

# FLAMINGO *Gujarat*

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## Contents:

Asian Dowitcher <i>Limnodromus semipalmatus</i> at Jamnagar.....	1	Black-winged Cuckooshrike <i>Coracina melaschistos</i> at Thol Bird Sanctuary, Ahmedabad.....	12
Yellow-breasted Bunting <i>Emberiza aureola</i> near Kheda: an addition to the avifauna of Gujarat.....	2	Broad-billed Sandpiper <i>Calidris falcinellus</i> in South Gujarat.....	13
Falcated Duck <i>Anas falcata</i> at Nal Sarovar.....	4	Blue-throated Blue Flycatcher <i>Cyornis rubeculoides</i> in Porbandar.....	13
Large-billed Reed Warbler <i>Acrocephalus orinus</i> from Nal Sarovar.....	5	Observations on nesting of Indian Pitta <i>Pitta brachyura</i> at Hingolghadh Nature Education Sanctuary, near Rajkot.....	14
Mew Gull <i>Larus canus heinei</i> in Gujarat in January 2006.....	6	Some interesting bird sightings from Jessore Sloth Bear Sanctuary.....	17
Tagged Black Kite <i>Milvus migrans</i> near Rajula, Amreli District.....	6	Radio-collared Greylag Goose <i>Anser anser</i> at Vadla, near Nal Sarovar.....	18
Two Ringed Birds.....	7	Red-breasted Parakeet <i>Psittacula alexandri</i> in Vadodara.....	19
A study of prey taken by Peregrine Falcon <i>Falco peregrinus calidus</i> in Little Rann of Kachchh.....	9	Short Birding Notes.....	21
		Abstracts.....	25

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## Asian Dowitcher *Limnodromus semipalmatus* at Jamnagar

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On 31 December 2018, the second author was bird watching with Bishnoi K. N. at Bedi Port area, Jamnagar, early in the morning. He saw an Asian Dowitcher (*Limnodromus semipalmatus*) with a flock of Black-tailed Godwits (*Limosa limosa*) near the gate of Bedi Port. He immediately took some photographs, sent them to the first author and also called him to check the identification and see the bird. The first author confirmed that this was indeed an Asian Dowitcher, a rarity here, and within 15 minutes, reached the site and saw the bird. It was a memorable sighting on the last day of the year!

The Asian Dowitcher is an elegant wader, and needs a second view to separate it correctly even for an experienced birder. Almost like a Bar-tailed Godwit (*Limosa lapponica*) in jizz and size, the Asian Dowitcher is easily confused with the former in non-breeding plumage. Here, it was with a group of Black-tailed Godwits and was clearly smaller in size. The difference was apparent when seen through binoculars and scopes. It mixed freely with Black-tailed Godwits while feeding or roosting.

We observed this individual constantly feeding in very shallow waters of an abandoned saltpan. The saltpan consisted of a fine layer of algae on the moist mud on its southern side and a pool of shallow water in the rest of the pan, probably providing this wader an ideal habitat to forage. The dowitcher was very deliberate in feeding. It was probing persistently in the mud with its bill. Most of the time, it foraged by wading through the water which was tarsus high for it, and sometimes, it foraged in slightly deeper waters, about the height of its tibia. It also preferred walking on the algae covered moist mud to feed. Here, the bird was very near to us and we could get very good profile photographs. Due to this location being very near to the road, the bird tolerated human presence.

Precisely described as a 'Snipe-billed Godwit' by Ali & Ripley (2001), it shows a marked similarity to snipes (*Gallinago* sp.) with a long, bold supercilium, dark loreal line and an almost similar forehead structure, leading to a relatively long bill. The bill is straight, dark and of even thickness, and slightly swollen at the tip (which is visible only in close-up views). In non-breeding plumage, the face, neck and the breast are slightly streaked or mottled grey-brown with a white belly. The flanks are also barred grey-brown. The feathers on the upperparts and wing coverts are darker grey-brown, containing dark brown shaft and a contrasting, neat, pale border on the feather fringes.

The typical feeding behavior of the Asian Dowitcher is what makes it look different from similar-looking waders. The long bill is used for probing in the moist mud in a fast vertical motion, like a sewing machine. It always feeds by poking; sometimes the bill is penetrated deep into the mud, just up to the nostrils and withdrawn a few seconds later with a worm or a crustacean. Feeding is almost continuous, usually in tarsus-deep waters and also on exposed mud. It covers more ground than godwits while foraging. It seems to feed mainly on marine worms (polychaetes) by pulling them out of the moist mud. Small crustaceans and mollusks were also consumed by jabbing in the mud, but it foraged for them in the water too. In one of the photographs, we were able to capture it feeding on a small fish.

The Asian Dowitcher was more comfortable roosting near or between the groups of godwits. A water level which was touching its tibia was ideal for it to roost. It also tended to bathe and preen in between bouts of sleeping. An occasional stretch exposed the under-wings and axillaries, which were white with almost no markings. The Asian Dowitcher looks most attractive when it stands upright and stretches the neck to scan the situation and the surroundings. Although generally silent while feeding, it gives a soft flight call when taking off. The take off, when alarmed, was sudden like snipes and godwits. Once, we were able to photograph the Asian Dowitcher with a group of Curlew Sandpipers (*Calidris ferruginea*) while it was landing. This displayed the tail with twelve feathers, which are barred. The rump showed streaks of grey-brown.

We found this individual in a saltpan at Bedi Port, four kms outside Jamnagar town. The Asian Dowitcher is a species which usually migrates along the East Asian - Australasian Flyway, wintering in S and SE Asia (BirdLife International 2019). It is interesting to learn, however, that this Asian Dowitcher

## Asian Dowitcher...

reached Jamnagar, in western Gujarat, which lies in the Central Asian - Indian Flyway. This can be a case of it being a vagrant here. In this region, previously it has been recorded at Pirotan and Narara Island in the Marine National Park (Gulf of Kachchh) and also at Khijadia Bird Sanctuary, Jamnagar (Bhatt 2008, Forsten & Lindholm 2008, Robson 2012). This is the fourth record of an Asian Dowitcher from Gujarat. It should also be noted that the Asian Dowitcher is a 'Near Threatened' species (BirdLife International 2019) and hence, this sighting assumes importance.



Rajdeepsinh Jadeja

This Asian Dowitcher in Jamnagar is being watched from dawn to dusk by some or the other birders and photographers every day since it was found. We now wish and very much hope that the bird stays here safely and leaves for its breeding ground only after acquiring breeding colours. As of 10 March 2019, it is still present in the area; a total of more than two months

of stay here. This is one of the rare instances when an Asian Dowitcher has been observed in India over such a long period and its activities and foraging/feeding monitored closely.



Yashodhan Bhatia

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## Sighting of Yellow-breasted Bunting *Emberiza aureola* near Kheda: an addition to the avifauna of Gujarat

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The Yellow-breasted Bunting (*Emberiza aureola*) is a passerine bird, of the bunting family (*Emberizidae*) that is found across Eurasia. The species is listed as 'Critically Endangered' due to extremely rapid population decline throughout its range (BirdLife International 2019). It is a winter visitor to India, mainly to the foothills of the Himalayas, and in eastern and Northeast India (Grimmett *et al.* 2011, Rasmussen & Anderton 2012).

On 12 January 2019, I was on the way to Pariej Lake (22° 33' 08" N, 72° 37' 05" E), near Kheda. It was a foggy morning. Suddenly, a bird came and perched in front of my car and I was lucky to take a few photos of the bird before it disappeared in the fields



Bhavesh Mengar

with flocks of Red-headed Buntings (*Emberiza bruniceps*) and Black-headed Buntings (*Emberiza melanocephala*).

Later, while reviewing the images, I was confused regarding the identification of this bird. I thought it could be some bunting (*Emberiza* sp.) or some weaver (*Ploceus* sp.), and so I put the images on a Whatsapp group for identification help. It was confirmed as a Yellow-breasted Bunting with the help of Dr. Pankaj Maheria and senior birder Prasad Ganpule. This is the first photographic record of a Yellow-breasted Bunting in Gujarat and it is an addition to the avifauna of the state.

[*The Yellow-breasted Bunting breeds from Europe, across Russia, in NE Mongolia and NE China and in far eastern Russia and winters in S and SE Asia (Copete & Sharpe 2019). As explained here by the author, it is now a 'Critically Endangered' species.*

*The individual from Pariej showed a white wing covert patch, yellow throat and whitish supercilium. The white wing patch was quite conspicuous in the photos and hence, it was initially identified as an immature Yellow-breasted Bunting by referring to Peltomäki & Jantunen (2000) and Copete & Sharpe (2019). However, since the identification is difficult, we sent the images to Jari Peltomäki and Arend Wassink, who have extensive experience with the species.*

*Jari Peltomäki replied (email dated 18 January 2019) that 'to me it looks like 100% sure Yellow-breasted Bunting and there are few features supporting this identification: 1) mainly white median coverts 2) pink base of bill 3) yellow throat extending behind the ear coverts (and overall head pattern) and 4) reddish rump and uppertail coverts. I do not have so much experience with the winter plumages of this species, so I do not know for sure if this is a first-winter male or older male. One should also remember that old females get whiter median coverts, but somehow this looks like a male'. He suggested sending the images to other experts for further confirmation.*

*Arend Wassink replied (email dated 16 January 2019) that 'Indeed, it is a Yellow-breasted Bunting; apart from other characters, in these photos, the short primary projection with tertials hanging well over secondaries shows well! A very good record, certainly given the fact of the huge decrease in numbers. For instance, in Kazakhstan, where it was a common breeding and passage migrant in eastern and northern parts, there are now only a handful of records post 2000! As to the age, the bird is certainly not an adult male. Adult winter males have a cryptic plumage, with lots of pale fringes hiding the bright colours. Through wear, they acquire the summer plumage. That leaves us with adult female or second calendar-year male/female. Since I cannot see whether the bird has any streaking left of the juvenile plumage, on that character I cannot say much but what I see in the upper photo (with the bird looking to the right), it shows at least remnants of a lateral throat-stripe, which is a good character of a young (in this case second calendar-year)*

