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# Interspecific territorial behaviour exhibited by Bronze-winged Jacana (*Metopidius indicus*) during its nesting season

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Photo:

Figure 1

## Abstract

The Bronze-winged Jacana, *Metopidius indicus* inhabits a variety of habitats such as floating and emergent dense vegetation in freshwater lakes, swamps, tanks, ponds, wet grasslands, and overgrown paddy fields. Although, polyandrous, the males vigorously defend territories against other males and females defend their mates' territories against other females. However, in this paper, we report some interspecific territorial behaviour by BWJ during its nesting season. Out of 57 instances, in the majority of the instances (53) only male was involved while in only four instances both male and female were involved. In these instances Lesser Whistling Duck (42.10%) was the major intruder and Pheasant-tailed Jacana (5.26%) and Indian Jungle Crow (5.26%) were the least. Moreover, it has been observed that the male BWJ first gives an alarm call to the intruder then it starts chasing and in extreme cases, it fights with the intruder.

## Introduction

The Bronze-winged Jacana (BWJ), *Metopidius indicus*, a common, widespread, resident species found throughout the

Indian Subcontinent (Grimmett *et al.*, 2011; Rasmussen & Anderton, 2012; BirdLife International, 2016) is a common to uncommon resident breeding species in different parts of Gujarat (Parasharya *et al.*, 2004; Ganpule, 2016). Its breeding season coincides with the onset of the Indian South-West Monsoon i.e. from June to September. Mostly males defend their territory against other males while females defend their mates' territory against other females (Jenni and Kirwan, 2020). Though polyandrous (Ali & Ripley, 1978), both the male and the female of species are reported to protect their territory aggressively from all types of intruders (Butchart, 1999; Butchart *et al.*, 1999). However, there are only three reports available stating their behaviour towards some species of birds entering their territory (Mathew, 1964; Chattopadhyay, 1981; Ramachandran, 1998). Here we record the interesting defensive behaviour of BWJ against intruders of five different species of birds in their breeding territory.

## Observation

We observed these aggressive behaviours of BWJ at different wetlands (Savli pond, Harni pond, Timbi Irrigation Reservoir and Mahi River) in and around Vadodara from June 2018 to

## Bronze-winged Jacana....

July 2019. On 24 June 2018, at 13.30 h we observed a male BWJ chasing away a Pheasant-tailed Jacana (PTJ) *Hydrophasianus chirurgus* at Mahi River (22.35° N, 73.04° E), near Kotna Village, Vadodara district, Gujarat. Later, on August 10, 2018, while birding at Savli Pond (22.56° N, 73.22° E), again in Vadodara district, one Grey-headed Swamphen *Porphyrio poliocephalus* was observed entering the territory of BWJ at 16.08 h. The male BWJ straight away chased the Swamphen. In both cases, the male was incubating and protecting the eggs.

During the next breeding season, on 18 May 2019, again while birding at Mahi River near Kotna Village, we observed similar behaviour by male BJW twice but this time it was chasing away Lesser Whistling Duck *Dendrocygna javanica* at 08.53 h (Figure 1) while it just gave an alarm call to one Indian Spot-billed Duck *Anas poeocilo rhynga* at 09.20 h (Figure 2). The male BWJ was incubating its egg. The next day one Indian Jungle Crow *Corvus macrorhynchos* was chased away by the same male BWJ at the same location.

On two other occasions, we observed both the male and the female BWJ defending their territory from the intruders. Firstly, on 20 May 2019 at 08.17 h while foraging on the bank of Mahi River near Kotna Village, when a Grey-headed Swamphen came closer to them, both started calling rapidly and then chased away the Grey-headed Swamphen (Figure 3). One of these BWJ even pecked on the tail of the Grey-headed Swamphen (Figure 4). Secondly, on 20 June 2019 at 08.14 h, at the same place we observed combat between a pair of BJW and a pair of PTJ. On this occasion both the pairs started chasing and pecking each other alternately: i.e. first one individual of BJW flew and pecked one PTJ. In turn, another individual of PTJ flew and pecked the second BWJ (Figure 5). This territorial fight continued for about 16 minutes. Through our observations and literature survey, we learned that a male and female of the BWJ protected their territory.

Overall, out of 57 observations (Figure 6), the BWJ showed territorial behaviour on 24 occasions (42.10%) against Lesser Whistling Duck, on seven occasions (12.28%) against Indian Spot-billed Duck, on 20 occasions (35.08%) against Grey-headed Swamphen, on three occasions (5.26%) against PTJ, and three occasions against Indian Jungle Crow (5.26%). From these observations, it can be said that in this polyandrous species, the male is mainly involved in defense of the nest. In conclusion, in the majority of the attacks the involvement of male is more (53 instances) than the male and female combine (four instances) and no involvement of female separately.

Some behavioural responses by the males of BWJ may be divided into three different patterns.

**Alarm call:** While incubating and foraging, if the male finds any threat in its territory, it stands up, starts calling “seek-seek-seek” and doesn’t stop until the threat has gone away. Also, it sometimes opens the wings and starts flapping to warn the intruders. The interesting observation was that whenever villagers came with their cattle near its territory, it started calling but did not try to chase or peck them.

**Chasing:** When the alarm call doesn’t work, it moves closer to the invader while continuously calling. In the end, it starts chasing the invader and forces it to leave its territory. The species that were chased away are Lesser Whistling duck, Grey-headed Swamphen, PTJ, and House Crow. We also observed that chasing sometimes depended on the size of the intruder. When the intruders were comparatively smaller, then only the male tried to chase them away but when the intruder was bigger in size it just gave an alarm call. For example, when a pair of Lesser Whistling Ducks came closer to its territory; the male BWJ chased and pecked them until they left the territory (Figure 1) while in the case of the Indian Spot-billed Duck entering its territory it just gave a high pitched alarm call. When it did not work it started foraging normally in its territory.

**Fights:** When the first two strategies did not work and the intruder did not leave, then the BWJ would attempt to fight with the intruder. The male BWJ aggressively started attacking the intruder with the help of its beak and feet until the intruder left the territory. We observed such type of aggressive fights with Lesser Whistling Duck (Figure 1), Grey-headed Swamphen (Figure 4) and PTJ (Figure 5), and sometime with other BWJ as well. On one occasion, the male was observed plucking the wing and tail feathers of the Lesser Whistling Duck and Grey-headed Swamphen. Sometimes such fights became aggressive causing injury to one of them. On 24 June 2018, we saw one severe fight between a male BWJ and one PTJ. In this fight BWJ aggressively approached the PTJ, pecking its beak in the neck of PTJ and ultimately hurting it.

## Discussion

The male BWJ is known to have a territory of about 0.2 hectares (approx.) defended strongly from any bird other than his mate (Mathew, 1964) while the territory of female overlaps with one to four male territories (Butchart, 2000). In the present study, we try to measure the territory of 2-3 males around 0.23 to 0.27 hectares overlapping each others territory. While defending offspring from the predators, females assist males and both aggressively attack the possible predators of their eggs and chicks (Stephens, 1984b). Behavioural observation on interspecific aggression by males and females





Figure 2



Figure 3



Bronze-winged Jacana....



Figure 4



Figure 5

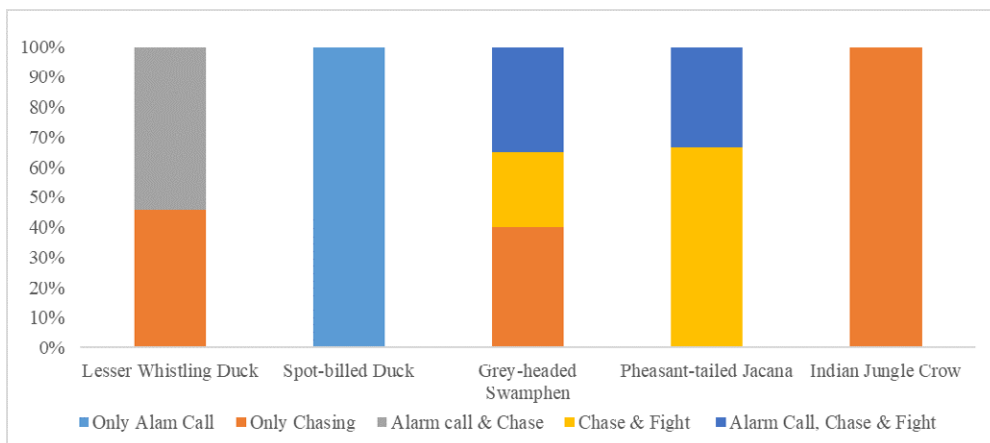


Figure 6

and the time spent by them in attacking predators to their offspring is reported in detail by Jenni and Betts, (1978). Mathew, (1964) has described the defensive displays of both the sexes of BWJ. He states that during such displays the male shows threat postures, stands with stretched neck, open wings, and does furious pecking while the female produces a wheezy piping call and restlessly flies about. Sometimes, the male fakes injury poses during such fights. Stephens (1984b) had described such behaviour as “swoop” and “threats”.

