

# Flamingo

Newsletter of the Bird Conservation Society, Gujarat



Vol. XVI 1  
Jan - Mar 2018

**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:** 'Little Crake' by Ashvin Trivedi  
**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:

Sighting of Little Crake near Jamnagar: a first photographic record for India.....	1	Black-winged Kite preying on a Spotted Crake.....	12
Sighting of Namaqua Dove near Jamnagar: a first record for India.....	2	Sighting of Ruddy-breasted Crake and Water Rail in Rajkot.....	13
Thick-billed Green Pigeon in Junagadh district.....	5	Some recent uncommon bird sightings from Gandhinagar.....	14
Black-legged Kittiwake in Kachchh: an addition to the avifauna of Gujarat.....	6	Ringed Broad-billed Sandpiper in Jamnagar.....	15
Status of Red-tailed Shrike in Kachchh.....	7	Indian Blackbird near Mahuva, Bhavnagar district.....	16
Sighting of Rook from Velan-Kaj Wetland, Gir Somnath District: an addition to the avifauna of Gujarat.....	9	Sighting of Black-bellied Tern near Bharuch.....	17
White-tailed Eagle in Velavadar N.P.: a first photographic record from Gujarat.....	10	Significant bird sightings near Porbandar.....	18
Black-necked Grebe in Bharuch district, south Gujarat.....	11	Short Birding Notes.....	20
		Book Review.....	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

## Sighting of Little Crake near Jamnagar: a first photographic record for India

Ashvin Trivedi: Jalani Jar, Bajariya Fali, near Pancheshwar Tower, Jamnagar. snapchaserashvintrivedi@yahoo.com



Ashvin Trivedi

On 10 December 2017, I visited Ranjitsagar Dam (22° 23' 06" N, 70° 06' 09" E), located about 10 kms from Jamnagar, for birding. At the outflow of the dam, downstream from the main dam wall, there is a small pond and a bridge. The habitat is a marshy, water flooded area with some reeds, lotus plants and underwater vegetation. This area is an ideal habitat for water birds and harbours a good population of crakes (*Porzana* sp.), bitterns (*Ixobrychus* sp.), White-breasted Waterhen (*Amaurornis phoenicurus*), Little Grebe (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*) etc. There, I saw a crake (*Porzana* sp.), which I thought was probably a Baillon's Crake (*Porzana pusilla*), but because it was late in the evening, I could not take any photo due to the low light.

In the evening on 17 December 2017, I visited the same place again with my wife Jyoti, hoping to encounter the crake again. I was fortunate as it was seen foraging out in the open, on the lotus leaves, searching for food. It was seen well and I managed to take some good photos. I immediately shared these photos with Prasad Ganpule, as I thought that this bird was larger, and also somewhat different, from a Baillon's Crake. He quickly confirmed that this was a Little Crake (*Porzana parva*) based on a diagnostic red base to bill, larger size and longer primary projection. He further informed that this was the first photographic record of this species from Gujarat and also India. Hence, I was very much excited to find this rarity near Jamnagar. On 23 December 2017, I visited this area with him at around 16:30 hrs in the evening and we saw the Little Crake very well as the bird was feeding out in the open. We took photos and re-confirmed the identification.

I visited this area many more times and saw the crake on numerous occasions. A large number of bird watchers visited this location to see this rarity here. It was seen in the same area at least till mid-February 2018. It was seen regularly early in

the morning and in the late evening. It was not disturbed by the traffic and noise made by vehicles travelling on the bridge and used to feed in the open during this time. Based on the plumage features, it seemed that the Little Crake seen here was an immature bird.



[The Baillon's Crake and the Little Crake are two small crakes which are very similar and usually provide only brief and fleeting views. Hence, identification is quite difficult. In Gujarat, and also elsewhere in India, the default small crake seen here between these two is usually the Baillon's Crake, as it is a widespread winter migrant. The identification of these two crakes in juvenile and adult plumages is covered in the recent field guides (Grimmett et al. 2011, Rasmussen & Anderton 2012) and also given in detail in Bradshaw (1993) and Christie et al. (1996), who state that the Little Crake is best separated from the Baillon's Crake by structural differences; a larger size, and longer wing projection. The primary projection in Little Crake is longer, with five well spaced primary tips visible. Another feature which is consistent and can be used practically for separating the two is that the Little Crake has a red base to bill, which is lacking in Baillon's Crake. Other features like less extensive barring on the underparts in Little Crake, and bill colour (dark olive-greenish in Baillon's Crake) etc. are also useful in identification of these species. But, it is truly difficult to identify it conclusively (in all plumages) unless seen well and the distinguishing features noted or photographed.

The Little Crake breeds in the western and central Palearctic and winters in central Africa and the Middle East (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). For India, Grimmett et al. (2011) give it as a winter migrant to the northern areas of Jammu & Kashmir (Indus Valley) and show only three isolated records from the Peninsula; from Mumbai (Maharashtra), Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh. Rasmussen & Anderton (2012) state that the records from Mumbai and Karnataka are specimen records and the species is a winterer and passage migrant in the Upper Indus Valley, further noting that other than these two specimen records, other regional reports require verification as confusion with Baillon's Crake is likely. Surprisingly, there are numerous reports of Little Crake from various locations in India (Pittie 2018) but, since it is quite similar to Baillon's Crake, it is possible that these reports could be of misidentified birds. It is important to note that before it was photographed here in Jamnagar, there were no photos of the Little Crake from India on the popular birding websites like Oriental Bird Images, India nature watch and Internet Bird Collection, or even on the social media. Hence, this is the first photographic record of the Little Crake from India.

## Little Crane...

For Gujarat, there have been claims of Little Crane sightings previously. Sightings have been reported from Nal Sarovar, in south Gujarat (Mukesh Bhatt, pers. comm.) and from Saladi, Amreli (Viral Joshi, pers. comm.). However, there is no photographic proof and it can be said that it was not adequately documented before. Ganpule (2016) included it in the checklist of birds of Gujarat based on a sight report from the Little Rann of Kachchh, where it was noted alongside Baillon's Crane and presumed to have been correctly identified. Here again, there is no photographic evidence. Though it is probable that some of the earlier reports could have been correct, it is a fact that even though there are a large number of bird photographers now in India, the Little Crane remained elusive so far and also, the identification of the species is quite difficult unless the diagnostic features are seen well. Hence, this photographic record of one individual seen in Jamnagar is very important and is the first properly documented and confirmed sighting of the Little Crane from Gujarat, proving that its inclusion in the Gujarat checklist is justified. It is also pertinent to note that it was seen for more than two months in the same area, indicating that it is a winter visitor here and not a passage migrant.

Now that many bird watchers have seen this species here and noted the habitat in which it was seen in Jamnagar, they are urged to search for the Little Crane in other areas in Gujarat and report any sightings – Eds]

## Sighting of Namaqua Dove near Jamnagar: a first record for India

**Akshay Trivedi & Krunal Trivedi:** "Gauri-nivas", Shubhash Nagar-1, B/h. Amrapali Cinema, Raiya Road, Rajkot 360007. krunaltrivedi2811@gmail.com

On 17 December 2017, a Sunday, we visited Khijadiya Bird Sanctuary (22° 31' 18" N, 70° 08' 40" E), near Jamnagar, early in the morning. After a few hours of fruitful birding during which we saw more than 50 species like Great Crested Grebe (*Podiceps cristatus*), many Ducks (*Anas* sp.), Orphean Warbler (*Sylvia hortensis*), etc. we were returning back. At around 09:30 hrs, we saw a dove foraging on ground in the short grass along the road. It looked different from the other common doves (*Streptopelia* sp.) that are seen here. So, we stopped for a while. We saw that this dove had a long and pointed tail with some barring on the rump, black spots on the wing coverts, thin greyish bill, blackish primaries and darkish lores. We observed that it was much smaller than other species of doves and similar in size to a White-eared Bulbul (*Pycnonotus leucotis*), which came and perched beside it. When we approached closer, it flew away. Its flight was quick and it flew close to the ground and then perched on a tree. We took some photos and tried to identify this dove but failed to do so.

On coming back, we saw the photos on our computer but could not identify it. Though superficially similar to the doves seen here, we were sure that this was not one of the species

## Acknowledgements

I thank Prasad Ganpule for all his help.

## References

- Bradshaw, C., 1993. Separating juvenile Little and Baillon's Crakes in the field. *British Birds* 86: 303-311
- Christie, D. A., Shirihi, H., & Harris, A., 1996. Field identification of Little and Baillon's Crakes. *British Birds* 89: 54-59
- 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. Christopher Helm & Oxford University Press. London.
- Pittie, A., 2018. Bibliography of South Asian Ornithology. URL: [Accessed on 10 February 2018]
- Rasmussen, P. C. & Anderton, J. C. 2012. *Birds of South Asia: The Ripley Guide*. 2 vols. 1st ed. Smithsonian Institution and Lynx Edicions, Washington D. C. and Barcelona. □

seen here as none has such a long and pointed tail. We then sent the images to senior bird watchers Jaipalsinh Jadeja, S. N. Varu and Prasad Ganpule. It was identified as a female Namaqua Dove (*Oena capensis*). We were happy because it was a lifer for us and this species has not been noted in India before and this was the first record of the Namaqua Dove from India.



Akshay Trivedi

[On the same day in the morning, we were in Khijadiya Bird Sanctuary. We were observing a Paddyfield Pipit (*Anthus*



Akshay Trivedi

*rufulus*) when we saw that an unidentified dove came and perched near the pipit. It started foraging on the road. It was small in size and had a long pointed tail.

We took some photos but could not identify it. After about a minute, it flew away and when it flew, we noticed that the wings were reddish-brown in colour and the tail looked longer as compared to other doves. We came to know that this was a Namaqua Dove (*Oena capensis*) when it was identified later by other senior birders. This sighting was at about the same time it was seen by Akshay & Krunal Trivedi there.

**Shivani Patel:** "Shree", Ambavijay Society, Near Milan Ground, Jamnagar. shivani.shivani9420@gmail.com

**Aditiba Raol:** 16 Natvarpark (Dabar Society), Near Muni Babu Ashram, 80 feet Road, Surendranagar. raoladiti30@gmail.com]

[The observers took some good images of this dove. As can be seen from the photos, it is somewhat similar to a Eurasian Collared Dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*) and Laughing Dove (*Stigmatopelia senegalensis*), both of which are common in Gujarat. However, it differs from these species in having a long pointed tail, is smaller in size, and has different plumage with black spots on the wing coverts. Further, as noted by the other observers, the wings were reddish-brown in colour, which was seen when it flew. Hence, there remains no doubt that this is indeed a Namaqua Dove. It is a female based on its plumage. And the fact that it was seen independently by others at around the same time establishes that it was present in that area for some time in the morning.

The Namaqua Dove is resident in S Israel and SW Jordan, sub-Saharan Africa, Arabia and Socotra, with seasonal and nomadic movements through Africa and Middle East; there has been a recent spate of vagrant records further north of its range, in the Middle East, Caucasus and even Central Asia, which are suggestive of range expansion (Baptista et al. 2017). Northward range expansion occurred in the wake of the extension of agricultural fields and water sources, especially after 1975; apparently as a result of these changes, the first individuals reached Israel (Shirihai & Gellert 1989). In the UAE and Arabia, it is now a regular breeding bird and it is stated to be dispersive and is seen offshore also on the Das Island, which is about 150 kms from the mainland, in the Arabian Gulf (Jennings 2000). Hence, a change in habitats has resulted in this species moving into newer areas.

For the Indian Subcontinent, there is a recent record offshore near Karachi, in October 2016, when a fisherman noted a male Namaqua Dove on his boat about 3 kms from the Karachi harbour (WWF-Pakistan 2016). However, it has not been noted in India before and has not been included in the recent India Checklist (Praveen et al. 2016) or the Gujarat checklist (Ganpule 2016). It is also not included in the list of species not recorded from India, but recorded in the Indian Subcontinent (Praveen et al. 2017).