*bird. Therefore, I would call this bird a second calendar-year male/female'.*

*Thus, the identification was confirmed as a Yellow-breasted Bunting, and this was probably a second calendar-year individual. As stated by the author, it is an addition to the avifauna of Gujarat as it is not given in the Gujarat checklist (Ganpule 2016) or in the first update to the Gujarat checklist (Ganpule 2017). In fact, there are no records shown in the reference texts (Grimmett et al. 2011, Rasmussen & Anderton 2012) for western India. The only record from the western part of the Indian Subcontinent is of a bird collected from the Baluchistan coast, in Pakistan, in 1901 (Ticehurst 1927). Thus, this record from the western part of the Indian Subcontinent comes after more than 115 years. It is a very important record of this critically endangered species and shows that a few individuals may be straggling to western India. It could be overlooked in flocks of Red-headed Buntings and Black-headed Buntings. It is heartening to note this species in Gujarat and it is a record of great importance since the species is now so rare in many parts of its range.*

*We are extremely thankful to Arend Wassink and Jari Peltomäki for confirming the identification of this bird – Eds]*

### Acknowledgments

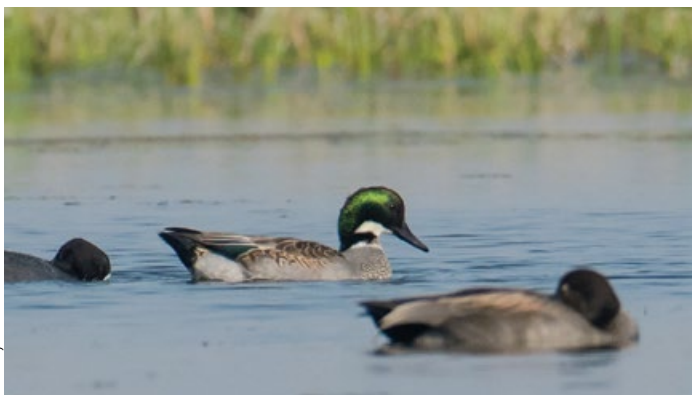
I thank Dr. Pankaj Maheria and Prasad Ganpule for their inputs in the identification of this bird.

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## Sighting of Falcated Duck *Anas falcata* at Nal Sarovar: a first photographic record from Gujarat

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Pankaj Maheria

Early in the morning on 20 November 2018, we went on a family birding trip at Vadla Wetland. It is near the Nal Sarovar Bird Sanctuary, and is a large wetland. There were many water birds in the area. We had to observe them with binoculars because they were scattered and very far away. While scanning groups of dabbling ducks (*Anas* sp.), the first author (PM) spotted an unusual, green-headed duck. It was foraging in shallow water, and was surrounded by several Eurasian Coot (*Fulica atra*), Eurasian Wigeon (*Anas penelope*), Common Teal (*Anas crecca*) and Gadwall (*Anas strepera*). At first, we thought that it was a Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*). But, on further observation, it was clear that this was a male Falcated Duck (*Anas falcata*).

We observed its diagnostic features, like a large head, which is metallic bronze-green, chestnut-purple crown with a bushy crest and mane – like a nuchal crest, which is diagnostic for the male in breeding plumage of this species. It has black-and-grey inner secondaries hanging off its back, which are elongated and falcated (sickle-shaped), which give this species its name; the throat and fore-neck is white, with a narrow dark green collar at base; the bill is black, body is grey, vermiculated with black, and the speculum is glossy black and green (Carboneras & Kirwan 2018). Except for the sickle-shaped secondaries, many other features observed in this individual were matching with a Falcated Duck and the identification was readily confirmed as a male Falcated Duck. It was probably not a full adult as some retained juvenile feathers were present on the flanks and scapulars. Though ageing of Falcated Ducks is complicated (Martin & Garner 2012), here, the scapulars were retained juvenile scapulars, which were brown with pale brown fringes, which indicated that this individual was possibly a first-winter bird.

Simply put, the Falcated Duck was a strikingly beautiful duck. It was busy in mainly foraging and preening, and feeding

hurriedly while swimming. It kept swimming in the far corner of the wetland covered with tall grass, and was visible only from the front side. It never left the group of other ducks, even though at the same time was hostile to them. We observed that the Falcated Duck often drove away other ducks which came near to it and did not tolerate other ducks feeding near itself.

We stayed there for a while in the hope of getting a decent photograph of this individual, in case it came any nearer. But, it never left that particular patch of marshy area, keeping close to emergent vegetation all the time. We were able to get some photographs, which further confirmed the identification.

Meanwhile, our daughter Geet (the third author) spotted another interesting bird in the nearby marshes, which turned out to be a Water Rail (*Rallus aquaticus*). There were two individuals and we heard them calling several times. The birds were very shy, appearing and disappearing into the reeds while expertly catching small, silver-coloured fish from the water. We then took some photographs of the Water Rails. However, the Falcated Duck did not come any closer and finally, we left the place.

On studying published literature, we found out that the Falcated Duck is vagrant to Gujarat. There are only two known previous record of this species from Gujarat; the first record was by H. H. Maharao Vijayrajji of Kachchh, who shot a bird in February 1932 in Kachchh (Vijayrajji 1932) and the second record was in Khijadia Bird Sanctuary, Jamnagar, in December 1984 when six individuals – three males and three females – were seen (Natarajan & Akhtar 1988).

We visited this site several times to check for the presence of the Falcated Duck, but we did not succeed in finding it again. So, it is possible that this individual had left the place. The Falcated Duck is a 'Near Threatened' species, which is thought to be declining moderately (BirdLife International 2018). This is the first photographic record of the Falcated Duck from Gujarat.

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## A second sighting of Large-billed Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus orinus* from Nal Sarovar

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Rajni Trivedi

On 22 December 2017, I was bird watching in Nal Sarovar Bird Sanctuary, with local guide Kasam Sama. At around 08:30 hrs in the morning, we were able to see and photograph an *Acrocephalus* sp. warbler. This individual had a rather large bill and was small sized. I was able to take four good photographs which showed the bird from all angles. Based on the smaller size and different structure, I was able to eliminate Clamorous Reed Warbler (*Acrocephalus stentoreus*), which is much larger than the individual I saw. I thought that this could be a Large-billed Reed Warbler (*Acrocephalus orinus*) since the bill was much longer than what is usually seen in a Blyth's Reed Warbler (*Acrocephalus dumetorum*). I had seen a Large-billed Reed Warbler earlier in Nal Sarovar (Trivedi & Ganpule 2016), and hence was aware of the possibility of its occurrence again in this area.

After coming home, I saw the images on my computer and thought that this individual was most probably a Large-billed Reed Warbler. However, since the identification is difficult, I shared the images with senior birders here and finally, the identification was confirmed as a Large-billed Reed Warbler. This is the second record of a Large-billed Reed Warbler from Nal Sarovar and the third record for Gujarat.

[As detailed earlier in Trivedi & Ganpule (2016) and Maheria et al. (2018), the identification of Large-billed Reed Warbler and its separation from Blyth's Reed Warbler is often quite difficult. Like in the previous instances, we again sent the images to Lars Svensson for confirmation and he replied (in litt., email dated 17 May 2018) that, "the bird you asked me about simply must be another Large-billed Reed Warbler. When I compare bill length with tarsus

length, both of which can be fairly accurately estimated on some of the images you sent me, the bill length far exceeds what could be possible for a Blyth's Reed Warbler. I think you can safely publish it as *A. orinus*. It is a slightly more darkly pigmented bird than most, but such birds are documented and not un-typical. This explains the dark smudge on the outer part of the lower mandible (which can similarly be seen on the bird Philip Round trapped in Thailand) and the rather darkish tarsi. All are within the normal variation as we know it for this species. Do you have a suitable swamp in Gujarat where the species could have a regular wintering range? Then you should make a targeted trapping survey there next winter. Or do you think the species moves further south in India before stopping to spend the winter?"

As explained here, there remains no doubt regarding the identification of this individual. It is interesting to note that this is the second record of a Large-billed Reed Warbler from Nal Sarovar. As suggested, it will be interesting to have a targeted trapping survey in this area to look for this species and since the sanctuary does have a habitat suitable (a swampy area), it is quite possible that this could yield positive results. It is also possible that the species could be moving further south in the winter but there are no records till date from any of the southern states. But, it should be noted that an earlier record from Vansada National Park, which is south-east from this area, is known for Gujarat (Maheria et al. 2018). So, only further records (photographic or by trapping) can confirm if the Large-billed Reed Warbler is a regular winter migrant to Nal Sarovar or whether it moves to southern parts of the country in the winter. It is urged that ornithologists / organisations like BNHS undertake the task of targeted trapping in Nal Sarovar at the earliest.

We are very grateful to Lars Svensson for confirming the identification – Eds]

### Acknowledgements

I thank Kasam Sama for helping me with the logistics and for his company in the field.

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## Mew Gull *Larus canus heinei* in Gujarat in January 2006

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Klaus Olsen

The Mew Gull (*Larus canus*), also known as the Common Gull, breeds across the northern Palearctic. It was stated by Rasmussen & Anderton (2005) that the species is a vagrant in South Asia, including in NW India, but with no specimens known and had only been sight-recorded in the region, mentioning the 'probable occurrence' of Central Russian breeding subspecies *heinei* here in South Asia.

During gull-watching (*Larus* sp.) in Gujarat in January 2006, I came across two birds in a group of larger gulls at the harbour of Nava Bandar, near Una, in Gujarat. The two smaller gulls immediately caught my eye by being about 70% smaller than the larger gulls present and, as can be seen in the photos, had a much gentler appearance with smaller, rounded head, larger eyes and a smallish bill. One of the birds had some damage in the wing, as can be seen from the photos. Both the birds were readily identified as Mew Gulls. From the photos, it was possible to identify the birds as belonging to the subspecies *heinei*, which breeds from Central Russia and eastwards, and winters mainly in the Black Sea and Caspian Sea areas, with regular occurrence eastwards to Eastern China and westwards to Western Europe.

The subspecies identification of Mew Gull has been treated in detail by Malling Olsen & Larsson (2004), Adriaens & Gibbins (2016), and Malling Olsen (2018). The identification to subspecies *heinei* was possible here based on the almost

unmarked head and underbody, as well as just faint dark markings on the underwings. Albeit with some variation, the western subspecies *L. c. canus* (Europe to Moscow, wintering mainly within Europe) shows more extensive dark markings on head and underbody, as well as being on average slightly smaller, with slightly paler grey upperparts/mantle in first winter plumage.

This was the first photographic record of a Mew Gull from Gujarat, and possibly India too. In Gujarat, there are just two further records (Prasad Ganpule, *pers comm.*, by e-mail), but it is suspected it may be a regular winter visitor, at least in NW India, and especially in Gujarat.

