

Flamingo

Newsletter of the Bird Conservation Society, Gujarat



Vol. XV 4
Oct - Dec 2017

Editor: Bakul Trivedi, M.S.
Associate Editor: Prasad Ganpule
Editorial Board: Anuj Raina; Ashok Mashru; Indra Gadhvi, PhD; Maulik Varu, M.D.
Consulting Faculty: Bhavbhuti Parasharya, PhD; Geeta Padate, PhD; Jugalkishor Tiwari; Pranav Trivedi, PhD; Shantilal Varu; Uday Vora, IFS; Vinod Soni, PhD
Cover Photo: 'Lesser Florican' by Ashok Chaudhary
Layout and design: Pugmark Qmulus Consortium
Address for articles: 19/414, Satyagrah Chhavni, Satellite Road, Ahmedabad-380015, Gujarat. flamingo.bcs@gmail.com / drbakultrivedi@gmail.com

Contents:

Recent sightings of Lesser Florican in Gujarat.....	1
Report: Satellite tagged birds of prey visiting Gujarat.....	7
Sighting of Loten's Sunbird in Dadra and Nagar Haveli.....	10
Malabar Lark in south Gujarat.....	11
Blue-cheeked Bee-eater nesting in Kachchh.....	13
Sighting of Grasshopper Warbler in Kachchh.....	14
Sighting of Little Bittern near Surat.....	15
Calling behaviour of Greater Painted Snipe.....	16
First update to the Gujarat checklist: December 2017.....	17
Short Birding Notes.....	21
Abstracts.....	25

- Views expressed by the contributors in 'Flamingo' are not necessarily those of BCSG.
- No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, without permission in writing from Bird Conservation Society, Gujarat (BCSG).



bcsg Bird Conservation Society, Gujarat

Governing body:

President: V. C. Soni, PhD
Vice President: Shantilal Varu
Hon. Secretary: Bakul Trivedi, M.S.
Hon. Jt. Secretary: Uday Vora
Hon. Treasurer: Prashant Shah
Exe. Committee : Ajay Desai; Anuj Raina; Ashok Mashru; Bhanubhai Advharyu; Dhaval Vargiya; D. N. Rank, PhD; Gaurang Bagda, M.D.; Indra Gadhvi, PhD; Jaipalsinh Jadeja; Jugalkishor Patel; Kartik Shastri; Mahamadhasan Jat; Maulik Varu, M.D.; Pankaj Maheria, M.S.; Piyush Patel, M.D.; Prasad Ganpule; Rajendra Desai; Snehal Patel; Suresh Prajapati, PhD; Viral Joshi; Yashodhan Bhatia

Bird Conservation Society, Gujarat (BCSG) was founded in 2000 with the objective of conservation of birds of the State through field research, documentation, training, awareness activities, networking with like-minded NGOs; and lobbying for protection of birds and their habitats. It is the only statewide network of bird-watchers, ornithologists and conservationists of Gujarat striving to achieve the above goal.

BCSG brings out a quarterly newsletter – 'Flamingo'. Articles, notes on bird-life of Gujarat, interesting bird sightings, knowledge about important bird areas, information / appeal regarding conservation issues, reports on society's events and activities are published in 'Flamingo'. For publication of articles/notes in the Flamingo, both the common English and scientific names must be given when a bird species is mentioned for the first time and later references, common English name only. Common English and scientific names should follow Richard Grimmett, Carol Inskipp and Tim Inskipp (2011), Birds of Indian Subcontinent, Second edition. Oxford University Press, New Delhi. If the nomenclature is adopted from other source, full reference should be given.

For subscription and more information about BCSG : Jyoti Dhandhukia, 94, Avnish Society, Opp. Pavitrakunj Society, Near CTM Cross Road, Below CTM Overbridge, Ahmedabad-380026. M. 9725018556, E-mail: birdcsg@gmail.com
Subscription: Rs. 300 per annum to be paid by Cheque/DD in favour of BCSG payable at Ahmedabad. Donations to BCSG are exempt from IT under 80G. NEFT : Central Bank of India, A/c # 1215745262, IFSC: CBIN0280548

Email: birdcsg@gmail.com

Web: www.bcs.co.in

Recent sightings of Lesser Florican in Gujarat

Devvratsinh Mori: Opp. Darbargadh, Wadhwan 363030. devvratsinhmori@gmail.com

Shatrughnasinh Jebli: Kailash-Bag, Near Old Market Yard, Jasdan 360050, Dist. Rajkot. shatru.jebalia@gmail.com

Viral Joshi: At Post: Saladi, Ta. Liliya, Dist. Amreli 365535. virjoshi892@yahoo.com



Ashok Chaudhary

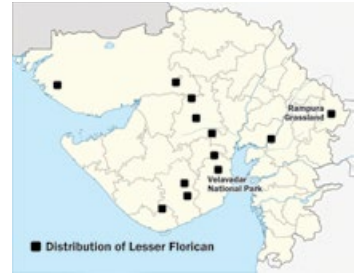
Introduction

The Lesser Florican (*Sypheotides indicus*) belongs to the family *Otididae*, the members of which are commonly known as bustards. Three species of bustards are found in Gujarat; the Lesser Florican and Great Indian Bustard (*Ardeotis nigriceps*), which are resident, while Macqueen's Bustard (*Chlamydotis macqueenii*) is a winter visitor (Ganpule 2016). Lesser Florican is now categorised as 'Endangered' (BirdLife International 2017), with a declining population.

The most common local name for the Lesser Florican in Gujarat is *Khadmor* (*Khad* = grass, *Mor* = peacock). But it is also called as *Tillor*. It is distributed in Kachchh, Saurashtra and Gujarat, and known to be a monsoon migrant to the state, when it visits grasslands and suitable habitats for breeding. The migration depends much on the rainfall (Dharmakumarsinhji 1955). The birds establish themselves where heavy and good monsoon occurs. In Gujarat, in a recent survey in 2010, it was found only in Bhavnagar, Kachchh and Panchmahal (now Dahod) districts (Bharadwaj *et al.* 2011). The Lesser Florican is a species of interest for birdwatchers here, and as there are many recent sightings reported from many parts of the state, an attempt is made here to make a compilation of the recent sightings of the Lesser Florican in Gujarat. We have also collected sightings in the non-breeding season and records of eggs/chicks from the state.

Historical records in Gujarat

There are many historical records of the Lesser Florican from Gujarat. It is mentioned for Kachchh, Saurashtra and Gujarat by Palin (1904). Ali (1945) mentions it from Kachchh. During his surveys in Gujarat, Ali (1954) noted it as 'patchy' but common in Kachchh, Saurashtra and Gujarat in the monsoon from July to October. The Lesser Florican is a well studied species here and there have been many publications (Magrath *et al.* 1985, Rahmani 1986, Sankaran *et al.* 1992, Sankaran 1994, Gadhvi 2003, Bharadwaj *et al.* 2011) about it, to name a few. Dharmakumarsinhji (1955), who studied the Lesser Florican in great detail, ringing more than 400 individuals and studying their habits, movements and breeding, gives it as 'resident and local migrant', occurring in Kachchh, Saurashtra and Gujarat.



Sightings

The Lesser Florican is usually seen in small numbers in suitable habitats like dry grasslands with scattered bushes, *vidis*, standing cotton and millet crops, and in agricultural fields. One of the last remaining strongholds of the species is the Velavadar National Park, in Bhavnagar district (also known as the Velavadar Blackbuck National Park). This area is a predominantly a well preserved grassland, with scattered shrubs and trees and the region is locally known as 'Bhal'. Lesser Florican is a regular monsoon migrant to this area. Surveys are conducted by the Forest Department and Dept. of Marine Science, Bhavnagar University, every year in the park in the monsoon season (usually in August). Data from this count, done each year in Velavadar NP, is given in Table 1:

TABLE 1: Lesser Florican count in Velavadar National Park since 2010

No.	Year	Date of count	Male(s)	Female(s)	Total
1	2010	8, 9 August 2010	48	5	53
2	2011	6, 7 August 2011	54	4	58
3	2012	5 August 2012	51	3	54
4	2013	13, 14 July 2013	44	4	48
5	2014	15, 16 August 2014	22	5	27
6	2015	25, 26 July 2015	50	5	55
7	2016	20, 21 August 2016	25	1	26
8	2017	23, 24 August 2017	35	6	41

Lesser Florican....

Similarly, Rampura Grasslands in Dahod district is also another location in which it is monitored every year. The data of counts from Rampura Grassland is given in Table 2:

We also collected sightings of the species from locations other than these two locations to know about its current sightings in Gujarat. We have generally collected data for the last 6-7 years, to get an idea about its distribution here. There may be more sightings from other areas which we could have missed, but we have tried to cover sightings from as many locations as possible outside of Velavadar NP and Rampura Grasslands. Also, we have not given repeated sightings from the same location (in the same month/year) since these could be of the same bird(s) seen by different people. These sightings are given in Table 3.

TABLE 2: Lesser Florican count in Rampura Grassland, Dahod, since 2010

Sr. No.	Year	Male(s)	Female(s)	Total
1.	2010	4	0	4
2.	2011	3	1	4
3.	2012	2	2	4
4.	2013	1	1	2
5.	2014	1	1	2
6.	2015	0	0	0
7.	2016	0	0	0
8.	2017	0	0	0



Ashok Chaudhary



Dewratsinh Mori

TABLE 3: Sightings of Lesser Florican from June – October in Gujarat (except Velavadar NP and Rampura, Dahod).

Sr. No.	Date	Location	No. of Individuals	Observer	Remarks	Source
1.	17 July 2015	Visavadar, Dist. Junagadh	1	Viral Joshi	Male	<i>pers. obsv.</i>
2.	July 2011	Savarkundla, Dist: Amreli	1	Viral Joshi	Male	<i>pers. obsv.</i>
	July 2012	Savarkundla, Dist: Amreli	2	Viral Joshi	Males	<i>pers. obsv.</i>
	August 2013	Savarkundla, Dist: Amreli	5	Viral Joshi	4 Males & 1 Female	<i>pers. obsv.</i>
	September 2014	Savarkundla, Dist: Amreli	14	Viral Joshi	8 Males, 4 Females & 2 Juveniles	<i>pers. obsv.</i>
	July 2015	Savarkundla, Dist: Amreli	10	Viral Joshi	7 Males, 2 Females & 1 Juvenile	<i>pers. obsv.</i>
	26 August 2015	Saladi, Dist. Amreli	1	Viral Joshi	-	<i>pers. obsv.</i>
3.	25 July 2011	Muli outskirts, Dist. Surendranagar	1	Devvratsinh Mori	Male	<i>pers. obsv.</i>
	July 2012	Outskirts of Little Rann of Kachchh, Surendranagar	6	Nirav Bhatt	4 Males & 2 Females	<i>pers. comm</i>
	20 August 2014	Anandpar, Dist. Surendranagar	3	Devvratsinh Mori	Males	<i>pers. obsv.</i>
	30 July 2017	Near Surendranagar	1	Gulamahmed Vora	Male	<i>pers. comm</i>
4.	August 2014	Naliya, Kachchh	1	Great Grey Owl	-	eBird
	20 August 2017	Naliya, Kachchh	2	Punit Mehta	Males displaying	eBird
5.	15 August 2015	Mithapur, Dist. Bhavnagar	4	Devvratsinh Mori	Males displaying	<i>pers. obsv.</i>
	20 September 2015	Mithapur, Dist. Bhavnagar	3	Devvratsinh Mori	1 Female & 2 Juveniles	<i>pers. obsv.</i>
	8 August 2016	Mithapur, Dist. Bhavnagar	5	Sunil Kini	Males	<i>pers. comm</i>
	17 July 2017	Adhelai - Velavadar Road, Bhavnagar	17	Irshad Theba	Males displaying	eBird
	26 August 2017	Mithapur, Dist. Bhavnagar	1	Devvratsinh Mori	Male displaying	<i>pers. obsv</i>
	17 September 2017	Kana Talav, Velavadar Outskirts, Bhavnagar	1	Gaurang Bagda	Male displaying	eBird
6.	30 October 2017	Dumad, Dist. Vadodara	1	Rahul Bhatt	Female (Rescue)	<i>pers. comm</i>

These observations indicate that the Lesser Florican is still seen in areas other than Velavadar NP and Rampura. The current sightings are mainly from the districts of Bhavnagar, Kachchh, Surendranagar, Dahod and Amreli. For Rajkot district, the species was noted on 16 August 1999 and 29 August 2001 in Bhandariya *vidi*, Ta. Jetpur, and on 8 September 2000 and 8 September 2002 in Betavad *vidi*, Ta. Gondal (Vinod Nimavat and Ashok Mashru, *pers. comm.*) The earlier records from the grasslands in Rajkot district suggest that the species frequents suitable habitats in years of good monsoon. However, it is now very rare and there are only occasional sightings in these grasslands/*vidis* of Rajkot district, with one-two individuals seen once in 4-5 years depending on the monsoon (Ashok Mashru, *pers. comm.*). In Junagadh district, a male was seen for two weeks in Devaliya, Gir NP (Pati 2003) and there is only one recent sighting from Visavadar.

In general, the Lesser Florican follows the monsoon and its dispersal in the state depends greatly on the amount of rainfall in these districts. Thus, its numbers vary from year to year in the districts in which it occurs. It is seen in grasslands, *vidis*, agricultural fields, and other suitable habitats. The sightings in Bhavnagar district are from the periphery of Velavadar NP and these areas fall within 10-20 kms from the park. Though these are not sightings from the protected area of the park, it can be said that these locations are contiguous with the national park. So, many birds are seen outside the park in suitable habitat, mainly in agricultural fields. The sightings from Kachchh are mainly from the grasslands near Naliya and surroundings. Some sightings have been reported from around the Little Rann of Kachchh too. Grasslands in Surendranagar district are important and there have been many recent sightings.