Regarding this individual seen in Khijadiya, its behaviour was like a wild bird and it did not allow close approach. It did not show any unusual plumage features which are commonly seen in caged birds. Here, it is pertinent to point out that the Namaqua Dove is a popular cage bird. It is also known as Cape Dove. However, an

## Namaqua Dove....

online search for this species from Gujarat proved to be negative and also, it is not kept in zoos here. Reliance Industries Ltd., near Jamnagar, has a large private collection of exotic birds. But, they usually clip the wings of birds in their collection, while this individual was flying normally. Also, it is unlikely that this was an escapee from their collection since the birds there are kept under watch. Some individuals are known to be kept as pets in large cities of Gujarat like Ahmedabad, etc. but, the behaviour of this individual was like a wild type bird. This species is said to be difficult to breed in cages, with pairs taking several years before they breed (Vriends 1994); the sighting from Khijadiya was of probably a young female (though ageing is difficult), reducing the possibility that this was an escapee. In principle, the Namaqua Dove cannot be aged after completion of post juvenile moult; but lack of pale base to the lower mandible, which is seen in older females but was not seen here, could indicate that this is a young female (Hadoram Shirihai, in litt., email dated 4 January 2018). Another aspect which has to be considered is that this could have been a ship-assisted individual; Jamnagar is a port city. But, this possibility seems less as the species is migratory (with seasonal movements) and prone to vagrancy. The individual recorded near Karachi was also seen just 3 kms from the shore and it came and perched on a fisherman's boat, which could indicate ship assistance. Vagrancy by ship-assistance is a complicated subject and we can speculate that this could be one of the reasons for it being here in Jamnagar, but it seems unlikely in this case, as the species has spread north to newer areas in Caucasus and Central Asia, probably due to finding of suitable habitats.

Though known to breed all round the year, the breeding season in Arabia is from Mar-May, with young in June. So, winter (December) would be the non-breeding season for this species. It is reported that these can rarely be kept in cages without their feathers getting thrashed (White 2008), while this individual was in fine plumage. So, it can be inferred that this was probably a wild bird. Another interesting aspect about this sighting is that it is a well known fact that this species has a tendency for vagrancy (or colonising new areas if favourable habitat is available) and so this also supports the genuine vagrant possibility. This species tends to spread naturally, first as vagrants, and in the later years for breeding, as it happened in Israel in the 1980s (Hadoram Shirihai, in litt., email dated 4 January 2018). Doves (*Streptopelia* sp.) are known to colonize new areas. It is very well known that the Eurasian Collared Dove colonized Europe and North America in the last century (Rocha & Hidalgo 2000, Romagosa & McEneaney 1999).

That there have been records of Namaqua Dove outside its normal range is beyond any doubt. After its first and second sighting in Iran in 2007 (Osaei & Jamadi 2008), there have been many records of the species from the country and it is seen in Iran now. It can also be noted that there is a record from Pakistan too. All these records cannot be attributed to escaped or ship-assisted birds and it is

very likely that on finding suitable habitat, the Namaqua Dove is increasingly seen beyond its normal range, even in Iran and now in the Indian Subcontinent. For Gujarat, the change in agrarian practises due to extensive canal network has resulted in habitat changes. Such changes could be beneficial for this species and it remains to be seen if this is sighted in the future regularly. Hence, the current sighting can be considered to be of a genuine vagrant rather than that of an escapee since it is certain that the species is moving into new areas where it was not seen before. In any case, the origin of such individuals would always be open to questions, but a logical analysis is presented for the above record showing that it is most probably a wild vagrant.

In view of the details given here, we consider that this individual seen in Khijadiya was a genuine wild vagrant and accept it into the Gujarat checklist. This is an addition to the avifauna of Gujarat and also India.

We thank Hadoram Shirihai for all his help. We are grateful to Praveen J. for his inputs – Eds]

## References

- Baptista, L. F., Trail, P. W., Horblit, H. M., Kirwan, G. M. & Boesman, P. 2017. Namaqua Dove (*Oena capensis*) Handbook of the Birds of the World Alive. Lynx Edicions, Barcelona. (retrieved from <https://www.hbw.com/node/54185> on 26 December 2017).
- Ganpule, P., 2016. The Birds of Gujarat: Status and Distribution. *Flamingo* 8 (3) – 12 (4): 2-40
- Jennings, M., 2000. Namaqua Dove (*Oena capensis*) in the UAE and through the Arabian Peninsula. *Tribulus* 10 (1): 18-19
- Osaei, A. & Jamadi, M. 2008. The First and Second Records of Namaqua Dove (*Oena capensis*) in Iran. *Podoces* 3 (1/2): 103-104
- Praveen J., Jayapal, R. & Pittie, A., 2016. A checklist of the birds of India. *Indian BIRDS*. 11 (5&6): 113–172A.
- Praveen J., Jayapal, R., Inskipp, T., Warakagoda, D., Thompson, P.M., Anderson, R.C. & Pittie, A., 2017. Birds of the Indian subcontinent: Species not recorded from India. *Indian BIRDS* 13 (4): 93–101
- Rocha, G. & Hidalgo, S. J. 2000. Ecología de la Tórtola Turca (*Streptopelia decaocto*). Servicio de Publicaciones, Universidad de Extremadura, Cáceres.
- Romagosa, C. & McEneaney, T. 1999. Eurasian Collared-Dove in North America and the Caribbean. *N. Am. Birds* 53: 348–353
- Shirihai, H., & Gellert, M., 1989. Namaqua Doves breeding in Israel. *British Birds* 82 (5): 210-219
- Vriends, M. M., 1994. *Doves: A Complete Pet Owners Manual*. Barron's Educational Series, New York, USA.
- White, H., 2008. Website URL <https://www.diamonddove.info/bird12%20Cape.htm> [Accessed on 25 December 2017].
- WWF- Pakistan, 2016. Website URL: [http://www.wwfpak.org/newsroom/191016\\_namaqua.php](http://www.wwfpak.org/newsroom/191016_namaqua.php) [Accessed on 20 December 2017].



## Thick-billed Green Pigeon in Junagadh district

**Mital D. Moradiya:** Vanganga Society, Vanthali Highway, Junagadh 362001. mitaldm@gmail.com

On 24 November 2017, my colleague, Arvind Parmar, called me and sent photos of a Green Pigeon (*Treron* sp.) on my mobile and told me that this bird was injured in his farm near Mangrol (21° 07' N, 70° 07' E), Junagadh district. Mangrol is a coastal city and located about 40 kms from Veraval.

I went to his farm, saw the bird and took some photos. At first sight, I thought it was a Yellow-footed Green Pigeon (*Treron phoenicopterus*), but the red base to bill, greenish orbital skin around the eye, red coloured legs and stripes on wings were different. With the help of a field guide (Grimmett *et al.* 2011), I identified it as a Thick-billed Green Pigeon (*Treron curvirostra*). I confirmed the identification by sending the images to senior birders Dr. Gaurang Bagda and Irshad Theba, who agreed that it was this species.



Mital Moradiya

The bird looked very sick. I examined it and saw that it was wounded and had injuries near the beak, neck and on the head. According to my colleague, it had collided with a pole in his farm, after which it fell down on the ground. It also looked very tired. After the identification was confirmed, I checked the diet of this species. I read that it was exclusively frugivorous. After washing the wounds with water, we observed that it slept for 3-4 hours. We tried to give fruits and found that it ate only Sapodilla (*Manilkara zapota*), which is locally known as *chickoo*. At that time, it had no energy to even open its beak and take the fruit from our hands. So we had to open its beak and feed it. After 4-5 days, its health improved but the wound was not healed. On the seventh day, it was easily walking on the ground and also flew up to about 1.5 to 2 meters, and further up to about 4 meters after some days. It also called a few times but I could not record its call. Unfortunately, it died after two weeks of rescue.

The Thick-billed Green Pigeon is not known to occur in Gujarat; it is resident in NE India, with isolated records from Odisha (Grimmett *et al.* 2011). There is a recent record from Vizag (Andhra Pradesh), which was reported on some newspapers online. However, there are no records from Gujarat and it is not listed in the checklist of birds of Gujarat (Ganpule 2016), or in the first update to the Gujarat checklist (Ganpule 2017). Thus, experts were surprised to note its occurrence in Junagadh district. Could it be a captive bird which escaped? Or



Mital Moradiya

## Thick-billed Green Pigeon....

can it be that it was a vagrant and reached here? We can make assumptions but it is difficult to be sure in this case.

[It can be seen from the photos that it is indeed the Thick-billed Green Pigeon and there is no doubt regarding its identification. As stated by the observer, it is not known to occur in Gujarat. In fact, there are no records from western India. Hence, it is really surprising that this species was seen here. It is most probable that this was an escapee from the pet bird trade. We tried to search whether this species is kept as a cage bird in Gujarat but could not find any details for this species and it seems it is not kept as a pet here. Also, since it was seen in a coastal area, it could be a bird which was released or escaped from a ship or arrived here by ship assistance. There could be many reasons for its occurrence here and though chances are very less, it is also probable that it could be a wild vagrant. However, in view of the fact that it is way out of its range and has not been noted in western India before, this species is not

included in the Gujarat checklist at present. A decision can be taken later by a committee regarding its inclusion or exclusion in the state checklist – Eds]

### Acknowledgements

I thank Arvind Parmar for informing me about this bird. I am grateful to Dr. Gaurang Bagda and Irshad Theba for their help in identification.

### References

Ganpule, P., 2016. The birds of Gujarat: Status and distribution. *Flamingo* 8 (3)–12 (4): 2–40

Ganpule, P., 2017. First update to the Gujarat checklist: December 2017. *Flamingo* 15 (4): 17–20

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

## Black-legged Kittiwake in Kachchh: an addition to the avifauna of Gujarat

**Rishi Mehta:** Madhapar (Bhuj), Kachchh 370020. officialrishiphotography@gmail.com

On 24 December 2017, I visited Mandvi coastal area in Kachchh with my friends for bird watching. At around 07:10 hrs, we saw a flock of gulls (*Larus* sp.) and approached nearer to take photos. While taking photos, I saw a gull which seemed quite different from the other gulls there. It was perched alone besides the flock. I managed to take some good photographs of this bird and shared the photos with my friends. It was

identified as a Black-legged Kittiwake (*Rissa tridactyla*). There are no previous records of this species in Gujarat. Hence, this sighting is an addition to avifauna of Gujarat.

[As can be seen from the two photos taken by the observer, the characteristic features like the small, thin, all yellow bill, large eye, very pale grey mantle, the diagnostic all black 'dipped in ink' extreme wing tip, grey neck and darker grey ear-spot, reaching onto hind-





neck as half hood and the very short legs are visible. Though similar to Mew Gull (*Larus canus*), the above features help to confirm its identification as a Black-legged Kittiwake and there remains no doubt regarding its identification. It is an adult, in non-breeding plumage, based on its bill and plumage, which is similar to that described for adults in winter plumage by Olsen & Larsson (2004). It is not known which subspecies occurs here; two subspecies are known – the nominate *R. t. tridactyla* and *R. t. pollicaris* (Olsen & Larsson 2004). Praveen et al. (2014) speculate that birds occurring here are likely to be of the nominate subspecies. For this individual seen in Kachchh, we are unable to comment on the subspecies based on these two photographs.



Rishi Mehta

The Black-legged Kittiwake is a vagrant to India; Praveen et al. (2014) list six records from the country, till February 2013, from Rajasthan, Goa, Kerala, Maharashtra and Assam. More records from Rajasthan (Lawrence 2014), West Bengal (photos

on the website Oriental Bird Images) and Odisha (Bhujbal et al. 2015) are now known. As noted by Praveen et al. (2014), all birds recorded here were juveniles or first-winter birds, including the birds seen subsequently. This individual, noted in Kachchh, is an adult and this is different from the other records so far. Looking at the number of records from India, it is quite possible that the species is a rare straggler to the country.