[The Mew Gull is also known as the Common Gull. Rasmussen & Anderton (2012) and Praveen et al. (2014) use Mew Gull for *Larus canus* and the same is followed here. Praveen et al. (2014) list only 10 records of Mew Gull from India till 2014, including the above record. For Gujarat, and also India, this was probably the first photographic documentation of Mew Gull. For Gujarat, as stated by the author, two more records are known; a sighting (with photograph) by James Eaton from Bhuj (Eaton 2013) and a record from Little Rann of Kachchh in October 2015 by Prasad Ganpule (P. Ganpule, in print). It is likely that the Mew Gull is more common than believed and could be overlooked in the flocks of gulls seen here. Bird watchers are requested to look out for Mew Gull here in Gujarat – Eds]

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## Tagged Black Kite *Milvus migrans* near Rajula, Amreli District

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On 7 December 2018, I saw and photographed a wing-tagged Black Kite (*Milvus migrans*) near Rajula, in Dist: Amreli. The Black Kite was having a green wing tag on its left wing, with '077' printed on the tag. A metal ring was visible on its left leg but the numbers on the ring were not readable. I was very intrigued to see this tagged bird and took some photographs.

I posted the photos on Facebook and tried to find out the tagging details. The photos were widely circulated and the following tagging information was obtained from the Hiddensee Bird Ringing Centre, Guestrow, Germany:



First Ring: DEH EA 189927, wing-tagged bird, with individual inscription green – 077

Species: Black Kite (*Milvus migrans*)

Age: Nestling

Date of tagging: 08. 07. 2017

Place: 16 km NE of Somon (village) Sharga, Govi-Altai, Mongolia

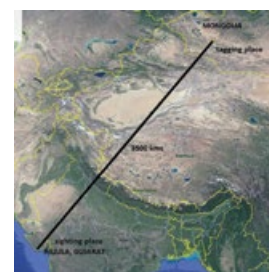
Coordinates: 46° 22' N, 95° 25' E.



Ashvin Italiya

The bird was seen again after 517 days from the date it was ringed and was seen almost 3500 kms south-west from the place of ringing. The subspecies of Black Kite breeding in Mongolia is *M. m. lineatus*, also known as the Black-eared Kite, and it is known that it migrates to the Indian Subcontinent (Orta *et al.* 2019), and it is a winter migrant to Gujarat too.

A Black Kite ringed in Mongolia was recovered in Loktok Lake, Manipur, in October 2001 (Chaudhary 2006); the individual was also ringed by the Hiddensee Bird Ringing Centre, Germany, and this was the first instance of a ringed Black Kite from Mongolia being recovered in India.



But, this record was from north-eastern India. The present record is from Gujarat in the western part of the country. Thus, this is the first time a Black Kite tagged in Mongolia has been photographed in Gujarat. It shows that Black Kite from Mongolia winters as far south-west as Gujarat.

### Acknowledgements

I thank the Hiddensee Bird Ringing Centre, Guestrow, Germany, for providing the tagging details.

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## A tale of two ringed birds

### 1) Eurasian Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus* preying on a ringed Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata*

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Rajni Trivedi

On 7 November 2016, in the morning, I was walking with Kasam Sama in the area of Nal Sarovar Bird Sanctuary (22° 49' 31" N, 72° 03' 07" E), between the main entrance at Vekaria village and the tourist point near the forest guest house and boating facility.

We saw a Eurasian Marsh Harrier (*Circus aeruginosus*) swooping on a large wader standing in the open marsh near the edge of shallow water. The harrier swooped on the wader, gripped

it from the neck and killed it. The wader hardly struggled to escape from the predator. Subsequently, it started peeling the neck, head and back. To confirm the identification of the prey, we slowly approached the hunting site, which made the harrier leave the prey. On a closer look, we could identify it as a Eurasian Curlew (*Numenius arquata*) with the help of photos and reference text (Grimmett *et al.* 2011). The bird was bearing an aluminum ring on its right leg, above the tibia-tarsal joint. The ring had a number, F – 49089, with a write up on second line 'Inform BOMBAY NAT HIST SOCIETY'. After taking photographs, we took out the ring and later informed BNHS about this ring recovery.

In response to the information sent to BNHS, Dr. S. Balachandran, Dy. Director, BNHS, Bird Migration & Ringing Division, sent the following details about the ringed bird – “the bird you found was a Eurasian Curlew ringed at Nalsarovar during first week of November 2016. The bird was rescued by the Forest Department from a bird trapper’s net and had wing injuries”.

## A tale of two ringed birds....

It seems that the curlew was ringed at Nal Sarovar itself by BNHS and staff of the state forest department. It was the first joint bird ringing programme of BNHS and the Gujarat state forest department, organized during 4–10 November 2016. Probably, the curlew was predated within a few hours of its release from the ringing camp. Ideally, this should not happen; we tried to analyze the situation due to which the curlew might have been killed.

The cause of death of this curlew was predation by a Eurasian Marsh Harrier. The curlew was standing alone in the open marsh when it was attacked and it did not make any attempt to escape, and rather, became easy prey. Perhaps it was standing alone with a weak posture which drew the attention of the predator. The inability of the bird to fly strongly after release or to remain stranded around the release place indicates weak health of the bird. This situation probably arose since the bird had injured itself during its struggle to escape from the trap. As mentioned by Dr. Balachandran, the curlew had wing injuries. No one knows the time period for which

the bird was held in the trap before it came in hands of the ringing team! Under such circumstances, ideally, the release of the bird should be delayed till it is stabilized under captivity. Extreme care is usually taken in handling of trapped birds, and during measurements and ringing. The health of the bird and its trapping history should be considered before ringing and release of any individual. If the bird is physically unfit, the risk of predation immediately after release is very high.

Another aspect which was disconcerting was that a close examination of the ring revealed that both the lower and upper edges were sharp, which might injure the skin. Normally, standard bird rings have smooth edges to avoid any injury to birds. It is hoped that all internationally accepted quality standards are maintained in all ringing programmes and extreme care is taken before any ringed bird is released.

### Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Dr. B. M. Parasharya for correspondence with BNHS regarding ring details and for preparation of this note. I thank Kasam Sama Sidani for accompanying me in the field.

## 2) Sighting of Indian Skimmer *Rynchops albicollis* injured by ring on its leg

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On 1 October 2018, I visited Dhinchada wetland, approximately 5 kms from Jamnagar, with Chirag Solanki. There we saw a flock of about 50-60 Indian Skimmers

[The observations of the injury to the Indian Skimmer due to ring on its leg and the killing of the Eurasian Curlew by the harrier immediately after it was ringed show that there are negative effects of ringing. In avian research, recognizing individual birds by marking them with plastic or metal rings is one of the main techniques for studying different aspects of avian biology, migration etc. and is one of the most widely used methods for studying birds. However, as seen here, there are some hazards to ringing.

(*Rynchops albicollis*). On our arrival, one bird started flying and soon landed nearby. This was repeated two-three times. It was not able to fly and land properly. So, we suspected that the bird might be injured. I took a few photographs and after watching the photographs at home, a ring was seen on one of its legs (details on that ring could not be read) and at the rim of the ring, some tumour-like growth was visible on that leg. I shared these photos with other friends and posted them on the social media. On 3 October 2018, I got a phone call from BNHS, asking for the details of our sighting. On 4 October 2018, a team from BNHS, which included Parveen Shaikh, Madhumita Panigrahi and Bhavik Patel arrived at Jamnagar to rescue the injured bird. However, they were not successful even after trying for four consecutive days and returned back. This particular individual was ringed by them last winter and the ring on its leg had caused injury to the bird.

In the first case here, the ringed bird was injured earlier and was released after ringing, leading to its death by predation. In the second case, the ring had caused a serious injury to the leg of the Indian Skimmer. It is commendable that the BNHS took prompt action and tried their best to re-capture the injured Indian Skimmer, but were not successful. Recently, a ringed Red-necked Phalarope (*Phalaropus lobatus*) was seen limping the next day after it was ringed near Mumbai and photographs of the seemingly injured

phalarope were widely shared on the social media. To specifically address the problems arising due to ringing, it is important to systematically record both the frequency, and severity of impacts (Griesser et al. 2012). While there is almost no data regarding injuries to birds due to ringing in India, EURING, the European Union for Bird Ringing, has a section about reporting ringing-related damage in birds on their website.

Here, it is important that researchers and birdwatchers communicate both the positive and negative consequences of the techniques used in ringing; a hazard index is proposed to facilitate this and the index is based on a logarithmic increase of hazard points, from minor inflammations (leg partly inflamed), to inflammations (whole leg inflamed), toe loss, leg damage up to the loss of a foot or a whole leg (Griesser et al. 2012). One of the problems which can be identified in the case of the injured Indian Skimmer is that the quality of the rings used is probably not of internationally accepted standards and the sharp edges could cause problems or injuries to the birds.

It is important to note that some problems with ringing become apparent only years after the bird was ringed, making it very difficult to spot injuries caused by ringing. A few solutions are proposed for the different problems which may be caused due to ringing by Griesser et al. (2012) and ringers

should be made aware of these. While most of the ringing in India is done by the BNHS, there are no subsequent studies done to show the impacts – both positive and negative – on the birds which were ringed. As reported earlier by Raval et al. (2018), a large number of waders were ringed near Jamnagar in the last winter by BNHS and these birds were seen in the same general area for 2-3 months. It is now important that we try and spot these birds again to see if there have been any negative effects of ringing on these individuals. The three examples given here show the detrimental effects of ringing on the birds and it is hoped that these will be addressed in the future by the agencies involved – Eds]

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## A study of prey taken by Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus calidus* in Little Rann of Kachchh

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of prey (White et al. 2013). Winter migrating Peregrine Falcons are widely distributed throughout the Indian Subcontinent, seen in the winter from late September to mid-April, preferring wetlands and coastal habitats, where waterfowl and shorebirds congregate. The Peregrine Falcon may also frequent artificial reservoirs, fringes of forests, and desert regions in the Indian Subcontinent.

The subspecies of Peregrine Falcon known to winter throughout the Indian subcontinent is *F. p. calidus* (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). A good population of Peregrine Falcons is found in the Little Rann of Kachchh, Gujarat. The habitat here consists of saline wetlands and open desert, with some elevated areas with grasslands and shrubs (mostly *Prosopis* sp.), called 'bets', that rise up to 300 feet. The diverse prey base and easily available vantage points are attractive to the wintering Peregrine Falcons. They tend to spend the winter in the same general area, more or less without much movement, unless disturbed due to human activities or prey base decreases due to variation in water level in the wetlands.