There are two instances of birds rescued in recent times. A

Table 4: Recent sightings of Lesser Florican from November – May in Gujarat

Sr. No.	Date	Place	No. of Individuals	Observer	Remarks	Source
1	2 December 2010	Velavadar National Park	4	Dragan Simic	-	eBird
2	6 November 2011	Little Rann of Kachchh	1	Rajesh Shah	Female	OBI
3	March 2013	Maharaja Bet, Nal Sarovar	1	Ramjhan Sama	-	<i>pers. comm</i>
4	18 May 2013	Velavadar National Park	1	Dhyey Shah	-	eBird
5	14 January 2014	Velavadar National Park	1	Sunil Moteria	In non breeding	Moteria 2017
6	February 2015	Liliya, Dist. Amreli	1	Viral Joshi	In non breeding	<i>pers. obsv.</i>
7	12 November 2015	Velavadar National Park	-	Vipul Trivedi	-	eBird
8	12 November 2015	Shell River, Amreli	1	Viral Joshi		<i>pers. obsv.</i>
9	December 2015	Velavadar National Park	1	Samrat Bose	In non breeding	INW
10	14 February 2016	Velavadar National Park	1	Vipul Trivedi	-	eBird
11	29 April 2016	Liliya, Dist. Amreli	1	Viral Joshi	In non breeding	<i>pers. obsv.</i>
12	16 February 2017	Velavadar National Park	1	Ishleelkaur Wadhwa	-	eBird
13	26 February 2017	Velavadar National Park		Niket Chaudhari	-	Moteria 2017
14	30 March 2017	Velavadar National Park	1	Punit Lalbhai	-	eBird

female was rescued from Bardoli, Dist. Surat in 2009 (Krunal Trivedi, *pers. comm.*) and another bird, a female, was rescued near Dumad, Dist. Vadodara, in October 2017. This female, which was rescued near Vadodara, was ringed by BNHS, and released at Rampura Grassland, Dahod, which is a known site for the Lesser Floricans. The sighting from Surat is the only known recent sighting of Lesser Florican from south Gujarat.

Though it is well known that the species visits Gujarat during the monsoon season for breeding, its status in Gujarat in the non-breeding season is still a mystery. Dharmakumarsinhji (1955) stated that though most of the birds seem to migrate here in the monsoon season from other areas of the Indian Sub-continent, some individuals remain in the 'vidis' and grasslands here throughout the year. We collected sightings of the Lesser Florican from November till May, to get an idea about its status during the non-breeding season. These sightings are given in Table 4.

As can be seen from the above records, the Lesser Florican has been noted in the winter months in Gujarat, suggesting that a few individuals do remain here in the winter. The local guides at Velavadar NP say that a few Lesser Floricans are seen in the area throughout the year (*pers. comm.*), which can be seen from Table 4. It should be noted that the male Lesser Florican undergoes a moult after breeding and looks similar to the female in the non-breeding season, with a few retained black neck feathers and/or some white in wing coverts (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). Hence, it is difficult to separate the male and the female in non breeding plumage. By June, the males

start to moult into breeding plumage, with characteristic black feathers appearing on the body and plumes on the head, and are in full breeding plumage in June-July. Hence, it is difficult to sex the birds in non-breeding plumage unless seen closely.

Breeding

Lesser Florican visits the grasslands of Gujarat for breeding. It was once widespread, and common, but now breeds only in a few areas in Gujarat (Bhardwaj *et al.* 2011). This species has a dispersed lek type mating system, in which no pair-bond is formed, with the males establishing territories measuring 1-2 ha in size, clumped together in a lek, with an inter-territorial distance of 200-500 mts and they display from a particular spot within the territory (Sankaran 1994). Females are generally very shy, with a cryptic plumage, and hence finding the females or chicks/nests is very difficult. The nesting records of the Lesser Florican in the last few years are given in Table 5.

Discussion

Based on the data presented above, it can be said that Velavadar National Park is the only area in Gujarat in which the Lesser Florican is regular, and still seen in good numbers. In other districts of Gujarat, it is present, but is erratic and the numbers are quite less and vary each year depending on the monsoon.

In a survey in the grasslands of Gujarat in 2010 by Bharadwaj *et al.* (2011), a total of 54 individuals were sighted mainly in three districts; Bhavnagar, Kachchh and Panchmahal (now Dahod). It is interesting to note that no floricans were noted

Table 5: Lesser Florican breeding records in Gujarat

Sr. No.	Date	Place	Nesting Activity		Observer	Remarks/ Source
			Eggs	Chick(s)		
1	July - August 2001	5 nests near Velavadar National Park	Yes	Yes	Indra Gadhvi	Gadhvi 2003
2	17 August 2008	Kherva, Dist. Surendranagar	Yes	-	Gulamahmed Vora	<i>pers. comm</i>
3	15 September 2009	Gediya, Dist. Surendranagar	-	Yes	Gulamahmed Vora	<i>pers. comm</i>
4	October 2009	Outskirts of Velavadar NP	-	Yes	Nirav Bhatt & Devesh Gadhvi	INW
5	13 August 2014	Anandpur grassland, Dist. Surendranagar	Yes	-	S. Jebalia	Author's sighting
6	18 September 2014	Liliya, Dist. Amreli	-	Yes	V. Joshi	Author's sighting
7	8 September 2015	Mithapur, Dist. Bhavnagar	Yes	-	D. Mori	Author's sighting
8	14 September 2015	Naliya, Kachchh	Yes	-	Ashok Chaudhary	<i>pers. comm</i>
9	20 September 2015	Mithapur, Dist. Bhavnagar	-	Yes	D. Mori	Author's sighting
10	Unknown	Rampura Grassland, Dahod	Yes	-	R. M. Parmar	<i>pers. comm</i>

in this survey in the districts of Amreli, Junagadh, Jamnagar and Rajkot. However, we have noted it in Surendranagar, Amreli and Junagadh districts recently. But it appears that it is indeed either absent or locally very rare in Rajkot district. There are still no records from Jamnagar district and as per senior bird watchers in Jamnagar, it has not been noted in the district in last few years. In Kachchh, it is sporadic in Naliya area. However, the grasslands here are under tremendous anthropogenic pressure and unless urgent action is taken, the grasslands will all be lost to agriculture. Most of the grasslands in this area have already been converted into agricultural fields in the past few years. The many sightings from Surendranagar district in the past few years are encouraging and suggest that some individuals are regular in these grasslands and also breed in the district. A good population (more than 10 individuals) was seen twice in Savarkundla, Amreli district, which was a pleasant surprise. We could not find any records of the Lesser Florican from north Gujarat in recent times. It is quite possible that it could occur in this region, as there is suitable habitat. Towards this, extensive surveys are needed to know if the species is present here. It is important to note here that in Rampura Grassland in 2008, a total of 16 males and one female were noted while in 2009, 5 males and one female were seen. Hence, it is a cause for concern that no Lesser Florican has been noted here in the last three years.

In the study conducted by Sankaran (1994), grasslands which had five or more males were more than 75 ha. in size, and the larger the grassland, the greater the number of males that were likely to occupy it. In view of this, there is an urgent need to identify grasslands which are more than 75 ha. in size and provide immediate protection to such grasslands. Ideally,

grasslands more than 100 ha. are needed to accommodate nesting females and help in conservation of the species (Sankaran 1994). For this, detailed satellite mapping of suitable grasslands and habitats needs to be done and all such important habitats identified in the state. This data can then be used to protect and conserve such habitats.

There are still many unanswered questions regarding the migration of the Lesser Florican in the non-breeding season. Do the birds remain in the same locality or do they migrate to other parts of India? Our observations establish that at least some individuals do remain in the same area throughout the year, as there are sightings from November to May, the non-breeding period of the species. The implications of this are that grasslands are needed for this species not only during the breeding season, but perhaps also during non-breeding. Another interesting and unanswered question is regarding the population of females; majority of the birds counted in Velavadar NP are males as they are more visible and hardly a few females are seen. The counts are skewed in favour of the males since the displaying birds are easily seen. The ratio of males to females in any territory is not known and is a matter for speculation. The dispersal pattern of females, number of females in a lek, etc. is still not known.

There are very few actual observations of eggs/chicks of this species in Gujarat. While it is obvious that it is breeding in the grasslands here, there are very few studies conducted on the breeding of this species here. All the five nests recorded by Gadhvi (2003) in Velavadar NP area were outside the protected area, on the periphery of the park, and only 8 out of the 22 eggs in five nests hatched. Predation of the eggs and trampling of the nest/eggs by grazing cattle are the main

Lesser Florican....



Mohan Ram Legha

threats to the breeding of the Lesser Florican here. The recent breeding records from Amreli, Kachchh, Surendranagar, and Dahod districts suggest that in years of good monsoon, it breeds successfully in other areas of the state. This is important as other than Velavadar and its surroundings, there is almost no data regarding the breeding of this species in other parts of Gujarat in the recent years.

While we are unable to comment on the recent population trends of the Lesser Florican in Gujarat based on our data, there is no doubt that urgent conservation is needed for the species in Gujarat. In addition to protection of grasslands, local community involvement, regular population surveys, stopping hunting and livestock grazing in grasslands, etc. can help in arresting the decline of this species in Gujarat. A Lesser Florican recovery plan (part of species recovery plan for bustards) prepared by MoEF, along with BNHS, WII, WWF – India, and field scientists, in 2011, lists guidelines for states like Gujarat, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh etc. to help in the recovery of the species. If these guidelines are implemented on the ground, it will definitely help in the recovery of the species in India. For Gujarat, site specific recommendations are given for only two areas; Velavadar NP and Rampura Grassland. However, based on our data of sightings in Kachchh and Surendranagar, these recommendations should be extended for all grasslands in these districts, where the Lesser Floricans are still seen in good numbers. We urge the forest department of our state to take urgent steps in this regard.

[We are very thankful to Dr. Indra Gadhvi for sharing the data of Lesser Florican counts in Velavadar NP and also for a review of the draft manuscript. We are also thankful to Sakir Kadiwala of Prakruti Mitra Mandal, Dahod for sharing the data of bird sightings in Rampura Vidi, Dahod – Eds]

Acknowledgements

We are especially grateful to Ashok Mashru for his help in preparing this note. We wish to thank Mohan Ram Legha

(DCF Bhavnagar) and Ashok Chaudhary for the photographs. Special thanks to R. M. Parmar (ACF Dahod), Gulam Ahmad Vora, Ramjhan Sama, Ghanshyamsinh Solanki, Zuzar Boriwala, Sakir Kadiwala, Neelam Patel and all the bird watchers who shared their sightings.

References

- Ali, S. 1945. *The Birds of Kutch*. Oxford University Press. Published for the Govt. of Kutch.
- Ali, S. 1954. The birds of Gujarat. Part I. *J. Bombay Nat. Hist. Soc.* 52 (2): 374–458
- Bhardwaj, G. S., Sivakumar, K., & Jhala, Y. V., 2011. *Status, distribution and conservation perspectives of Lesser Florican in north-western India: A survey report*. Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun.
- BirdLife International. 2017. Species factsheet: *Sypheotides indicus*. Downloaded from <http://www.birdlife.org> [Accessed on 13 May 2017].
- Dharmakumarsinhji, R. S., (Undated=). 1955. *Birds of Saurashtra, India: With additional notes on the birds of kutch and Gujerat*. 1st ed. Bhavnagar, Saurashtra: Published by the Author.
- Gadhvi, I. R., 2003. Monitoring nesting sites of Lesser Floricans (*Sypheotides indica*) in and around Blackbuck National Park, Gujarat. *Zoos' Print Journal* 18 (7): 1135–1142
- Ganpule, P. 2016. The Birds of Gujarat – Status and Distribution. *Flamingo* 8(3) - 12(4): 2-40
- Magrath, R. D., Ridley, M. W. & Woinarski, J. Z. 1985. Status and habitat requirements of the Lesser Florican in Kathiawar, western India. *Bustard Studies* 3: 185–193
- Moteria, S. 2017. Sightings of Lesser Florican in the winter in Velavadar. *Flamingo* 15 (2): 24
- Palin, H. 1904. *The Birds of Cutch; Being a Descriptive Account of their Plumage, Habits, and Characteristics*. The Times Press. Bombay.
- Pati, B. P. 2003. Sighting of the Lesser Florican *Sypheotides indica* in Gir Interpretation Zone, Devaliya, Gir Sanctuary. *J. Bombay Nat. Hist. Soc.* 100 (1): 122
- Rahmani, A. R. 1986. Lesser Florican survey in Gujarat. *Study of ecology of certain endangered species of wildlife and their habitats. The floricans*. 51–73. Bombay Natural History Society. London.
- Rasmussen, P. C. & Anderton, J. C. 2012. *Birds of South Asia. The Ripley Guide*. 2 Vols. Smithsonian Institution and Lynx Edicions, Washington D. C. and Barcelona.
- Sankaran, R. 1994. Some aspects of the territorial system in Lesser Florican *Sypheotides indica* (J. F. Miller). *J. Bombay Nat. Hist. Soc.* 91(2): 173-186
- Sankaran, R., Rahmani, A. R. & Ganguli L., U. 1992. The distribution and status of the Lesser Florican *Sypheotides indica* (J.F. Miller) in the Indian Subcontinent. *J. Bombay Nat. Hist. Soc.* 89: 156-179 □

Report: Satellite tagged birds of prey visiting Gujarat

Nirav Bhatt: H-52, GIDC Residential Plots, Wadhwan 363035. birdwatchernrb@gmail.com

The technological improvements in electronics and communications in the recent years have revolutionized bird migration studies. The latest Platform Transmitter Terminals (PTTs) are small enough to allow birds as light as 100 gms to be tracked. The PTTs transmit basic data about their functioning that is picked up by the Argos satellites as they pass overhead. Due to the Doppler Effect, a shift in wavelength of these radio transmissions occurs as the satellite passes overhead and this allows the ground-based part of the satellite system to calculate the positions of the PTT and the bird carrying it. This is not as accurate as GPS – typically the best locations are accurate to within 500 mts, whereas GPS has an accuracy of a few meters. It is, however, very accurate on a global and regional scale and provides a far more reliable and detailed track than other, slightly smaller, tracking devices such as geolocators (BTO 2017). The transmitters usually work for 10 hrs before going to 'sleep' mode for 48 hrs to allow the solar panel to recharge the battery. This continues till the tag fails or the bird dies.