For Gujarat, this species is not included in the earlier state checklist (Parasharya et al. 2004) nor in the latest checklist by Ganpule (2016). This is the first record of the species from the state. Hence, the Black-legged Kittiwake is an addition to the avifauna of Gujarat – Eds]

### Acknowledgements

I am thankful to Ashish Gohil, Dr. Pankaj Maheria and Prasad Ganpule for helping with the identification.

### References

- Bhujbal, M., Bhujbal, N. K., & Bhujbal, C., 2015. First Record of Black-Legged Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla* in Odisha, India. *J Bombay Nat Hist Soc.* 112 (3): 172-173
- Ganpule, P., 2016. The Birds of Gujarat: Status and Distribution. *Flamingo* 8(3) – 12 (4): 2-40
- Lawrence, J., 2014. Record of a Black-legged Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla* in south-eastern Rajasthan, India. *J Bombay Nat Hist Soc.* 110: (3) 227
- Olsen, K. M., & Larsson, H. 2004. *Gulls of Europe, Asia and North America*. Helm, London.
- Parasharya, B. M., Borad, C. K. & Rank, D. N. 2004. *A Checklist of Birds of Gujarat*. Bird Conservation Society, Gujarat.
- 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 □

## Status of Red-tailed Shrike in Kachchh

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

The Red-tailed Shrike (*Lanius phoenicuroides*) is now treated as a separate species from Isabelline Shrike (*Lanius isabellinus*) (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). It is given as a rare autumn passage migrant in Kachchh and Saurashtra, with a few individuals noted in September during the autumn passage migration season (Ganpule 2017).

This year, I visited the Banni area in Kachchh from 24 to 26 September 2017 with my friends to search for passage migrants. Senior ornithologist Jugal Tiwari, from the Centre for Desert and Ocean (CEDO), at Moti-Virani, near Nakhatrana, kindly accompanied us in the field. In the course of three days, we saw at least three adult Red-tailed Shrikes and many first winter birds. The first-winter birds could not be conclusively identified as Red-tailed Shrikes as their separation from

Isabelline Shrike in first-winter plumages is quite difficult (Worfolk 2000). But, for adults, it was fairly easy, and the birds were typical Red-tailed Shrikes. One individual, which was seen very closely and gave very good views, showed all the typical features of *phoenicuroides*: red crown contrasting with brown back (which is diagnostic), blackish wings with very prominent primary patch, red tail, white underparts, prominent face mask and supercilium. I could get very good photos and two images of the same individual are given here. It can be seen that sometimes, when the bird is perched, the white primary patch is not visible.

There is no doubt that the Red-tailed Shrike is a passage migrant in Kachchh. In addition to our sightings and sightings of Red-tailed Shrike given in Ganpule (2017), a sighting was

## Red-tailed Shrike....

reported from eastern Banni (Kapdi 2017) in September 2017 and more sightings from this year were reported from Banni on the website 'eBird' too. All these birds are typical *phoenicuroides* and show all the characteristics of the species as described in Worfolk (2000) for 'classic' birds. Jugal Tiwari also confirmed that Red-tailed Shrike is uncommon but has been noted by him in the Banni area regularly during the autumn passage migration season.



Prasad Ganpule

For Red-tailed Shrike, Rasmussen & Anderton (2012) have erred in stating that 'those reported from extreme W India (mostly Kutch = Kachchh) are closer to Isabelline; pure *phoenicuroides* winter extralimittally'. This statement is probably based on specimens collected by Ali (1955) in Gujarat, where no 'typical' or 'classic' plumaged birds were noted, and these specimens, identified by Col R. Meinertzhagen, were stated to be intermediates between *L. isabellinus* and *L. phoenicuriodes*. Though the Red-tailed Shrike does not winter here in Gujarat and is only an autumn passage migrant (*pers. observation*), pure *phoenicuroides* type birds do occur in Kachchh. It is correctly stated in Grimmett *et al.* (2011) that small numbers migrate through NW subcontinent and the authors show it as an autumn passage migrant in Kachchh and Saurashtra. It is quite possible that some intermediates could also be occurring in Gujarat, and it is well known that there are areas in the breeding ranges of *L. isabellinus* and *L. phoenicuroides*, where hybrids occur. Recently, a probable hybrid shrike was seen and photographed in Kachchh (Gohil 2017).



Prasad Ganpule

For Gujarat, it can be confirmed that Red-tailed Shrike is an uncommon autumn passage migrant in Kachchh. It is possible that many of the first-winter birds noted by us could also be pure *phoenicuroides*, as the plumage was similar to what is described in literature (Worfolk 2000, Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). However, it is difficult to confirm the identification in first-winter plumage unless seen closely and plumage details noted. Towards this, first-winter birds should be specially studied in this area as it is quite probable that a few first-winter Red-tailed Shrikes may also occur in Kachchh during the autumn passage migration season.

### Acknowledgements

I am very grateful to Jugal Tiwari for all his help. I thank Ashok Mashru, Manoj Finava, Ashvin Trivedi, S.P. Jadeja and Kapilsinh Zala for their company.

### References

- Ali, S. 1955. The Birds of Gujarat – Part II. *J. Bombay Nat. Hist. Soc.* 52 (4): 735– 802
- Ganpule, P., 2017. Red-backed, Brown, Isabelline and Red-tailed Shrike in Gujarat. *Flamingo* 15 (3): 1-7
- Gohil, A., 2017. A probable hybrid Shrike in Kachchh. *Flamingo* 15 (4): 22
- Grimmett, R., Inskipp, C., & Inskipp, T. 2011. *Birds of the Indian Subcontinent*. 2 nd ed. Christopher Helm & Oxford University Press. London.
- Kapdi, B., 2017. <http://www.indianaturewatch.net/displayimage.php?id=595760> [Accessed on 15 November 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.
- Worfolk, T. 2000. Identification of red-backed, isabelline and brown shrikes. *Dutch Birding* 22 (6): 323-362

□

## Sighting of Rook from Velan-Kaj Wetland, Gir Somnath District: an addition to the avifauna of Gujarat

**Ravi B. Dave:** At - Bhojde, Ta. Talala, District Gir - Somnath 362135. ravidave85@gmail.com

**Anuj Raina:** C-18, Manali Apartment, Opp. AMA, Ambawadi, Ahmedabad 380015. anzraina@gmail.com



Ravi Dave

On 8 December 2017, the first author [RB] visited Velan-Kaj Wetland (20°43' 9.3"N, 70°48' 48.6"E), in Gir Somnath district, during the morning hours. He observed a large Crow (*Corvus* sp.), which seemed unusual, with bare base of bill and glossy plumage. The bird was not shy and was perched on a cement pole near a dumping site close to Sodav Mataji temple. The plumage and body features looked different from an Indian Jungle Crow (*Corvus macrorhynchos culminatus*). It was identified as a Rook (*Corvus frugilegus*) by its large size, conical pointed bill with bare base and glossy plumage. It looked like an adult bird.

On 17 December 2017, we again visited the area in search of the bird. It was easily located near the same place, perching on another cement pole nearby. On closer examination and with the help of the many photographs which we could take, it was identified as an adult Rook without any doubt. The bird allowed close approach. The dumping site had House Crows (*Corvus splendens*) foraging but we did not observe any Indian Jungle Crows there.

The Rook was a full grown adult, with peaked crown, plumage with violet gloss and ragged, shaggy thighs. The bill was conical in shape with bare nostrils, and naked paler base having creamish-white skin, which was extending till the eyes. When perched, the wings tips reached till the tail tip. During flight, we were able to note the rounded tail, splayed and fingered wing-tip, and longer wings. No call was made by the bird during both observations.

Subsequently, we contacted Prasad Ganpule, who confirmed its identification as an adult Rook. In the field guides (Kazmierczak 2000, Grimmett *et al.* 2011, Rasmussen & Anderton 2012), there is no record of Rook from whole of India except Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Punjab.

There are no photos of the species on the Oriental Bird Images website from Rajasthan or Gujarat. It is also not mentioned in the checklist of birds of Gujarat (Ganpule 2016) or in the first update to the Gujarat checklist (Ganpule 2017). Thus, this is the first record of Rook from Gujarat and it is an addition to the avifauna of the state.

[We sent the images of the Rook to Arend Wassink, author of *Birds of Kazakhstan*, who confirmed that it was an adult Rook with unusually strong violet gloss to the wing coverts and scapulars. The nominate subspecies *C. f. frugilegus* is resident in Europe and Central Asia; northern populations migrate south to Mediterranean Basin and Middle East, east across Iran to Afghanistan, NW China and NW Indian Subcontinent (Madge 2018). In the southern part of its range, the blue gloss is tinged violet, as was seen here. Rook is generally uncommon in the Indian Subcontinent, and occurs in Ladakh in India (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). A flock was recently noted in the plains near Jammu, in Jammu & Kashmir (Sharma & Sharma 2017); as stated by the authors here, isolated records from Himachal Pradesh and Punjab are known, but there are no records from other parts of the country. Hence, this is an important record of the Rook from Gujarat and it is the southernmost known sighting so far for India. As stated by the authors, it is an addition to the avifauna of Gujarat.

We are grateful to Arend Wassink for all his help – Eds]

### References

- Ganpule, P., 2016. The Birds of Gujarat: Status and Distribution. *Flamingo* 8(3)-12(4):2-40
- Ganpule, P., 2017. First update to the Gujarat checklist: December 2017. *Flamingo* 15 (4): 17-20
- Grimmett, R., Inskipp, C., & Inskipp, T. 2011. *Birds of the Indian Subcontinent*. 2nd ed. Christopher Helm & Oxford University Press. London.
- Kazmierczak, K., 2000. *A field guide to the birds of India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh and the Maldives*. 1st ed. London. Pica Press / Christopher Helm.
- Madge, S. 2018. Rook (*Corvus frugilegus*). *Handbook of the Birds of the World Alive*. Lynx Edicions, Barcelona. (retrieved from <https://www.hbw.com/node/60784> on 6 February 2018).
- Rasmussen, P. C. & Anderton, J. C. 2012. *Birds of South Asia: The Ripley Guide*. 2 vols. 1st ed. Smithsonian Institution and Lynx Edicions, Washington D. C. and Barcelona.
- Sharma, N., & Sharma, S., 2017. A recent record of Rooks *Corvus frugilegus* from the Jammu plains, north-western India. *Indian BIRDS* 13 (2): 51–52

□

# White-tailed Eagle in Velavadar N.P.: a first photographic record from Gujarat

**Mukesh Bhatt:** Mavji Nivas, Near Jalaram Temple, Vesu, Surat 395007. mukeshbhatt\_mbhatt@yahoo.com



Mukesh Bhatt

Jorbeed, Bikaner and from Tal Chappar, (both in Rajasthan) with photos posted on the website Oriental Bird Images. Hence, it has been noted in western India in the past few years.



The White-tailed Eagle is somewhat similar to other *Aquila* sp. eagles and can also be confused with Pallas's Fish Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucorhynchus*). It can be separated from these species by its large size, short wedge-shaped tail, protruding head and neck, and powerful bill. Another feature which separates it from *Aquila* sp. eagles is that the tarsi are largely bare and yellow in this species. Adult White-tailed Eagles are distinctive, with pale head and huge, all yellow bill, while immatures and juveniles have dark head and neck contrasting with streaked or blotched underbody (Forsman 1999). Regarding this individual seen in Velavadar, it appears to be a juvenile bird as extensive white mottling can be seen on the mantle and breast, along with a regular pattern on the upperwing coverts. Forsman (1999) describes such birds as being in juvenile plumage, and this can be aged as possibly a 2 cy individual. The birds seen in Rajasthan are also usually immatures or juveniles. However, adults have been noted regularly in North-east India (Mondal & Maheshwaran 2016).