### Introduction

The Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) is one of the most widespread bird species in the world, inhabiting habitats as varied as the Arctic tundra, deserts, forests, and oceanic islands, up to the South Sea Islands, and is the most widespread bird

## Prey consumed by Peregrine Falcons in Little Rann of Kachchh

Sr. No.	Prey	Observer(s)	References/Details
1	Common Pigeon ( <i>Columba civia</i> )	Nirav Bhatt	Author's sighting
2	Gadwall ( <i>Anas strepera</i> )	Nirav Bhatt	Author's sighting
3	Northern Shoveler ( <i>Anas clypeata</i> )	Nirav Bhatt	Author's sighting
4	Common Teal ( <i>Anas crecca</i> )	Nirav Bhatt	Author's sighting
5	Rosy Starling ( <i>Pastor roseus</i> )	Nirav Bhatt	Author's sighting, on three occasions
6	Black Drongo ( <i>Dicrurus macrocercus</i> )	Nirav Bhatt	Author's sighting, on three occasions
7	Little Cormorant ( <i>Phalacrocorax niger</i> )	Jay Shah	pers. comm.
8	Common Pigeon	Dhairya Dixit, Hardik Bhatt, Vivek Mansata	Author's sighting
9	Common Teal	Dhairya Dixit, Jay Shah, Hardik Bhatt	Author's sighting
10	Common Teal	Dhairya Dixit, Jay Shah, Hardik Bhatt	Author's sighting
11	Unidentified insect	Dhairya Dixit, Jay Shah, Aseem Khadakkar	Author's sighting
12	Common Quail ( <i>Coturnix coturnix</i> )	Dhairya Dixit, Jay Shah, Vivek Mansata	Author's sighting
13	Cormorant sp. ( <i>Phalacrocorax</i> sp.)	Dhairya Dixit, Jay Shah, Vivek Mansata, Aseem Khadakkar	Author's sighting
14	Lesser Flamingo ( <i>Phoenicopterus minor</i> )	Dhairya Dixit, Jay Shah, Hardik Bhatt	Author's sighting
15	Unidentified duck ( <i>Anas</i> sp.)	Dhairya Dixit, Jay Shah, Hardik Bhatt, Jay Solanki	Author's sighting
16	Unidentified lark ( <i>Alaudidae</i> )	Dhairya Dixit, Jay Shah, Vivek Mansata	Author's sighting
17	Cormorant sp.	Dhairya Dixit, Nirav Bhatt, Jay Shah	Author's sighting
18	Egret sp.	Dhairya Dixit, Jay Shah	Author's sighting
19	Asian Koel ( <i>Eudynamys scolopaceus</i> )	Yogendra Shah	www.indianaturewatch.net
20	Common Teal	Vipul Ramanuj	Facebook
21	Egret Sp.	Hardik Patel	Facebook
22	Unidentified duck	Anuj Gandhe	Facebook
23	Eurasian Coot ( <i>Fulica atra</i> )	Abhishek Chatterjee	Facebook
24	Indian Pond Heron ( <i>Ardeola grayii</i> )	Manu Panicker	Facebook
25	Indian Pond Heron	Harish Reddy Patlolla	Facebook
26	Montagu's Harrier ( <i>Circus pygargus</i> )	Ganesh Jayaraman	Facebook
27	Indian Pond Heron	Yogendra Shah	Facebook
28	Egret sp.	Falguna Shah	pers. comm.
29	Common Teal	Dhairya Dixit, Dhaivat Hathi	Author's sighting
30	Common Pigeon	Falguna Shah, Shweta Shah	pers. comm.
31	Lesser Flamingo	Nirav Bhatt, Dhairya Dixit	Author's sighting
32	Common Pigeon	Dhairya Dixit, Chintu Panchal, Vimal Dubal	Author's sighting
33	Northern Shoveler	Kandarp Katju	pers. comm.
34	Unidentified duck	Saddam Sumra	Facebook
35	Unidentified dove ( <i>Streptopelia</i> sp.)	Kartik Patel	Facebook
36	Egret sp.	Saddam Sumra	Facebook
37	Cattle Egret	Nirav Bhatt	Author's sighting
38	Indian Pond Heron	Falguna Shah	pers. comm.
39	Egret sp.	Suparn Khaladkar	Facebook
40	Egret sp.	Dipendrasinh Zala	Facebook

## Types of prey

In Little Rann of Kachchh, the prey consists of migratory and resident birds like Egrets (*Egretta* sp.), Common Pigeon (*Columba livia*), ducks (*Anas* sp.), etc. along with smaller birds like larks (*Alaudidae*) and quails (*Coturnix* sp.). Details of prey consumed/hunted by different Peregrine Falcons, observed by us and collected from other bird watchers, are given in the table. The data presented here has been mainly collected over the last 10 years.

## Observations regarding hunting

During the winter (September to March), we have observed Peregrine Falcons hunting/killing prey in the Little Rann of Kachchh many times. Some observations are given below:

- Around 07:00 hrs on 5 November 2014, an adult female Peregrine Falcon was observed feeding on a Common Pigeon on the fringes of the desert, near a village. It was disturbed by vehicle movements and flew to a distant place. While it was flying, a juvenile Peregrine Falcon unsuccessfully tried to pirate its kill.
- Another time, on 19 December 2015, we observed a juvenile Peregrine Falcon basking on the ground, on protruding dried mud (caused by tractor tracks). After a few minutes, it took flight and started making short stoops, attempting to capture prey. After several unsuccessful attempts, it caught an unidentified insect and consumed it partially on the wing, perched on the ground and ate it.
- We observed on 14 November 2015 a particularly big female Peregrine Falcon roosting in the shade of *Prosopis juliflora*. We photographed it for almost an hour before it flew directly to a kill. The kill appeared like a large bird from a distance, and it was identified as a Lesser Flamingo. The carcass appeared to have been slightly plucked but not eaten. The head and neck of the flamingo were not visible. The falcon removed the intestines first, and then ate the flesh for 2-3 minutes, frequently panting in between. Whether the falcon had killed a bird five times its size, or was scavenging the kill of another predator, was not clear.
- On 15 November 2016, we observed a typical hunting sequence. It started with preening and after a while, the bird took off and attained a lot of height. The Peregrine Falcon was looking like a speck through the binoculars. After circling for a few minutes, it swooped almost at 45 degrees into the small area with water and flushed some ducks. Immediately, it returned in a straight flight and caught a Common Teal out of the flushed flock. It ate the whole teal, cleaned its beak, and went into shade for afternoon roosting. (siesta?)

- A juvenile Peregrine Falcon was observed hunting a cormorant on 5 November 2017. It flew from its perch and directly followed a cormorant very close to the ground and with one small stoop, pounced on it and killed it.
- A first-year Peregrine Falcon was observed consuming a Common Pigeon on 6 December 2018. It had killed its prey when we saw it. It started plucking feathers and started eating the pigeon. We could witness it feeding for almost an hour. It plucked most of feathers. After a while, it removed its heart and ate it. Only the intestines and koilin (inner layer of pigeon's gizzard) were left out. Small stones were found from carcass of the pigeon.

## Discussion

Information from literature and these observations suggest that the prey of Peregrine Falcons wintering in the Little Rann of Kachchh is highly varied. Though most frequently reported as preying on mid-sized birds, they can adapt to both small, and large, prey. Adult Peregrine Falcons were observed to prefer similar prey items. Two huge sized, adult females were observed taking Lesser Flamingos, a prey which is many times bigger than it. But, a juvenile Peregrine Falcon was seen unsuccessfully attacking a Painted Stork (*Mycteria leucocephala*) in the western part of Little Rann of Kachchh (Ganpule 2013). Adult males were observed hunting smaller birds, preferably larks. But ducks and pigeons were hunted by the female as well as male Peregrine Falcons. One juvenile Peregrine Falcon was observed hunting egrets, cormorants and pond herons in particular. Common Quail was a surprising prey item as the species is quite uncommon in this area as compared to other preferred prey items. We saw it hunt an insect once, which was unusual. However, Peregrine Falcons have been observed capturing California Stonefly (*Pteronarcys californica*) in America (Summer & Davis 2008). From our observations, we can state that Lesser Flamingo, Asian Koel and Black Drongo is prey which has not been mentioned in reference texts for wintering Peregrine Falcons in India (Naoroji 2006). Hunting methods and timings varied with different individuals. The maximum number of hunts were observed early in the morning but a few hunts were observed during late morning, at around 11:00 hrs.

Our observations suggest that the presence of a good population of Peregrine Falcons in the Little Rann of Kachchh is very much dependent on the wetlands. They are home to a large number of water birds, which is the preferred prey of the Peregrine Falcons wintering here. Whether there is any seasonal variation in prey needs further study. As per our observations, the birds here take a wide variety of prey and the individual birds show preferences to specific prey. More

## Peregrine Falcon....

studies will be helpful in determining the variation in prey taken by Peregrine Falcons here.

### Acknowledgements

We are thankful to Falguna Shah, Yogendra Shah, Jay Shah, Hardik Bhatt, Aseem Khadakkar, Vivek Mansata, Jay Solanki, Hardik Patel, Dipendrasinh Zala, Vipul Ramanuj, Anuj Gandhe, Abhishek Chatterjee, Manu Panicker, Harish Reddy Patlolla, Ganesh Jayaraman, Dhaivat Hathi, Suparn Khaladkar, Shweta Shah, Chintu Panchal, Vimal Dubal, Saddam Sumra, Kandarp Katju and Kartik Patel for sharing their sightings. We are thankful to Hans Peeters for sharing details about the anatomy of pigeons.

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## Sighting of Black-winged Cuckooshrike *Coracina melaschistos* at Thol Bird Sanctuary, Ahmedabad

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Sejal Daniel

On 23 December 2018, in the morning, the first author visited Thol Bird Sanctuary, near Ahmedabad, for bird watching. While searching for birds, he found an unknown bird with black wings in the shadow of a tree. It was a difficult location for taking a photo as it was dark and the bird was perched in the shadow of a tree. The bird became alert and started to move around. The first author took a few pictures although the light was very poor. Later, he contacted a few birders. But, the bird was not conclusively identified at that time.

On 6 January 2019, the second author visited the same area with Vaneet Daniel in the morning. They noticed some movement of an unknown bird, which, at first, was thought to be a Common Myna (*Acridotheres tristis*) or a Rosy Starling (*Pastor roseus*) based on its colour and size. They managed to take a few photographs but, the identity could not be confirmed. The bird was hyper active and constantly moving on top of a huge tree, making it very difficult to take good

photographs. It soon flew away and was not seen again. Later, the second author sent the images to Ashok Mashru and Prasad Ganpule for identification. They confirmed that this was a Black-winged Cuckooshrike (*Coracina melaschistos*) based on the dark grey head and body, black wings, heavy bill and white tips to tail feathers.