The data collected by the PTTs is now freely available on the internet and can be seen by everyone. Based on the data shared by many different researchers in various parts of the world, we are now able to see, in real time, that some satellite tagged birds of prey are visiting Gujarat. I present here data collected from various sources regarding satellite tagged birds of prey visiting Gujarat.

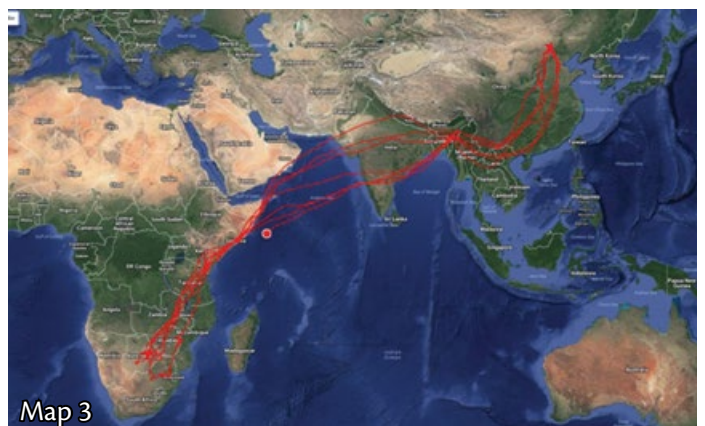
Part 1 – Eagles (*Aquila* sp.) from Russia

Bird 1 – named 'Zava' – a female Greater Spotted Eagle (*Aquila clanga*) – transmitter currently inactive.

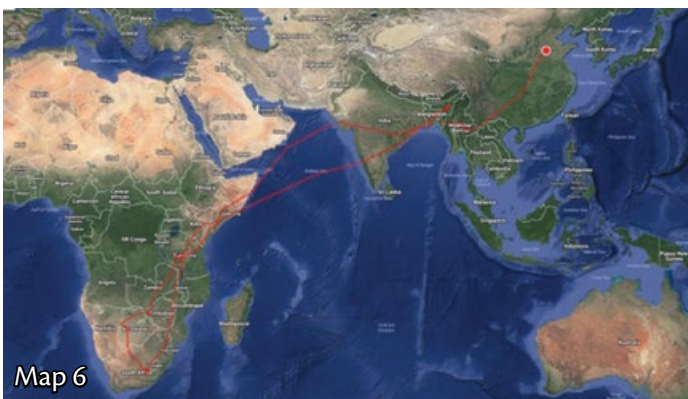
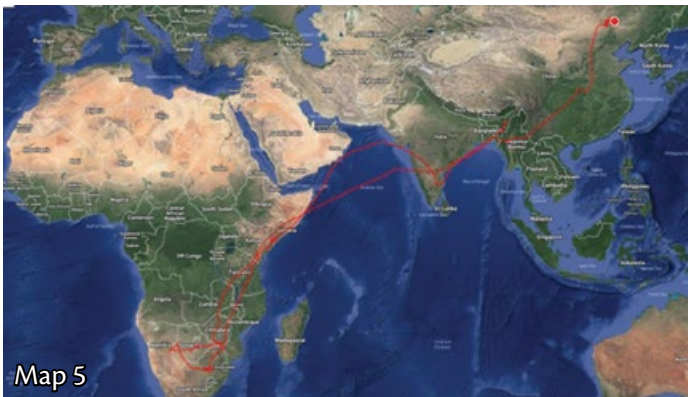
This female Greater Spotted Eagle was tagged when it was in its nest as a fledgling in Russia on 18 July 2013. It started migrating from 18 September 2013, and travelled south. It visited Gujarat on 28 and 29 November 2013, when it was located near Navagam and Deesa, in north Gujarat. It travelled further south till Andhra Pradesh, passing through Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. Its journey in Gujarat is given in Map 1 (Source: Russian Raptor Research and Conservation. Website URL: <http://rrrcn.ru/en/migration/eagles/2>)

Bird 2 – named 'Eva' – a young fledged Steppe Eagle (*Aquila nipalensis*) – transmitter currently active.

A recently fledged Steppe Eagle was tagged in Russia on 22 July 2016. It visited the Little Rann of Kachchh, from 28 October 2016 to 2 November 2016, and returned back to Pakistan, where it spent the winter. On 25 March 2017, it began to migrate back to its breeding grounds and the last location obtained was near Uzbekistan. The interesting part regarding its migration was its presence in the Little Rann of Kachchh,



tagged birds....



and eastern part of Greater Rann of Kachchh (north of Adesar) for almost one week at the end of October 2016. The migration route of this eagle, including its travels in Gujarat, is given in Map 2a and Map 2b (Source: Russian Raptor Research and Conservation. Website URL: <http://rrrcn.ru/en/migration/eagles2016/3>)

Part 2 – Amur Falcons (*Falco amurensis*) passing through Gujarat

Amur Falcon is a migratory falcon breeding in North-east Asia and wintering in South-east Africa (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). It is a passage migrant in India, passing through the Peninsula during both spring, and autumn, passage migration. There was a lot of interest in the migration routes of Amur Falcon and recently, a few Amur Falcons were tagged in

Nagaland, India. This is an ongoing project by the Wildlife Institute of India, Government of Nagaland, and various other international organizations.

The data obtained from these satellite tagged Amur Falcons shows that during autumn migration, these falcons prefer a route through southern India, with majority of them crossing India through Maharashtra, Karnataka and Goa. While on return (spring) migration, they prefer a route through Gujarat & Rajasthan. This is detailed below as follows:

Bird 1 – named 'Naga' – transmitter currently inactive.

The transmitter on this bird was active for three years. The bird passed through Gujarat twice and once through Rajasthan during spring migration. The migration route for this individual is given in Map 3.

Bird 2 – named 'Pangti' – transmitter currently inactive

This individual was tracked over two years, and during spring migration in both the years, the bird passed through Gujarat (Map 4).

Bird 3 – named 'Longleng' – transmitter currently active

This individual also passed through Gujarat during spring migration, touching southern Saurashtra and then proceeding further to its breeding grounds (Map 5).

Bird 4 – named 'Hakhizha' – transmitter currently active.

This individual also passed through Gujarat during spring migration (Map 6).

Discussion

The migration routes of birds of prey are still not very well known. Many migratory birds of prey spend the winter months in India. These are reports of only a few individuals, of three-four species, on which studies have been made. The data gathered from PTTs fitted on these birds has provided valuable insights into the migration routes taken by these birds of prey. As can be seen from the above details, the Greater Spotted Eagle and Steppe Eagle visited Gujarat during winter. More individuals were tagged by the Russian Raptor Research and Conservation (RRRCN 2017); one Greater Spotted Eagle and three Eastern Imperial Eagles (*Aquila heliaca*) tagged in Russia, wintered in southern Pakistan, at the mouth of the Indus river delta, very near to Greater Rann of Kachchh, Gujarat. The Greater Spotted Eagle visited this same area in southern Pakistan for three consecutive years in the winter. Thus, these individuals tagged in Russia, visited Gujarat or wintered very near the state border.

The data gathered from the migrating Amur Falcons is fascinating. It appears that during autumn migration, the birds prefer a more southern route, passing through South India while on their way to their wintering grounds in southern

Africa. However, during spring migration, they prefer a more northern route, wherein they cross the Arabian Sea and make landfall in Gujarat, and cross the Peninsula on the onward journey to their breeding grounds. This data is in line with the known sightings of Amur Falcon in Gujarat. There are records of the Amur Falcon from Gujarat during autumn as well as spring migration, and it is an uncommon passage migrant here (Ganpule 2011). Recently, a flock of 18 birds was noted in Velavadar NP during spring passage in April 2016 (Maheria 2016), and there are a few photos/reports of the species on websites (Oriental Bird Images, eBird) during autumn and spring migration from Gujarat in the past two-three years.

There have been reports of ringed/tagged birds of prey from Gujarat recently; a ringed Peregrine Falcon released in May 2009 in Kazakhstan was photographed in Little Rann of Kachchh (Bhatt 2010), while an Eastern Imperial Eagle, which was wing-tagged in Kazakhstan, was seen in Little Rann of Kachchh (Sangha *et al.* 2016). A Pallid Harrier (*Circus macrourus*) tagged in Velavadar NP in March 2008, travelled through Pakistan, Afghanistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, to spend the summer in its central Kazakhstan breeding grounds (Terraube *et al.* 2012). Research is being carried out in India also to study the migration of raptors; an adult and a juvenile Montagu's Harrier (*Circus pygargus*) were fitted with PTTs in Nannaj grasslands, near Solapur, Maharashtra, in December 2016 (Pune Mirror 2017). Both these harriers migrated to Kazakhstan for breeding in the summer and one bird is back in the same area for the winter this season (in 2017). More birds are to be tagged in Rajasthan too for migration studies.



Nirav Bhatt

Satellite tagging is revealing more details about the migration route, duration of migration, the number of days spent wintering in a particular area and also the return migration

route. These birds of prey cover long distances and undertake perilous journeys to come here in the winter. The conservation and habitat requirements of these wonderful birds are being studied by scientists by using satellite telemetry. However, it would be prudent to point out that there are also negative effects of PTTs on the birds. A recent study in tagged Red Kites (*Milvus milvus*) found that 22% birds had moderate to severe lesions due to radio transmitters fitted on their backs (Peniche *et al.* 2011). In Saker Falcons (*Falco cherrug*), it was found that harness mounted transmitters resulted in decreased survival rates and the birds suffered from other detrimental physical effects (Dixon *et al.* 2016).

Hence, it is advisable to use PTTs judiciously, balancing the need for information with the welfare of the birds. Gujarat is a well known destination for birds of prey in the winter and bird watchers are urged to look out for such satellite tagged birds.

References

- Bhatt, N., 2010. Ringed Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* in Gujarat. *Indian BIRDS* 6 (4&5): 97
- British Trust for Ornithology. 2017. <https://www.bto.org/science/migration/tracking-studies/cuckoo-tracking/tracking-technology> [Accessed on 30 August 2017].
- Dixon, A., Ragyov, D., Purev-Ochir, G., Rahman, M. L., Batbayar, N., Bruford, M. W., & Zhan, X. 2016. Evidence for deleterious effects of harness-mounted satellite transmitters on Saker Falcons *Falco cherrug*. *Bird Study* 63(1): 96-106
- Ganpule, P., 2011. The status and distribution of Amur Falcon *Falco amurensis* in Gujarat, India. *Indian BIRDS* 7 (2): 45-46
- Maheria, P. 2016. Amur Falcons at Velavadar. *Flamingo* 14 (4): 21
- Peniche, G., Vaughan-Higgins, R., Carter, I., Pocknell, A., Simpson, D., & Sainsbury, A. 2011. Long-term health effects of harness-mounted radio transmitters in red kites (*Milvus milvus*) in England. *Veterinary Record* 169 (12): 311-316
- Pune Mirror, 2017. <http://punemirror.indiatimes.com/pune/others/journey-of-montagus-harrier-to-be-charted/articleshow/56285770.cms> [Accessed on 30 August 2017].
- Rasmussen, P. C. & Anderton, J. C. 2012. *Birds of South Asia: The Ripley Guide*. 2 vols. 2nd Ed. Smithsonian Institution and Lynx Edicions, Washington D. C. and Barcelona.
- Russian Raptor Research and Conservation Network (RRRCN). 2017. Website URL: <http://rrrcn.ru/en/migration> [Accessed on 30 August 2017].
- Sangha, H. S., Ganpule, P., & Raote, N., 2016. Wing-tagged Eastern Imperial Eagle *Aquila heliaca* in the Little Rann of Kachchh, Gujarat, India. *Indian BIRDS* 12 (2&3): 73
- Terraube, J., Mougeot, F., Cornulier, T., Verma, A., Gavrillov, A., & Arroyo, B. 2012. Broad wintering range and intercontinental migratory divide within a core population of the near threatened Pallid Harrier. *Diversity and Distributions* 18(4): 401-409

Sighting of Loten's Sunbird in Dadra and Nagar Haveli

Saswat Mishra: C/2, Govt. Polytechnic College Campus, Karad D. P., Silvassa, Dadra & Nagar Haveli (UT). paulmshr@gmail.com



Saswat Mishra

On 26 August 2017, I visited Madhuban Dam forest (20° 12' 43.9" N, 73° 03' 28.5" E) near Silvassa, in Dadra and Nagar Haveli (Union Territory), south Gujarat, which is very near the state border. At around 16:00 hrs, I saw a sunbird in the area which looked different from a Purple Sunbird (*Cinnyris asiaticus*). It was a male, with lower belly looking yellowish and with metallic blue-green head, upperparts, and upper breast. I could take a few photos and the following features were noted: a long, sharply down-curved beak, which looked much longer than seen in Purple Sunbird. Also the tail was longer than the tail of a Purple Sunbird. When observed closely, a maroon band was visible on the breast.

The features described here led me to identify this as a male Loten's Sunbird (*Cinnyris lotenia*). However, since I was not very sure of the identification, I posted the image on the Facebook group 'Ask ID's of Indian Birds'. Many bird watchers commented that this was a Loten's Sunbird. So the identification was also confirmed by others. It was the first time that I had noted it here and this is the first photographic record of Loten's Sunbird from Gujarat. On 17 October 2017, while bird watching in the Madhuban Dam forest at around 08:50 hrs, I again saw and photographed a male Loten's Sunbird. A third sighting of a pair (adult male and female) was made in the same area on 20 October 2017, and images were posted on the OBPix group. These three sightings in the space of two months remove any doubt regarding the occurrence of the species in Gujarat and this is an addition to the avifauna of the state.