In the present study, we have divided territorial defence into three types: giving alarm calls, chasing, and fighting. From the studies on the competition for territories by BWJ, it has been noted that the territorial males spend more time defending their territory and sometimes display hovering flights towards predators during the breeding season. Nevertheless, it has been reported that territorial male considerably responds more towards other male intruders while female responds more towards other female intruders (Butchart, 1999; Butchart *et al.*, 1999).

Though, territorial male and female BWJ protect their territory from others of the same species (Butchart, 2000), there are only a few reports of their behaviour against other species. Mathew, (1964) reports that the female protects her territory by chasing away other birds such as White-breasted Waterhen *Amaurornis phoenicurus*, Indian Pond Heron *Ardeola grayii* and Lesser Whistling Duck. On one occasion it has been observed to safeguard an injured chick from species like Cotton Teal *Nettapus coromandelianus*, Lesser Whistling Duck, PTJ, White-throated Kingfisher *Halcyon smyrnensis* and Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis* (Chattopadhyay, 1981). Ramachandran, (1998) reported that during one occasion in defence of its chick, the BWJ actually assaulted a Western Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus* and on another occasion, they were found chasing away the Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*. Such type of antipredator behaviour has also been reported in Northern Jacana *Jacana spinosa* against the American Purple Gallinule *Gallinula martinica*, which is a predator of its eggs (Stephens, 1984a, 1984b). Here, we report interspecific territorial behaviour of BWJ against Lesser Whistling Duck, Indian Spot-billed Duck, Grey-headed Swamphen, PTJ and Indian Jungle Crow.

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# Oriental Magpie Robin (*Copsychus saularis*) preying on Northern House Gecko (*Hemidactylus flaviviridis*)

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Fig. 1

## Introduction

The Oriental Magpie Robin (*Copsychus saularis*) is a small passerine bird that resides in tropical southern Asia from Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and further east to Indonesia, Thailand, South China, Malaysia, Singapore and the Philippines (Grimmett et al. 1998). It is a common bird of forests, agricultural fields, urban gardens, and forests and feeds on insects and other invertebrates. It is a sexual-dimorphic bird. The male has black upperparts, head and throat apart from a white shoulder patch and long tail. However, when the females are morphologically similar to the males, the black colour of the male is replaced with a grey colour in females (Ali & Ripley 2001). Adult birds usually feed various invertebrates and vertebrates, including insects, ants, centipedes, geckos, and lizards (Sreekar 2010). Here we present an incidence of gecko feeding by an Oriental magpie robin at Jambughoda Wildlife Sanctuary, Panchmahal, Gujarat, India.

## Observation

On 17<sup>th</sup> July 2022, we are visiting Jambughoda Wildlife Sanctuary, Gujarat. During the return, we show a small black-coloured bird chasing prey at Bhat village (22°24'20.82"N; 73°37'23.04"E), the area of the edge of the Sanctuary. There was a male Oriental Magpie-robin chasing something on the ground. Having caught it, we realised it was a lizard – it looked like the strategy of losing the wriggling tail. Having the lizard securely between its bill, the bird it's very vigorous in trashing the lizard, the bird whipping its head from side to side, with the prey held firmly between its bill (Fig. 1). And unlike other birds that would smash the prey (Fig. 2).

At last satisfied that the lizard was dead, the bird stopped its side-to-side whipping motion, thus showing me his prey. Then, finally, the oriental magpie engulfed the gecko. On careful observation, the prey identifies Northern house gecko (*Hemidactylus flaviviridis*), with the help of photographs and literature (Daniel 2002). However, the oriental magpie robin is known to prey on lizards such as Brooks gecko *Hemidactylus cf brookii*, Northern house gecko *Hemidactylus flaviviridis* and Bark gecko *Hemidactylus leschenaultii* (Sumithran 1982; Saxena 1998; Sreekar 2010) and White-spotted Skink *Lygosoma albopunctata* (Mahapatra et al. 2020).



Fig. 2

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## Nesting behavior of Purple Sunbird (*Cinnyris asiaticus*)

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### Introduction

Purple Sunbird (*Cinnyris asiaticus*) is a widespread species of Sunbird in the Indian Subcontinent. They are sexually dimorphic birds. The males have an iridescent purple body with a small bill, blackish-brown iris, black belly, red chest band, and black legs. The male also has a short-term "Eclipse plumage" where most of the iridescence on the wings and back is replaced by yellow and gray feathers. The females have the same characteristics as males, except that they are entirely yellow or plain gray colored with no iridescence whatsoever (Grimmett et al., 2011). They are very protective parents when it comes to nesting, both parents come together to fight off any intruder who comes near the nest (example - Indian Palm-Squirrel or Purple-rumped Sunbird).

### Observations

The Sunbird nest was observed in Ahmedabad, Gujarat, India. The nest was in front of my house in an urban environment. It was observed from the last week of February till the 20<sup>th</sup> March, 2021. The nest was found with eggs in February end and at that point in time, the construction of the nest was completed. The Female used to incubate the eggs for hours while the male made hundreds of trips during the day to and from the nest. The male carried a few nest materials and food.

In a week or so after incubation, the two chicks hatched. Their sizes were quite small at that time, so small that they couldn't even be seen from the opening. Both the parents took turns feeding the chicks in a time gap of 10 minutes or so. The chicks were observed to get digested food from their parents.

When the chicks were two weeks old, they started having a red mouth with a yellow lining which was mostly open for food, the neck was still red as the feathering hadn't developed, and the eyes still weren't open at that time. The parents gave a short and sharp "cheert" call first and then arrived at the nest with food. During this time, the female used to take the fecal matter away from the nest, it was white. The Female used to sit in the nest overnight to protect the chicks while the male resting on a nearby tree. In the next few days (March 11 and 12), the chicks opened their eyes and started to develop yellow feathers on their body. They could pop their head out of the nest and do some movements with the bill (flicking the tongue and opening bills). As they grew, the adults arrived in the nest less frequently to feed than before.

On March 13, approximately two weeks after hatching, the chicks started vocalizing. Their body was becoming more and more active as they frequently flapped their wings and started using their claws too. The molting was going on smoothly and



## Purple Sunbird....



their bellies could now be seen in prominent yellow colors.

March 14 was the day when the nest was changed a bit as the original nest had fallen on the ground due to unknown reasons. The same nest was sewn from the base after 2-3 hours of falling. It was fixed on the same tree. The male used to vocalize a lot before feeding the female, while the female fed the chicks more than the male. The females took more time (20-25 seconds) to feed the chicks, while the male averaged a lesser time (10 seconds).

On days from March 15 to 17, the feeding process slowed even more as chicks grew. The fecal sac was still taken out of the nest by the female. The male wasn't observed emptying the fecal sac from the nest. The chicks can vocalize more prominently now while their bodies have almost completely feathered with olive-yellow feathers. The approximate size of the chicks is 5 cm after almost 2.5 to 3 weeks after hatching. They are getting stronger now and with each visit by their parents, they can sway the nest back and forth with their excited wing and body movements.

From March 17 till their last day (March 20), the growth process reduced as their final days in the nest were closing in. Their vocalizations became very sharp and frequent. The parents now wanted the chicks to be independent so they limited their visiting time by a lot. By March 19, the chicks had already started to leave the nest; by the very next day, the chicks and parents had abandoned the nest completely. In the end, the female cleaned the nest up a little bit before leaving.

**Food** - The main diet consisted of digested food until the very last 7-8 days of leaving the nest. Usually, the male carried larger-sized food than the female. The undigested food provided to the chicks consisted of arachnid-spiders, an unidentified green insect (may be a queen ant), a white worm/maggot, and a brown insect.

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# Black-headed Ibis & White-throated Kingfisher feeding activities in open gutters and garbage dumping sites in Shyam Nagar (Kamrej), Surat, Gujarat

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## Introduction

Black-headed ibis (*Threskiornis melanocephalus*), also known as the Oriental white ibis, Indian white ibis, and black-necked ibis. The Black-headed Ibis is one of several large waterbird species in south and southeast Asia. White-throated kingfisher (*Halcyon smyrnensis*), also known as the white-breasted kingfisher. The White-breasted Kingfisher is a common species found in plains and lower hills all over India. Black-headed ibis is categorized in "Schedule IV" under the Indian Wildlife Protection Act (1972), while as 'Near Threatened' by IUCN Red List" because of its decreasing population status in the last few decades (BirdLife International, 2016).

