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bcsg Bird Conservation Society, Gujarat

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Regd. Address : 19/414, Satyagrah Chhavni, Satellite Road, Ahmedabad-380015, Gujarat.

Email: devvratsinhji.flamingogujarat@gmail.com, **Web:** www.bcsog.co.in

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Orange-headed Thrush *Geokichla citrina citrina* at Ahmedabad: a first record for Gujarat

Ishaan Punit Lalbhai: Ahmedabad. poorva.lalbhai@gmail.com



Photo 1

Photo: Ishaan Lalbhai

Introduction

The Orange-headed Thrush (*Geokichla citrina*) is a polytypic species found widely in India (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). The subspecies occurring in Gujarat is *G. c. cyanotus*, which is distinguished from the nominate *G. c. citrina* by vertical black stripes across the eye and the ear-coverts and has a white throat (Ganpule *et al.* 2022). The nominate *G. c. citrina* has an unmarked orange-rufous head and a broad white bar on the upper wing ('shoulder') (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). The subspecies *G. c. cyanotus*, which occurs in Gujarat, is resident in the forest belt from north Gujarat to southern Gujarat, with scattered records from the forests and well-wooded areas of Saurashtra; it is a vagrant to Kachchh (Ganpule *et al.* 2022). However, there are no records of the subspecies *G. c. citrina* from Gujarat. This short note describes the sighting of *G. c. citrina* from Ahmedabad.

Observations

On March 24, 2023, at around 17:30 hrs., while on a regular birding trip at our garden area in Ahmedabad, I encountered a male Orange-headed Thrush (Photo 1). The bird was seen well, and it was noted that it moved on the dry

leaf bed and looked for insects. It was identified as an Orange-headed thrush, and photos were taken from a safe distance. Later, the photos were shared with Devvratsinh Mori, Prasad Ganpule, and Sunil Kini, and it was confirmed to be an Orange-headed Thrush of the nominate *G. c. citrina* subspecies. A brief description is as follows: The upperparts were slaty-blue and the underparts were rufous-orange. This bird lacked the vertical black stripes across the eye and ear-coverts and had a plain, unmarked head (Photo 2).



Photo 2

Photo: Ishaan Lalbhai

Orange-headed Thrush....

The throat was not distinctly white as in *G. c. cyanotus*. Hence, the identification was confirmed as a male *G. c. citrina* (Photo 3). Then, after a gap of about 16 days, the thrush was spotted again, very briefly, on April 9, 2023, at around 17:30 hrs. Punit Lalbhai, Sunil Kini, Ruchita Soni, and I were birding and saw it well. It was seen briefly, and after this sighting, it was not seen again. We tried to find it again at the same location but were unsuccessful.



Photo: Ishaan Lalbhai

Photo 3

Discussion

As per Ganpule *et al.* (2022), only *G. c. cyanotus* occurs in Gujarat; this subspecies is widespread in peninsular India,

mainly south of Gujarat and southern India. Rasmussen & Anderton (2012) mentioned the range of *G. c. citrina* as a summer visitor to the Himalayas and winter visitor to the northern plains (with some individuals remaining at the base of hills), Ganges Delta, NE Peninsula, straggling further south, with a few reaching Sri Lanka'. As per data from 'eBird', there are no records of this subspecies from western India, and most records are from the Himalayas and the adjoining plains. There are records from the Eastern Ghats and South India. However, there is no record of this subspecies from Gujarat on 'eBird'.

The sightings from Ahmedabad were from March and April, which is indicative of a bird seen during spring migration. It is possible that a few individuals could be passing through Gujarat when going towards the Himalayas for breeding. This is the first record of the Orange-headed Thrush of the nominate *G. c. citrina* subspecies for Gujarat and is an important sighting for the state.