[As described by the observer, the long and sharply down-curved bill, longer tail and maroon band on the breast are all diagnostic of a male Loten's Sunbird and there remains no doubt regarding the identification. Loten's Sunbird is very similar to the Purple Sunbird and careful observation is needed to separate the two.

*Loten's Sunbird is endemic to India and resident in south India, Sri Lanka and in the Western Ghats; its range is shown till around Mumbai, Maharashtra in the north and there are no records given for Gujarat (Grimmett et al. 2011). Rasmussen & Anderton (2012) give its range from northern Maharashtra, south to southern India and Sri Lanka. For Gujarat, Ali (1955) did not record the species here. Khacher (1996) stated that 'it is in the Dangs that a look out needs to be kept for the two Western Ghats sunbirds: Crimson-backed Sunbird (*Leptocoma minima*) and Loten's Sunbird', but did not give any specific record or sighting. Khacher (2000) again stated that both the above species should be looked out for in Gujarat and they could be more widespread than believed, but gave no records. Parasharya et al. (2004) included the Loten's Sunbird in the Gujarat checklist, giving it as a resident. However, Ganpule (2016) did not include it in the latest checklist of the birds of Gujarat in absence of properly documented sightings, stating that it could be 'probable in south Gujarat forests'. It is important to note that there are no photos of the species from Gujarat on the popular birding websites Oriental Bird Images, Indianaturewatch or Internet Bird Collection. Further, confusion with Purple Sunbird is very probable and observers should be careful in the identification of this species, and all sightings should be well documented with photographs or field notes. It is also important that birdwatchers should be aware of this species.*

As stated in the editor's note in Mishra (2017), sightings from Dadra and Nagar Haveli are included in the state checklist. Thus, these sightings are the first confirmed sightings of Loten's Sunbird from Gujarat and it is an addition to the avifauna of the state – Eds]

References

- Ali, S., 1955. The birds of Gujarat - Part II. *J Bombay Nat Hist Soc.* 52 (4): 735-802
- Ganpule, P., 2016. The Birds of Gujarat: Status and Distribution. *Flamingo* 8(3) – 12(4): 2-40
- Grimmett R., C. Inskipp & T. Inskipp 2011. *Birds of the Indian Subcontinent*. Second Edition. Christopher Helm, London.
- Khacher, L., 1996. The birds of Gujarat – a Salim Ali centenary year overview. *J. Bombay Nat Hist Soc.* 93 (3): 331-373
- Khacher, L., 2000. Range extension of the Purple rumped Sunbird *Nectarinia zeylonica*. *J Bombay Nat Hist Soc.* 97 (1): 146
- Mishra, S., 2017. Sighting of Slaty-legged Crake in Dadra and Nagar Haveli. *Flamingo* 15 (3): 19
- Parasharya, B. M., Borad, C. K. & Rank, D. N. 2004. *A checklist of the birds of Gujarat*. Bird Conservation Society, Gujarat.
- Rasmussen, P. C., & Anderton, J. C., 2012. *Birds of South Asia: The Ripley Guide*. 2 vols. 2 nd ed. Washington D.C and Barcelona. Smithsonian Institution and Lynx Edicions. □

Malabar Lark in south Gujarat

Jugalkishor H. Patel: At Untiyadra, Ta. Ankleshwar, Dist. Bharuch 394125. jugalkishorhpatel@gmail.com [JP]

Mukesh Bhatt: Mavji Nivas, Nr. Jalaram Temple, Vesu, Surat 395007. mukeshbhatt_mbhatt@yahoo.com [MB]



Jugalkishor Patel

Malabar Lark (*Galerida malabarica*) is a medium sized, fairly sturdy lark with prominent spiky crest, rufous upperparts with strong blackish streaking and heavily spotted breast and buffish underparts, especially on the breast and flanks (Alström 2017). It is endemic to India and is resident in the Western Ghats, from southern Gujarat till Kerala (Grimmett *et al.* 2011, Nalavade 2013).

Distribution in Gujarat

Ali (1954) did not come across this species in Gujarat except on the summit of Salher Fort of Navsari district (which is now in Nashik district of Maharashtra, but very near Gujarat) during field work in the state from 1942 to 1946. Monga & Naoraji (1984) reported seeing a solitary lark around Chandod (on the banks of Narmada River) and remarked that it was uncommon in this area, and they failed to come across the species around Rajpipla. Narve *et al.* (1997) have recorded it from Shoolpaneshwar Wildlife Sanctuary.

For Saurashtra, Dharmkumarsinhji (1955) has not mentioned the species from Kathiawar, but Khacher (1996) saw a pair of Malabar Larks on Pirotan Island, near Jamnagar, with the remark that the species was recorded up to south Gujarat, in Western Ghats type country, and that Dharmkumarsinhji extended the range further north, to the edges of the salt pans of Bhavnagar, but was noted to be totally absent in interior Saurashtra and other areas of Gujarat, including Kachchh.

Grimmett *et al.* (2011) show it is as a resident in the Western Ghats, with its range up to south & central Gujarat, with two

isolated records from Bhavnagar and near Jamnagar, in the distribution map. Rasmussen & Anderton (2012) describe it as a resident in SE Gujarat (i.e. south Gujarat) and the Western Ghats, and stated it as also reported from Kathiawar Peninsula. This was probably based on Khacher (1996). Ganpule (2016) includes it in the checklist of Gujarat, with reference from Ali (1954) and Monga & Naoraji (1983), giving it as 'rare/uncommon resident in south Gujarat; status in Saurashtra uncertain, probably absent'.

Notwithstanding its inclusion in the recent Gujarat checklist based on the above historical records, there are no recent sightings reported from Gujarat. Recent publications, websites like Oriental Bird Images, eBird, INW (indianaturewatch.net) (Accessed on 25 September 2016), or social media sites do not have any photos of this species from the state.

This note describes recent sightings of the Malabar Lark, mainly in Ankleshwar and Hansot Taluka of Bharuch District in south Gujarat, and confirms the occurrence of the species here. Further, an attempt is made to understand the status of Malabar Lark in Gujarat.

Sightings

The second author (MB) saw two Malabar Larks with Anil Bhardwaj behind the pond of Untiyadra village of Ankleshwar Taluka on 1 June 2016. The area around the sighting place is open and somewhat saline, with scattered grassland and paddy fields. The second author informed the details of the sighting to the first author (JP) and asked him to look out for the species as it is not recorded recently, and since Untiyadra is the native village of JP, he could search for the bird there easily.

After this information was received from MB, JP carefully started observing all *Galerida* larks in the area. When JP was going to Ankleshwar on 25 September 2016 for a social gathering, a lark looking slightly different than Crested Lark (*Galerida cristata*) was seen at Sarthan village of Ankleshwar Taluka, about 15 km away from Untiyadra. However, since JP did not have time, he had to leave the area. On the next day, he visited the place again to search for the lark. It was found there, in the same area. This time, JP took a few photographs and identified it as a Malabar Lark. It was smaller and had strongly streaked rufous upperparts, boldly streaked underparts, a prominent supercilium and when the spread tail was seen, the outer tail feathers were pale rufous. In Crested Lark, the upperparts are paler, and the streaking on upperparts and underparts is less bold. Hence, it could be identified as a Malabar Lark. Malabar Lark can be separated from the Sykes's Lark (*Galerida deva*) by its longer bill, larger size, and

Malabar Lark....

more prominent streaking on the underparts. However, to confirm the identification, JP sent the photographs to Prasad Ganpule, who confirmed that it was a Malabar Lark, with the advice to give attention to its call for distinguishing it from the similar looking Crested Lark. The call was duly recorded and was typical of Malabar Lark and thus the identification was confirmed beyond any doubt.

Following this sighting, JP saw the Malabar Lark at the following places of Ankleshwar – Hansot area during the past two years, the details of which are given in Table 1:

Sightings of Malabar Lark in Ankleshwar – Hansot area

No.	Date	Place	No. of birds
1	25 September 2016	Sarthan	1
2	28 September 2016	Adol	1
3	2 October 2016	Ghodadra	6
4	5 October 2016	Hajat	3
5	10 October 2016	Untiyadra	2
6	3 November 2016	Kantasayan	4
7	4 November 2016	Aaliya Bet	5
8	14 January 2017	Ilav	2
9	14 January 2017	Dhamarad	2
10	24 January 2017	Kantiyajal	5
11	30 July 2017	Adadara	1

Outside of these areas, Malabar Lark was recorded by MB at Suvali beach, Hazira, on 7 February 2017. MB saw it again and also recorded its call at Navsari. Another sighting by Dr. Nainesh Parikh has been reported from Sultanpur village of Navsari District in late August 2016.

Discussion

Although there are past records, the Malabar Lark has not been reported recently by birdwatchers, may be due to its similarity to Crested Lark. Malabar Lark and Crested Lark have a sympatric distribution in Gujarat, especially in south Gujarat. Ranges of these *Galerida* sp. overlap in this area and both the species are found together here. Both the species are very similar looking, with a prominent crest. Crested Lark is reported from the whole state and hence it is possible that the Malabar Lark is probably overlooked as Crested Lark by birdwatchers.

JP has found that all sightings of Malabar Lark in Ankleshwar-Hansot area were in somewhat reddish or yellowish-brown saline soil, with scattered short grass and paddy fields, which matches with Malabar Lark habitat described in Nalavade (2013); general range of the Malabar Lark in Maharashtra

coincides with the red lateritic and reddish/yellowish-brown soil in Konkan and the Ghats, and the species prefers this kind of habitat. Similar potential habitat exists in other areas of Gujarat, including Saurashtra, and Khachar (1996) has noted this species in Saurashtra. Hence, it is quite probable that it could occur there.

May be, it could be common in south Gujarat and presumably uncommon in Saurashtra, with probable distribution along the coastline. However, this is just speculation and birdwatchers should look at all *Galerida* larks closely as there is possibility of the Malabar Lark occurring here. Its sightings should be reported so that the actual range and distribution of this species in Gujarat can be understood. However, it can be confirmed that the Malabar Lark occurs in south Gujarat and is fairly easily seen in the Ankleshwar-Hansot area of Bharuch.

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank Prasad Ganpule for confirming the identification and for encouraging us to write this note. We are also thankful to Dr. Nainesh Parikh for sharing his sighting.

References

- Alström, P. 2017. Malabar Lark (*Galerida malabarica*). *Handbook of the Birds of the World Alive*. Lynx Edicions, Barcelona. (retrieved from <http://www.hbw.com/node/57676> on 9 September 2017).
- Ali, S. 1954. The birds of Gujarat – Part I. *J Bombay Nat Hist Soc.* 52 (2): 374–458
- Dharmakumarsinhji, R. S. (Undated=) 1955. *Birds of Saurashtra, India with additional notes on the birds of Kutch and Gujarat*. Bhavnagar, Saurashtra. Published by the author.
- Grimmett, R., Inskipp C. & Inskipp T. 2011. *Birds of the Indian Subcontinent*. Second Edition. Christopher–Helm, London.
- Khachar L. 1996. The birds of Gujarat - a Salim Ali centenary year overview. *J. Bombay Nat. Hist Soc.* 93(3): 331-373
- Monga, S. G. & Naoroji, R. K. 1984. Birds of the Rajpipla forests - South Gujarat. With notes on nests found and breeding recorded and some new observations. *J Bombay Nat Hist Soc.* 80 (3): 575–612
- Nalavade, S. B. 2013. Conservation and sustainable management of avifaunal diversity in northern western ghats, India. Tilak Maharashtra Vidyapeeth. URL : <http://hdl.handle.net/10603/16101>
- Narve, D. S., Patel, C. D., & Pandya, N. P., 1991. Avifaunal diversity of Shoolpaneshwar Sanctuary. *Tiger Paper* 24(1): 12-17
- Rasmussen, P. C. & Anderton, J. C. 2012. *Birds of South Asia. The Ripley Guide*. Vols. 1 and 2. Second Edition. National Museum of Natural History - Smithsonian Institution, Michigan State University and Lynx Edicions, Washington, D. C., Michigan and Barcelona. □

Blue-cheeked Bee-eater nesting in Kachchh

Shivam Tiwari: Centre for Desert and Ocean, Moti Virani, Kachchh 370665. shivam.cedo@gmail.com

Jugal Kishor Tiwari: Centre for Desert and Ocean, Moti Virani, Kachchh 370665.

Bharat Kapdi: Epicentre Home Stay, Near Lodai, Kachchh.



Jugal Kishor Tiwari

The Blue-cheeked-Bee-eater (*Merops persicus*) is considered as a passage migrant in Kachchh (Ali 1954). However, some adults in full breeding plumage are seen earlier than other migrants; we have been seeing such birds every year since August 2005. We documented adults feeding juveniles in the nest at three different locations in Kachchh from 16 July 2017 till 3 August 2017. Past records of its nesting from Gujarat are also discussed here.

The Blue-cheeked Bee-eater is shown to be a passage migrant in Gujarat, and breeding in southern Saurashtra and in a small area in Kachchh (Grimmett *et al.* 2011). For Gujarat, Dharamakumarsinghji (1947) documented the nesting of the species in the outskirts of Bhavnagar. According to him, the Blue-cheeked Bee-eater is a regular monsoon breeder in Bhavnagar (specific breeding areas not mentioned). Ali (1954) mentions it as an autumn passage migrant in Kachchh, though states that its status in Gujarat is not clear and it breeds in Bhavnagar. However, Khacher (1976), on his way to 'Flamingo City' near Nir, in Kachchh, saw a group of six Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters and an embankment nearby where approximately eighty nest holes (not active then) were seen. Himmatsinhji (1981) noted a juvenile being fed on an electric wire, near Devisar Tank, Bhuj. Thus, there are scattered records of its breeding in Gujarat.

On 16 July 2017, we came across a nest near Dhinodhar hill, Banni, where Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters were competing for the nest with Green Bee-eaters (*Merops orientalis*). The bee-eaters were seen chasing each other and trying to enter and occupy the nest hole.