## Observation & Results

Open gutters and garbage dumping sites are located at Shyam Nagar (21.263085°N, 72.948087°E), Kamrej, Surat. Open gutters and garbage dumping sites have a variety of anthropogenic disturbances like vehicle noise pollution, urbanization, Human interferences etc. Open gutters and garbage dumping sites are visited by Black-headed Ibis during their breeding season only,

so Black-headed Ibis are considered residential migratory birds in Surat (South Gujarat). White-throated kingfisher very common and permanent resident bird in Shyam Nagar, Kamrej, Surat.

Six pairs of Black-headed Ibis and 2 pairs of White-throated Kingfishers (Male & Female) are found feeding in Open gutters and garbage dumping sites. And other birds, such that Common Myna, Indian Pond Heron, Cattle Egret, Intermediate Egret, Rocky Pigeon, House Crow, Red-vented Bulbul, Indian Robin, House Sparrow, etc, are found in Open gutters and garbage dumping sites. The main factor in selecting Open gutters and garbage dumping sites was the best food availability.

**Black-headed Ibis:** Black-headed Ibis choose a nesting site after carefully assessing the nearby foraging area. Black-headed ibis forages in a range of natural and man-made habitats. Microhabitat preference of black-headed ibis changed seasonally (Chaudhury & Koli 2018). Seasonal wetlands were the most preferred habitat, likely to provide optimal feeding ground in the form of the large marshy open area than perennial wetlands. Using sewage lines throughout all seasons may be because of high chironomid larvae and oligochaetes density, which is often close to vegetation or in moist soil in standing water (Frederick & Bildstein 1992; Safran *et al.* 2000; Sundar 2006). Seasonal water level variations in different habitats may cause variations in abundance, foraging, and diet of large waterbirds owing to changes in the availability of resources (Kushlan 1981; González 1997; Sundar 2006).

Therefore, few encounters in monsoon season may be due to high water availability throughout the area, which increases population dispersion. Grazing areas, sewage lines, and crop fields provided supporting habitats in monsoon when marshy open areas around wetlands become submerged. Municipal garbage, along with rotten vegetable matter and carcass also provided additional feeding sites for black-headed ibis in the study area (Chaudhury & Koli 2016).

**White-throated Kingfisher:** This bird is well known for its versatile food and feeding habits (Ali & Ripley 1983, Mukherjee, 1975). Large insects, fish, Earthworm (Yahya & Shahla 1991), Crab (Asokan *et al.* 2009), frogs, lizards, geckos, common skinks, young birds, and mice form a major part of their diet in India (Ali, 1996).

## Black-headed Ibis....

The White-throated Kingfisher feed on various Arthropods, Amphibians, and Reptiles (Asokan *et al.* (2009). They benefit agriculturists by taking various insects such as grasshoppers, crickets, centipedes, mantises, scarabs and other beetles, ants, winged termites, locusts and dragonflies etc (Islam & Kamruzzaman 2008). Thus, they keep checking the populations of various insect pests of crops. So they are also known as insectivorous birds.



White-throated Kingfisher food consisted largely of insects and secondarily of fishes. Moreover, they mentioned that the food also consisted of frogs and lizards (*Mabuia* and *Calotes*, etc.), mice and birds like fledgling sparrows, adult white-eye and munias and red-wattled lapwing chick (Ali & Ripley 1983)

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## Interesting Bird sighting of Danta Forest Range, Banaskantha

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During one of the treks around the Danta Range on June 24, 2022, we noted some interesting birds in just 1 sq. km of the patch (Table). Some of the birds were not reported earlier from the range. The Mt. Abu range is the closest reporting location for all the birds listed below. The Indian Blackbird (*Turdus simillimus*) has been reported for the first time from Danta range, while the Orange-headed Thrush (*Geokichla citrina*) has been reported from the Jessore Sloth Bear

Sanctuary (Jani, 2017). Indian Pitta (*Pitta brachyura*) is a monsoon visitor in north Gujarat's forest region (Ganpule *et al.*, 2022). Most of the birds listed prefer forest areas with high tree densities.

Danta forest range belonging to Banaskantha District is part of the Aravalli biogeographic region (Rodgers & Panwar 1988), geographically sharing proximity with the Jessore Sloth Bear Sanctuary and the Balam Ambaji Wildlife Sanctuary. The Aravalli region of Gujarat, bordering Rajasthan, includes vegetation of dry deciduous, semi-deciduous and evergreen species (Champion & Seth 1968). The majority of the tree species in the observation area included Jamun tree *Syzygium cumini*, Banyan tree *Ficus benghalensis*, Peepal tree *Ficus religiosa*, Mahua *Madhuca longifolia*, Bamboo *Poaceae* sp., Palash *Buteo monosperma*, and Neem *Azadirachta indica*.

### List of birds recorded at Danta forest, Banaskantha, Gujarat.

Species	Count
Indian Blackbird <i>Turdus simillimus</i>	2
Black-hooded Oriole <i>Oriolus xanthornus</i>	10
Indian Pitta <i>Pitta brachyura</i>	20+
Orange-headed Thrush <i>Geokichla citrina</i>	2
Black-naped Monarch <i>Hypothymis azurea</i>	2
Yellow-crowned Woodpecker <i>Leiopicus mahrattensis</i>	1
Indian Paradise Flycatcher <i>Terpsiphone paradisi</i>	6
Indian Golden Oriole <i>Oriolus kundoo</i>	2
Indian Gray Hornbill <i>Ocyrocus birostris</i>	2
Brown-headed Barbet <i>Psilopogon zeylanicus</i>	5

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## Sighting of Long-billed Dowitcher (*Limnodromus scolopaceus*) at Kumbharwada Wetland, Bhavnagar

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**Payal Langaliya:** Bhavnagar.

**Bhartendu Dave:** Bhavnagar.



On the morning of 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2023, we were doing our birdwatching at Kumbharwada wetland Near Bhavnagar city. The first author sighted a different-looking wader through binocular foraging in a swamp area of wetland. We took a photograph of it. After seeing the photographs, we concluded that it looks like Dowitcher but cannot finalize which one. Then we send photos to senior birdwatchers Jaidevbhai Dhadhal, Kandarp Andharia and Prasad Ganpule and confirmed the bird as Long-billed Dowitcher. We are delighted to find this rarity in the Kumbharwada wetland, Bhavnagar. Subsequently, many birdwatchers from Bhavnagar and other places visited the Kumbharwada wetland and observed this bird at the Same place up to 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2023. (ebird website).

Referring to its status and distribution in the world 'Fairly

common breeding in arctic beyond tree limit usually near fresh water: in eastern Siberia from the Yana east to western Alaska and north-west Canada. Non-breeding in freshwater wetlands south from California, Virginia, Gulf Coast and Central America to Panama; rarely Hawaii. Regular vagrant to Europe and much less commonly as far east as India' (Chandler 2009). There are a few records of Long-billed Dowitcher in India, in 10 different places (ebird website). In Gujarat, this record is the third one. Earlier Sightings (two) from Marine National Park, near Jamnagar (Froster & Lindholm 2008) and Khijadiya in 2012 (Unpublished photo of Single bird by Laurens Steijn- see Indian Birds 8 (4): 101-103, Photos available) (Ganpule 2016). So, its status and distribution in Gujarat is "Vagrant-Winter. Isolated records from coastal parts of Saurashtra (Ganpule et al. 2022).

Kumbharwada wetland of Bhavnagar is the host of thousands of resident and wintering birds every year, various species of wetland birds, like Geese, Pochards, Ducks, Storks, Teals, wintering raptors and many species of waders. Wetland is degraded by human interference. So, in our view, this wetland should be declared a Ramsar site as it is also eligible.

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## Sighting of Grey Hornbill (*Ocyrceros birostris*) in Bandiya Beli, Mandav Reserve Forest

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An Indian Grey Hornbill (*Ocyrceros birostris*) was sighted for the first time at Bandiya Beli, part of Mandav Reserved Forest under Surendranagar division, on May 15, 2022, the day after Cyclone Tauktae hit Gujarat on May 14, 2022. The first author made the first sighting, and later confirmed by the second author. The hornbill was seen at the same place for three

consecutive days. During this period, the bird preferred to sit on Banyan (*Ficus bengalensis*) and Peepal (*Ficus tsiela*) trees. Most of the time, birds were observed eating the fruits that were lying on the ground under these two trees. The sighting was made for two consecutive days, while no sighting was made on the third day. Bandiya Beli patch of forest houses a



dense canopy with huge trees amidst the scrubby forest of Mandav Reserved Forest. The forest of Bandiya Beli is near Thangadh, geographically centered between Rajkot and Surendranagar city. The appearance of this bird at this place is an exclusive sighting that has never been reported earlier.