For Gujarat, as stated by the author, this is only the second record and the first photographic documentation of the species from the state. Further, the eagle was seen here for almost one month, indicating that it remains in the same location (probably if habitat is suitable) for extended periods in the winter. Thus, this sighting is important for the state and further confirms the occurrence of the White-tailed Eagle in Gujarat – Eds]

## References

- Forsman, D., 1999. *The Raptors of Europe and the Middle East: A Handbook of Field Identification*. T & AD Poyser Ltd. Christopher Helm, London.
- 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. Christopher Helm & Oxford University Press. London.
- Himmatsinhji, 1970. Interesting Eagles in Western India. *J. Bombay Nat. Hist. Soc.* 67 (2): 330–331
- Mondal, H. S. & Maheshwaran, G. 2016. Caught on camera in the field: Further sightings of White-tailed Eagle (*Haliaeetus albicollis*) in Arunachal Pradesh, India. *Birding ASIA*. 26: 123
- Rasmussen, P. C. & Anderton, J. C. 2012. *Birds of South Asia: The Ripley Guide*. 2 vols. 1st ed. Smithsonian Institution and Lynx Edicions, Washington D. C. and Barcelona. □

On 14 January 2018, I visited Velavadar National Park, in Bhavnagar District, with my wife Sarla and my son Meet. Shri Mohan Ram Legha, DFO, Bhavnagar, also joined us. Our main target was to look for and photograph a Hen Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*), which is a rare winter migrant / vagrant to this area. While searching for the same, we came across a large sized eagle sitting on a *Prosopis juliflora* tree. Due to unfavourable sunlight, its features were not clearly visible, and so we could not identify it in the field. It seemed different from the other eagles (*Aquila* sp.) usually seen here. However, we managed to take some record photographs.

After returning home to Surat and watching the photos on my computer, I suspected that it was a White-tailed Eagle (*Haliaeetus albicollis*). I shared the photos with Prasad Ganpule and Devvratsinh Mori. Both replied that it was a juvenile White-tailed Eagle. I was happy to know that it was this species and this was my first sighting of the White-tailed Eagle. On the same day, a few other birdwatchers from Ahmedabad also recorded this eagle in the area. It was seen till mid-February by different birders and photos were posted on the social media (Facebook) and on the website 'eBird'. Thus, it was seen in this area for almost one month.

The White-tailed Eagle is given as a vagrant to Gujarat (Ganpule 2016), with only a single record from Kachchh. The previous record of this species from the state is by M. K. Himmatsinhji, who had recorded it near Mundra, Kachchh, in 1949-1950 (Himmatsinhji 1970). Thus, this is only the second record from the state and the first photographic record of White-tailed Eagle from Gujarat.

[The White-tailed Eagle is a winter visitor to the Indian Subcontinent and it is given as being 'generally rare' here (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). Grimmett et al. (2011) show isolated records for India, mainly from the sub-Himalayan region till Assam, with scattered records from the Peninsula. There are recent records of the species from

## Black-necked Grebe in Bharuch district, south Gujarat

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



Jugalkishor Patel

On the evening of 9 September 2016, I was going with my son Aarsh to Telva village, 15 km from my village Untiyadra, in Bharuch district. We were going to see nine Sarus Cranes (*Grus antigone*) at that place which had been reported earlier. When we were passing by the village lake of Ghodadra (21° 30' N, 72° 55' E) of Hansot Taluka, Aarsh drew my attention to a grebe (*Podiceps* sp.). The grebe was definitely not a Little Grebe (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*) since it was slightly bigger in size, with red eyes and extensive dark cheeks and forehead.

The lake is divided in three parts and the grebe was seen in the first part which is adjoining the road and a mosque. The area of this part is approximately 3 acres and is clean and free of any vegetation. A few people were sitting on the bank and three - four women were washing clothes on the steps of the lake. However, the grebe was diving and swimming without any disturbance and fear. There was only one bird in this part of the lake. After taking a few record photographs, we left the place because our aim was to see the Sarus Cranes.

After arriving back home, we checked the photographs and identified the bird as a Black-necked Grebe (*Podiceps nigricollis*) in non-breeding plumage with the help of a field guide (Grimmett *et al.* 2011).

I again visited this place on the next morning for better photographs as generally there is hardly any human activity on the lake early in the morning. The bird was there but unfortunately, the morning was very foggy. I had to wait till 10:00 hrs but it remained foggy. So I visited in the evening and the scenario of the bird and human activity was the same. I noted that the second and third part of the lake was free from any disturbance and the third part had scattered vegetation and was larger. However, the grebe preferred the first part of the lake. Except this lone bird, other birds of different species were seen in the third part of the lake.

The Black-necked Grebe is winter visitor to southwest Gujarat (i.e. Saurashtra) (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). It is given as

an uncommon winter visitor for Gujarat, mainly in Charakala, with scattered reports from other parts of Saurashtra and Kachchh (Ganpule 2016). Charakala Salt pans, near Dwarka, is an internationally important site for Black-necked Grebe as it supports high concentrations of the species since 1996 (Balar & Balar 1999). The highest count of about 1405 Black-necked Grebes was recorded at Charakala on 12 January 2003 by Jadhav *et al.* (2003). Parasharya & Mukherjee (1998) have reported the species at three places in central Gujarat; one bird at Nalsarovar on 25 January 1996, one at Vadadhla in Vadodara district on 17 January 1993, one at Kanewal in Kheda district on 12 January 1998. Grimmett *et al.* (2011) show an isolated record for south Gujarat, but the details for this sighting could not be traced. Hence, the current sighting confirms its occurrence in this region.

Earlier, the species has been recorded south of southern Gujarat, at Pune (Mahabal & Lamba 1987) and in western Maharashtra as a rare winter visitor (Prasad 2004). A record east of south Gujarat, at Nashik, Maharashtra is known (Raha *et al.* 2005). It has also been reported in Thane district in November 2017 on the website 'eBird'. Hence, this sighting in Bharuch district is not unexpected, but this photographic documentation proves that it occurs here.

### References

- Balar, R. B., & Balar, R. 1999. *Charakla nu pakshitirth*. Vihang 2 (2): 10. [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. Christopher Helm & Oxford University Press. London
- Jadhav, A., Parasharya, B. M. & Rughani, B. 2006. Charakla salt pans: a haven for Black-necked Grebe (*Podiceps nigricollis*) Brehm. *J Bombay Nat Hist Soc*. 102: (2) 228–229
- Mahabal, A. & Lamba, B. S. 1987. On the birds of Poona and vicinity. *Records of the Zoological Survey of India, Occasional Paper No. 94*: 1–115. Zoological Survey of India. Calcutta.
- Parasharya, B. M. & Mukherjee, A. 1998. A record number of Black-necked Grebe (*Podiceps nigricollis*) from Gujarat. *J Bombay Nat Hist Soc*. 95: (2) 335–336
- Prasad, A. 2004. Annotated checklist of the birds of Western Maharashtra. *Buceros* 8(2&3): 1-174
- Raha, B., Bhure, N., Sarda, R. & Bob, I. 2005. Sighting of Black-necked Grebe (*Podiceps nigricollis*) at Gangapur Dam, Nashik District, Maharashtra, India. *Indian BIRDS* 1(1): 13
- 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. □

## Black-winged Kite preying on a Spotted Crake

**Meet Vala:** 'Shyam', 16, Mayurnagar, Dipanjli-2, Timbavadi, Junagadh 362015. valameet1991@gmail.com



Meet Vala

On 9 December 2017, I visited a check-dam near Rajkot, on the Rajkot – Jamnagar Highway, for bird watching. I was scouting the area during mid-day and was sitting near a freshwater muddy patch with reeds, near the check dam. At around 15:00 hrs, I saw a herd of buffaloes coming into the muddy patch. Disturbed by this herd, I saw a crake moving from one patch of reeds to another very quickly. It was bigger in size than a Brown Crake (*Amaurornis akool*) and had a colourful beak. Fortunately, I managed to get record photographs for identification. I sent the images to Gaurang Bagda and it was identified as a Spotted Crake (*Porzana porzana*).

I went to the same place for whole of next week looking for this bird but could not see it. The place was a regular route for the herd of buffaloes for relaxing and grazing, as the patch was grassy and muddy. So, I assumed that the bird probably changed its location due to regular disturbance by this herd. Then, on 5 January 2018, I visited the area with Ashok Mashru and Divyesh Ghervada in the evening and saw the Spotted Crake again at sunset, at around 17:45 hrs.

On 7 January 2018, Ravi Patel and I went again in the evening for observing this individual. While we were waiting for the bird to come out in the open as per its routine, we saw that some raptor pounced on the ground behind the reeds and suddenly, all the birds nearby started giving alarm calls. We could not see anything because of the reeds. In a short time, a Black-winged Kite (*Elanus caeruleus*) came out of the reeds with some prey in its talons. We observed that it had caught something and the prey was struggling. At that time, we realised that it had caught some bird. I took a video and photos of the bird struggling in its talons. The kite then lifted the bird, which was still alive, flew and perched on a wooden

pole at the edge of a farm. I approached near to it and saw that the prey was dead. The Black-winged Kite started tearing at the prey and separated the head and swallowed it whole. After feeding for some time, I observed that it was very hard for the kite to adjust its prey on the pole and it was struggling to handle it. The kite flew and perched on the ground deeper into the farm with its prey and so, we decided to leave it alone and tried to identify the prey from photos. To our surprise, we realised that the prey was a Spotted Crake, probably the same one that we had come to observe. After some time, the kite came out again and perched on an *Acacia* sp. tree with the kill. We watched it feeding very quickly on the crake. It was moving its tail constantly and calling while feeding. I took video footage as it was too dark to take photos. We also saw a shrike (*Lanius* sp.) trying to mob the kite. We observed it for some more time but it was dark and so we left the place while it was still feeding on its prey. Looking at the plumage of the kite, we concluded that it was an immature bird, and not an adult.



Meet Vala

Two aspects regarding this observation are important: a) the presence of Spotted Crake near Rajkot and b) Black-winged Kite preying on the Spotted Crake. The Spotted Crake is an uncommon/rare winter visitor to Gujarat (Ganpule 2016). It has been noted in Rajkot previously (Mashru & Trivedi 2012), but it is generally rare here. A sighting of Spotted Crake was reported on 4 February 2018 from Nyari River, Rajkot, by Nirav Raval and Prashant Patel. Hence, these sightings re- confirm its occurrence in the Rajkot area. The Black-winged Kite is known to usually prey on insects, lizards, rodents (its main prey), small birds and occasionally small snakes and frogs; birds including doves, larks, pipits and buntings, an injured green pigeon (*Treron* sp.), Wood Sandpiper (*Tringa glareola*), White-breasted Waterhen (*Amaurornis phoenicurus*) etc. have been recorded as its prey (Naorji 2006, Kemp *et al.* 2018). A recent observation, by Vennu Madhav, of a Black-winged Kite preying

on a female Watercock (*Gallicrex cinerea*) near Kallakurchi town, Viluppuram district, Tamil Nadu, on 3 January 2018 is known (*pers. comm*). But, the Black-winged Kite has not been recorded to prey on Spotted Crake. Thus, the Spotted Crake is an addition to its diet.

### Acknowledgements

I thank Dr. Gaurang Bagda for his guidance and for keeping me motivated to observe the bird on a regular basis. I am thankful to Ashok Mashru for helping me sight the bird again and to Divyesh Ghervada and Ravi Patel for their company. I am grateful to Vennu Madhav for sharing his observation.