On 20 July 2017, one nest was observed by the third author in Lodai village area. This is in eastern Banni, around 30 kms from

Bhuj. He saw an adult perched with prey in its beak, and then going inside a hole in a mound, and coming out empty beaked. He saw the bird doing so a few times. He visited the nest site on 25 and 28 July 2017 and confirmed breeding there.

On 1 August 2017, we saw a pair of adult Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters in breeding plumage, near Jathavira village. We observed them catching insect prey and sitting on perches but not consuming the prey. We went farther away and waited, and the adult birds flew from the perches to their nest, where a juvenile bird was peeking out of the nest with its beak open.

The nest had two fledglings, one of which was already out of the nest. The pair was observed feeding both the offspring, one outside on the perch and the one inside the nest, with different winged insects, mostly comprising of dragonflies.

On visiting the nesting site the next day, we located two other active nests in the vicinity of the first nest. The other two nests were about 100 meters away from the first nest. All nests were active and adult birds were observed catching insects and perching and then proceeding to feed their offspring.

Conclusion

It can be inferred from our observations that the Blue-cheeked Bee-eater breeds in the Banni area of Kachchh. The breeding season here is June-August, with nesting observed in holes made in mounds. It is pertinent to point out here that as far as we know, there have been no recent observations or published literature regarding the Blue-cheeked Bee-eater nesting in Saurashtra, and there are no photographs posted on the social media or birding websites regarding its breeding there.

The Blue-cheeked Bee-eater is shown as breeding in north-western India (Grimmett *et al.* 2011). A search of the popular websites 'Oriental Bird Images' (OBI) and 'Internet Bird Collection' (IBC) was made and we found two photos of nesting of the species outside Gujarat in the recent times. Tiwari (2015) came across an active nest of Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters, with many adult plumage birds in Jhanjrola, Gurgaon District, Haryana, while Singh (2015) came across active nests of Blue-cheeked Bee-eater near Mangar, Haryana.

From the literature survey, and our observations of active nests of the Blue-cheeked Bee-eater in Kachchh, it can be inferred that apart from its status as an autumn passage migrant, the species still breeds in Gujarat at favorable locations from June till August. A detailed survey of suitable habitats is required since it is possible that it may be breeding in other areas of Kachchh and Saurashtra.

Bee-eater...

References

- Ali, S., 1954. The birds of Gujarat – Part I. *J Bombay Nat Hist Soc.* 52(2): 374-458
- Dharmakumarsinhji, K. S., 1947. Breeding of the Blue-cheeked Bee-eater (*Merops superciliosus persicus* Pallas) in Bhavnagar State. *J Bombay Nat Hist Soc.* 46 (4): 723–724
- Grimmett, R., Inskipp, C., & Inskipp, T. 2011. *Birds of the Indian Subcontinent.* 2nd ed. Christopher Helm & Oxford University Press. London.
- Himmatsinhji, M. K., 1981. The Bluecheeked Bee-eater *Merops superciliosus* (Linnaeus) in Kutch. *J Bombay Nat Hist Soc* 77 (2): 328–329

Khacher, L. J., 1976. The Bluecheeked Bee-Eater *Merops superciliosus*, its status in Kutch and Saurashtra. *J Bombay Nat Hist Soc* 72 (2): 543–544

Singh, S., 2015. http://orientalbirdimages.org/search.php?Bird_ID=367&Bird_Image_ID=106919&Bird_Family_ID= [Accessed on 1 October 2017].

Tiwari, A., 2015. <http://www.hbw.com/ibc/video/blue-cheeked-bee-eater-merops-persicus/blue-cheeked-bee-eater-activity-and-habitat-peak> [Accessed on 1 October 2017]. □

Sighting of Grasshopper Warbler in Kachchh

Samir Ovalekar: 3, Jayvant, 36 Mahant Road, Vile Parle (East), Mumbai - 400057. samir7399@yahoo.com

Subhadeep Ghosh: B-107 Legend Apts, Vakola, Santacruz (East), Mumbai - 400055. subhadeep_g@yahoo.com

Veer Vaibhav Mishra: Centre for Desert & Ocean CEDO, Village Moti-Virani, Ta: Nakhatrana, Kachchh 370665. vvaibhavam2008@gmail.com



Subhadeep Ghosh

The Grasshopper Warbler (*Locustella naevia*) is a winter migrant to India, mainly to SW Ghats and central India, and can be observed in passage across the peninsula in suitable habitats, including in Gujarat (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012).

On a recent bird watching trip to Kachchh, we were en route to Fot Mahadev, near Nakhatrana, Kachchh, in the morning on 23 September 2017. We observed and photographed a Grasshopper Warbler on a farm fence made of dry branches of *Acacia* sp. trees. The bird appeared from within the dense and darker part of the bramble near the ground and proceeded to move quickly up, but mainly across the branches to an approximate height of 2 feet from the ground. It appeared to be hunting for insects/prey. The structure and plumage of

this individual left no doubt regarding the identification of this individual. We had enough opportunities to click a few photographs showing different angles of the bird before we lost sight of it.

We later attempted a call playback but even though the individual responded (providing another confirmation of its identification), it was not seen again.

Based on the lack of streaking on the throat / breast and some hint of speckles on its throat, we felt this may have been a first-winter individual. However, we are not sure regarding the age of this bird.

Although there have been various sightings of the species in the state recently; near Amreli (Joshi 2015), near Porbandar (Zala 2017), in the Little Rann of Kachchh (Ganpule 2017), the previous record from Kachchh was from the Bhuj area, when a specimen of Grasshopper Warbler was collected in September 1959 (Ali 1960). Though the recent sighting from Little Rann of Kachchh is also from the Kachchh district, our sighting from mainland Kachchh comes after almost 57 years and is an important record for the region.

Acknowledgements

We thank Prasad Ganpule for confirming the record for Kachchh and for encouraging us to write this note.

References

- Ali, S. 1960. Additions to the birds of Kutch. *J. Bombay Nat Hist Soc.* 56 (3): 635
- Ganpule, P., 2017. Sighting of Moustached Warbler, Red-throated Pipit and Grasshopper Warbler in the Little Rann of Kachchh. *Flamingo.* 15 (2): 17–18

Joshi, V. 2015. Sightings of Grasshopper Warbler in Amreli, Gujarat. *Flamingo*. 13 (3): 19–20

Rasmussen, P. C. & Anderton, J. C. 2012. *Birds of South Asia. The Ripley Guide*. 2 Vols. Smithsonian Institution and Lynx Edicions, Washington D. C. and Barcelona.

Zala, V. N. 2017. Grasshopper Warbler near Porbandar. *Flamingo*. 15 (2): 23 □

Sighting of Little Bittern near Surat

Vijay S Bendre: 52, Ankurpark Row House, Jahangirpura, Surat. bendrevs@gmail.com



[The Little Bittern is thought to be a vagrant to Gujarat, with only one photographic record from Nalsarovar (Ganpule 2016). The record from Nalsarovar was in April 2009 when an adult was seen and photographed near Kathechi village (Trivedi 2015), which was the first confirmed record of the species from Gujarat; Little Bittern is not shown in either Grimmett et al. (2011) or in Rasmussen & Anderton (2012) for the state. An earlier record from Gavier Lake, Surat, in September 2002 by Mukesh Bhatt (Bhatt 2003) was considered to be inadequately documented; the editor's note given in the article states that this is a species which had not been noted in Gujarat before and hence, detailed documentation was required to confirm the identification.

This sighting from Surat in early September is surprising. The species is given as a scarce winter visitor (occasionally) and passage migrant in Indus Valley, Pakistan, and vagrant elsewhere in India; it winters mainly in Africa (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). The earlier record was in April while this sighting was in September. The unconfirmed sighting from Surat was also in early September. While these only two records are insufficient to make any comments on its status here, it is possible that this species could be a passage migrant in Gujarat. Birdwatchers should look for the Little Bittern in suitable habitats here in September and October. This photographic record is important and as stated by the observer, only the second record from Gujarat, and the first photographic record for south Gujarat – Eds]

On 5 September 2017, at around 07:30 hrs, I was on the Jahangirpura-Sayan Highway, on the outskirts of Surat for birding when I saw a bird similar to a bittern (*Ixobrychus* sp.) perched on a tree. So I stopped my car and took a few photos. I noticed that it had pale creamish underparts with whitish streaks, white wings and black mantle and crown. I could not identify this bird but knew that it was a bittern, and different from Yellow Bittern (*Ixobrychus sinensis*) and Cinnamon Bittern (*Ixobrychus cinnamomeus*). I shared the images with a few friends and it was identified as an adult Little Bittern (*Ixobrychus minutus*).

The Little Bittern was perched near a Baya Weaver (*Ploceus philippinus*) nest and sometimes, it was showing aggressive behaviour towards the Baya Weavers. Unlike other bitterns, this individual was not shy and skulking. I was able to photograph it from hardly ten feet, possibly since I was in my car. After two to three minutes, it noticed me and hid in the grass, after which I was not able to see it. After waiting for about five minutes, the bird was found near a small tree, 15 feet away from me. Again, I took a few photos. After this, it flew away into the grass and was not seen again. The bird was found near a canal alongside the road, with lots of grass. In the canal, a large number of fish were present. Hence, it is possible that this area was a suitable habitat for this individual. This is the first time I had noted a Little Bittern here and as per my talk with senior bird watchers here, it is only the second photographic record for Gujarat.

Acknowledgements

I thank Chintu Panchal for helping with the identification and Dr. Pankaj Maheria for encouragement and guidance for this note.

References

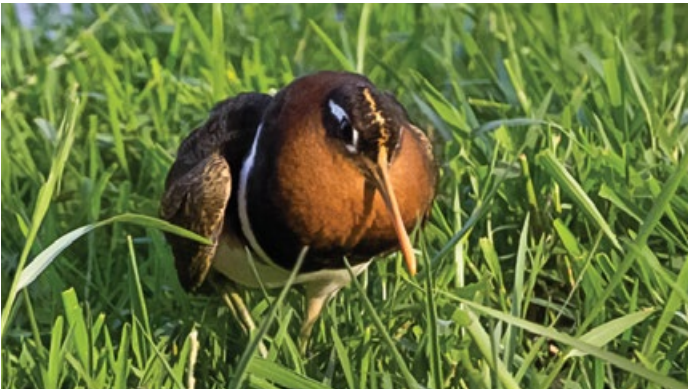
- Bhatt, M., 2003. *Nani panbagli* (Little Bittern) *nu avlokan*. *Vihang* (Grishma): 17 [In Gujarati].
- Ganpule, P., 2016. The Birds of Gujarat: Status and Distribution. *Flamingo* 8(3)-12(4): 2-40
- Grimmett, R., Inskipp, C., & Inskipp, T., 2011. *Birds of the Indian Subcontinent*. 2nd ed. London: Oxford University Press & Christopher Helm.
- Rasmussen, P. C., & Anderton, J. C., 2012. *Birds of South Asia: the Ripley guide*. 2nd ed. 2 vols Washington, D. C. and Barcelona: Smithsonian Institution and Lynx Edicions.
- Trivedi, R., 2015. Some important photographic records from Gujarat. *Indian BIRDS* 10(3&4): 108–110 □

Calling behaviour of Greater Painted Snipe

Ashok Mashru: A-7, Alap Heritage, Kalavad Road, Rajkot. mashruashok@gmail.com



Ashok Mashru



Ashok Mashru

The Greater Painted-snipe (*Rostratula benghalensis*) is our only resident snipe, but it belongs to a separate genus, *Rostratula*, and is the only species in this genus found in India. The breeding season is in the monsoon. It is an exception in birds as the female behaves like a male during breeding, which is seen in only a few select species. So the female is bright and colourful. Ali & Ripley (1980) state that the 'female is polyandrous and pugnacious as in Bustard Quails and the dominant sex partner. She battles with rival females for possession of successive husbands and once secured, and eggs laid, leaves to him the onus of incubating them and raising the chicks'.

On the evening of 12 May 2017, on a birding trip to Randarda Lake, Rajkot, with Raju Karia, we saw a female Greater Painted-snipe sitting in the grass. It froze on seeing us and after some time, it fluffed up its body; mainly the throat, upper breast, and nape was fluffed up. The fluffed out plumage was very striking and it was looking as if the upper body of the bird, including the neck sides and the nape, had been pumped with air! We managed to take some photos of this individual when it had fluffed out its plumage. Rajubhai, who had earlier observed this behaviour, mentioned that the bird would call soon. As predicted by him, the female then uttered a very slow, booming call, like an 'oook' sound, which has been described as similar to the blowing of a large mouthed bottle (Ali & Ripley 1980).

I referred to Dharmakumarsinhji (1955) and Ali & Ripley (1980) to find out if this behaviour has been described but failed to find any reference to it. Rasmussen & Anderton (2012) state that the call is 'given at night by female' but do not describe that the body/plumage is fluffed out while uttering the call.

According to Kirwan (2017), females call almost exclusively in the evening except during the egg-laying and incubation periods, when calls may be given day-long, but also at night, at intervals of 1–1.5 seconds. In addition to display calls, the female also gives similar vocalizations in agonistic contacts and in response to human intruders, while males vocalize much less frequently. Voice of the female is deeper and stronger than that of the male due to the longer, convoluted trachea (twice the length of the neck). However, there is no description of the fluffed-out plumage while calling by the female.

Here, we saw the female uttering the call in the evening and it was quite vocal. It is possible that the fluffed out plumage is a visual display. Such type of behaviour was recently observed in Small Buttonquail (*Turnix sylvaticus*) in the monsoon – the breeding season of species – where the body, and especially the nape, was noticeably fluffed out when calling (Ardesana & Bharad 2017). The female of Small Buttonquail is also polyandrous and performs such calling behaviour. This raises an interesting question: is there any relation of such behaviour – calling with a fluffed out plumage – with polyandry? Or do other polyandrous species also call with a fluffed out plumage? Is it a visual display or something else? This behaviour has now been described in two species which are known to be polyandrous and raises more questions regarding the calling behaviour of these species.