Despite many searches, it was not found in the surrounding area. About a month and a half later, on June 28, it was seen on

a pile of harvested groundnut crops in a groundnut field adjacent to the reserved forest, about three km northeast of the first location. where the bird used to fly from three trees, Peepal (*Ficus tsiela*), Khijdo (*Prosopis cineraria*), and Neem (*Azadirachta indica*), to the pile and feed the groundnut seeds. After staying there for four consecutive days, the bird was nowhere to be seen.

About a year later, in March 2022, a hornbill was reported to have appeared in Jasdan, Rajkot. Apart from this, a few birds were released in February 2022 in Gir National Park by Wildlife Division Sasan, Junagadh. Before these two occasions, this bird had been seen in the Surendranagar. In any case, this bird may have drifted in this direction due to the storm. And the possibility that the bird seen in Jasdan and roaming around in this area is the same individual cannot be ruled out. The Indian Grey Hornbill is expanding its territory in parts of Gujarat, including parts where it was historically reported and new territory where tree density has increased over the year. □

## Sighting of Brown-breasted Flycatcher (*Muscicapa muttui*) at Sundarvan, Ahmedabad

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### Introduction

The Brown-breasted Flycatcher is a small passerine bird in the flycatcher family Muscipidae. The species breeds in North Eastern India, Central and Southern China and Northern Burma and Thailand, and migrates to Southern India and Sri Lanka in winter (Birds of Gujarat 2023). Dull but rather cute flycatcher with large white-framed eyes. Dark brown above and white below with a gray head, brown flanks, and two distinct dark 'mustache' lines (eBird, 2023).

### Observations

On 17<sup>th</sup> February, 2023 (Thursday) at around 3 pm, on a routine Bird watching at Sundarvan- Nature Discovery Centre, Ahmedabad, Brown-breasted Flycatcher (*Muscicapa muttui*) was sighted sallying for insects in an area (23.026° N 72.521° E; 60m above msl) within a radius of 5 m of its perch on a dead tree (~1.5m perching height) situated in a small woodland area surrounded with Tamarind (*Tamarindus indica*), Asopalav (*Polyalthia longifolia*) and Fishtail Palm (*Caryota urens*). Earlier, it was recorded on March 03, 2018, in an area of Anandnagar Road, Satellite, Ahmedabad (Mukherjee et al. 2020). There are a few other reported sightings of the species in Gujarat state: from Kachchh (Tiwari & Varu 2010), Saurashtra (Varu & Zala 2010), Girnar forest in Junagadh (Mashru 2014; Singhal 2018), Gandhinagar (Mashru 2016), Jamnagar (Sabhaya et al. 2017), Thol Bird Sanctuary, Ahmedabad (Trivedi 2018) and Rajkot District (Sureja et al. 2022).

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## Sighting of Red-necked Phalarope (*Phalaropus robustus*) at Nalsarovar Bird Sanctuary

**Kamarudin Alvani:** Vekaria, Nal Sarovar.

**Ramajhan Kasam Sama:** Vekaria, Nal Sarovar.



phalarope is a least concern species (Birdlife International 2021). The second author had seen the species earlier in 2018 and 2019. (Ganpule 2016) stated in Gujarat. It is an uncommon winter visitor. It is regularly found from Salts pans near Jamnagar. But scattered sightings from coastal areas in Saurashtra and Kachchh region. Red-necked phalarope several times in the months of August to September. A few sightings records of Red-necked Phalaropes are given here in table.

On 28 August 2021, around 13:15 hours. While visiting Nal Sarovar Bird Sanctuary, Gujarat. We were searching for the birds near Lasa beyt when we spotted many rarities there. We were surprised to see three individuals of Red-necked Phalarope (*Phalaropus robustus*), and photographs. Red-necked

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Ganpule, P. 2016. The Birds of Gujarat: Status and Distribution. 8(3)-12(4): 2-40 □

### Details of sightings records of Red-necked Phalarope at Nalsarovar

No.	Date of sighting	Observer	Remarks
1	20 August 2018	Devratsinh Mori & Kasam sama	18 individuals were seen
2	20 September 2018	Viral Patel & Pankaj Maheria	OBI
3	23 September 2018	Sunil Kini & Ramajhan sama	3 individuals were seen
4	31 August 2019	Kasam Sama & Ramajhan Sama	12 individuals were seen
5	26 August 2021	Author's sighting	This work



## Comments on Distribution and breeding of Orange-headed Thrush (*Geokichala citrina*) in Saurashtra by Rathod et al. (2022).

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**Pilu Sitapara:** Rajkot

**Ashok Mashru:** Rajkot



Recently a research note was published by Rathod et al (2022) entitled 'Distribution and breeding of Orange-headed Thrush *Geokichala citrina* in Saurashtra'. The authors provided 22 sighting records of the Orange-headed Thrush from various locations of Saurashtra and an observation on the breeding of the species from Bhutnath Mahadev Temple, Halenda, Rajkot.

Earlier, the first breeding record of the Orange-headed Thrush (*Geokichala citrina*) in Saurashtra from the protected area of

Gir Wildlife Sanctuary & National Park (Vaja & Vaghasia 2016), and the second record from the protected area of Paniya Wildlife Sanctuary (Bhatt 2017). However, the present record of the breeding of Orange-headed Thrush from Bhutnath Mahadev Temple, Halenda, Rajkot, is the third report on the breeding of the species from the Saurashtra region. Somehow, Rathod et al. (2022) missed referring to a report by Bhatt (2017) on the breeding record of Orange-headed Thrush from the Saurashtra region. The authors regret not referring to the literature, especially Bhatt (2017).

Hence, several sighting records of Orange-headed Thrush from Saurashtra show this species widely occurs in the Saurashtra area, not only, but it breeding well in this part of the state.

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□

## Sighting of Black-capped Kingfisher (*Halcyon pileata*) from Charakla Salt pans, Devbhumi Dwarka

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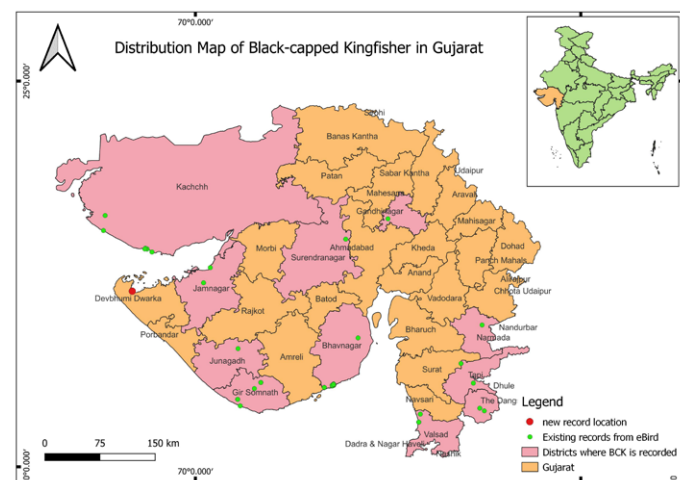


Black-capped Kingfisher *Halcyon pileata* is mainly a coastal kingfisher found in India along the coasts of Gujarat in the west and up to the coasts of West Bengal in the east but has been reported from 19 States (including union territories) (eBird 2022). It has been described to often move upriver, above tidal limits, and sometimes farther inland along larger rivers in forested habitats (Grimmett et al. 1998; Ali 2002; Rasmussen et al. 2005).

Recently, we made an eight days birding trip covering Nalsarovar, Little Rann of Kutch, Jamnagar and Porbandar. During the trip, while discussing with fellow birders we learned about Charakla salt pans and the bird diversity it hosts.

## Black-capped Kingfisher...

We decided to try our luck for Eared Grebe (*Podiceps nigricollis*), which is reported from Charakla salt pans. On 29th December 2022, we visited the salt pans. Not aware of the location, we started scouting the Northern section of the pans and started looking for Eared Grebe (*Podiceps nigricollis*). We searched for approximately 3 hours but couldn't find the grebe and had reached the end of the pan's Northern section. Disappointed, we decided to take another route to the main road expecting some new sightings on the way and later searching the southern section of the pans. Shortly after we took the turn and started driving, we saw a Kingfisher sitting on the edge of the mud road. We stopped immediately but the bird flew and perched on the nearest Mangrove adjacent to the road. Realizing the bird as Black-Capped Kingfisher (Figure 1), we did not step out of the vehicle and photographed the individual from inside. After we took a few record shots, the individual flew deep inside the mangroves. This sighting forms the first official record of a Black-Capped Kingfisher from Charakla Salt Pans and Devbhumi Dwarka District.



