home to a large number of migratory and non-migratory species of birds. It was there that I was photographing different water birds and waders when I happened to see and photograph a bird which was not seen by me earlier. I was able to take many photos. It was medium-sized, and looked similar to a Ruff (*Calidris pugnax*). I thought that this bird looked different from a Ruff and it could be something else. I tried to identify it but could not do so. I then forgot about this sighting and the photographs remained in my computer archive for almost two years.

In December 2022, I happened to come across these photographs again. This time, I forwarded the photos to Sejal Daniel, who forwarded them to Ashok Mashru. He confirmed that this was a Pectoral Sandpiper (*Calidris melanotos*). To be sure of the identification, he sent the photos to Prasad Ganpule, who also confirmed that this was a Pectoral Sandpiper in non-breeding plumage and this was the first sighting of this species for Gujarat. The identification could be confirmed by the clean-cut border between streaked breast

and white belly, the weakly patterned head and the straight short bill with yellow basal half. I uploaded all the photographs I took on that day on the 'eBird' website – see checklist <https://ebird.org/checklist/S11884925>, where too the identification was confirmed.



Photo: Aniket Patel

The Pectoral Sandpiper breeds on the tundra in the high Arctic. It winters mainly in southern South America, but small numbers also winter in Southeast Asia, Australia, and New Zealand. For India, it is a rare vagrant, with records mainly from Punjab and Kerala – see eBird for more details of these sightings. But, there are very few sightings of this species from India and it is a genuine vagrant here. It is likely that it is overlooked due to identification difficulties.

The Pectoral Sandpiper has not been listed in the Gujarat checklist (Ganpule 2016, 2020) and this is the first record of the Pectoral Sandpiper for Gujarat.

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