The second author posted the photographs on the social media and on Whatsapp groups. On seeing the photographs, the first author realized that the bird seen and photographed by him earlier in the same area was also a Black-winged Cuckooshrike. It was probably the same individual which stayed in the area for two-three weeks. The Black-winged Cuckooshrike is a vagrant to Gujarat. The first record of the species was from Shoolpaneshwar Wildlife Sanctuary in March 2015 and the second record was from Vansada National Park in November 2016 (Bhatt *et al.* 2015, Desai 2017). This is the third record of a Black-winged Cuckooshrike from Gujarat. It is most likely that it is a winter vagrant to our state as all the three records are from the winter months.

### Acknowledgements

We thank Ashok Mashru and Prasad Ganpule for helping with the identification.

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## Sighting of Broad-billed Sandpiper *Calidris falcinellus* in South Gujarat

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Jugal Patel

On 13 September 2018, in the morning, I visited Aaliya bet for watching waders (*Calidris* sp.). Aaliya bet is a saline area adjoining Hansot village of Dist: Bharuch, located at the estuary of Narmada River and is spread over approximately 200 sq km. While returning back, I photographed a wader at location 21° 34' 11" N, 72° 43' 18" E, but did not identify it in the field. The bird was alone and foraging in shallow, brackish water. When I checked the photographs at home, I was surprised to see that it was a Broad-billed Sandpiper (*Calidris falcinellus*). The Broad-billed Sandpiper is a winter migrant to India. Looking at the plumage of this individual, it looked like it was moulting out of breeding plumage.

There are no published records of Broad-billed Sandpiper from the coastal areas of southern Gujarat (Ganpule *et al.* 2015, Ganpule 2016). There is no photo or any published data

regarding the species from South Gujarat on popular birding websites – [www.orientalbirdimages.org](http://www.orientalbirdimages.org) and [www.ebird.org](http://www.ebird.org) (accessed on 16 September 2018).

However, Rasmussen & Anderton (2012) show its distribution in the coastal regions of the entire state, including South Gujarat, while Ganpule *et al.* (2015) suggested that as there appears to be suitable habitat, there is no reason why the Broad-billed Sandpiper would not be occurring in South Gujarat. Ganpule (2016) gives it as 'rare in South Gujarat area?' This is the first photographic record from South Gujarat and confirms its occurrence in the area and hence is important. It is possible that it does occur here, but is not seen and photographed by birders because the coastal areas of South Gujarat are not easily accessible due to muddy sea shore, dense *Prosopis juliflora* in many places and a number of muddy creeks. Bird watchers are requested to search for the Broad-billed Sandpiper in suitable areas in South Gujarat.

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## Re-sighting of Blue-throated Blue Flycatcher *Cyornis rubeculoides* in Porbandar: a third record for Gujarat

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Harsh Prajapati

The Blue-throated Blue Flycatcher (*Cyornis rubeculoides*) belongs to the family *Muscicapidae*. The species is a summer (breeding) visitor to the Himalayas and resident in NE India; it winters in Eastern Himalayas, south to Bangladesh, and in SW India and Sri Lanka (Grimmett *et al.* 2011). The species is vagrant to Gujarat with only two previous records - from Morbi in 2008 and Porbandar in 2015 (Ganpule 2009, 2016, and Vargiya & Jethva 2016).

The male Blue-throated Flycatcher is similar to a Tickell's Blue Flycatcher (*Cyornis tickelliae*) but, is distinguished by its blue throat (rufous-orange throat in Tickell's Blue Flycatcher) and the female is brown above, with more rufous on rump and tail, and with pale orange throat and upper breast (Grimmett *et al.* 2011).

## Blue-throated Blue Flycatcher...

On 14 January 2018, the second author, along with Dr Ankit Dey and Dr Terrance Makwan, were invited for treatment of birds injured during the kite flying festival day 2018 (i.e. 14 January) at Porbandar Bird Sanctuary. The first author, through Rapid Action Project of Wildlife Trust of India and International Fund for Animal Welfare, was involved in this project. The second author saw a flycatcher during the lunch break and could take some photographs. Later, he showed the photos to the first author and both visited the site and found the bird. It was identified as female Blue-throated Blue Flycatcher. It is interesting to note that a female of Blue-throated Blue Flycatcher was also seen on 5 December 2015 at Porbandar, on the same tree and at almost same time of the day (Vargiya & Jethva 2016). This sighting makes it a third sighting from Gujarat and the second from the same place in Porbandar.

Sightings of species which are vagrant to a particular region are very important to ornithology and such records add to our understating of species distribution and behaviour. When a vagrant species returns to the same tree in its wintering area, it usually means that the habitat is suitable and must be conserved. It is possible that this was the same individual which was seen here in 2015 and we speculate wintering site fidelity in the Blue-throated Blue Flycatcher. But, we

understand that to prove this, the individual must be ringed and re-trapped to be sure.

Wintering site fidelity is known in birds. For example, a ringed Grey Wagtail (*Motacilla cinerea*) returned to the same garden in Mumbai for five years in succession (Wooley Smith 1947). There are many other instances of wintering site fidelity in different species and many studies have been carried out regarding this. We will continue to monitor this area to see if the flycatcher is seen here again.

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## Observations on nesting of Indian Pitta *Pitta brachyura* at Hingolghadh Nature Education Sanctuary, near Rajkot

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We happened to be at Hingolghadh Nature Education Sanctuary, Dist: Rajkot, many times during July-August 2018. The sanctuary is spread over about 654 ha. and was notified in August 1980. It is situated in Ta: Vinchhiya of Rajkot. It is an open thorny scrub forest, with patches of grasslands, interspersed with some large trees, and is dominated by *gorad* (*Acacia senegal*). The sanctuary is surrounded by agricultural farms and waste lands. Some parts of the sanctuary are hilly and undulating. The area provides a good habitat for resident and migratory birds. We took this opportunity to observe the nesting activity of Indian Pitta (*Pitta brachyura*), which is known to breed here in the monsoon season. The birds usually arrive in the month of May, and are silent when they arrive. As the rainy season approaches, they become vocal and start their breeding activities. This year, we observed a total of 14 nests in the sanctuary area. Out of these 14 nests, we monitored four nests closely and noted various details, which are as follows:

### Nest 1:

Location: Near a stream, in a *gorad*. The nest was built by repairing an old nest made the previous year, in 2017. The nest was at a height of approximately 14 feet.

3 July 2018: Incubation started.

17 July 2018: Three chicks were seen.

25 July 2018: Four chicks were seen putting their heads outside the nest. Both parent birds were feeding them, mainly with earthworms, millipedes and other insects. We noted that they came 11 times to feed the chicks in 34 minutes of observation.

28 July 2018: Same feeding activity as noted on 25 July 2018.

29 July 2018: All four chicks were outside the nest and seen wandering nearby.

1 August 2018: Same activity as noted on 29 July 2018. At roosting time, both the parent birds were calling the chicks,



presumably for roosting at a safe place.

Result: Chicks fledged successfully.

### Nest 2:

Location: In a *gorad* in the compound. The nest was at a height of 13 feet.

23 July 2018: Nest building was going on. Nesting material consisted of dried leaves of bamboo, some twigs and plastic threads and other plastic items.

28 July 2018: Incubation started.

31 July 2018: Incubation was going on.

An important observation was that before making this nest, the same pair had started building nests at three different locations one after the other, but each time, left the nest incomplete due to unknown reasons.

### Nest 3:

Location: In an *ingoriyo* (*Balanites aegyptiaca*) in the compound. The nest was at a height of 13 feet.

6 July 2018: A single bird was moving in the area and seemed to select the nesting site.

13 July 2018: Nest building was going on.

18 July 2018: Incubation started.

21 July 2018: Incubation was going on (by both the parent birds).

23 July 2018: Left the nest and started building another nest, about 4-5 feet behind the previous nest.

28 July 2018: Incubation started in the new nest.

31 July 2018: Incubation was going on.

An important observation here was that the birds changed the nest even after the eggs were laid. They built another nest nearby and started nesting there.

### Nest 4:

Location: Near a stream in an *aambali* (*Tamarindus indica*). The nest was at a height of 11 feet.

2 July 2018: Nest building started.

7 July 2018: Incubation started.

20 July 2018: Both the parent birds were seen carrying food to the nest but chicks were not visible.

26 July 2018: Same observations as noted on 20 July 2018.

28 July 2018. Four chicks were seen protruding their heads outside the nest and both the parent birds were seen feeding them.

2 August 2018: All four chicks were outside the nest and parent birds were feeding them.



Bhavesh Trivedi

Result: Chicks fledged successfully

### Discussion

The Indian Pitta is mainly a monsoon (breeding) migrant to Gujarat and is widely distributed in the state (Ganpule 2016). The species is quite common in Gir National Park and in many other forest areas of the state in the monsoon season. It is also well known that the India Pitta nests in Hingolghadh. Many photographers from all over Saurashtra come to Hingolghadh to see and photograph these birds. Thus, its nesting here is not new. A good population of Indian Pitta nests here as it can be seen that 14 nests were located within a short distance of each other. It is quite astounding that so many nests were located in a small area, quite near to each other. We noted that the nests were usually quite large and oblong or round in shape. The nesting material observed here was twigs, leaves, grass, etc. with plastic threads and other plastic items also being used in some nests. Majority of the nests were located near streams or water sources. The nesting season of July-August observed here is similar to what is described in the reference texts (Erritzoe 2018). We observed two other nests where the birds were successful in raising young but we did not monitor these nests closely. Thus, we saw and observed that the chicks were fledged successfully in four nests. We were unable to complete our observations for the two other nests we were studying since we had to leave the area for some urgent work.

## Indian Pitta....

In a recent study on the nesting of Indian Pitta in Jambhughoda Wildlife Sanctuary, central Gujarat (Solanki *et al.* 2018), breeding biology of the species was studied till the chicks were predated by a common palm civet (*Paradoxurus hermaphrodites*); nesting site, feeding behaviour, etc. was described in detail. The height of the nest in Jambhughoda was 3 mts, or about 10 feet. In Hingolghadh, the height of the nests ranged from 10 to 14 feet. The species preferred to build its nests in forks of tree trunks, and the same was observed here in Hingolghadh. Here, two nesting attempts that we observed closely were successful with the parent birds managing to fledge four chicks each in these two nests. The brood size of four observed here, is also similar to what is known for the species – a clutch of 4-6 eggs is normal. The food given to the hatchlings, mainly earthworms, millipedes and insects, was similar to what was observed in central Gujarat. An interesting observation here was that the birds caught insects attracted by tube-lights at night and fed the chicks. This feeding in the night was unusual. The fledging period here, for two nests, was around 14 days, which is also similar to what has been observed earlier. The nesting in two other nests that we were watching closely was ongoing but as stated earlier, we could not complete our observations of these nests and so, we could not find out if nesting was successful here too.