Black-Capped Kingfisher falls under the Vulnerable Category of the IUCN Red List (BirdLife International 2023). According to Ganpule (2016), Black-Capped Kingfisher is uncommon to rare residents and local migrants in Gujarat. After the sighting at Charakla Salt Pans, we decided to explore iNaturalist and eBird and study the sightings of the kingfisher. iNaturalist has 103 observations from India, while eBird has 4223 sightings reports from 19 states and Union territories. Although major sightings are from Coastal areas, many records are from mainland India. From Gujarat, there are a total of 64 records from 11 districts ranging from 2002 to 2022 (Table 1 & Figure 2). Out of the 64 records, around 27 records are from the Bhavnagar district, of which 22 records are from the year 2022 (probably of the same few individuals).

A systematic survey covering all the coastal areas having mangroves might bring credible information on the occurrence and movements of the species. The species is threatened, and identifying the mangrove patches and inland riverine forest patches where the species occurs and its protection might help avoid future local extinction of the species.

### District-wise sightings of Black-capped Kingfisher (eBird data) from Gujarat

District	Year	Number of Sightings
Bhavnagar	2019	1
	2020	2
	2021	2
	2022	22
Dang	2018	2
Gandhinagar	2018	1
Gir Somnath	2016	3
	2017	4
	2018	5
Jamnagar	2008	1
	2022	1
Junagadh	2018	1
Kachchh	2002	1
	2009	1
	2012	2
	2014	3
Narmada	2019	1
Surendranagar	2015	1
Tapi	2017	3
	2018	1
Valsad	2014	1
	2021	3
	2022	2

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## Nesting of Little Ringed Plover in Kutch-After a Long Time?

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On 27th March 2021 myself and a friend were visiting a recently discovered archaeological site near Khatiya village in Lakhpat taluka of Kutch district. We took the Bhuj-Ravapar-Valka-Khatiya road to reach our target place. Between Valka and Junachay villages, the road crosses the 'Nara River'. While crossing a concrete bridge over the 'Nara River' (23°36'0.93"N; 69° 1'19.99"E), we observed 3 small chicks and 2 adults of Little Ringed Plover (*Charadrius dubius jerdoni*). The quick movements of 3 small chicks chasing their parents attracted our attention (Fig. 1). The major part of the river bed was dry soil with exposed salt. There was a long stream-like stretch of stranded water with reeds on the edge where 3 chicks and 2 adults started feeding actively. The Nara River is a seasonal river that originates from the hilly terrain of Gugaliana Rakhil, Paneli, and Valka Villages and flows North-East to meet the Nara Check dam and then to Banni region in the Great Rann of Kutch. Little Ringed Plover is a smaller plover and a widespread resident breeder in India. It is assessed as Least Concerned by IUCN and protected under Schedule-IV of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972. There are 3 subspecies of Little Ringed Plover, the one found in India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan to South-East Asia is *Charadrius dubius jerdoni* (Legge, 1880).

Ali (1945) mentioned in 'The Birds of Kutch reported that the species breeds in Kutch. According to Ali (1945), 'Lester records

taking an egg from the Khari River at Godsar in May (1896). The season normally ranges between March and May, but Sir G. Archer collected a c/3 (incubated) at Khari Rohar on July 12 (1939). The eggs, usually four, are laid among the shingle in a dry riverbed.' As per the senior birdwatcher of Kutch, and second author Mr. Shantilal Varu (who is known to maintain systematic records of new sightings of birds and their breeding in Kutch), there has been no record of the breeding of Little Ringed Plover in the last 40 years or more in Kutch. It is, therefore, likely that the present record may be after a long time, probably after reported by Ali (1945). It is also likely that its breeding might have been overlooked by birdwatchers to date, or there is no published record of the breeding of this species after 1939. Our observations on the breeding of Little Ringed Plover i.e., 3 chicks, in a dry river bed in the month of March are consistent with documentation by Ali (1945) on the breeding habitat and the season in Kutch.

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## Short Birding Notes



### White-winged Black Tern (*Chlidonias leucopeterus*) near Rajkot

I was looking forward to this month to find this bird, as White-winged Black Tern (*Chlidonias leucopeterus*). It was only possible to identify it in breeding plumage. It is hard to spot it between flocks of Whiskered Terns (*Chlidonias hybrida*) as it is of the same size and merges almost with the breeding plumage of the Whiskered Terns, I took this at Nyari Dam on 10 April 2021 hope this meets the short note description, not that good on writing notes I always have to take help from Prasad Ganpule, Editor, Flamingo Gujarat.

**Rajen Karia:** Rajkot. dealwise99@yahoo.co.in

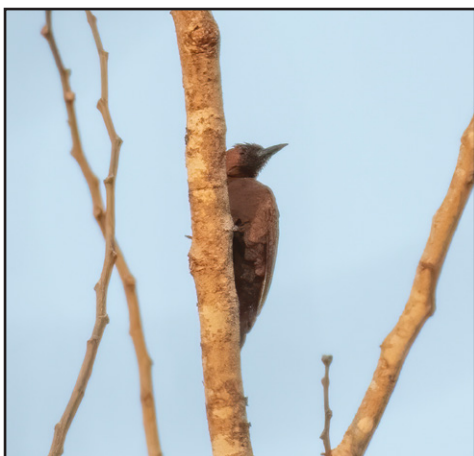


### Sighting of Mongolian Short-toed Lark *Calandrella dukhunensis* at Kachchh

Mongolian short-toed Lark or Sykes's Short-toed Lark (*Calandrella dukhunensis*). Earlier, it was considered a subspecies of the Greater Short-toed Lark (*Calandrella brachydactyla*), but now, it elevated to a separate species status. Mongolian Short-toed lark can be separated by a short, conical bill and the colour of the bird is warmer brown with a rust-colour tinge on the breast and underparts, there is so much confusion in the identification of this rarity. there are very less confirmed records of Mongolian Short-toed Lark in Gujarat.

I was lucky to confirm clearly by world main Lark experts Per Alstrom and Hadoram Shirihai, at the Servo Dhandh, Nr. Hodko village, Banni. I was photographing birds with my son Nirav Parekh on 6th November 2022 there was a big scattered flock of Bimaculated Lark (*Melanocorypha bimaculata*). Generally, a very small group of 2-5 birds has been seen in Kutch but this time, there was a very big flock of Bimaculated Larks, around 70-80 birds, which were feeding on small plants and at the edge of the water in wet, muddy soil. the birds were feeding in groups and after some time flock was changing spots nearby. As one bird flies, all birds fly. I saw this flock from 6 to 14th November continuously at the long wide edge of Servo and clicked many photographs. While checking photographs after transferring to my laptop, I found some interesting birds which were looking quite different from Bimaculated Larks as well as Greater Short-toed Larks. (See comparison picture: Bimaculated Lark [Top], Greater short-toed lark [Middle], and Mongolian Short-toed lark [Lower]) colour of the bird was warmer brown with a rust-coloured tinge on the breast and underparts, there were at least 3-4 birds that clicked at different times from that flock. while transferring data from Oriental bird images to e bird/maculatory library, my picture of 2014 was classified and uploaded on ebird as a Mongolian short-toed lark which was clicked at Naliya grassland Kutch.

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### Rufous Woodpecker (*Micropeternus brachyulus*) at Vandsa National Park

On 19 March 2023, during Dang bird festival, we were birdwatching in Vandsa National Park (VNP). Birds were more active due to the rain previous day. Around 8'o clock, we reached a lake surrounded by tall trees where a Brown-cheeked Fulvetta (*Alcippe poioicephala*) was calling from the top of trees more than usual. So, I was scanning tree canopies to find them. I heard a distinct call of an unknown woodpecker between a Fulvetta calls that drew my attention. Scanning in that direction with binoculars, I saw two Golden Backed Woodpeckers (greater / lesser?) on a tree. Another birdwatcher Sabana pointed out the third woodpecker with those two. I clicked it and checked the photo It was a Rufous Woodpecker (*Micropeternus brachyulus*). I managed to click 2-3 more clicks but it flew away. We also saw an Emerald Dove, Forest Wagtail, Scimitar Babbler, and Malabar Trogon during the same trek. Rufous woodpecker is known to be in VNP, but its sighting is notable.