### References

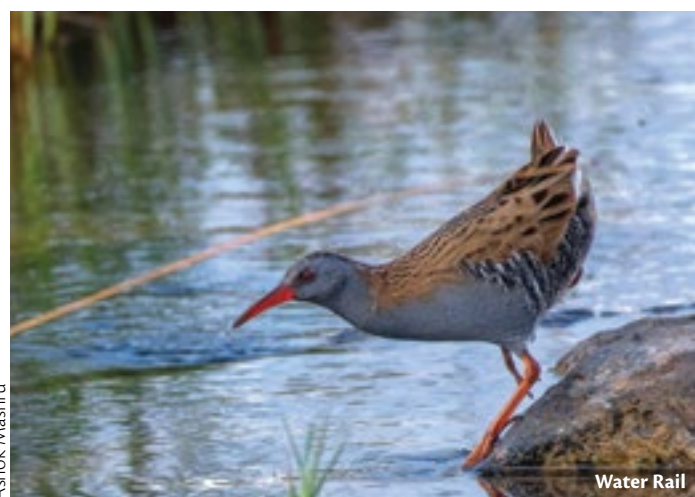
- Ganpule, P., 2016. The Birds of Gujarat: Status and Distribution. *Flamingo* 8 (3) – 12 (4): 2-40
- Kemp, A. C., Kirwan, G. M., Marks, J. S., Motis, A. & Garcia, E. F. J. 2018. Black-winged Kite (*Elanus caeruleus*). Handbook of the Birds of the World Alive. Lynx Edicions, Barcelona. (retrieved from <https://www.hbw.com/node/52966> on 7 February 2018).
- Mashru, A., & Trivedi, B., 2012. Spotted Crake (*Porzana porzana*) sightings in Saurashtra, Gujarat. *Indian BIRDS* 7 (6): 162
- Naoroji, R. 2006. *Birds of prey of the Indian Subcontinent*. Om Books International, New Delhi. □

## Sighting of Ruddy-breasted Crake and Water Rail in Rajkot

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



Ashok Mashru



Ashok Mashru

This short note describes the sighting of Ruddy-breasted Crake (*Porzana fusca*) and Water Rail (*Rallus aquaticus*) in Rajkot.

On 9 February 2018 early in the morning, Manoj Finava and I visited the Nyari River, Rajkot, to see the Spotted Crake (*Porzana porzana*) which had been reported from this area.

It was a very foggy morning. Suddenly, a ruddy coloured crake came out from the reeds for a few seconds and went back in. We could not take any photos but I identified it as a Ruddy-breasted Crake, as I had seen the species recently in Pune, Maharashtra. For confirmation, I played the call of the species from my digital book. Instantly, the bird responded with the same call. So, it was further confirmed that it was a Ruddy-breasted Crake. Subsequently, I visited the place 5-6 times and finally on 13 February 2018, I managed to take a good photograph of the Ruddy-breasted Crake, conclusively confirming its occurrence here.

On 10 February 2018, Nirav Raval and I visited this area. While returning back, I saw a beautiful bird, having slaty-coloured breast and a long red bill, walking on the rocks, crossing a patch of reeds in the river. I took some photos and identified it as a Water Rail. It was seen again and we could get good images of it on 13 February 2018. The subspecies occurring in India is *R. a. korejewi*, which differs from the nominate subspecies in being larger and paler.

The Water Rail is a rare winter visitor to Gujarat (Ganpule 2016). Recent sightings of Water Rail have been from Surat in south Gujarat, in Kachchh and from a few places in Saurashtra (Shah 2004, Jadeja & Shah 2007, Joshi & Karia 2015, Bhatt & Patel 2017). The Ruddy-breasted Crake is widely distributed in Gujarat, with sightings from central and south Gujarat (Parasharya *et al.* 2016); the authors indicate that it could be a resident breeding species here. However, its distribution in Saurashtra requires more study. Thus, this sighting in the winter months from Rajkot is important.

These are probably the first records of both species from Rajkot area and it indicates that both, the Water Rail and the Ruddy-breasted Crake, are probably more widely distributed than believed and given in the reference texts (Grimmett *et*

## Crake and Rail....

al. 2011, Rasmussen & Anderton 2012) for our state. Both the species were seen for more than two weeks in the same area and were seen frequently by many birders here.

### References

Bhatt, A., & Patel, P., 2017. Sighting of Spotted Crake and Water Rail near Surat. *Flamingo* 15 (3): 15  
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. Christopher Helm & Oxford University Press. London.  
Jadeja, R. D., & Shah, T. D., 2007. Additions to the birds of Kachchh: *Rallus aquaticus* (Linnaeus), *Halcyon pileata* (Boddaert) and *Monticola saxatilis* (Linnaeus). *Flamingo* 5 (3&4): 5

Joshi, V., & Karia, P. 2015. Sightings of Water Rail at two places in Saurashtra. *Flamingo* 13 (3): 21

Parasharya, B. M., Patel, J., Trivedi, R., Joshi, T., Desai, Rajendra M. & Patel, P. 2016. Status and distribution of Ruddy-breasted Crake in central and south Gujarat. *Flamingo* 14 (2): 8–11

Rasmussen, P. C. & Anderton, J. C. 2012. *Birds of South Asia: The Ripley Guide*. 2 vols. 1st ed. Smithsonian Institution and Lynx Edicions, Washington D. C. and Barcelona.

Shah, S., 2004. Water Rail (*Rallus aquaticus*) sighted near Vav, Surat. *Flamingo* 2 (1&2): 2 □

## Some recent uncommon bird sightings from Gandhinagar

**Naushad N. Theba & Irshad N. Theba:** Block No-119/1, "Cha" Type, Sector-21, Gandhinagar 382021.  
naushadtheba@gmail.com, irshadtheba@gmail.com. Photo credit: Authors

We have been observing birds in Gandhinagar very regularly. Based on the data gathered by us, we present here recent (since May 2017) records of five species which are uncommon in this area.

**Jerdon's Leafbird (*Chloropsis jerdoni*):** On 8 May 2017, we saw a female Jerdon's Leafbird in Gandhinagar Riverfront area, which was being mobbed by an Oriental Magpie Robin (*Copsychus saularis*) and a Common Iora (*Aegithina tiphia*), and we observed that the Leafbird was calling. On the next day at the same place, a male Jerdon's Leafbird was also observed along with the female. This was our first photographic record of Jerdon's Leafbird in Gandhinagar.



Jerdon's Leafbird

**Great Tit (*Parus major*):** On 14 September 2017, at Punit Van, we saw one Great Tit foraging/feeding on fruits of a Banyan Tree (*Ficus benghalensis*) along with Red-vented Bulbul (*Pycnonotus cafer*) and Oriental White-eye (*Zosterops palapebrosus*). The Great Tit was seen in a flock of Oriental

White-eyes. It was seen till 25 September 2017, after which we could not locate it again.



Great Tit

**Pale-billed Flowerpecker (*Dicaeum erythrorhynchos*):** On 21 October 2017, at 15:50 hrs, we saw two Pale-billed Flowerpeckers at Gandhinagar Riverfront, feeding on nectar of flowers with Purple Sunbird (*Cinnyris asiaticus*), Thick-billed Flowerpecker (*Dicaeum agile*) and Oriental White-eye. We observed these birds till 11 November 2017. This was our first sighting of Pale-billed Flowerpecker from Gandhinagar.



Pale-billed Flowerpecker



**Red-headed Bunting (*Emberiza bruniceps*):** On 2 January 2018, at Punit Van at about 10:00 hrs, we saw flock of Chestnut-shouldered Petronia (*Gymnoris xanthocollis*) and Indian Silverbills (*Euodice malabarica*) feeding on the ground in a garden. But, in this flock, we saw two different birds which were bigger than the Petronias and so, we tried to approach closer towards the flock. We identified the birds as male Red-headed Buntings in non-breeding plumage. According to Noormohammad Theba, he, along with the second author, saw these birds in 1997-98 near Sabarmati riverbank and Dholshwar Mahadev area where the river is always full with water. After almost 20 years, this species was found again in Gandhinagar. We did not see these birds after 10 January 2018 at this place.



Red-headed Bunting

**Black-hooded Oriole (*Oriolus xanthornus*):** On 3 January 2018 in Training and Research Center of Gujarat Forest Department at about 08:30 hrs, we saw a single Black-hooded Oriole calling from a tree. This species was also seen at Indroda Park in March 2017 on a Cotton Tree (*Bombax ceibia*), foraging in its flowers. Another record is also known from the Serenity Botanical Garden and Library, near Bhat village, in 2016-17 during the winter. Though Black-hooded Oriole is given as a

resident in Gujarat (Grimmett *et al.* 2011), we consider this species as a winter migrant to Gandhinagar district as it has not been observed in this area all round the year or during the breeding season. However, more information is needed to make a correct assessment regarding its status here.



Black-hooded Oriole

All the above mentioned species are not rare or uncommon in many other parts of the state. However, during our daily bird watching and monitoring, we found that these species were not common in our area. Gandhinagar is the capital of the state and has habitats which are suitable for birds, with many areas conducive for bird watching. These are preliminary observations of five species made by us in the last few months. Though we have been observing birds here since a long time, we started gathering data more regularly since the last year. Sustained data collection done here over the next few years will be useful in knowing the correct status of these species for the district.

### References

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

## Ringed Broad-billed Sandpiper in Jamnagar

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

**Amish Patel:** 51, Sanghi Bunglows, Jain Society, Jamnagar 361008. aameeshhpatel@yahoo.com



Ringed birds is done by ornithologists to study migration routes, longevity, and various other biological aspects. It is a widely accepted research method to get information about birds. We report here a ringed Broad-billed Sandpiper (*Limicola falcinellus*) seen and photographed by us in Jamnagar.

On 25 November 2017, between 07:00 to 09:30 hrs, we were birding around Jamnagar city. We observed a Broad-billed Sandpiper with an aluminum ring on its left tarsus. We also saw a flock of around 12-14 Broad-billed Sandpipers, along with other waders like Curlew Sandpiper (*Calidris ferruginea*), Dunlin (*Calidris alpina*), Little Stint (*Calidris minuta*), Lesser Sand Plover (*Charadrius mongolus*), Greater Sand Plover

## Broad-billed Sandpiper....

(*Charadrius leschenaultii*) etc. The ringed Broad-billed Sandpiper was foraging alone rather than with this group. It was also not allowing other waders to come nearby. When we saw the ring on its leg, we tried to get closer to take photos of the numbers/alphabets that were written on it. The details were not visible clearly and we had to struggle a lot of to take pictures of the ring. We also tried to see with binoculars but could not succeed. Finally, we got some photos in which the details were visible.

The photographs were sent to BNHS (Bombay Natural History Society) for getting the ringing details. Following ringing details were received from BNHS.

Ring Number: AB 169297

Species: Broad-billed Sandpiper

Ringing Date: 11 February 2015

Ringed By: Tuhina Katti, Scientist-A, Wetland Programme.

Ringing Place: Panje, Uran (near Mumbai)

Ringing Coordinates: 18° 90' N, 72° 95' E

Finding Date: 25 November 2017

Province: India

Finding Place: Jamnagar, Gujarat

Finding Coordinates: 22° 48' N, 70° 06' E

Thus, this bird was ringed near Mumbai in early 2015. It was seen by us again after two years and nine months at Jamnagar in the winter and was seen at a different location from its ringing place.

The first author had earlier recovered two ringed birds which had died due to electrocution; a dead Ruff (*Philomachus pugnax*) and a Dalmatian Pelican (*Pelecanus crispus*) were recovered in Surendranagar district. The Ruff was ringed near Nurinskiy, Kazakhstan (Mori 2017a), while the Dalmatian Pelican was ringed at the delta of Ili River, Kazakhstan (Mori 2017b).

There are recent records of sightings of ringed/tagged Lesser Sand Plover and Greater Sand Plover from Kachchh (Parekh 2017, Parekh & Parekh 2017). This sighting is another addition to the sighting of ringed waders in Gujarat.

### Acknowledgments

I thank Tuhina Katti & Taej Mundkur for all their help.

### References

Mori, D., 2017a. <https://birdingugujarat.wordpress.com/2017/08/24/ringed-ruff-near-surendranagar-gujarat/> [Accessed on 25 February 2018].

Mori, D., 2017b. <https://birdingugujarat.wordpress.com/2017/08/13/ringed-dalmatian-pelican-near-surendranagar-gujarat/> [Accessed on 25 February 2018].