References

- Ali, S., & Ripley, S. D., 1980. *Handbook of the birds of India and Pakistan together with those of Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan and Sri Lanka*. Vol 2 of 10 (Sponsored by BNHS) Oxford University Press, Delhi.
- Ardesana, R. & Bharad, M. 2017. Calling behaviour of Small Buttonquail. *Flamingo* 15 (2): 14
- Dharmakumarsinhji, R. S. (Undated =) 1955. *Birds of Saurashtra, India with additional notes on the birds of Kutch and Gujarat*. Bhavnagar, Saurashtra. Published by the Author.
- Kirwan, G.M. 2017. Greater Painted-snipe (*Rostratula benghalensis*). *Handbook of the Birds of the World Alive*. Lynx Edicions, Barcelona. (retrieved from <https://www.hbw.com/node/53745> on 1 December 2017).
- Rasmussen, P. C. & Anderton, J. C. 2012. *Birds of South Asia: The Ripley Guide*. 2 vols. 2 nd ed. Smithsonian Institution and Lynx Edicions, Washington D. C. and Barcelona. □

First update to the Gujarat checklist: December 2017

Prasad Ganpule: C/o Parshuram Pottery Works, Opp. Nazarbaug, Morbi 363642. prasadganpule@gmail.com

This paper is the first update to the Gujarat checklist published in 2016 (Ganpule 2016), which listed 574 species documented within the boundaries of the state, along with the Union Territories of Diu & Daman, and Dadra & Nagar Haveli.

The records of the following species have been reviewed:

Variable Sunbird (*Cinnyris venustus*): The Variable Sunbird is resident in Africa; mainly in sub-Saharan Africa. There are no records of the species from India (Praveen *et al.* 2016). In September 2009, an adult male Variable Sunbird was photographed in Jamkhambhaliya, Jamnagar district, by local bird watcher Jeetu Jam (Jam 2009), who took three photos of the bird. The photographs clearly show all the diagnostic features of Variable Sunbird; metallic green throat, black breast band, yellow belly, black lores and metallic purplish upperparts, and the image was sent to Clive Mann and Krys Kazmierczak for confirmation. Both agreed that this was unlike any sunbird from India and was a Variable Sunbird.



Jeetu Jam

This sighting was discussed in detail with senior birders from Jamnagar in a BCSG workshop which was held there. While everyone agreed that the identification was correct, it was felt that since it was not known whether this individual was an escapee or not, it should not be included in the Gujarat checklist. Though the Variable Sunbird is nomadic and known to be migratory (Cheke & Mann 2017), its occurrence in Jamnagar district is quite extraordinary. The species is not kept as a pet and there are no records of it from any zoo in India (Anonymous 2009-2010), and an online search for the species in zoos in India proved negative. Hence, the possibility that this was an escapee was very less. Ship assisted passage is a possibility but looks unlikely in this case, as the diet of

this bird is mainly nectar from flowers, insects and spiders (Cheke & Mann 2017), which would be difficult (but not impossible – insects could be available) to obtain on a ship. However, the nearest region from Gujarat where it is resident is Somalia, which is more than 2000 kms away, with the Arabian Sea in between. An issue which was also considered is that Reliance Industries Ltd., Moti Khavdi, near Jamnagar, has a large collection of birds in its aviary and the possibility of an escapee from this collection had to be considered. However, it was learnt that they do not have any sunbirds in their aviary as per information gathered from them and also that they clip the wings of all the birds in their collection (Vinayak Parmar, *pers. comm.*). This individual was behaving like a wild bird, singing away, and did not have clipped wings. Hence, this was more like a truly wild individual. But, in view of the ongoing discussions regarding this individual and since no decision has yet been taken, the Variable Sunbird is not included in the Gujarat checklist at present though the identification is beyond any doubt. It may be included or excluded in the future based on a decision taken by a committee or by BCSG.

Long-tailed Skua (*Stercorarius longicaudus*): A probable Long-tailed Skua was seen and photographed in Amreli district (Joshi & Adhyaru 2016). However, there is only a single photo available, which is not very clear for the bird to be conclusively identified. As explained in the editor's note, it was not included in the Gujarat checklist since identity of this bird could not be confirmed beyond any doubt. Hence, at present, this record is considered to be a probable Long-tailed Skua.

Water Pipit (*Anthus spinoletta coutellii*): This subspecies of the Water Pipit, called Caucasian Water Pipit, was noted in the Little Rann of Kachchh in February 2017 (Ganpule 2017). While this is currently treated as a subspecies of Water Pipit, based on a preliminary genetic analysis and differences in plumage and flight calls, there is a proposal to split it and treat it as a separate species (Fijen 2014, Garner *et al.* 2015). If this is split in the future and treated as a separate species, then it will be an addition to the state checklist. However, at present, it is treated as a subspecies of Water Pipit in the Gujarat checklist.

Since the publication of the Gujarat checklist, the following species have been added:

Species added

575. Goosander (*Mergus merganser*): As stated in the checklist, this species is mentioned as 'rare straggler off Gujarat waters' (Anonymous 1887) and for Kachchh by Ali (1945). While the record by Anonymous (1887) is rather vague, the record mentioned by Ali (1945) is based on a sighting by Stoliczka (1872) from Kachchh. Stoliczka, during his travels in

checklist....

Kachchh, mentions that he was 'tolerably certain' regarding the occurrence of this species from Kachchh and gave the location as a 'large lake near Dinodhar hill or a lake southwest of Charvar range'. This sight record is included in Appendix 'A' in Ali (1945) for Kachchh. Based on feedback received from senior bird watchers here, it was proposed to include this species in the Gujarat checklist since the sight record has been accepted in Ali (1945). Hence, this species is added retrospectively in the checklist.

576. Siberian Thrush (*Zoothera sibirica*): An individual seen well and photographed in Porbandar Bird Sanctuary (Vargiya *et al.* 2016).

577. Rosy Minivet (*Pericrocotus roseus*): A well documented sighting from Vansada National Park in Dang district (Patel 2017).

578. Buff-bellied Pipit (*Anthus rubescens*): Sighting from Greater Rann of Kachchh (Ganpule *et al.* 2017).

579. Masked Shrike (*Lanius nubicus*): A Masked Shrike was seen and photographed at Govaldev, near Vyara, in Tapi district, on 18 December 2016, and was seen 3-4 times, lastly on 8 January 2017 (Bharti 2017). This sighting was well documented and verified, and is an addition to the avifauna of Gujarat and India.

580. Short-tailed Shearwater (*Puffinus tenuirostris*): Two recent records from Gujarat. A bird was seen and photographed at Nalsarovar, on 30 April 2017, while an injured bird was recovered from Mahuva coast, Bhavnagar district, on 20 May 2017; the first and second record for Gujarat respectively (Shah *et al.*, in print).

581. Slaty-legged Crane (*Rallina eurizonoides*): An adult and a juvenile were photographed near Madhuban Dam, Dadra & Nagar Haveli, and this species is an addition to the avifauna of Gujarat (Mishra 2017a).

582. Loten's Sunbird (*Cinnyris lotenia*): A male Loten's Sunbird was photographed near Madhuban Dam, Dadra & Nagar Haveli, and it is an addition to the avifauna of Gujarat (Mishra 2017b).

Thus, the Gujarat checklist is now 582 species.

A lot of feedback was received upon the publication of the checklist. Birdwatchers gave their inputs regarding certain species and the following species are worth mentioning:

Details for certain species included in the checklist

Snow Goose (*Anser caerulescens*): A very detailed discussion regarding the sighting of Snow Goose from Surendranagar district by Mundkur *et al.* (1992), is given in Praveen *et al.* (2014), wherein this species was excluded from the India

checklist due to 'being of unknown origin'. While there was no doubt regarding the identification, doubts were expressed that it could be an escapee from captivity and expert opinion was divided. This contentious species was included in the Gujarat checklist based on inputs received from various bird watchers who saw this individual in the field. Its behaviour was like a wild bird and it was seen with a flock of Bar-headed Goose (*Anser indicus*), and hence presumed to have migrated here. It was accepted as a wild vagrant and included in the state checklist.

Rock Martin (*Ptyonoprogne fuligula*): As explained by Praveen (2016), this species was not included in the India checklist (Praveen *et al.* 2016). Rasmussen & Anderton (2005) cite an 'old record' from Kachchh which 'requires substantiation'. As correctly pointed out by Praveen (2016), Stoliczka (1872) does not mention the Rock Martin in his list of birds from Kachchh, and the inclusion of any record of this species by Ali & Ripley (1987) based on this reference is debatable. However, the Rock Martin was included in the Gujarat checklist based on Butler (1879). While no record of a specimen collected by Butler (1879) could be traced, this species, along with Eurasian Crag Martin (*P. rupestris*) and Dusky Crag Martin (*P. concolor*) are listed by the author, who gives the Rock Martin for 'Sind, Cutch (=Kachchh)' and as a 'cold weather visitant, not uncommon along the coast'. Thus, it is unlikely that the author made an error in identification, as the similar Eurasian Crag Martin is also mentioned separately. Further, the species could indeed occur in Kachchh as it is resident in Sindh, Pakistan, which is adjoining Kachchh. Since Butler (1879) specifically mentioned Kachchh in the locality, this record was accepted in the Gujarat checklist.

Brown-necked Raven (*Corvus ruficollis*): This is another species which was not accepted in the India checklist (Praveen *et al.* 2016). Like the Rock Martin, this is also resident in Sindh, Pakistan. This species was first mentioned for Gujarat by Ali (1945), who saw Ravens twice in Kachchh and mentioned that they could be Punjab Ravens (*C. corax subcorax*) or Brown-necked Ravens. However, the identification was not confirmed. It was included in the Gujarat checklist based on a sight record from Kachchh; Khacher (1993) mentioned a sighting of this species in Kachchh by Shivraj Kumar Khachar. This sight record was accepted and this species was also included in the previous checklist of birds of Gujarat (Parasharya *et al.* 2004), and was retained in the current checklist based on this record.

Blue-bearded Bee-eater (*Nyctornis athertoni*): A few birders pointed out that this record was given in Ali (1954) as 'confirmation is desirable'. However, Ali (1954) reported hearing its distinctive call in the forests in Navsari district, but noted 'no specimen obtained nor completely satisfactory sight record'. The call of this species is very distinctive and

the possibility that this was misidentified by a senior and experienced ornithologist like Ali is very less. Thus, it was included in the Gujarat checklist.

Mongolian Finch (*Eremopsaltria mongolica*): This 'improbable for Gujarat' species was included in the checklist based on a photographic record from Dhola-Veera, Khadir, Kachchh, in November 2007 (Ganpule 2013). This record was published first in 'Vihang' (Ganpule 2010), with senior ornithologist L. Khacher commenting that this was certainly not a Desert Finch (*Rhodospiza obsoleta*), but could be a probable female Trumpeter Finch (*Bucanetes githagineus*). Hence, the identification could not be confirmed at that time. The identification was later discussed in detail and was confirmed by Arend Wassink and Rajah Jaypal, both very experienced ornithologists, who agreed that it was a Mongolian Finch based on the weak pale bill, pale legs and whitish panels on coverts, along with strongly patterned wings and tail. Hence, this species was included in the Gujarat checklist.

Jouanin's Petrel (*Bulweria fallax*): In the Gujarat checklist, this was included based on a record by Sinclair (1979) from the Gulf of Kachchh. However, as explained in Vargiya *et al.* (2017), this record does not fall within Indian limits. Hence, the individual recovered from Porbandar (Vargiya *et al.* 2017) is the first record of the species from Gujarat and the sight record off Veraval coast (Naik 2016) is the second record for Gujarat.

Scarlet Minivet (*Pericrocotus (flammeus) speciosus*): Included in the checklist based on a record from Kachchh (Himmatsinhji 1982). However, now Orange Minivet (*P. f. flammeus*) and Scarlet Minivet (*P. f. speciosus*) are treated separately. The Orange Minivet occurs in south Gujarat, while the Scarlet Minivet is resident in the Himalayas, Eastern Ghats and in Central India, up to western M.P. and except for the Kachchh record, no other sighting is given for Gujarat (Grimmett *et al.* 2011). The details of whether it is a *flammeus* or *speciosus* are not mentioned in the record from Kachchh and no description is given. Thus, it is possible that the Kachchh bird could have been Orange Minivet rather than Scarlet Minivet. However, Scarlet Minivet is retained in the checklist based on unpublished records from south Gujarat, where individuals similar to Scarlet Minivet, with scarlet red (rather than orange) underparts have been noted. This requires further study and Scarlet Minivet records should be carefully evaluated and a considered decision is needed to be taken in the future. It is retained in the checklist for now based on records from south Gujarat.

Fieldfare (*Turdus pilaris*): This was included in the checklist based on a record from north Gujarat (Joshua *et al.* 2005). However, doubts were raised regarding this sighting by

Khachar (2005), who suggested keeping this record (and other doubtful records) in a separate list pending verification. This record is mentioned in Bannerjee & Inskipp (2013), who photo documented this species recently in India. So, there remains no doubt that the Fieldfare does occur in the country. Though not photographed, this species is retained in the Gujarat checklist at present and can be re-evaluated in the future.

Discussion

After the monumental work done by Praveen *et al.* (2016) in making the checklist of birds of India, now, for the first time, we have an authentic, peer reviewed and widely accepted country checklist. Ideally, state checklists should be derived from the country checklist. But, for Gujarat, Parasharya *et al.* (2004) made the first detailed state checklist in 2004. In the recent Gujarat checklist (Ganpule 2016), three species, viz., Snow Goose, Rock Martin and Brown-necked Raven are included, which have not been listed in the India checklist. As explained by Praveen (2016), there is no need to align both the checklists as long as the associated documentation is well aligned. The details for these three species are given here. Thus, acceptance criteria vary between the two checklists; Gujarat checklist accepting the Snow Goose as a wild vagrant and the Rock Martin and Brown-necked Raven on the basis of records by experienced bird watchers. Another point to be considered is that there are a few differences in the two checklists due to the different taxonomies adopted; BCSG follows Grimmett *et al.* (2011) while the India checklist is based on Howard & Moore, 4th edition (Dickenson & Remsen 2013). For example, Persian Shearwater (*Puffinus persicus*) is given as a separate species in Grimmett *et al.* (2011), while in the India checklist, it is treated as a subspecies of Tropical Shearwater (*Puffinus bailloni*). While both are included in the India checklist under a single species, the Gujarat checklist treats them as two separate species. Thus, a few differences remain between the Gujarat and India checklists.