**Akshay Trivedi:** Rajkot. akshaytrivedi87@yahoo.com





### Sightings of Olive-backed Pipit (*Anthus hodgsoni*) in Bhavnagar.

On 18th February, 2023, I along with Meghna, Himanshu and Dhayey went on birding at Malnath hills, Bhavnagar. We stopped at one point near a water body and we saw two pipits on land both were busy feeding, I photographed both and it was looking different from tree pipits, and with their black and white ear coverts, less streaking on upperparts and greenish olive in colours we identified them as an Olive-backed Pipits (*Anthus hodgsoni*) in the past on October 2019, I saw two individuals with Vivek Upadhyay at same mountain range but an at a different location.

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### Rain Quail (*Coturnix coramandelica*) in Hazira, Surat

Generally, I go bird watching in Hazira Area in the morning and photograph all day. On 28 May 2021, near the paddy field of Damka Area, I saw a water cock and did some photography. During this I heard a *tweet tweet...* sound and was slightly excited and it felt like I had listened to that sound of a bird before also. So immediately, I sat near a tree and started observing the sound from where it was coming. After almost 30-40 minutes, I bird caught my eye. After identifying the bird, I was really happy and was bit surprised as this bird was observed for the first time in Hazira area., It was a Rain Quail (*Coturnix coramandelica*). I got a chance to click a few photographs and shoot some videos, which I am sharing with you.

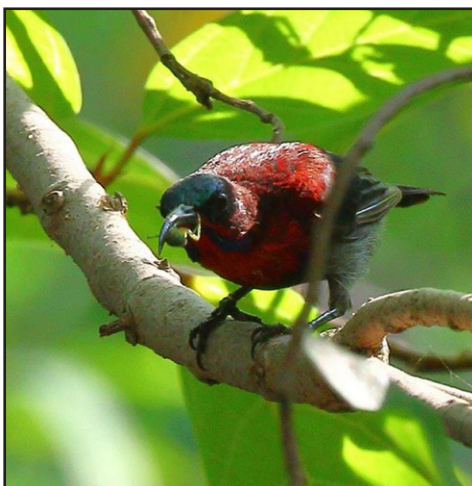
**Dharmesh Kanthariya:** Village Mora, Surat.



### Black-headed Cuckoo-shrike (*Lalage Melanoptera*), Bharuch

On 17-Apr-2022, Darshan Chauhan and I went birdwatching in nearby areas to Bharuch. My eyes set on a bird on Neem Tree (*Azadirachta indica*), which looked like a white morph India Paradise Flycatcher from far and flew away quickly. But the bird was not having a long tail and the size was a little large. Its size was similar to Brahminy Myna. After observing a few other birds like Yellow-Wattled Lapwings (*Vanellus malabaricus*), Yellow Crowned Woodpecker (*Leiopicus mahrattensis*), White-browed Fantail (*Rhipidura aureola*), etc, the same bird was seen again. This time Darshan could take a couple of photos. It was identified as Black-headed Cuckoo-shrike (*Lalage Melanoptera*). While discussing with him, he recalled that he also spotted it on 21-Feb-2021 in nearby places. Meanwhile, the bird was moving around us for more than half an hour. There are two previous photographic records on eBird. (1) By Dr. Sandip Modi on 1st Feb-2020. By Darshan Chauhan on 21-Feb-2021. Due to a smaller number of birders in the Bharuch area, many species might have been less/not reported from the area. Apart from this, Savannah Nightjar (*Caprimulgus affinis*) was also seen. Another Savannah Nightjar (*Caprimulgus affinis*) was found dead on the road, maybe a road kill.

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### Vigor's Sunbird (*Aethopyga vigorsii*) Sightings around Ratanmahal Wildlife Sanctuary

Vigor's Sunbird (*Aethopyga vigorsii*) sightings are very common in south Gujarat including Narmada district, there are hardly any recorded sighting beyond Shoolpaneshwar Wildlife Sanctuary. I am not sure about its sighting even in Jambugodha Wildlife Sanctuary & Reserve Forests of Pavagadh area as well, however, there are chances of rare reporting in that area. Recently while on a birding trip to explore Ratanmahal Wildlife Sanctuary in the month of October and November 2020, I could capture a male Vigor's sunbird near Kanjeta, Ratanmahal. Probably this is first ever photographic record of this species beyond its northern most tip of distribution range. Exactly after a year, November 2021 Ayaz Mansuri, Dr Nahid Ansari and Myself Tushar Tripathi visited Kevdi Eco Campsite, here again we had a glimpse of these species. In same month, Dr Nahid again visited Kevdi Eco Campsite and got very good sightings. Later in last week of November, Ayaz Mansuri and Dr Nahid recorded the species again at Kevdi Eco Campsite.

**Ayaz Mansuri, Tushar Tripathi and Dr. Nahid Ansari**





### Indian Pitta (*Pitta brachyura*) in GNFC Township, Bharuch

I was at my home in the evening of 31 May 2022 when I heard a call that was familiar to me but had never heard in this area in more than 10 years. The sound was coming from the GNFC township just behind my home. As it was late evening, I decided to visit the area the next morning. I visited the area the next day, on 1 June 2022, in the area from where the voice was heard. After waiting around 20-25 minutes, I heard the magic voice. I was sure it was Indian Pitta (*Pitta brachyura*), only. I could see it on Arjun Tree (*Terminalia arjuna*) from a distance. I took a couple of photographs from far for record purposes and let it enjoy its new habitat. There was only one bird I could see or hear that day. After 4-5 days, I was listening to the same voice at my home. This time the voice was from quite close to my home. And I could hear the voice of two birds, one was a little closer, and the other sound was from far, the voice was of low volume. These birds were seen/heard for 20-22 days. Now, they cannot be heard in the area. I assume that it was a passage halt for them. Or they might have dropped the idea of nesting there because of other reasons like safety or unsuitable surroundings. Although widespread common sightings in SW Gujarat, hardly an actual record in the Bharuch city area, hence the sightings are important.

**Hiren Majithiya:** Bharuch, Gujarat.



### Sighting of Leucistic Indian Robin (*Copsychus fulicatus*) at Vayana, Thol

I was going for routine bird photography on 19th August 2022, around 7.00 am. I entered Vayana village, near Thol Bird Sanctuary. I was searching for something through my car window and to my surprise I found something unusual bird on a tree by the roadside a few hundred meters away from the village gate, I observed that bird and it was a leucistic Indian Robin (*Copsychus fulicatus*) female who was jumping from the branch to another and also coming down to the ground for routine feeding activity, I took some record photographs for further confirmation, and sent it to few experts and the information was found true regarding bird.

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### Sightings of Rudy Turnstone (*Arenaria interpres*) at Nalsarovar

On 8th August 2022, I was on a Birdwatching boating trip from Ranagadh, Nalsarovar Bird Sanctuary. To my surprise, I have sighted and photographed two numbers of Rudy Turnstone (*Arenaria interpres*) on Gadhevad Island. Last year in August 2021, I sighted a single Rudy Turnstone on Dhrabla Island of the tourism zone near the main entry point. It is surprising to observe this coastal bird in this inland sweetwater lake. The sighting of a coastal bird at Nalsarovar in August looks early for arriving migration. Referring to earlier inland sightings come to know that Rajubhai Karia and Ashokbhai Mashru have sighted Rudy Turnstone at Nyari-1 dam, Rajkot, on 19 May 2020, a note of which was also published in Flamingo Gujarat.

**Kamrudin Alwani:** Nal Sarovar Bird Sanctuary, Gujarat.



### Tickell's Thrush (*Turdus unicolor*) in Shoolpaneshwar WLS

I was at Shoolpaneshwar Wildlife Sanctuary with Viren Desai, Abhay Naik, and Dr. Pragnesh Patel, on 27 January 2018. We had a good morning session where we photographed many good species. We took a lunch break at Sagai Campsite. At around 14:30 hrs, we decided to go towards Ninayi Waterfalls. At about 16:00 hrs, one km before the fall, we stopped and Abhay Naik saw a group of birds, which looked like Indian Blackbirds (*Turdus merula*). We took some photos and later, when processing the photos, realized that this was not a blackbird but a Tickell's Thrush (*Turdus unicolor*) based on the greyish upper parts, whitish belly, and vent and pale legs. I sent the photos to Chintu Panchal, who confirmed this was a Tickell's Thrush. Tickell's Thrush has been noted in Ratanmahal, Vansada National Park, and Girnar Wildlife Sanctuary (Deomurari 2012, Trivedi 2015, Bagda 2016). This sighting from Shoolpaneshwar Wildlife Sanctuary suggests that this species is probably more widely distributed in the forest areas of Gujarat.