Parekh, J., 2017. Sighting of tagged Lesser Sand Plover from Kachchh. *Flamingo*. 15 (1): 16

Parekh, J., & Parekh, N. 2017. Re-sighting of tagged Greater Sand Plover at Modhava, near Mandvi, Kachchh. *Flamingo*. 15 (3): 13 □

## Indian Blackbird near Mahuva, Bhavnagar district

**Batuk Bhil:** At Nikol, Ta: Mahuva, Dist: Bhavnagar. [batukbhil@gmail.com](mailto:batukbhil@gmail.com)



Mahuva, Dist: Bhavnagar, I saw a Myna-like (*Acridotheres* sp.) bird in flight, which came towards me and perched on a Neem tree (*Azadirachta indica*). After careful observation, I identified it as an Indian Blackbird (*Turdus merula simillimus*). As I did not have a camera with me at that time, I immediately called my friend Rameshbhai Makwana to bring the camera. But before he could arrive at this place, the bird flew away and could not be located again. In next two days, on 8 and 9 February 2018, I again visited the same place and was able to see it both the times and took a few record photographs.

As per my observations, the Indian Blackbird was not very shy. When undisturbed, it came as close as 7-8 feet. It used to feed on the ground, searching for insects under fallen leaves, dried twigs, small stones etc. and sometimes foraged in cattle dung. Once, I noted that it was mobbed by a Common Myna (*Acridotheres tristis*) and it in turn successfully chased an Oriental Magpie Robin (*Copsychus saularis*) for a caterpillar.

On 7 February 2018, When I was passing on the road near Nikol Bandhara wetland (21°05'31" N, 71°50'14"E ) near

The Indian Blackbird is an uncommon resident/local winter migrant in Gujarat (Ganpule 2016) with most of the sightings in well wooded areas. It is seen in south Gujarat, and it is known to occur in Gir National Park in Saurashtra. This is the first time I have seen this species near Mahuva and it is an important record for this area.

## References

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

## Sighting of Black-bellied Tern near Bharuch

**Kandarp Andharia:** Plot No. 55, 'Ishavashyam', Maruti Tenament, Airport Road, Subhashnagar, Bhavnagar. kandarpandharia053@gmail.com



structural differences (Black-bellied Tern is smaller than River Tern) and orange bill are the main differences from River Tern.

For Gujarat, Dharmakumarsinhji (1955) gave it as 'not as common as River Tern but as many as half a dozen pairs are sometimes found on larger lakes and rivers' and gave its distribution as whole of India including Saurashtra and in the winter, a local migrant all over the country; also breeding here, and stated the breeding period to be from January/February to April. Ali (1955) noted it in Kaira (now Anand and Kheda) and Baroda districts but stated that its status was uncertain and it was probably resident and breeding on the sandbanks of some rivers here. Khacher (1996) noted that he had seen the Black-bellied Tern breeding at Jasdan, near Rajkot, and stated that the large reservoirs constructed in the state had become nesting areas for the species.

I visited Bharuch, south Gujarat, on 24 February 2018, for watching birds. On the banks of the Narmada River, I noticed a group of five Black-bellied Terns (*Sterna acuticauda*). In this group of five birds, I noticed that three birds were immature or non-breeding plumaged birds and two were adults in breeding plumage. The adults were identified by orange bill, black cap not reaching till the forehead and black upper breast, belly and vent. The immature/non-breeding birds were having white underparts, orange bill with black tip, and diffuse black crown and dark eye mask. I took photos and confirmed the identification.

The Black-bellied Tern is given as formerly resident in Gujarat with no recent records (but may still survive) (Grimmett *et al.* 2011). There are no recent photo records of the species from Gujarat and thus, this is an important sighting from Bharuch. This photographic record from Bharuch confirms that the Black-bellied Tern is still seen along the Narmada River.

[The Black-bellied Tern is now classified as 'Endangered' since the species is almost extinct in large parts of its range and is thought to be in very rapid decline overall, owing to a multitude of threatening processes that affect riverine species in southern Asia (BirdLife International 2017). Its decline has been noted earlier (Sykes 2010), and there are only a few locations in India now where it is reliably seen and still breeds. Regarding its identification, the Black-bellied Tern can be confused with both the River Tern (*Sterna aurantia*) and Whiskered Tern (*Chlidonias hybrida*). It can be separated from Whiskered Tern by its long orange bill and deeply forked tail, while



In the recent reference texts, Grimmett *et al.* (2011) give it as formerly resident with no recent records while Rasmussen & Anderton (2012) give it as a resident along the Narmada River. Ganpule (2016) gives it as probably rare and a migrant, possibly overlooked in non-breeding plumage. There are a few records from the state in the bibliography by Pittie (2018), but there are no photos of the species on popular birding/bird photography websites or on the social media. It is certainly not seen regularly in Saurashtra now, which is quite different from what is stated in Dharmakumarsinhji (1955). Thus, there is no doubt that it has either become rare or is overlooked. As

## Black-bellied Tern....

per senior birdwatchers from south Gujarat, it is still known to occur along the Narmada River, but is uncommon / rare in the state. Thus, in Gujarat, the Narmada River is now the only place where it is still seen. It seems that the Black-bellied Tern is now indeed uncommon or rare (or even absent) in Saurashtra and Kachchh, but detailed surveys are needed to confirm this. It is possible that it is overlooked but now, with many bird watchers actively taking photographs and travelling widely all over the state, it is strange that this species has not been seen or photographed recently.

Since the Black-bellied Tern is now treated as 'Endangered', an urgent survey and a population assessment is required to be done in the state to know its current status and distribution in Gujarat. This sighting of five individuals is encouraging and suggests that a few individuals may still be resident in the state. Birdwatchers should actively look for this species in suitable habitats like large rivers and lakes, sandbanks, etc. and report sightings – Eds]

### References

Ali, S. 1954. The birds of Gujarat – Part I. *J Bombay Nat Hist Soc.* 52 (2): 374-458

BirdLife International. 2017. *Sterna acuticauda* (amended version of 2016 assessment). The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species 2017 [Downloaded on 12 March 2018].

Dharmakumarsinhji, R. S., (Undated=). 1955. *Birds of Saurashtra, India: With additional notes on the birds of kutch and Gujarat.* 1st ed. Bhavnagar, Saurashtra: Published by the Author.

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.

Khacher, L. 1996. The birds of Gujarat - a Salim Ali centenary year overview. *J Bombay Nat Hist Soc.* 93 (3): 331–373

Pittie, A. 2018. Bibliography of South Asian Ornithology. URL: <http://www.southasiaornith.in>. [Accessed on 01/03/2018.]

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.

Sykes, B. R. 2010. River terns: is the Black-bellied Tern *Sterna acuticauda* heading to oblivion? *Birding ASIA* 13: 73 □

## Significant bird sightings near Porbandar

**Punit Karia:** C/o. Mijbani Caterers, Bungalow 27, Nirant, Jalaram Colony, Porbandar 360575. [mijbani@yahoo.com](mailto:mijbani@yahoo.com)

Gosabara Wetland, also known as Mokarsagar Wetland, is situated near Porbandar. It is a well known place for bird watching, attracting large number of birds in the winter. In the course of birding here during the last two-three years, following are the important sightings noted by me:

**Amur Falcon (*Falco amurensis*):** On 3 January 2017, Rajesh Shah and I visited the wetland. At around 09:00 hrs, we saw and photographed an Amur Falcon. It was easily identified as this species by its orange-red cere and eye ring. It was perched on the branch of a tree and gave us very good views. The Amur Falcon is given as an autumn and spring passage migrant in Gujarat (Ganpule 2016). However, this sighting in January is in mid-winter and too late for autumn passage. This could be an individual which was late in its migration to its wintering grounds in southern Africa. For this district, there are only two previous records of Amur Falcon; from Porbandar and near Madhavpur (Ganpule 2011). Hence, this is an important record for this area.

**White Stork (*Ciconia ciconia*):** On 3 February 2017, I visited Gosabara for bird watching. There, in a flock of Painted Storks (*Mycteria leucocephala*) and Woolly-necked Storks (*Ciconia episcopus*), I saw and photographed a White Stork. It was easily

identified by me since I had seen in previously in Jamnagar with wildlife photographer Amish Patel. I was happy to get this species near my home. Though the White Stork is a widely distributed winter migrant to Gujarat (Grimmett *et al.* 2011), it is not very common here in Porbandar.



**Pin-tailed Snipe (*Gallinago stenura*):** On 7 May 2017, a Sunday, I visited the area with my son Konark in the morning. As soon as we started bird watching, we saw a snipe (*Gallinago* sp.) which was foraging on the ground in the open. We were sure that it was not a Common Snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*) as its size, plumage and length of bill looked different. We took some photos and shared the photos with Prasad Ganpule. He confirmed that it was a Pin-tailed Snipe by its plumage and underwing pattern. The Pin-tailed Snipe has been noted here in Gosabara before, but it is an uncommon/rare winter migrant to Gujarat (Ganpule 2016). This sighting in the month of May is surprising, as it is rather late for the species to remain here in the summer.

**Red-backed Shrike (*Lanius collurio*):** On 8 October 2017, I visited this area in the evening. I took photos of a first-winter Red-backed Shrike. It was perched on a dry branch of a tree and I could take photos from a very close distance. It was identified by its plumage; upperparts with scaling, grey and unmarked nape, typical head pattern and white underparts with scaling on the flanks. It was a first-winter individual. For Porbandar, an adult Red-backed Shrike was seen and photographed here in September 2017 (Raval 2017). This record is further confirmation that a few Red-backed Shrikes do pass through Porbandar area during the autumn passage migration season.

The Gosabara Wetland is an important area for wintering birds and it hosts large number of waterbirds as well as birds of prey etc. The above mentioned four species are not common in our area and hence, these are significant records for Porbandar district.



Red-backed Shrike

Punit Karia



Pin-tailed Snipe

Punit Karia



Amur Falcon

Punit Karia



White Stork

Punit Karia

**References**

Ganpule, P., 2011. The status and distribution of Amur Falcon *Falco amurensis* in Gujarat, India. *Indian BIRDS* 7 (2): 45–46

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. Christopher Helm & Oxford University Press. London.

Raval, B., 2017. Red-backed Shrike near Porbandar. *Flamingo* 15 (4): 22

□

## Short Birding Notes



### Little Bittern in Pariej Lake

While birding around Pariej Lake in Kheda district, as we travelled parallel to the canal, we observed a Little Bittern (*Ixobrychus minutus*) on 13 October 2017 at around 08:00 hrs, hidden within the reeds. It was identified by its black mantle and crest, whitish wings and pale yellowish stripes on the neck and upper breast. So, on the next day on 14 October 2017, at around 08:35 hrs, we waited at the same spot and soon it emerged from the reeds and this time, was clearly visible. The habitat where it was observed was an area with reeds growing around a canal opening, with very shallow flowing water and mud. Due to traffic, the bird remained shy and after a while, went back into the reeds and was hidden. The Little Bittern is a vagrant to Gujarat, with a recent sighting near Surat (Bendre 2017). This was the first time I had noted it in Pariej.

[A sighting of a juvenile Little Bittern was reported from Nalsarovar Bird Sanctuary in September 2017 by Rajni Trivedi; images are posted on the Oriental Bird Images website. The above mentioned records are the third and fourth of the species for Gujarat – Eds]

**Dakshina Magiawala:** Ahmedabad. dakshina.magiawala@gmail.com



### White-capped Bunting at Pavagadh, Vadodara district

On 26 January 2016, at around at 16:30 hrs during a trip to Pavagadh hills, Champaner Fort in Vadodara district, I saw a male White-capped Bunting (*Emberiza stewarti*). I saw it only for a few seconds from a long distance and managed to take photos before it swiftly took off and disappeared in the bushes. The identification was confirmed by this individual having all the characteristic features of the species, which can be seen in the photo. The White-capped Bunting is a rare winter visitor in Saurashtra and Kachchh (Ganpule 2016). This is an important record of this species for central Gujarat, as this is probably the first photographic record from this region. There are recent sight records from Nal Sarovar (Trivedi 2016) and Porbandar (Vargiya 2017), but the White-capped Bunting is rare in Gujarat.

