

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

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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 specie 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.

Reference

Bhatt, A., 2017. Breeding of Orange-headed Thrush in Gir. *Flamingo* 15(3) 22

Rathod J., Sitapara P. & Mashru, A, 2022. Distribution and breeding of Orange-headed Thrush *Geokichala citrina* in Saurashtra. *Flamingo Gujarat* 5(4) 19-21

Vaja, A., & Vaghashiya, P., 2016. Breeding of Orange-headed Thrush in Gir National Park. *Flamingo* 14 (4): 13

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

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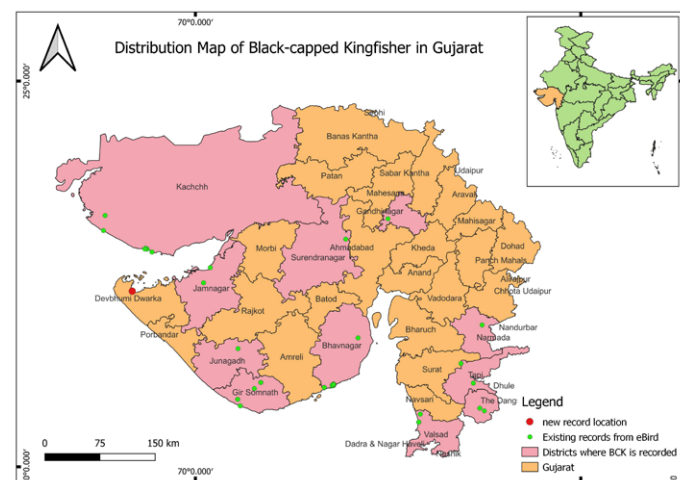


Black-capped Kingfisher *Halcyon pileata* is mainly a coastal kingfisher found in India along the coasts of Gujarat in the west and up to the coasts of West Bengal in the east but has been reported from 19 States (including union territories) (eBird 2022). It has been described to often move upriver, 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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- eBird Basic Dataset, 2022. Version: EBD_relNov-2022. Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Ithaca, New York. November 2022.
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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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