An interesting observation was at nest no. 3, where the parent birds left the nest while incubation was going on and made another nest, laid eggs, and were seen incubating in the new nest. The eggs from the abandoned nest were observed and noted to be white in colour, with red-brown blotches or different-shaped markings on one side (towards the broader end) and were spherical in shape. This behaviour of nest abandonment and making a new nest is atypical and the reasons for abandonment of the earlier nest were not known. This type of behaviour has not been reported for the species in the previous study and requires further study. It was observed that in nest no. 1, the pair repaired an older nest, from the previous season, and used it for nesting this year after making suitable changes. This reusing of an old nest is also intriguing and it is not known whether this is common for the species or is rarely observed.

The successful nesting of the Indian Pitta at Hingolghadh is encouraging and it seems that the species is thriving here. The total of 14 nests seen in July-August 2018 makes this as one of the important areas for the breeding of the Indian Pitta in Saurashtra. Some of the observations reported here like reusing of old nest, nest abandonment and making a new nest etc. have not been described for the species and more studies will help in understanding the breeding biology of the Indian Pitta here.

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Bhavesh Trivedi



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## Some interesting bird sightings from Jessore Sloth Bear Sanctuary: Dist. Banaskantha

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The Jessore Sloth Bear Sanctuary, covering about 180 sq. kms. was declared as a protected area in 1978 to preserve the habitat of the vulnerable Sloth Bear (*Melursus ursinus*). The sanctuary falls in the arid to semi-arid zone of North Gujarat and consists of dry deciduous thorny scrub forest (Anonymous 2017). The forest is part of Aravali ecosystem and acts as a buffer, separating the desert ecosystem (western region) from the forest ecosystem. The rocky terrain and tree-clad landscape arrests the process of desertification and its eastward advancement (Pandit *et al.* 2005). The sanctuary is surrounded by numerous wetlands, which fulfil water requirement of its varied life forms, including endangered birds like vultures (*Gyps* sp.), which regularly nest in its high rocky peaks and crevices. The sanctuary is also a home to some rare and endangered avifauna and holds good number of bird species endemic to India and South Asian region. As per a GEER Foundation report, 212 bird species have been reported from the sanctuary (Trivedi 2005). During our birding trips in the past seven years, we have seen more than 280 bird species and are continuing to collect data from this area. Many of the species have been identified by calls but photos of a few species have not been obtained yet. We hereby report a few of the interesting bird sightings from the region.

**Orange-headed Thrush** (*Zoothera citrina*) – A first record of the species in Jessore was on 9 July 2017 (Jani 2017). On 27 July 2018, at around 16:00 hrs, the first author was not only able to locate the bird again but was also able to take good photographs, though from a long distance. These photos confirmed the sighting as well as the occurrence of the species from this area. These sightings, for two consecutive years in the same patch of the forest, indicate that it could be a monsoon visitor to this area. But so far, we have not found any evidence of its nesting here.



**Drongo Cuckoo** (*Surniculus lugubris*) – During many of our monsoon birding visits to the sanctuary, we have heard the call of a Drongo Cuckoo, which is a monsoon visitor to many other parts of the state (Ganpule 2016). On 5 August 2018, at around 11:05 hrs, near 'Muniji' Temple, the first author was able to photograph the bird and confirm its identity by its call and also by its thin, curved beak, white nape patch and white barred under-tail coverts. This is the first photographic record of the species from Jessore and hence confirms its presence during the monsoon season in this area.



**Eurasian Sparrowhawk** (*Accipiter nisus*) – At around 11:00 hrs on 21 October 2018, at Khatta Amba region of the



## Jessore Sloth Bear Sanctuary....

sanctuary, the first author was able to photograph a Eurasian Sparrowhawk. The bird was perched on the lower branches of a tree in a patch of forest. Earlier we had captured many flying records of the bird from the Sanctuary premises. The bird was identified by white underparts with chevron-shaped markings, lack of gular stripe, and prominent white supercilium. Though the Eurasian Sparrowhawk is a widespread winter visitor to our state, it is probably overlooked and there are very few published records from Jessore.

**Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin** (*Cercotrichas galactotes*) – A Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin was seen perching along with an Indian Robin (*Saxicoloides fulicatus*) at around 17:30 hrs on 18 August 2018 in the foothills of Ranitook region, which is a part of the sanctuary. Both the authors, along with birders Akshay Chauhan and Ravi Dave, were present. During our two hour birding trail, we were able to see three individuals, which were quite bold and we were able to get good photographs. The birds were foraging on the lower branches of trees, on the ground, and all its features were noted. No call was heard during our observations. The second author made consecutive



Kailash Jani

visits to the same location in an attempt to relocate it and was successful in seeing it again on 15 September 2018 at 17:00 hrs, on 23 September 2018 at 09:40 hrs and on 7 October 2018 at

10:45 hrs. The last sighting was on 7 October 2018, i.e. 51 days from the first sighting date. The Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin bird is a passage migrant in Gujarat and is seen regularly in Kachchh and sometimes in Saurashtra (Ganpule 2016). These records from Jessore suggest that it is a passage migrant in this area too.

In addition to the records mentioned above, we have noted a juvenile Indian Courser (*Cursorius coromandelicus*), which is uncommon in this area and indicates that it could be breeding here. The endangered and endemic White-naped Tit (*Parus nuchalis*) is resident in the sanctuary and is frequently seen in Jessore. Most of the sightings of White-naped Tit are from the foothills of the sanctuary. We have never seen the species at higher regions of the sanctuary, where Great Tit (*Parus major*) is resident and seen in good numbers. Indian Yellow Tit (*Parus xanthogenys aplonotus*) has been recorded from Ranitook and in the north-east area of sanctuary, facing Mt. Abu. The Mottled Wood Owl (*Strix ocellata*) has been heard thrice from Ranitook, during the night and in the early morning hours. More intensive bird watching, in different seasons and covering more areas of the sanctuary, may result in some more interesting sightings from this area and can further increase the avian species recorded from the sanctuary.

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## Radio-collared Greylag Goose *Anser anser* at Vadla, near Nal Sarovar

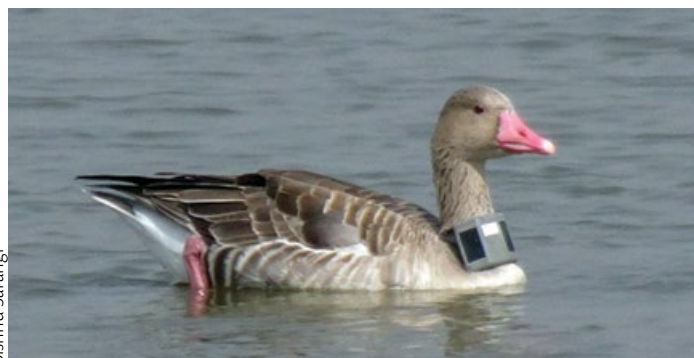
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Vadla Wetland is situated about 90 kms from Ahmedabad, on the Viramgam-Surendranagar highway, towards Gangad. It is a shallow wetland north-west of Nal Sarovar and is a part of the same watershed. Due to very less rainfall, the Nal Sarovar Sanctuary is running dry this year. But, Vadla has water this year due to the Narmada Canal, and has turned into a stop-over spot for migratory birds. The water birds and other common birds have found an alternate home in Vadla this year.

On 13 January 2019, a Sunday, I was on my way back from Ahmedabad. I decided to visit this area. I reached Vadla at around 11:00 hrs in the morning. I was greeted by a profusion of birds, both migratory as well as resident. I took a round of the water body, to do a reconnaissance survey of the area, during which I could spot the following birds without the aid of binoculars:



Greylag Goose (*Anser anser*), Bar-headed Goose (*Anser indicus*) Common Crane (*Grus grus*), Demoiselle Crane (*Grus virgo*), Northern Shoveler (*Anas clypeata*), Ruddy Shelduck (*Tadorna ferruginea*), Common Teal (*Anas crecca*), Eurasian Coot (*Fulica atra*), Grey Heron (*Ardea cinerea*) and many other common birds.



Bishnu Sarangi

The Demoiselle Cranes were in thousands. There were about twenty Bar-headed Geese and about fifty Greylag Geese. I spent about two hours taking photographs. On my return to Rajkot, I downloaded the photos on my computer. I was surprised to see that one of the Greylag Goose had a neck band. In order to share this discovery with other birdwatchers, I posted the photograph on Facebook. Very soon, I started receiving comments from other bird watchers. There was a

general consensus that the band on the neck of the goose was a solar-powered radio transmitter.

It was Dr. Taej Mundkur, Programme Manager at Wetlands International, Ede, Netherlands, who noted the post and referred it to Dr. Nyambayar Batbayer in Mongolia. In no time, he confirmed that the bird was radio-collared on 23 June 2018 at Lake Dorgon, in the province of Khovd, in western Mongolia. Dr. Batbayer, from his data, also confirmed that one of the radio-collared birds was indeed in our area, i.e., at Vadla, in Gujarat. This site is about 3350 kms from the radio collaring site and he further confirmed that this individual was not marked with coloured / numbered bands.

This is the first time a radio-collared Greylag Goose has been observed in Gujarat. From this observation, it is interesting to note that the birds visiting us fly over the Himalayas, all the way from Mongolia. More such observations and interactions with birdwatchers from all over the world can help in knowing about the migration route and conservation requirements of many of these migratory species which winter in India.

### Acknowledgements

I thank Dr. Taej Mundkur and Dr. Nyambayar Batbayer for all their help. □

## Sighting of Red-breasted Parakeet *Psittacula alexandri* in Vadodara

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Hiren Patel

### Introduction

The Red-breasted Parakeet (*Psittacula alexandri*) is a resident species of the foothills of the Himalayas, from Uttaranchal to Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Assam and Andaman & Nicobar Islands (Grimmett *et al.* 2011, Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). It is now a 'Near Threatened' species (Birdlife

International 2018). It usually occurs in small flocks of 6-10 individuals, but much larger flocks are found where food is plentiful (Ali 2002, Arlott 2014). We report its occurrence in the Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda arboretum (22.320° N, 73.179° E), located in Vadodara city, Gujarat.