**Sunil Kini:** Ahmedabad. sunil\_kini@yahoo.com



### Sightings of Grey-bellied Cuckoo in Saurashtra

**Hingolghadh Nature Education Sanctuary:** On 19 July 2017, I was birding at Hingolghadh Nature Education Sanctuary in Rajkot district. In the morning at around 11:00 hrs, I saw a small orange bird flying in the scrub forest. It landed on a tree near a water source. I observed it for over five minutes. I was able to identify it as a hepatic morph Grey-bellied Cuckoo (*Cacomantis passerinus*). This species has been recorded from Hingolghadh by Dhaval Vargiya on 12 August 2016 (Vargiya 2016, ebird). It is considered to be a monsoon migrant to the forests of south Gujarat and Gir NP (Bagda *et al.* 2015). These records indicate that it is probably more widespread in Saurashtra.

**Hemanya Radadia:** Rajkot. radadiahemanya@gmail.com

**Rampara Wildlife Sanctuary:** On 17 July 2016, I was birding in Rampara Wildlife Sanctuary, near Wankaner, in Morbi district. At around 18:00 hrs in the evening, we saw and heard the call of a Grey-bellied Cuckoo (*Cacomantis passerinus*) near the forest guesthouse. The bird was calling constantly and as we approached closer, it flew away and started calling from a different location. This was the first time we had noted this species here. It seems that the Grey-bellied Cuckoo is a monsoon migrant to this area as it has not been noted here in the winter months.

**Ashok Mashru:** Rajkot. mashruashok@gmail.com



### Himalayan Griffon near Jamnagar

A Himalayan Griffon (*Gyps himalayensis*) was found injured near Nevimoda village, Ta: Aliabada, about 15 kms from Jamnagar. As per information given by local villagers, it had collided with a windmill blade. We rescued it and transferred the bird to the Peter Scott Bird Hospital, Jamnagar. With the hard work of dedicated hospital staff, the bird recovered and was released in suitable habitat. Himalayan Griffon is a winter vagrant in Gujarat (Ganpule 2016). Most of its earlier records are from Kachchh area and it is not known to occur in Jamnagar district.

[Gujarat is one of the leading states in wind power generation in India. However, collision of birds with windmill blades is a very less studied topic here in the state. Birders are requested to provide data on birds affected by windmills in Gujarat – Eds]

**Jignesh Nakar:** Jamnagar.



### Amur Falcon in Navsari

On 12 November 2017, we were participating in a bird count organised as a tribute to Dr. Salim Ali. We had just completed our survey at around 09:30 hrs, and planned to visit one more location to check for Pacific Golden Plovers (*Pluvialis fulva*) near the sea shore area around Machhiwad, Navsari. We saw that one small falcon (*Falco* sp.) came from the sea side and perched on a tree. We took some photos and were surprised to see that it was an Amur Falcon (*Falco amurensis*). It seemed to be a juvenile or a female. The Amur Falcon is an uncommon/rare passage migrant in Gujarat (Ganpule 2016) and there are a few previous records from this region (Joshi 2008, Jat 2010), but, it is rare here.

**Minal Patel, Priyank Kapdi & Neel Tandel:** Navsari. minalpatel\_forestry@yahoo.in



### Saker Falcon in Little Rann of Kachchh

We went for birding to Wild Ass Sanctuary, Little Rann of Kachchh, on 19 November 2017. We saw one adult Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*). It was afternoon and we were observing it. We also found another falcon nearby which was a juvenile. So we thought it could be a juvenile Peregrine Falcon. Its crop was full and it did not fly away and was perched nearby. We took some photos and since we could not identify it, we sent the images to Nirav Bhatt. It was identified as a juvenile Saker Falcon (*Falco cherrug*). We visited the Wild Ass Sanctuary on 2 December 2017. We found the juvenile Saker Falcon again and this time, we observed that a Peregrine Falcon was mobbing the juvenile Saker Falcon. This species is a rare winter visitor to Gujarat, mainly seen in the Little-, and Greater Rann of Kachchh (Mori & Shah 2017).

[Two Saker Falcons were seen and photographed in the Rann this year. This individual was seen till mid-January by many bird watchers – Eds]

**Pankaj Maheria, Viral Patel & Geet Maheria Patel:** Ahmedabad.  
drpankajmaheria@gmail.com



### Indian Cuckoo in Dadra and Nagar Haveli

On 16 October 2017, at around 09:00 hrs, I saw and photographed an Indian Cuckoo (*Cuculus micropterus*) in the forest area of Dadra and Nagar Haveli (UT). The bird showed a rufous-buff wash to the upper breast, while the barring on the underparts was more diffuse but irregular and widely spaced. The eye appeared dark. Based on the above features, it was identified as an immature Indian Cuckoo. It could have been an immature female. There are a few records of Indian Cuckoo from south Gujarat (Shull 1962, Monga & Naoroji 1984, Joshi & Jat 2004); its exact status is not known but it is probably an uncommon or rare monsoon migrant in south Gujarat (Ganpule 2016). The sighting of Indian Cuckoo from this area is probably the first documented sighting for the Union Territory.

**Saswat Mishra:** Silvassa, Dadra & Nagar Haveli (UT). paulmshr@gmail.com



### Sightings of Great Bittern in central Gujarat

**Vadodara:** On 13 December 2017, I was on a morning birding trip at Timbi Lake near Vadodara, which is a home for Yellow Bittern (*Ixobrychus sinensis*), Cinnamon Bittern (*I. cinnamomeus*) & Black Bittern (*Dupetor flavicollis*). I observed that a bittern come out from a grass patch, which was slow in flight compared to other bitterns and its size was comparatively larger. Having seen bitterns before, I quickly realized that this was different. I was lucky to get a few flying photos of this bird. I waited for quite a long time, but it was not seen again. After checking my images and comparing with those on the internet, it was confirmed that this was a Great Bittern (*Botaurus stellaris*).

**Dhyey Shah:** Vadodara. ketanrinku@yahoo.com

**Khambhat Taluka:** On 5 February 2017, in the evening at around 18:00 hrs, I was bird watching at Tarakpur-Pandad wetland, in Khambhat Taluka, Anand district. I saw and photographed a Great Bittern (*Botaurus stellaris*), which was perched in the open at the edge of the water. It was easily recognized by its cryptic plumage. The Great Bittern is uncommon/rare winter visitor in Gujarat, and this was a surprise sighting for me.

**Uday Vora:** Gandhinagar. ilaudayvora@yahoo.co.in



### Grasshopper Warbler near Rajkot

I visited Khirasara vidi, near Rajkot, in the morning on 8 October 2017. In a small bush, I found two Grasshopper Warblers (*Locustella naevia*) foraging. At first, I mistook them for Common Babblers (*Turdoides caudata*), but these birds were much smaller in size. So, I went closer and took some photos of one bird while the other bird went into the bush. I identified it as a Grasshopper Warbler based on its typical plumage and structure. There have been recent sightings of Grasshopper Warbler in Gujarat (Ganpule 2017, Ovalekar *et al.* 2017), but it is uncommon here.

**Tejas Vagadiya:** Rajkot. tejas\_vagadia@yahoo.com



### Grey Hypocolius in Khijadiya Bird Sanctuary, Jamnagar

On 14 January 2018, we visited Khijadiya Bird Sanctuary, near Jamnagar. At around 08:30 hrs, we saw a male Grey Hypocolius (*Hypocolius ampelinus*) perched on a branch of a tree about 30 meters from us. It was seen for about five minutes, and moved about on the branch, before it flew off out of sight. Our guide Sanjay Makwana identified it. We could take good images and confirmed its identity. The Grey Hypocolius has now been noted in many locations outside Fulay, in Kachchh (its regular wintering area), including a sighting from Narara, near Jamnagar (Bhalodia & Mashru 2016). Thus, this is a further record of its occurrence outside Kachchh.

**Keyur Buch:** Jamnagar. keyurbuch@gmail.com



### Crested Hawk Eagle preying on an Oriental Honey-buzzard in Gir NP

On 13 February 2018, I was on route no. 6 (Andhari area) in the Gir National Park. At around 11:30 hrs, I observed a Crested Hawk Eagle (*Nisaetus cirrhatus*) preying on an Oriental Honey-buzzard (*Pernis ptilorhynchus*). The eagle had caught the Honey-buzzard and was perched on the ground with the prey in its talons, just starting to feed on it. The honey-buzzard was probably a female, as indicated by its plumage. The Crested Hawk Eagle is known to prey on large birds like pheasants, junglefowl etc. (Naoraji 2006), and has also been recorded to prey on a Mottled Wood Owl (*Strix ocellata*) in Gir National Park (Joshi 2016). But, this was the first time I had seen it preying on an Oriental Honey-buzzard and this is an addition to its diet.

**Abhilash Vaja:** At-Sasan, Junagadh. vajaabilash11@gmail.com





### **Black-capped Kingfisher in Ratanmal Wildlife Sanctuary**

On 4 February 2018, I went for bird watching to Ratanmahal Wildlife Sanctuary, near Dahod. Near the Udalmahuda Campsite in the forest, I saw and photographed a Black-capped Kingfisher (*Halcyon pileata*). It was identified by its purplish blue upperparts with black wing coverts, typical black cap, white throat with red bill and pale orange-buff belly and flanks. Black-capped Kingfisher is given as an uncommon to rare resident and local migrant in Gujarat, with isolated records from across the state (Ganpule 2016). However, this was my first sighting of the Black-capped Kingfisher from Ratanmahal and it is an important record for this area.

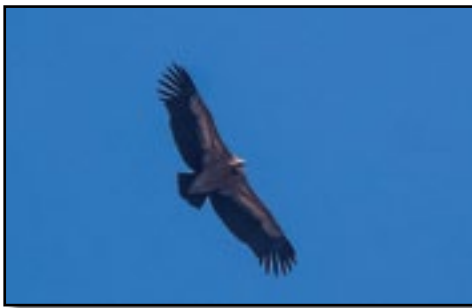
**Nilam Patel:** Dahod. drnilam009@gmail.com



### **Brown-breasted Flycatcher in Jessore Sanctuary**

On 31 December 2017, a Brown-breasted Flycatcher (*Muscicapa muttui*) was seen and photographed by me and my friends Raju Saini, Ashutosh Khatri and Jayant Khatri at Jessore Sloth Bear Sanctuary in Banaskantha district of north Gujarat. It was seen by the riverside in an area with large trees. After observing the birds (more than one individual was present) for some time, we could get very close and take good photos. The Brown-breasted Flycatcher is a rare winter migrant to Gujarat (Ganpule 2016). There are previous records from Polo forest and Deesa in north Gujarat, but it is rare here.

**Anand Varde:** Deesa. anandvardey@yahoo.co.in



### **Griffon Vulture near Jamnagar**

On 7 January 2018, we were birding near Vijarakhi Dam and Sapda, on the Jamnagar-Junagadh Highway. While returning back, we saw two birds soaring high in the sky near Theba village, about 6 kms from Jamnagar. One of the birds was bigger, so we took some photos and identified it as a Griffon Vulture (*Gyps fulvus*), by its rufous-brown plumage and typical underwing pattern. This species has not been noted in Jamnagar recently and this was the first time we had seen it in our area.

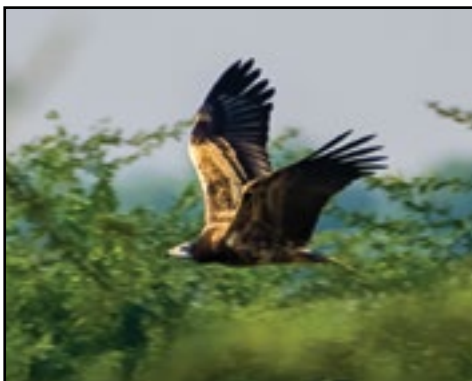
**Bhargav Raval, Divyesh Ghervada, Ravi Patel:** Jamnagar. dr.bhargavraval@gmail.com



### **Graceful Prinia near Surat**

On 19 February 2017, a Sunday, I, along with my friends Nilay Desai and Yogesh C. Patel, decided to explore a coastal village named Chhini, near Surat. There is an island-like area about a kilometre away from the village, which is used for cattle grazing. An unpaved road is the only way to approach it. To our surprise, we found a good number of Graceful Prinia (*Prinia gracilis*) here. We observed them closely, saw their habits and habitat, and also confirmed the identification by its call. We took some good images. Graceful Prinia is uncommon/rare in Surat area and this is the first time we observed them here.