Bird watching as a hobby is increasing, and with the advent of good digital cameras and field guides, sharing of photographs on the social media makes identification of some tricky species easier. It can be seen that seven species have been added to the Gujarat checklist in the last one and a half years, which is quite fantastic. In view of the rapidly growing bird watcher community in Gujarat and the proliferation of good digital cameras, it is hoped that more species will be added in the coming years.

Checklists are dynamic and need to be reviewed and updated regularly. As there are frequent taxonomic updates, more publications regarding identification criteria for species difficult to identify become available, and new information is

checklist....

obtained, the checklist needs to be kept up to date with the latest additions and taxonomic changes. Thus, it is hoped that regular updates – probably every two or three years – will be given in this journal to keep the Gujarat checklist updated.

Acknowledgements

I thank Ashok Mashru and Maulik Varu for reviewing the draft manuscript. I am grateful to everyone who provided valuable comments on the Gujarat checklist. I thank Clive Mann and Krys Kazmierczak for helping with identification of the sunbird. I thank Jeetu Jam for contributing the photographs of the sunbird. I thank Vinayak Parmar for all his help.

References

- Ali, S., 1945. *The Birds of Kutch*. Oxford University Press. Published for the Govt. of Kutch.
- Ali, S. 1954. The birds of Gujarat – Part I. *J Bombay Nat Hist Soc.* 52 (2): 374-458
- Ali, S., & Ripley, S. D., 1987. *Handbook of the birds of India and Pakistan together with those of Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan and Sri Lanka*. Vol 5 (Sponsored by BNHS) Oxford University Press, Delhi.
- Anonymous, 1887. Waters of western India. Part IV. Gujarat. *J Bombay Nat Hist Soc.* 2 (4): 221-228
- Anonymous, 2009–2010. Inventory of Animals in Indian Zoos and animal profile of identified individuals of endangered wild animal species-2009- 2010. Central Zoo Authority. Website URL: <http://www.moef.nic.in/sites/default/files/Inventory%202009-10%20%28e-version%29.pdf> [Accessed on 01 October 2017].
- Banerjee, M., & Inskipp, T., 2013. First photographic record of Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris* from the Indian Subcontinent. *Indian BIRDS* 8 (3): 77
- Bharti, H. 2017. Masked Shrike near Vyara: an intriguing first record for India. *Flamingo* 15 (2): 6
- Butler, E. A. 1879. *A catalogue of the birds of Sind, Cutch, Kathaiwar, North Gujarat, and Mount Aboo*. Government Central Press, Bombay.
- Cheke, R. & Mann, C. 2017. Variable Sunbird (*Cinnyris venustus*). *Handbook of the Birds of the World Alive*. Lynx Edicions, Barcelona. (retrieved from <http://www.hbw.com/node/60056> on 1 October 2017).
- Dickinson, E. C., & Remsen, J. V. J., (eds.) 2013. *The Howard and Moore complete checklist of the birds of the world*: 2 vols. 4th ed. Eastbourne, U.K.: Aves Press.
- Fijen, T. P. M., 2014. Flight call identification of Rock Pipit and Water Pipit. *Dutch Birding* 36 (2): 87-95
- Ganpule, P., 2010. 'Shu aa ran-tuti hati?' *Vihang* 4 (1): 10 [In Gujarati].
- Ganpule, P., 2013. <https://birdinggujarat.wordpress.com/2013/02/27/mystery-finch-in-kutch-gujarat/> [Accessed on 27 August 2017].
- Ganpule, P., 2016. The Birds of Gujarat: Status and Distribution. *Flamingo* 8(3)-12(4):2-40
- Ganpule, P., 2017. Water Pipit of subspecies *coutellii* in Little Rann of Kachchh. *Flamingo* 15 (1): 22
- Ganpule, P., Bagda, G. & Parekh, J. 2017. Sighting of Buff-bellied Pipit in GRK: An addition to the avifauna of Gujarat. *Flamingo* 15 (1): 13–14
- Garner, M., Perlman, Y., Kiat, Y. & Collinson, J. M. Water Pipits: three species rather than one? *British Birds* 108 (1): 42-48
- Grimmett, R., Inskipp, C., & Inskipp, T. 2011. *Birds of the Indian Subcontinent*. 2nd ed. Christopher Helm & Oxford University Press. London.
- Himmatsinhji, M. K. 1982. *Pericrocotus flammeus* (Forster) in Kutch and some general comments. *J Bombay Nat Hist Soc.* 79 (1): 198
- Jam, J. 2009. <http://www.indianaturewatch.net/displayimage.php?id=117928> [Accessed on 27 August 2017].
- Joshi, V. & Adhyaru, B. 2016. Sighting of a probable Long-tailed Skua in Amreli district. *Flamingo*. 14 (4): 12–13
- Joshua, J., Soni, H., Joshi, N., M & Joshi, P. N. 2005. Sighting of Fieldfare (*Turdus pilaris*) in Firozpora of Banaskantha district, north Gujarat, India. *Newsletter for Birdwatchers* 45 (4): 59–60
- Khachar, L., 2005. Letters to the editor. *Flamingo*. 3 (3): 15
- Khacher, L. 1996. The birds of Gujarat - a Salim Ali centenary year overview. *J Bombay Nat Hist Soc.* 93 (3): 331–373
- Misra, S., 2017a. Sighting of Slaty-legged Crake from Dadra and Nagar Haveli; an addition to Gujarat checklist. *Flamingo* 15 (3): 19
- Misra, S., 2017b. Sighting of Loten's Sunbird in Dadra and Nagar Haveli: an addition to the avifauna of Gujarat. *Flamingo* 15 (4): 14
- Mundkur, T., Pandya, P., Jhala, N., Pravez, R., & Khachar, S., 1992. Snow Goose *Anser caerulescens* - an addition to the Indian avifauna. *J Bombay Nat Hist Soc* 88 (3): 446–447
- Naik, K., 2016. Significant pelagic bird sightings off the Gujarat coast. *Flamingo* 14 (4): 1-4
- Parasharya, B. M., Borad, C. K. & Rank, D. N. 2004. *A Checklist of Birds of Gujarat*. Bird Conservation Society, Gujarat.
- Patel, P. R. 2017. Sighting of Rosy Minivet in Vansda National Park: An addition to the avifauna of Gujarat. *Flamingo*. 15 (1): 8
- Praveen, J., 2016. Letter to the Editor. *Flamingo* 14 (3): 23-24
- Praveen J., Jayapal, R., & Pittie, A., 2014. Notes on Indian rarities - 2: Waterfowl, diving waterbirds, and gulls and terns. *Indian BIRDS* 9 (5&6): 113–136
- Praveen J., Jayapal, R. & Pittie, A., 2016. A checklist of the birds of India. *Indian BIRDS*. 11 (5&6): 113–172A.
- Rasmussen, P. C. & Anderton, J. C. 2005. *Birds of South Asia: The Ripley Guide*. 2 vols. 1 st ed. Smithsonian Institution and Lynx Edicions, Washington D. C. and Barcelona.
- Shah, T., Shah, D., Desai, J. & Bhil, B., Two spring records of Short-tailed Shearwater *Ardenna tenuirostris* from Gujarat in 2017. *Indian BIRDS* (in print).
- Sinclair, J. C. 1979. Birds observed at sea in the Indian Ocean. *The Cormorant* 7: 7-10
- Stoliczka, F., 1872. Notice of the Mammals and Birds inhabiting Kachh. *J. Asiatic Soc of Bengal*. 41 (2): 211–258
- Vargiya, D., Jethva, V. & Rajshakha, K. 2016. Sighting of Siberian Thrush in Porbandar: an addition to the avifauna of Gujarat. *Flamingo* 14 (4): 19
- Vargiya, D., Tank, C. & Ganpule, P. 2017. Jouanin's Petrel in Porbandar: a first record for Gujarat. *Flamingo* 15 (2): 7-8 □

Short Birding Notes



Eurasian Scops Owl in Kachchh

On 22 September 2017, I was on a birding trip to a thorn forest near Lodai Village, Kachchh, looking mainly for passage migrants. At around 08:30 hrs, I spotted a small sized owl perched inside a tree. Initially, I thought it was a Pallid Scops Owl (*Otus brucei*) but when observed closely, I saw that it had some rufous colour on scapulars, around the eyes and on the ear tufts. Further, it lacked any feathering extending onto the toes, which is seen in Pallid Scops Owl, had mottled upperparts and underparts, and long wings falling over the tail. I waited for some time and got more images, from all angles, so that I could identify it. I identified it as a Eurasian Scops Owl (*Otus scops*), based on the features described above. I uploaded this sighting on 'eBird', where the identification was confirmed by experts. Eurasian Scops Owl was noted recently near Bhavnagar (Bhil 2016, Joshi & Legha 2017), but this is the first photographic record of the species from Kachchh.

Dhyey Shah: Vadodara. ketanrinku@yahoo.com



Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush in Rampura Grassland, Dahod

On 5 November 2017, I visited Rampura Grassland, near Dahod for bird watching. At around 16:00 hrs, I noticed a different bird perched on the ground. It looked similar to a Rock Thrush (*Monticola* sp.) but I could not identify it. I took some photos and referred to the field guide (Grimmett *et al.* 2011). I identified it as a juvenile or female Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush (*Monticola saxatilis*) based on the orange-red uppertail coverts and tail, whitish underparts with brown scaling and greyish upperparts with whitish scaling. The previous sightings of this species from Gujarat are all from Kachchh, with a recent sighting near Mundra (Suthar & Chudasama 2017). This is probably the first record of the species from central Gujarat and it is the first documented sighting from Rampura Grassland.

Dr. Nilam Patel: Dahod. drnilam009@gmail.com



Grey-bellied Cuckoo in Wadhwan

On 20 October 2011, at around 17:50 hrs, I observed an adult male Grey-bellied Cuckoo (*Cacomantis passerinus*) feeding on a caterpillar in Wadhwan, Surendranagar. I could take only a record photograph from far. The identification was confirmed by the grey upperparts, unbarred breast and belly, and grey throat. It is known to occur in Gir National Park in Saurashtra and in South Gujarat regularly, with scattered records from elsewhere in the state (Bagda *et al.* 2015). This was the first time I had seen a Grey-bellied Cuckoo in Wadhwan.

Devvratsinh Mori: Wadhwan. devvratsinhmori@gmail.com



Striolated Bunting near Khijadiya, Jamnagar

On 30 August 2017, we saw a Striolated Bunting (*Emberiza striolata*) near Khijadia Sanctuary, Jamnagar. A single individual was seen feeding / foraging with Crested Larks (*Galerida cristata*) and Sykes's Larks (*Galerida deva*) in the freshly grown grass of early monsoon. We asked Kunal Joshi and Chirag Solanki about recent sightings of this species in Jamnagar. Kunal recalled that he had seen it almost 10 years ago and Chirag confirmed that he, along with Falguna Shah, had seen this in December 2014 and noted it in Jamnagar for 2-3 times. However, no photos were available with them and senior birders here said that it was rare in Jamnagar. The earlier sightings were from Khijadiya and in Samana, which is around 35 kms from Jamnagar. Thus, the photographic record of this species from Jamnagar is important.

Hardik Pala, Urmil Jhaveri: Jamnagar. hardikpala@gmail.com



Red-backed Shrike near Porbandar

On 11 September 2017, I was birding at Gosabara wetland (also known as Mokarsagar wetland), near Porbandar. I saw a shrike on a perch which was very near to me. I found it different from other shrikes in the area and took a few photographs. Since I was not able to identify it, I discussed with my friends and the identification was confirmed as an adult Red-backed Shrike (*Lanius collurio*). Red-backed shrike is an autumn passage migrant in Gujarat, and most commonly seen in the month of September in Kachchh. Previous records from Saurashtra are from Jamnagar, Rajkot and Junagadh districts (Ganpule 2017). Thus, this sighting from Porbandar suggests that it could be passing through other areas of Saurashtra also.

Dr. Bhargav Raval: Jamnagar. dr.bhargavraval@gmail.com



Black-headed Munia in Jessore

On 17 September 2017, Sunday morning, we visited Avala village, near Banas River, which is located on the southern side of Jessore Sloth Bear Sanctuary, near Palanpur, north Gujarat. At around 13:30 hrs, forest guard Tejal Parmar informed us that this was a site where sparrows and munias were seen. She had seen Black-headed Munia (*Lonchura malacca*) there. While we were speaking with her, a pair of Black-headed Munia came and perched on an *Acacia* sp. tree but flew away. After a few minutes, once again a pair came under the tree and started to bathe in the water pool there. We could take good photos and observe the birds. We continued observing, and saw a group of 7 birds perched on a single branch. Another pair was seen near Dev Dugarpuri temple. Black-headed Munia is uncommon in north Gujarat, and these sightings suggest that it may be widespread in Jessore Sanctuary.

Dr. Suresh Prajapati, Kailash Jani: Palanpur. shpzoo@yahoo.com



Common Ringed Plovers in Charakla, near Jamnagar

On 13 October 2017, at around 16:00 hrs in the evening, a group of 10-12 Common Ringed Plovers (*Charadrius hiaticula*) were seen and photographed in Charakla Salt Pans, near Jamnagar. A few individuals were in almost full breeding plumage while some were in non-breeding and juvenile plumages. They were easily identified based on the face pattern, deep orange legs and prominent white wing bar in flight. The Common Ringed Plover is a rare winter migrant to Gujarat, with a few recent records from Jamnagar (Ganpule *et. al.* 2010). The sighting of a group of these birds in Charakla is interesting and adds to our knowledge regarding the distribution of this species in Gujarat.