### Observation

On 12 March 2018, at 08:45 hrs, while birding at the arboretum of M. S. University of Baroda, Vadodara, a loud squeaky call of a parakeet (*Psittacula* sp.) caught our attention. It was being chased by a House Crow (*Corvus splendens*). The chase continued for about five minutes till the parakeet could find a safer place to conceal itself in a nearby bush. Intrigued by the unusual calls of the parakeet, we saw, on closer observation through binoculars, that it looked different from the Rose-ringed Parakeet (*Psittacula krameri*), a common species in the region. We thought it to be an Alexandrine Parakeet (*Psittacula eupatria*), which has been observed here occasionally. However, when it shifted to the nearby *Eucalyptus* sp. tree, the breast colour was different from an Alexandrine Parakeet. The clear

## Red-breasted Parakeet....

pink-red wash on the breast and other features confirmed its identity as a Red-breasted Parakeet. On further observation, we saw that it had very few tail feathers, suggesting that it was most likely to be an escapee.

Again on 28 March 2018 at 18:45 hrs, while birding at the arboretum, the distinct call was heard from a nearby tree and probably the same individual was seen feeding. After some time, it came out and perched on a barren branch and started calling for 60 to 90 seconds, but due to poor evening light, identification was difficult. On the next day, we heard the call just for about 30 seconds and the bird flew away. After comparing the call with calls on 'xeno-canto' website, it was confirmed to be a Red-breasted Parakeet. Finally, on 2 April 2018, at 18:35 hrs, we could see it through binoculars and photograph it clearly and confirm the identity as a Red-breasted Parakeet.

### Discussion

The Red-breasted Parakeet is listed as 'Near Threatened' (Birdlife International 2018) due to various threats like on-going trapping pressure, persecution, habitat loss owing to extensive agriculture, etc. The species is regarded to be the easiest parakeet to catch for the pet-trade because of its flocking behaviour and relatively sluggish nature (Inskipp *et al.* 2016). Decline and local extinctions in recent decades have been attributed largely to the capture of birds for trade (Juniper & Parr 1998). Abrar Ahmed, of TRAFFIC India, in a joint programme of WWF and IUCN, says that of all the ten species of parakeets and one species of parrot from India, eight species have regularly been recorded in Indian markets and one of them is the Red-breasted Parakeet (Anonymous 2012). Hunting and trade of all Indian parrot/parakeet species is prohibited under the Wildlife Protection Act 1972. All Indian parakeet species are in Appendix II of CITES, except the Rose-ringed Parakeet. According to him, despite the blanket ban since 1990-91, hundreds of parrots/parakeets are collected and traded annually in India.

This species uses a variety of forest and wooded habitats, including human-altered areas (Juniper & Parr 1998). These habitats include dry forest, moist deciduous secondary forest, mangroves, cultivated areas with trees and human settlements. The M.S. University arboretum is having a good collection of tree species in a 0.1 km<sup>2</sup> area in the heart of the city. The escaped/freed individual probably got shelter in this small wooded area. Its diet includes wild and cultivated fruits, berries, flowers, nectar, nuts and seeds, leaves and cereals such as rice and maize (Ali 2002), all of which are available in the arboretum, and cereals could be obtained from the neighbouring storage space of Food Corporation of India (FCI),

which is hardly 200-300 meters away across the railway line in the southwest direction.

Feral populations of Red-breasted Parakeet have now established themselves in cities like Mumbai and small numbers occur in other cities such as Chennai and Bengaluru. Rasmussen & Anderton (2012) state that a small flock of escapees may have established themselves in Mumbai and there are many reports of its sightings from areas like Colaba, Borivali etc. For Gujarat, a single individual has been reported earlier from Tena village, near Surat (Parikh & Patel 2017). In the checklist of birds of Gujarat (Parasharya *et al.* 2004, Ganpule 2016), the Red-breasted Parakeet is not listed as its breeding population is not known to occur here and sightings are most probably of escapees. In the present case, the species needs to be monitored in Vadodara to check if it has established itself in this area.

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## Short Birding Notes



### Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus* near Surat

I was bird watching with my friends Pradip Sharan and Neha Joshi Sharan near Olpad, in the outskirts of Surat, on 27 January 2019. At around 10:00 hrs, we were taking photos of a Red Avadavat (*Amandava amandava*) when one harrier (*Circus* sp.) flew in. Without identifying it, I took some photos of the bird. After checking the reference books, I was confused between a Hen Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*) and a Pallid Harrier (*Circus macrourus*) and later, I uploaded the photos in our local birding groups of Surat and also on the 'ask id of indian birds' Facebook page. After some discussion, it was identified as a Hen Harrier based on the five fingered hand, underwing barring and face pattern. It was probably an adult female, but ageing is difficult from only two photos. The Hen Harrier is a vagrant or a rare winter migrant to Gujarat, with a recent record from Nalsarovar (Kini 2018). This is a first record from South Gujarat and the second photographic record for the state.

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### Marbled Duck *Marmaronetta angustirostris* in Little Rann of Kachchh

On 22 October 2017, I visited the western part of Little Rann of Kachchh. Since the monsoon was good that year, there was lot of water in the Rann. I saw a flock of more than 2000 ducks (*Anas* sp.) in the area. While scanning this flock, I saw a duck which looked different. I took some photographs but the duck was quite far away and I could manage only record photos. The flock then flew and I could not locate this individual again. This duck had a dark greyish mask through the eye, white spotting on the upperparts and was overall sandy-brown in colour. Based on these features, I identified it as a probable Marbled Duck (*Marmaronetta angustirostris*). I posted the photos on 'birdinggujarat' blog where the identification was confirmed by Peter de Rouw. The Marbled Duck is a vagrant / rare winter migrant to Gujarat (Ganpule 2016) and there are very few documented sightings from the state. I thank Peter de Rouw for confirming the identification of this bird.

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### Stoliczka's Bushchat *Saxicola macrorhynchus* in Nal Sarovar

On 19 February 2019, at around 17:00 hrs, I saw and photographed a Stoliczka's Bushchat (*Saxicola macrorhynchus*) at Nal Sarovar Bird Sanctuary. I took many photographs, and so it was easily identified. I also saw and photographed the typical 'puff-and-roll' behaviour, which is diagnostic of the species. The bird was seen in a fallow field. The Stoliczka's Bushchat is a regular but uncommon winter migrant, mainly to Kachchh, with scattered and isolated records from Saurashtra (Ganpule 2016). This was the first time I had seen it here in Nalsarovar.

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### White-rumped Munia *Lonchura striata* near Bilimora, Navsari District

On 6 January 2019, I saw and photographed a group of six White-rumped Munia (*Lonchura striata*) at Devsar, near Bilimora, in Dist: Navsari. I had seen a group of about 15 birds earlier in the same area (a few days prior to this sighting) but could not get good photos. The identification was confirmed in the field and all the characteristic features were noted in the photographs too. The White-rumped Munia is known to be resident in the Dang forest and it is given to be an uncommon resident in South Gujarat (Ganpule 2016). This was the first time I had noted it at Devsar, near Bilimora, which is outside the forest area and is very near to the city.

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### **Greylag Goose *Anser anser* in Kachchh**

On 14 January 2019, we were bird watching at a lake near Chadva Rakhhal area, Ta: Bhuj. There, we saw and photographed a Greylag Goose (*Anser anser*). The Greylag Goose is a regular winter visitor to Gujarat, including in the Little Rann of Kachchh, but it is rare in mainland Kachchh (Ganpule 2016). In the past, the regular hunting of this goose was a common practice by the royal family of Kachchh and the last big shoot was arranged in 1912-13 (Vijayrajji 1912). On 25 November 1990, Asad Akhtar and Jugal Tiwari recorded a Greylag Goose at Chhari Dhandh (Akhtar 1991) and this was a record of this species after a long span of 77 years from mainland Kachchh. Hence, this present sighting of this species comes after almost 29 years and is a significant record for Kachchh.

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### **Spangled Drongo *Dicrurus hottentottus* in Gandhinagar**

I was in Gandhinagar with Viren Desai, Pragnesh Patel and Sandeep Patel on 28 November 2018. On the next morning, our friend Chintu Panchal joined us at 06:30 hrs and we went to Indroda Park, and entered the Botanical Garden area. We saw two Spangled Drongos (*Dicrurus hottentottus*) perched on a tree just above and next to us. We saw the birds only for a few moments and did not get good photographs due to the foggy morning and low light. But, we could easily identify the birds by their typical tail and long, down-curved bill. We saw the birds again in the deer park area. The Spangled Drongo is believed to be a rare resident in South Gujarat, with isolated records from elsewhere in the state; it has been noted in Indroda Park in 1992 (Subramanya 2018) but it is rare here.

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### **Grey Hypocolius *Hypocolius ampelinus* near Rajkot**

A male Grey Hypocolius (*Hypocolius ampelinus*) was seen and photographed near Sindhavadar, in Ta: Wankaner, about 40 kms from Rajkot, on 26 January 2019 in the morning. We could get a few photographs of the hypocolius before it flew away. The total observation time was only about 10 seconds, and we were unable to find it again. The Grey Hypocolius has been noted at Lalpari Lake, Rajkot, in December 2015 (Bhalodia & Mashru 2016). This location is almost 40 kms from the place where it was seen earlier near Rajkot and it is a new location for this species from Rajkot area.

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### **Woolly-necked Stork *Ciconia episcopus* in Kachchh**

On 8 December 2018, I saw and photographed a Woolly-necked Stork (*Ciconia episcopus*) on Kotdi-Poladia Road, Ta: Mandavi, Kachchh. On this road, there is a river which always has some water in the winter. Due to good vegetation around this area, many birds are usually seen here. The Woolly-necked Stork is resident in Gujarat but is vagrant in Kachchh. Salim Ali did not come across this species during his surveys and mentioned that 'Lester observed it only during the cold season and rains' (Ali 1945). Thereafter, there is only one published record of this species in Kachchh till now; J. K. Tiwari had seen it at Tuga Dam in Pach chham area of Kachchh in 1992 (Tiwari 1993). On very next day, 9 December 2018, I revisited this place to watch the Woolly-necked Stork again. This stork was present at the same spot but to my surprise, this time, I also saw a Black Stork (*Ciconia nigra*) there. The Black Stork is an uncommon to rare winter migrant to Kachchh. So, I was very much delighted to find these two rare storks in Kachchh.