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### **Streaked Weaver (*Ploceus manyar*) Birds in Kachchh**

During a field visit for observation of Birds arrival at Modvadar Wetland 5 km from Gandhidham city in Kutch. Sighted folk of 50+ individuals of Streaked Weavers (*Ploceus manyar*) in Reeds situated on the outflow of sewage of nearby town Modvadar. Reeds is home for streaked weavers nesting inside it. Able to document 11 Streaked Weaver in one frame on the 3rd of December 2020 evening time. During visits on 3rd December 2020 & 6th December 2020, seen them in reeds same place and took short flights to nearby wetland peripheral areas visited in the evening time they were more active & during day time they resided inside the reeds. The joint Visit on 6th Dec was with my friends Vatsal Chedda, Parth Kansagra, Jay Thacker.

**Pratik Joshi:** Bhuj-Kutch.



### **Sighting of Streaked Weaver (*Ploceus manyar*) at Khijadiya Bird Sanctuary, Jamnagar**

I went to Jamnagar for personal work and visited Khijadiya Bird Sanctuary on 15th February 2023 in the morning. While I was birdwatching in Part I, I saw some small bird like baya emerge from reeds and perched on it. I clicked photographed, and while seeing on the screen with some zooming, it looked like me like a Streaked Weaver (*Ploceus manyar*). I have updated in e-bird live there. I received mail from Mr. Kunan Naik asking for a picture. I have uploaded pic and also shared it personally with him and got confirmation of identification and knew from him that it is rare in this season. As per my knowledge, there is no previous record of Streaked Weaver in Jamnagar District so this is important and useful for studying bird distribution.

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### **White-browed Bulbul (*Pycnonotus luteolus*) at Aji, Rajkot**

On 11th November 2022 at Morning around 8.45 AM near Aji– 2 Dam, observed 4 birds look like wood Shrike far when we went near these birds found that their markings were different from the Wood Shrike and clicked some of the pictures, and these birds flew away far. Later on, when I checked the photos on the net and discussed them with the Ashok Mashru Sir, found that it was an uncommon sighting of White-browed Bulbul (*Pycnonotus luteolus*). On searching earlier published records, two records were found near Rajkot. One from Rajkot Zoo (Bhatt & Trivedi 2016), and the second from Jalsika, Rajkot (Sitapara et al. 2019). It's common to an uncommon resident in South to Central Gujarat. Recent sightings from Thol Bird Sanctuary and Rajkot. In this sighting, Dr. Ketan Bavishi and I were together.

**Priyank Dhani:** priyank.dhani@gmail.com



### **White-winged Tern (*Chlidonias leucopterus*) at Servo Dhandh, Kutch**

Servo is a very good spot for waterbirds, raptors, and waders. With important habitat of a huge silent area with shallow water and small patches of long grass between them. There were hundreds of ducks and storks, waterbirds and waders and raptors. While photographing birds on the 6th November 2022, morning with my son Nirav Parekh, we saw a big group of mixed medium size terns that were resting and preening at the edge of the water at Servo Dhandh, Nr. Hodko Village in Banny Grassland, Kutch. Terns were in non-breeding plumages, so it was difficult to identify them properly. I was trying to search for some unique or uncommon birds from the group. one group of 5 birds looked different with black 'earmuffs', a black patch near the ear turning below, and looking like earphones. Which were later identified by the expert Mr. Prasad Ganpule, as white-winged tern or white-winged black tern *Chlidonias leucopterus*. White wing tern is a winter visitor to Kutch, Gujarat but not seen regularly. In Gujarat, it has been seen in Kutch, Nal Sarovar, and Mehsana. This time there were at least 7 to 10 birds in that group. This tern species regularly visit Kutch, and other parts of Gujarat in good numbers but due to nonbreeding plumages, it may be over sighted. Earlier, this tern was noted in Kutch in November 2016 and November 2017 at Devisar Lake and Banny area of Kutch by the author.

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### Sighting of Richard's Pipit (*Anthus richardi*) at Kumbharwada, Bhavnagar

On 24th January 2023, our team was birding at Kumbharwada wetland at noon. We were watching Long-billed Dowitcher. Jigar and I decided to go to by grassland and explore some new areas. Near 5.30 pm, we observed 2 different types of Pipits together. Both pipits were busy finding food. So, we clicked some good pictures of both pipits, and one pipit was identified as a Blyth's Pipit (*Anthus godlewskii*) on the field, and the second one was not clearly identified. After at night, I sent some pics of Pipit to experts. And one pipit was identified as a Blyth's Pipit and the second was identified as a Richard's Pipit (*Anthus richardi*). Richard's pipit is a large, robust, and thrush-like pipit. It has a big bill and a long and pale eyebrow. The face is strongly marked with pale lores and supercilium. On 7th December I saw this bird. But clearly not identified because of the record shot. But this time, it was clearly identified, and this is probably the first record in Bhavnagar. Referring to its distribution, rare winter visitors, and isolated records from Gujarat (Ganpule et al 2022). An earlier published record in Gujarat is from Mendarda, Gir (Bagda 2017). On searching in eBird there are six other (Excluding this) records at Devbhumi Dwarka, Jamnagar, Junagadh Surendrangar, Bharuch and Mandavi Kachchh districts.

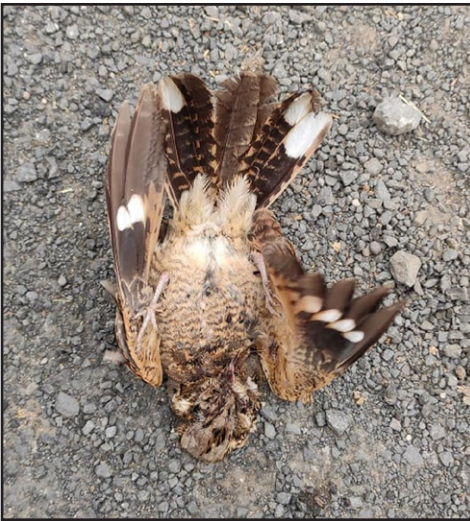
**Vivek Upadhyay and Jigar Vakani:** viveku39@gmail.com; jigarv35@gmail.com



### Black Drongo (*Dicrurus macrocercus*) preying on Western Yellow Wagtail (*Motacilla flava*)

On 3rd February 2022, I searched for a Red-breasted Goose (*Branta ruficollis*) with Akbar and Abdul in Nalsarovar's outskirts. Akbar saw me a Black Drongo (*Dicrurus macrocercus*), busy feeding on a dried branch of *Prosopis juliflora*. After watching through binoculars and checking photos, we learned that it was a Western Yellow Wagtail (*Motacilla flava*) in its prey. We observed it for the next few minutes. Black Drongo started feeding Wagtail's head, followed by other body parts. We left the place while it was still busy with its prey. This is a very unusual feeding and noteworthy habit of the Black Drongo.

**Kamruddin Alvani:** Nalsarovar.



### Road Kill Savannah Nightjar (*Caprimulgus affinis*)

On 17 April 2022, Darshan Chauhan and I went birdwatching in nearby areas to Bharuch. My eyes set on a bird on Neem Tree (*Azadirachta indica*), which looked like a white morph India Paradise Flycatcher from far and flew away quickly. But the bird was not having a long tail and the size was a little large. Its size was similar to Brahminy Myna. After observing a few other birds, including Yellow-Wattled Lapwings (*Vanellus malabaricus*), Yellow-fronted Pied Woodpecker (*Leiopicus mahrattensis*), White-browed Fantail (*Rhipidura aureola*) etc, the same bird was seen again. This time Darshan could take a couple of photos. It was identified as Black-headed Cuckoo Shrike (*Lalage melanoptera*). Meanwhile, the bird was moving around us for more than half an hour. There are two previous photographic records on eBird. By Dr. Sandip Modi on 1 February 2020. By Darshan Chauhan on 21 February 2021. Due to less number of birders in Bharuch area, many species might have been less/not reported from the area. Apart from this, Savannah Nightjar (*Caprimulgus affinis*) was also seen. Another Savannah Nightjar was found dead on the road, maybe it is victimized by speedy vehicles.

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## BOOK REVIEW: A FIELD GUIDE TO THE BIRDS OF GUJARAT

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**Title:** A Field Guide to the Birds of Gujarat- 488 Pages (ISBN 978-93-5777-321-8).