Ashvin Trivedi, S. P. Jadeja, Manoj Finava, Prasad Ganpule: Jamnagar. snapchaserashvintrivedi@yahoo.com



A probable hybrid Shrike in Kachchh

On 24 September 2017, I was bird watching near Karagoga village, Mundra, Kachchh. I saw and photographed an adult shrike (*Lanius* sp.) which I could not identify. It had a greyish head, prominent face mask, dark brown mantle, dark brownish wings, brownish flanks, and red-brown tail with black tip. I could not identify it and so posted the images on the social media. It was identified as a probable hybrid.

[This individual shows characteristics of a hybrid shrike; the face mask is like Red-tailed Shrike (*Lanius phoenicuroides*) while the head is like *Lanius isabellinus*. The tail with the black tip indicates that it can be a hybrid with *Lanius collurio*. Though such birds have not been documented here in Gujarat earlier, these are said to be common in NE Kazakhstan and could reach Gujarat in the passage migration season. We thank Lars Svensson for helping with the identification – Eds]

Ashish Gohil: Bhuj, Kachchh. rahee.gohil@gmail.com



Shikra preying on Pallid Scops Owl

On 1 March 2010, I was in Nalsarovar Bird Sanctuary. There, I was able to see and photograph an adult Shikra (*Accipiter badius*) preying on a Pallid Scops Owl (*Otus brucei*). The Shikra caught and killed the Pallid Scops Owl and perched on a branch of a tree. The Pallid Scops Owl was in the talons of the Shikra, dangling on the side of the tree branch and could be clearly seen and identified. Though the Shikra is known to be an opportunistic hunter, it has not been documented to prey on the Pallid Scops Owl. Naoroji (2006) does not mention Shikra preying on this species and it is an addition to its diet.

Rajni Trivedi: Ahmedabad. rajnitivedi1950@gmail.com



Breeding of Great Crested Grebe in Khijadiya, Jamnagar

The Great Crested Grebe (*Podiceps cristatus*) is resident in Gujarat and seen regularly in and around Jamnagar. Many times, it is seen in the coastal parts of Jamnagar in flocks – especially in Charakla Salt Pans, where flocks have been noted in the summer. It breeds in the monsoon season in Khijadiya Bird Sanctuary, near Jamnagar, when pairs perform elaborate courtship displays. I have noted around 8 to 10 nests inside the sanctuary and 2-3 nests in the surrounding area since the last three years. In years of good rainfall, up to 15 nests are seen here. It is possible that there are more nests as the area of the sanctuary is quite large. The fluffy, striped young grebes are often carried on the adult's back and are a photographer's delight. Though it is well known that the species breeds in Gujarat, nesting in Khijadiya Bird Sanctuary is observed regularly and the number of nests recorded in this area proves it one of the important areas for this species in Gujarat.

Amish Patel: Jamnagar. aameeshpatel@yahoo.com



Verditer Flycatcher in Jamnagar

On 1 November 2017, I visited Ranjit Sagar Dam, near Jamnagar. While bird watching in the area, I saw and photographed a Verditer Flycatcher (*Eumyias thalassinus*) perched on a wire. It looked like a female or an immature individual, with dusky lores and brownish secondaries. This species is given as an occasional/scarce or erratic winter visitor to entire Gujarat except Kachchh (Grimmett *et. al.* 2011). It has been recorded in Jamnagar earlier, but it is not common here and as per senior birdwatchers, there are very few documented sightings from Jamnagar area.

Neel Sureja: Jamnagar. neelsureja5@gmail.com



Cinerous Vulture near Nal Sarovar

On 13 October 2017, at around 10:00 hrs, I spotted a Cinerous Vulture (*Aegypius monachus*) near Vichhiya village on the Sanand-Nalsarovar road. The bird was sitting quietly on the ground and allowed me a very close approach to take record photographs. On the next day, 14 October 2017, I visited the same place again but did not find it. As per the details given by a local person, the bird was injured and hence rescued by some people to a nearby veterinary hospital. The Cinerous Vulture is a rare winter migrant to Gujarat, with sightings mainly from the Little and Greater Rann of Kachchh (Ganpule 2016). Thus, this sighting near Nal Sarovar is outside its known area of occurrence in Gujarat.

Asaraf Sama: Nalsarovar.



Colour aberrant Jungle Babbler family near Veraval

On 6 November 2017, while bird watching in Chagiya village, near Sutrapada, Veraval (20° 52' N, 70° 33' E), I saw a group of Jungle Babblers (*Turdoidea striata*), in which one individual was colour aberrant and looking entirely white. The group was easily identified by call and plumage. On the next day, at around 07:00 hrs, I saw 13 Jungle Babblers in a group at the same place. I was surprised to see three 'white' Jungle Babblers within the group. One seemed to be an adult while two were juveniles based on their behaviour. All were looking white and were similar in colour. One presumed adult bird, was feeding the two other birds and the birds were begging for food, which is typically seen in juveniles. I saw that a grasshopper was fed to one of the juveniles. I took photos and video of these individuals. I could not identify the exact colour mutation but could confirm that none was an albino since they had normal coloured eyes. The identification of the exact mutation is quite difficult and not always possible (Van Grouw 2013). But, it was interesting to note that the colour aberrant Jungle Babbler had bred in the wild and had similar, colour aberrant offspring.

I thank Pranav Vaghasiya and Dr. Gaurang Bagda for all their help.

Ravi Patel: Junagadh. rv.8980478450@gmail.com



Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin in Wadhwan, Surendranagar

On a bird watching trip near Wadhwan, Surendranagar, on 17 August 2012, I saw a Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin (*Cercotrichas galactotes*). It was seen briefly early in the morning. The second sighting was on 25 August 2013 at around 12:15 hrs. This time, I could take some photos and the bird was actively catching insects and seen well. The Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin is an autumn passage migrant in Gujarat (Grimmett *et al.* 2011). It is commonly seen in Kachchh, but there are only a few records from Saurashtra. It is possible that it is overlooked. This was my first sighting from Surendranagar area.

Devvratsinh Mori: Wadhwan devvratsinhmori@gmail.com



Desert Wheatear in Vadodara

In January 2017, I saw a Desert Wheatear (*Oenanthe deserti*) perched on a heap of sand near Kotana village, in the outskirts of Vadodara. I could not identify it at first and thought it was a Common Stonechat (*Saxicola torquatus*). I took a few photographs. After sharing the images with other bird watchers, it was identified as a Desert Wheatear. This species is not very common in Vadodara area

Shubham Akolkar: Vadodara. akolkarshubham94@gmail.com

References

Bagda, G., Joshi, V. & Ganpule, P. 2015. Grey-bellied Cuckoo in Gir and its distribution in Gujarat. *Flamingo* 13 (3): 8-9

Bhil, B., 2016. Eurasian Scops Owl at Mahuva, Bhavnagar. *Flamingo* 14 (1): 18

Ganpule, P., Varu, M. & Trivedi, A., 2010. Common Ringed Plover: Status and Distribution in Gujarat. *Flamingo* 8 (1&2): 3-5

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

Ganpule, P., 2017. Red-backed, Brown, Isabelline and Red-tailed Shrike in Gujarat. *Flamingo* 15 (3): 1-7

Grimmett, R., Inskipp, C., & Inskipp, T., 2011. *Birds of the Indian Subcontinent*. 2nd ed. London: Oxford University Press & Christopher Helm.

Joshi, V. & Legha, M. R., 2017. Eurasian Scops Owl in Bhavnagar district. *Flamingo* 15 (2): 11-12

Naoroji, R. 2006. *Birds of prey of the Indian Subcontinent*. Om Books International. New Delhi.

Suthar, A. & Chudasama, D. 2017. Observations of Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush in Kachchh. *Flamingo* 15 (2): 19

Van Grouw, H., 2013. What colour is that bird? The causes and recognition of common colour aberrations in birds. *British Birds* 106 (1): 17-29

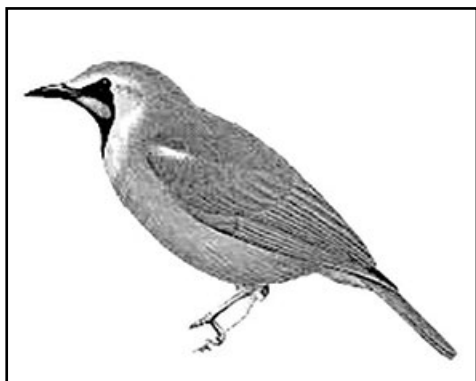


ABSTRACTS



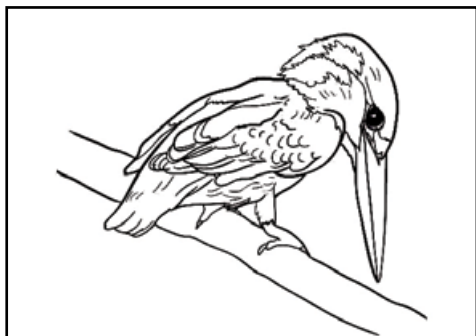
Breeding of Short-toed Snake Eagle: 'Breeding biology of the Short-toed Snake Eagle' by Devvratsinh Mori et al., *Indian BIRDS* 12 (6): 149-156.

The authors carried out a detailed study on the breeding ecology of the Short-toed Snake Eagle (*Circaetus gallicus*) near Wadhwan, Surendranagar. A breeding pair was studied over three seasons and nesting activity monitored. Nest building was observed in January - March, with eggs being laid in February - March. Observations on incubation period, hatchling growth and time taken till fledging were noted. Detailed study on its diet was made and it was found that toads, snakes, lizards, birds and mammals were taken, with reptiles forming a majority of its diet. New data on growth and behaviour of fledglings was reported in this study.



Diet of Jerdon's Leafbird chick: 'Notes on the diet of Jerdon's Leafbird chick' by Reshma Solanki et al., *Indian BIRDS* 13 (3): 69-73.

A study on the diet of a Jerdon's Leafbird (*Chloropsis jerdoni*) was made by the authors in Jambughoda Wildlife Sanctuary, wherein observations were made for 19 days and the prey given to the chick was documented. The hatchling was fed 14-15 times a day and 12 species of invertebrates were given as food to the hatchling. It was also noted that the Jerdon's Leafbird mimicked 17 species of birds and one mammal (northern palm squirrel *Funambulus pennantii*). Out of the 17 bird species mimicked by the Jerdon's Leafbird, 12 were not documented previously and were noted for the first time in this study.



Oriental Dwarf Kingfisher: 'Does the Oriental Dwarf Kingfisher breed in southern Gujarat?' by Vishal Mistri et al., *Indian BIRDS* 13 (3): 82.

The authors report on a sighting of an Oriental Dwarf Kingfisher (*Ceyx erithaca*) in Dang district, southern Gujarat. They observed an Oriental Dwarf Kingfisher attempting to dig a burrow near a stream. The authors suggest that, the species probably breeds in the area and it is likely that it could be a regular breeding visitor to the Dang forest. The authors also discuss other records of the species from Gujarat and state that it could be classified as a summer/breeding visitor to southern Gujarat.



Red-naped Shaheen: 'The identification of Red-naped Shaheen' by Nirav Bhatt & Prasad Ganpule, *Indian BIRDS* 13 (4): 85-92.

The authors carried out a study on the identification of Red-naped Shaheen (*Falco peregrinus babylonicus*) and its separation from the migratory Tundra Peregrine Falcon (*F. p. calidus*). The study was conducted mainly in north-western India. Special emphasis was made in separation of juvenile Red-naped Shaheen from the juvenile Peregrine Falcon. A host of features are required to be studied; plumage, state of moult, observations of bare part colour etc. to identify juvenile birds and even then, some individuals may not be safely separable in the field to the sub-species level. The Red-naped Shaheen is given to be a rare winter migrant to north-western India; sightings from Gujarat are mainly from the Little Rann of Kachchh and Greater Rann of Kachchh.

□

“ As late as in the Fifties and Sixties of the last century we used to have a pair of Neophrons, and one of Laggars nesting on the Hingolghadh Castle. The Laggars finally chivvied the Neophrons away, themselves continuing to nest each year well into the Nineties. Now, they have also gone! Why? There are plenty of pigeons and parakeets to prey on and absolutely no disturbance to their nest. Strangely a pair of Bonelli’s Hawk eagles continues breeding on trees overhanging the steep eastern escarpment of the large plateau nearby. Where the sky overhead invariably had several vultures quartering it along with one or two of the larger eagles, today it is empty except for the circling flock of House Swifts that nest under an arch of one of the castle gates. The decline was so sudden that honestly, the near total crash in raptor population was never anticipated. I for one am still stunned. The reasons should have been clear to have shaken us out of our complacency since the reasons leading to the stunning collapse were developing all around: felling of traditional nesting trees, total degradation of the countryside, especially the rich, well preserved grasslands, mono-culture in agriculture of groundnut, heavy use of pesticides and the disturbance of vultures at carcasses by huge numbers of feral dogs and human beings can all be attributable reasons. The latest is the series of veterinarian medicines that seem to be lethal to vultures. What can we do aside from lamenting the loss? Public opinion, very carefully articulated is to my mind, of very immediate importance. All of us need to evolve a common understanding to the dangers facing specific species and bird-life in general. Some prioritization has to be made for action to be initiated. Above all, we all must close ranks behind the professionals in the field of conservation even as they, in turn, unhesitatingly involve enthusiastic amateurs in official and unofficial programs that are being rather belatedly initiated.

The many promising birdwatchers in Gujarat must start maintaining careful diaries of observations of all birds and start compiling data on a species-wise basis. Given the simplification of tabulating data with the help of computers, it should be possible to develop an impressive information store from which trends in populations of different species can be quickly charted and action considered well in advance. We already do possess considerable knowledge of species’ requirements and even individuals can do a great deal to help birds in their immediate neighborhoods. Food and water, nest boxes, planting of selected shrubs and trees all can go a long way to help.

”
- Lavkumar Khachar