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### **Long-legged Buzzard *Buteo rufinus* in Jamnagar**

On 31 October 2018, we were birding at Ranjit Sagar dam, about 10 kms from Jamnagar. There we saw and photographed a bird of prey perched on a tree. It was identified as a Long-legged buzzard (*Buteo rufinus*). Another sighting of a Long-legged Buzzard was reported from Jamnagar city by Dr. Maulik Varu on 1 December 2018 (*pers. comm.*, verbally). Though the Long-legged Buzzard is a regular winter visitor in Gujarat and also seen in Jamnagar district frequently, it is uncommonly seen near/in Jamnagar city with only a few previous records. These records suggest that the species is also seen in urban areas of Jamnagar.

We thank Dr. Gaurang Bagda and Dr. Maulik Varu for confirming the identification.

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### **Oriental Scops Owl *Otus sunia* of rufous morph at Thol Bird Sanctuary**

On 23 December 2018, I was bird watching at Thol Bird Sanctuary, near Ahmedabad, when I heard the sound of wing-flapping and a small bird landed a little far away from me. While approaching, I realized that it was some small owl species (*Otus* sp.) and looked quite similar to an Oriental Scops Owl (*Otus sunia*), which I had seen earlier in Indroda Park, Gandhinagar. On a closer look, I saw that it was indeed an Oriental Scops Owl of the rufous morph. The bird perched for a few minutes and then flew away. Later, I visited the same place a few more times, but did not find it again. Though I had seen it earlier in Gandhinagar, which is near to Thol, this was my first sighting of an Oriental Scops Owl from this area.

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### **Trumpeter Finch *Bucanetes githagineus* in Kachchh**

On 18 October 2018, I visited Dhosa Mahadev Temple, Ta: Bhuj. The area has a freshwater lake and is surrounded by scrub and rocks. There, I saw and photographed five Trumpeter Finch (*Bucanetes githagineus*). This was the first sighting of this species for the winter of 2018-2019. The Trumpeter Finch is a rare winter migrant to Kachchh with recent sightings from Banni area and from near Bhuj (Parekh 2016). However, this is the first time this species was seen in Dhosa Mahadev area. This record indicates that it is possible that the Trumpeter Finch could be visiting other suitable habitats in Kachchh.

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### **Pin-tailed Snipe *Gallinago stenura* in Jamnagar**

On 13 January 2018, we visited the saltpans and marshy areas near INS Valsura, on the outskirts of Jamnagar. We saw four snipes (*Gallinago* sp.) there. Three snipes were identified as Common Snipes (*Gallinago gallinago*). However, one snipe was different from the others. It had a short bill, short legs, a bulging supercilium in front of eye, narrow and poorly defined stripes in front of eye. We took a few photographs. It was identified as a Pin-tailed Snipe (*Gallinago stenura*). Although Pin-tailed Snipe is an uncommon but regular winter visitor to Gujarat (Ganpule 2016), it is quite likely that it is overlooked and hence, there are only a few recent records from the state. A Pin-tailed Snipe was seen in Ranjitsagar Dam, near Jamnagar, by Ashwin Trivedi in January 2019 (*pers comm.*, verbally).

[The field identification and separation of Pin-tailed Snipe from Swinhoe's Snipe (*Gallinago megala*) is considered impossible unless the spread tail is seen well or photographed. The identification here as Pin-tailed Snipe is based mainly on the locality. Birders are urged to photograph the spread tail in such snipes – Eds]

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### Congregation of White Storks *Ciconia ciconia* in Little Rann of Kachchh

On 13 November 2013, at Bajana Wetland (23° 09' N, 71° 43' E) in the Little Rann of Kachchh, we observed a flock of White Storks (*Ciconia ciconia*), along with Painted Storks (*Mycteria leucocephala*) and Asian Openbills (*Anastomus oscitans*), in a mixed flock of storks feeding in a small water body at around 07:15 hrs. We also noted a flock of about 120 White Storks overhead. A second flock of around an equal number of birds was seen at the same place. In all, we estimated that about 250 White Storks were present. On the following couple of days, the large flocks seen previously were not observed again. This was an unusually large number of White Storks recorded here. It is possible that these birds could be in migration and had congregated here in the Rann.

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### Unusual feeding behaviour of Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*

On 2 December 2018, we were returning with from Jakhau Salt Pans, in Kachchh, after photographing birds there. We saw very strange feeding behaviour of Ruddy Turnstone (*Arenaria interpres*). We observed that three birds were walking on the cement roof of a constructed room near the coastal area. They were feeding on some insects, possibly some species of flies, which were present on the wall of the room. The birds were bending towards the wall and picking the insects from the wall and feeding on them. The insects which were within reach of the birds were being caught by them. The Ruddy Turnstone usually flips stones and other objects near the sea shore while feeding on insects, crustaceans, molluscs etc. (Van Gils *et al.* 2019). This was a new feeding method observed by us where the birds were catching insects from walls of a constructed room.

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### Asian Pied Starling *Gracupica contra* at Wadhwana, Vadodara

On 6 January 2019, I visited Wadhwana Lake, near Vadodara, with my friends Vasav and Rohit Markanday. At around 09:30 hrs, we saw and photographed a pair of Asian Pied Starlings (*Gracupica contra*) on top of the trees with Bank Mynas (*Acridotheres ginginianus*). We spent some time to observe and photograph this uncommon bird here. This pair was not shy, and was mostly seen foraging near the farms in the area. The Asian Pied Starling is regularly seen in Dahod area and there are isolated records from Jamnagar and South Gujarat (Ganpule 2016). This is the first time I had seen it at Wadhwana.

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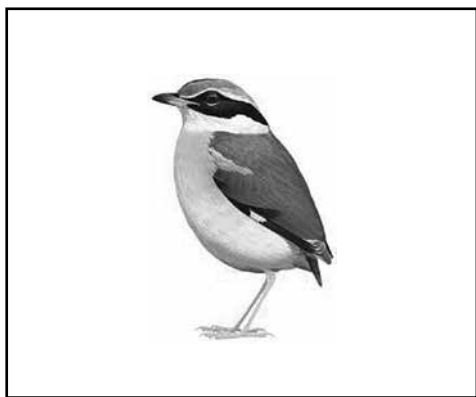
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## ABSTRACTS



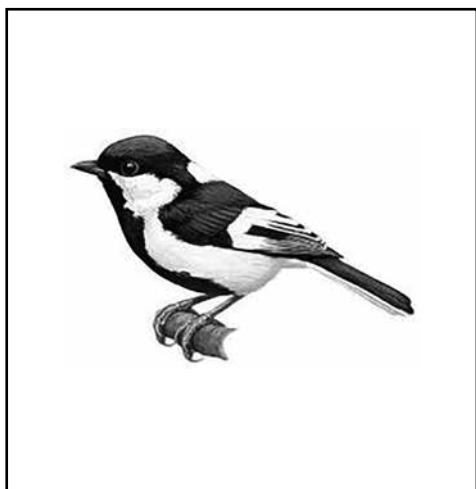
### **Notes on breeding of Indian Pitta by Reshma Solanki et al. *Indian BIRDS* 14 (4): 113-118. (2018)**

The authors carried out a study on the breeding of the Indian Pitta (*Pitta brachyura*) in Jambhughoda Wildlife Sanctuary, near Vadodara. The nest of the Indian Pitta was monitored for 20 days and details like number of eggs, incubation period, food and feeding frequency, etc. were noted. Both the parents actively participated in feeding the chicks and earthworms were a major part of the diet recorded here. The feeding frequency and number of feeding flights were noted. The fledglings were predated by a Common Palm Civet (*Paradoxurus hermaphrodites*) and this was a rare instance where a civet was photographed predated on the chicks of Indian Pitta.



### **Swinhoe's Minivet in Gujarat by Irshad Theba et al. *Indian BIRDS* 14 (5): 147-148 (2018)**

The authors photographed Swinhoe's Minivets (*Pericrocotus cantonensis*) in Indroda Park, Gandhinagar, in February 2018. The Swinhoe's Minivet is similar to Ashy Minivet (*Pericrocotus divaricatus*) and the authors discuss in detail the identification of the birds seen in Gandhinagar. The identification was confirmed as Swinhoe's Minivet by studying a host of features and comparing them with Ashy Minivet. This is the first record of a Swinhoe's Minivet from Gujarat.



### **Behavioural observations on White-naped Tit during the breeding season by Arjun Potter & André Dhondt. *Indian BIRDS* 14 (6): 161-165 (2019)**

The authors carried out a study on the behaviour of the endemic and endangered White-naped Tit (*Machlolophus nuchalis*) in a thorn forest near Phot Mahadev area, Kachchh, during its breeding season. They report the territorial behaviour and territory size, foraging, mating, and roosting behaviour of the species during breeding. Territory size was much larger than previously studied, nesting cavity was in the trunk of an *Acacia senegal* tree, foraging and mating was seen and roosting behaviour of the pair was noted. The pair roosted each night in separate cavities. The authors also studied the feeding of fledglings and the food items given. They conclude by stating that the conservation of thorn forests in Kachchh is of utmost importance for the White-naped Tit and suggest that providing nest boxes could help the species in finding roosting and nesting sites.



### **Range Extension of Chestnut Munia to Gujarat by Yagnesh Bhatt et al. *Indian BIRDS* 14 (6): 166-168 (2019)**

The authors report sightings of Chestnut Munia (*Lonchura atricapilla*) from Dist: Anand, in central Gujarat. The Chestnut Munia was seen in December 2017 in flocks of Tricoloured Munia (*Lonchura malacca*) and Scaly-breasted Munia (*Lonchura punctulata*). Re-examination of earlier photographs by the authors resulted in more sightings being found from these areas from 2011. The authors discuss prevalence of hybrid specimens between Chestnut Munia and Tricoloured Munia and suggest that DNA studies can help in determining the genetic distance between these two species here in Gujarat. The editor's note at the end states that more studies are required to establish the origins of these birds in Gujarat and any conclusions/decisions drawn till then are only tentative.

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It does not require great intelligence to agree that we are intrinsically embedded in nature no more isolated from our environment than globules of fat are from the emulsion they are suspended in. Our sciences are resulting from the contemplation and questioning of happenings in nature and the technologies evolved are masteries of the functions within the natural dynamics. Dynamics that have generated the substance of life and the dramatic display of life. Our personal well being depends on the harmonious interaction of various body parts within and the body as an entity with the natural world without.

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- Lavkumar Khachar