**Authors:** Ganpule, P., Trivedi, B., Varu, M. & Raina, A. D.

**Year of Publication:** 2022

**Publishers:** Bird Conservation Society of Gujarat, Gujarat.

**Format:** Soft Bound



Gujarat is a very special place for birds. It boasts over 600 bird species, which is nearly half the national total. This new field guide is a first for the state and fills a major gap for birdwatchers, conservationists, and the general public. The book is co-authored by well-known and respected birders: Prasad Ganpule, Bakul Trivedi, Maulik Varu, and Anuj D. Raina. It is an amazing publication by the Bird

Conservation Society of Gujarat, which celebrates twenty years of fostering interest and encouraging support for the conservation of the state's birds.

Situated on the western seaboard of the Indian subcontinent, Gujarat is host to a majority of migratory bird species of the Central Asian Flyway that enter the southwest of the country enroute Sri Lanka, and the Maldives. In addition, it lies on the eastern border of the West Asian-East African Flyway, and a number of species that breed in northern Eurasia eastward to China, stop off here enroute Africa. Many of these can be recorded here only on the southward migration, including the Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin (*Cercotrichas galactotes*). Gujarat's geographic location is also ideal for seeing a few species that range farther to the west of India, such as the Trumpeter Finch (*Bucanetes githagineus*), which just gets into Kachchh in northwest Gujarat (and adjoining western Rajasthan). Thus, Gujarat is a major draw for local and foreign bird watchers, whom this book will serve well.

This review aims to highlight the beauty and amazing value of this new guide and identify a few shortcomings that the next edition (which must surely be planned in the future) may wish to address.

Bringing this field guide together with all the text, images, and species maps has clearly been a herculean task. It has involved a large number of people who have contributed their knowledge, observations, and images, as outlined in the acknowledgments and in the section on the preparation of the maps. This reinforces the wonderful collaborative effort needed and achieved to make this book possible to produce – congratulations to all involved.

The book's size and weight (about a kilogram) with a soft plasticated cover should make it easy to carry into the field. Although, in balancing its size and weight, the font size of the text appears to have been compromised a little and this may make it slightly more challenging for older readers.

The introduction is very informative, tracing the rich history of ornithology in Gujarat, as is the section outlining the rich diversity of habitats that supports these birds, taxonomy, and how the book sections are presented – they are a must read. The introduction mentions the Critically Endangered Great Indian Bustard *Ardeotis nigriceps* still nests in Kachchh, although this may be optimistic given the near extinction of the species that is threatened by an explosion of power lines across prime habitats, feral dogs, overgrazing, illegal killing, and other threats across its range. While referring to the IUCN categories of threatened and near-threatened species, readers seeking an explanation of abbreviations of the different categories (CR, VU, EN, NT) will need to go to the IUCN website or other external sources. The top image on page 15 in the right underwing misidentifies lesser coverts as primary coverts.

The taxonomy section reveals several unresolved issues of the basic taxonomy of many species and subspecies found in the region. The authors have explained this well and despite their effort, it is difficult to easily grasp the complex details of the taxonomic conundrums (see the Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca* - with multiple subspecies, two of which, the *curruca*

and *althaea* groups, are usefully described). This leads into a section that explains Appendix 1, which includes species that were added to the state list as recently as 31 December 2022 (a reflection of how up to date this book is!); Appendix 2, with hypothetical species, including potential species to the state, which may encourage birdwatchers to look out for, and identify them, or improperly identified species (and probable escapees); and Appendix 3 with rejected species and reasons for their exclusion.

Readers will discover the taxonomic sequence, and quick index to the book on page 17, although placing this at the very start of the book would have made it more handy for quick use in the field, when trying to find a bird.

As expected, the bulk of the volume is devoted to the 615 species. Each entry provides the English, Scientific, and Gujarati names, length in centimeters, brief text to identify the species, points to differentiate male, female, and juvenile, habitats used, voice, status and distribution in the state, and taxonomic notes. These are accompanied by a distribution map, and multiple images of the taxon. The text is clear and useful for identifying species, pointing out similar-looking species, and helps separate them in the field.

The useful maps illustrate the status and distribution of species at a district level. Being produced in such detail, these maps will set a valuable bench mark for future observations and studies to improve knowledge about current distribution of species, and future changes to it. For some vagrant species, like the Grey-headed Fish Eagle *Icthyophaga ichthyaetus*, it is not clear why the map includes both a shaded area and circles, while for other species, there are only circles. For future editions, a small improvement would be to present individual records as solid circles rather than rings to be easily visible on these small maps.

Perhaps what sets this guide apart from most others is that it brings together over 3,100 photos to cover all the species recorded in the state – which is a major feat. These are presented as cut-outs, with multiple images per species. The White Wagtail *Motacilla alba* covers some six subspecies, three of which are illustrated. The quality of images varies. Most are sharp, although the printing is light and unclear on some plates. Multiple images are useful to inform a reader of differences between plumages, sex, and age. Still, more could have been done to help identification, such as with a line pointing to a key feature (as is the practice in many field guides) and to label the sex and age of each image. For example, the Rosy Starling (#495e) is identified as a juvenile, but isn't #495f one too? Or why is #511e, of the White-

rumped Shama *Kittacincla malabarica*, such a light blue, compared to the other images? Does this signify a stage in the bird's age, sex, or moult? The Rufous Treepie *Dendrocitta vagabunda* in #396d, with a short tail and a lot of white, appears to be a sub-adult or a moulting bird– but there is no explanation. Likewise, Strickland's Wheatear *Oenanthe capistrata* (#524d), or the Black-headed Bunting *Emberiza melanocephala* (#595e) appear to be juveniles, but this is neither mentioned on the plates, nor described in the texts. Finally, the Intermediate Egret *Ardea intermedia* in #89a is labeled as breeding, which is likely to be based on its breeding plumage, although its bill is still yellow with a black tip, while the text states that the breeding adult has a black bill and the non-breeding bird has a black-tipped yellow bill. So clarifying this in the text would be important to help correctly identify the bird.

For a few species, the images seem repetitive. It would have been useful to explain the relevance of each to aid identification. The inclusion of more frontal angles that help to identify some species would have been useful. While many species are illustrated with cut-outs in flight, I miss one that shows differences in the tail patterns to more easily separate, say, a Dunlin *Calidris alpina* from a Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*. The practice of some guides presenting multiple similar species in flight on a page makes for quick identification and could be considered in the future.

The guide includes useful images that compare the tail patterns of similar looking snipe (Pintail *Gallinago stenura*, Common *G. gallinago*, Swinhoe's *G. megala* and Great *G. media*) as well as for wheatear *Oenanthe* species. Although the illustration of Hume's Wheatear *Oenanthe albonigra* (p. 376) appears to be the same as the Variable Wheatear complex on p. 378. From illustrations and images of the species in other guides, it would appear that the Hume's should have more black on the central rectrices than depicted in the image on p. 376.

It would be useful to increase the size of images and include keys to the identification on the plates. Precious space on these plates has been given to photo credits. A creative solution could be to include species numbers in the pages that list contributing photographers instead at the end of the book.

Finally, as explained in the book, inclusion of a full list of references used in its preparation has been omitted. While this would have added several pages and weight, it is valuable information and hopefully the authors and publishers will look at other options to make this available, for example through the BCSG website.



All in all, this Field Guide is an amazing publication and will be most useful to anyone visiting Gujarat, or India. I learned a lot about the birds of Gujarat in going through it quickly for this review. No doubt I will be coming back to dip into it many

times in the future. The book retails for INR 1,500, and will be an invaluable asset in every birder's library. □

#### Errata

Patel, Aniket. 2022. Sighting of Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos* at Pariej: an addition to the avifauna of Gujarat. *Flamingo Gujarat*, Oct-Dec. 2022. 5(4):6.

**Correction:** Patel, Aneet. 2022. Sighting of Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos* at Pariej: an addition to the avifauna of Gujarat. *Flamingo Gujarat*, Oct-Dec. 2022. 5(4):6.

**We regret this error and thank Dr. Aneet Patel for pointing it out - by Eds.**

#### Announcement

We plan to publish a special issue on The RAPTORS OF GUJARAT, which will be the forthcoming issue (April -June '23 or the immediate next) of FLAMINGO GUJARAT – Bulletin of Gujarat Birds, published by BCSG. Please submit research articles, short articles, and short birding notes incorporated with images to us on the recommended mail add. FLAMINGO Gujarat intends to publish special issues from time to time, to create collections of articles on different themes. The aim is to avail hidden research and observations of birders to the readership of 'FLAMINGO Gujarat'. We would appreciate your contribution, efforts, support, and gestures too.

We will acquire articles through this email: devvratsinhji.flamingogujarat@gmail.com - **Editorial Team**