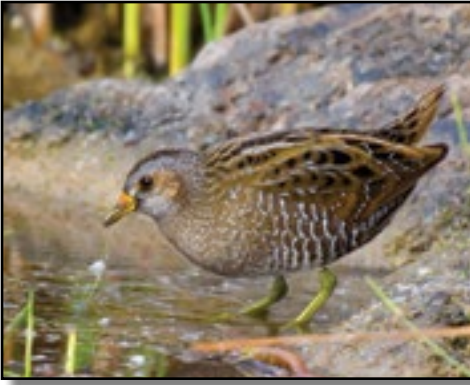
**Ashish Gajjar:** Surat. ashish\_gajjar@yahoo.com



### **Egyptian Vulture in Navsari**

On 11 November 2017, we visited Navsari outskirts area for checking locations before a planned bird count the next day. When we were returning back, we saw an Egyptian Vulture (*Neophron percnopterus*) perched behind a rock. But, it flew away as soon as we stopped. I could take a photo of it in flight which confirmed its identity. There was only one individual present. As per senior birdwatchers Rajendra Desai and Akshay Desai, it has been noted here after 7-8 years and it is rare in the district.

**Minal Patel & Dhara Patel:** Navsari. minalpatel\_forestry@yahoo.in



### Spotted Crake in Rajkot

On 4 February 2018, we visited the Nyari River, Rajkot. There, we saw and photographed a Spotted Crake (*Porzana porzana*) in the reeds in the area. We visited the same place with senior birder Ashok Mashru on 9 February 2018 and saw it again. It seemed like there were 2-3 individuals here and one bird was seen feeding on aquatic plants. The Spotted Crake has been noted in Rajkot before (Mashru & Trivedi 2012), but it is believed to be generally uncommon here. It is possible that it is overlooked due to its skulking nature. These sightings of more than one individual here suggest that it could be a common winter migrant in suitable habitats here in Rajkot area.

**Nirav Raval, Tushar Patel, Tejas Vagadiya:** Rajkot. niravraval@gmail.com



### Ultramarine flycatcher in Barda Hills near Porbandar

On a birding trip to Kileshwar Temple, Barda Hills, near Porbandar, on 14 January 2016, I was observing birds at around 13:30 hrs when I spotted a male Ultramarine Flycatcher (*Ficedula supercilialis*). It was easily identified by its typical plumage. It was observed near a rivulet besides the temple. The flycatcher was catching prey and I got an opportunity to watch it and take some photographs. There are scattered and isolated records of Ultramarine Flycatcher from Gujarat (Mashru 2012) and it is considered as an uncommon to rare winter migrant to the state (Ganpule 2016). This sighting adds to our knowledge regarding the distribution of the species in Saurashtra.

**Hemanya Radadia:** Rajkot. radadiahemanya@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
- Bendre, V. S., 2017. Sighting of Little Bittern near Surat. *Flamingo* 15 (4): 15
- Bhalodia, R. & Mashru, A. 2016. Sighting of Grey Hypocolius in Rajkot and its records from outside Fulay, Kachchh. *Flamingo*. 14 (3): 7
- Ganpule, P. 2016. The Birds of Gujarat: Status and Distribution. *Flamingo* 8(3) – 12(4): 2-40
- Ganpule, P., 2017. Sighting of Moustached Warbler, Red-throated Pipit and Grasshopper Warbler in the Little Rann of Kachchh. *Flamingo*. 15 (2): 17–18
- Jat, M., 2010. Amur Falcon near Valsad. *Flamingo* 7 (3&4): 12
- Joshi, J. & Jat, M. 2004. A trip to Vansda National Park in summer. *Flamingo* 2 (1&2): 13
- Joshi, J., 2008. 'Amur shaheen ni neerikshan nondh'. *Vihang* 2 (3): 18. [In Gujarati.]
- Joshi, P., 2016. Crested Hawk Eagle preying on Mottled Wood Owl. *Flamingo*. 14 (3): 19
- Mashru, A., 2012. Records of the Ultramarine Flycatcher (*Ficedula supercilialis*) in Gujarat. *Indian BIRDS* 7 (6): 169–170
- Mashru, A., & Trivedi, B. 2012. Spotted Crake (*Porzana porzana*) sightings in Saurashtra, Gujarat. *Indian BIRDS* 7 (6): 162
- 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
- Mori, D., & Shah, Y., 2017. Records of Saker Falcon (*Falco cherrug*) from Gujarat, India. *Indian BIRDS* 13 (6): 158–159
- Naoroji, R. 2006. *Birds of prey of the Indian Subcontinent*. Om Books International, New Delhi.
- Ovalekar, S., Ghosh, S. & Mishra, V. V. 2017. Sighting of Grasshopper Warbler in Kachchh. *Flamingo* 15 (4): 14
- Shull, E. M. 1962. Supplementary notes on 'The birds of Gujarat' from birds collected in the Surat Dangs. *J Bombay Nat Hist Soc.* 59 (2): 658–660
- Trivedi, R. 2016. Short Birding Notes: White-capped Bunting near Nalsarovar Bird Sanctuary. *Flamingo* 14 (3): 20
- Vargiya, D., 2016. Website URL: <http://ebird.org/ebird/india/view/checklist/S31073588> [Accessed on 16 July 2017].
- Vargiya, D., 2017. Short Birding Notes: Sighting of White-capped Bunting near Porbandar. *Flamingo* 15(1): 21

## Book Review

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

**Title:** GULLS OF THE WORLD

A Photographic Guide – 368 pp

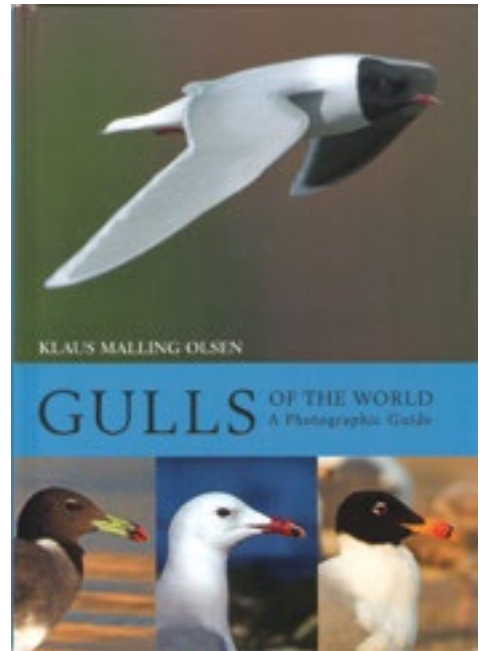
**Author:** Klaus Malling Olsen

**Publisher:** Christopher Helm, London,  
Bloomsbury Publishing Plc. February 2018.

This book, published by Christopher Helm, is a photographic guide to the gulls of the world. The author, Klaus Malling Olsen, is considered as the foremost expert on gulls. He, along with Hans Larsson, previously authored 'Gulls of Europe, Asia and North America' (Helm Identification Guides, 2004), which is still considered to be the definitive work on gulls. The author explains in the introduction that the aim of this book is to 'present identification in a more concise way' and 'the intention is not to present an authorised taxonomic update or highly detailed descriptions of plumages, moults and measurements'. For this, the earlier work is given as the main reference and this current book is intended as a photographic companion guide to the earlier book.

For any book on gulls, the taxonomic treatment followed for the large white-headed gull complex is always of great interest. Here, the author states in the introduction that all subspecies within a species that are recognisable in the field are described. In certain taxa where taxonomy is unclear or just partly resolved, such taxa are treated in separate accounts. This results in separate accounts for Steppe Gull, Mongolian Gull, Baltic Gull, Kamchatka Gull (previously under Common Gull) etc. to name a few. Of interest for India is the treatment of Heuglin's Gull, which is treated as a distinct taxon, with subspecies *taimyrensis*. The author clarifies that the taxonomic status is unclear but this is treated as a separate species, *Larus heuglini*, with one subspecies, *L. h. taimyrensis*.

The format of the book is an introduction, followed by species accounts and an index at the end. The species accounts covers identification, ageing (description of the plumages from juveniles to full adults), voice, moult notes, geographical variation, hybridisation, status habitat and distribution, similar species, references, distribution map and photographs with detailed captions. A total of 61 accounts are given, which cover all the gulls of the world; about 15 are of interest in the Indian context, with 7-8 covering the common taxa seen here. The photographs are of very high quality, and depict the birds from juveniles to adults, with perched and in-flight images. There are more than 600 photos in the book, helping in identification of each species/subspecies at different ages, which is the reason why this book is so useful. It is a little odd that though references are given for each account, there is no detailed reference list in the book and the author directs readers to consult the earlier work for detailed references.



For gull watchers in India, this book will be an invaluable resource. There is not much interest among birders here in watching gulls. This is mainly due to the constant taxonomic changes and difficulties in identification. With the help of this book, that obstacle can be removed as it will be easier to compare photos and identify not only the large white-headed gulls, but also other gull species occurring here.

Gujarat, with its long coastline, is one of the best states to watch gulls in India. It is now known that in the large white-headed gull complex, the Heuglin's Gull (including *taimyrensis*), Steppe Gull, Caspian Gull and probably Mongolian Gull occur in our state. If intensive gull watching is done here, it is quite probable that Baltic Gull could also be found in Gujarat. The identification of other gulls like Common Gull, Black-legged Kittiwake, Little Gull etc. will also be easier with the help of superb photos given for these species and will help birders in their search for these vagrants in Gujarat.

This book will certainly inspire bird watchers to look at gulls more closely. It is simple to use, has photos of gulls at all ages, with concise text which is easy to understand, and it is possible to carry it in the field too! All birders, including those who are not keen on gulls, should have this book in their collection as it will help in identification of the common taxa occurring here as well as the rare/vagrant species which one may find. It is available on online book stores at around Rs. 3700 and at this price, is a bargain for its usefulness in the identification of this 'difficult to identify' group of birds. It is hoped that this superb book will aid in gull identification for birders in Gujarat and elsewhere in India, resulting in encouragement for more gull watching in our country.

“ Years ago, as a student peering down a microscope at the intricacies of cells, the chromosomes dyed to make them more visible, I had doubts about linking the inert objects with the dynamism and vitality of living protoplasm. Despite the tremendous advances in cellular research we have not been able to replicate life in scientist’s test tubes. Even if the great breakthrough occurs, the synthetic blob of protoplasmic material would not be the same as substances of which the scientist was made, since it would not have impressed upon it the millennia of interaction with the environment, which generates a complex interplay of elemental forces and organic responses.

We can describe a beautiful sunset, perhaps project a flamboyant reproduction of one, but we cannot recreate its impact on individual gazing at it in isolation across a vista of sea, desert or mountains. Different individuals would experience different responses. Even the finest textbook guided through by the most gifted teachers fall short of experiencing Living nature. How much more inadequate, then, must be the education of our children, given sterile classrooms, drab textbooks and harassed teachers?

Is there any wonder that a land so endowed with the material of intellect, the human brain, has so much mediocrity? We like to believe that we are descended of a civilization which nurtured intellectual giants, but fail to realize that those thinkers were leading unfettered lives in a land which was largely wilderness, and replete with the bounties of Nature. By contrast, today’s child attending the most sophisticated of schools is cramped and provided a constricted vision. The child of yesteryears, while enjoying advantages of limitless horizons, enjoyed the benediction of gurus who encouraged questioning. Today’s child seems sentenced to ten years of a concentration camp governed by a syllabus as tyrannical and circumscribing as any prison code! The system, instead of exciting the wonder of growing minds, suppresses their flight as effectively as any efficient prison warden following the prison code.

”  
- Lavkumar Khachar

