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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.

References

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