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Second sighting records of Green-crowned Warbler *Phylloscopus burkii* at Ratanmahal Sanctuary, Gujarat

Murtuza Zabuawala: m_zabuawala@yahoo.com



Photo: Murtuza Zabuawala

During the camp organised by BCSG and Nature Club, Dahod, on the morning of 25th February 2023, I was birding in and around the Campsites of Naldha, Ratanmahal Wildlife Sanctuary. I saw the bright yellow colour of a small bird moving fast among patches of bamboo. The bird was often seen moving from one trunk to another, which means the bird did not sit calmly for a long time in one place. I managed to click the bird in my camera. The bird was new to me and I could not identify it. I have contacted Mr. Ashok Mashru, a Senior birdwatcher who had been there in camp. He told me, instantly seeing the picture, that you have clicked Green-crowned Warbler (*Phylloscopus burkii*), a very important second record of Gujarat.

The Green-crowned Warbler breeds in the Himalayas and winters in the plains; winter records from Bihar and Bastar (Chhattisgarh) are known (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012).



There are records, with photographs, from Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra, on 'eBird'. Hence, this warbler is known to occur in Central India as a vagrant. This species was first sighted in the scrub forest of Chadua Rakhil, Kutch (Tank et al. 2022; Ganpule 2022). The present sighting of a Green-crowned Warbler from Ratanmahal Wildlife Sanctuary is not only the second record from the Gujarat State, but it shows species also wintering in this part of Gujarat.

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Red-headed Bunting *Emberiza bruniceps* at Dantiwada, Banaskantha

Tarun Sutaria: Palanpur, Banaskantha. tarun.vets@gmail.com



I went to Dantiwada Dam on the evening of 2nd April 2023. I enjoyed the evening birding at the dam site, and while returning, I saw a tractor stuck on the narrow way, which forced me to wait for some more time around the wheat fields, ready to harvest and under harvesting. It was 6.22 pm, the sun was setting down; the golden light was turning darker, and suddenly, a small flock of seven birds similar to yellow wagtails flew in and perched on a shrub within a wheat field. I took a photograph of these birds against the reducing golden light. The captured image revealed red-headed bunting. The three males and four females were identified based on morphology. The male has a red-brown head and upper breast, yellowish-olive most underparts, and distinct wing bars, while females are plain, less streaked with yellowish rump and underparts (Ganpule et al. 2022). The Red-headed Bunting (*Emberiza bruniceps*), passerine birds, are long-distance (48 days each way: up & down) latitudinal migrants representing the Palearctic Indian migratory system (Ali & Ripley 1974; Kumar et al. 2021) wintering in India (Patel et al. 2022). They winter in the autumn (late July and early August) and return to

Red-headed Bunting....

breeding grounds in late March and early April. Thus, they migrate twice a year between breeding and wintering grounds, i.e., autumn and spring migration (Kumar et al. 2021). They breed in open scrubby areas, including agricultural land, and lay three to five eggs in a nest built in a tree or bush. Food habits include millets/cereals/plant seeds and insects (Patel 2010; Patel et al. 2022; Ganpule et al. 2022). Total 868 observations of red-headed buntings are on E-Bird recorded from Gujarat, five from Mehsana, 11 from Kachchh, and two from Patan. Despite these extensive records from Gujarat and nearby districts, there is no E-Bird record of sightings from Banaskantha and Sabarkantha. However, it has been recorded from Mount Abu on E-Bird. After discussing with fellow birders, I learned they observed these beautiful birds around Ranitook village near Dantiwada Dam a few years ago. However, this is the first sighting of red-headed bunting from Dantiwada, Banaskantha, being recorded on E-Bird.

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The thrill of sighting Indian Shaheen *Falco peregrinus peregrinator* with its mating and Indian Long-billed Vulture *Gyps indicus* breeding at Pavagadh, Vadodara

Rajvi Parikh: 32 Atmjyot Nagar, Near Atmjyot Ashram, Ellora Park, Vadodara 390023. rajvi77@gmail.com

Kartik Upadhyay: 1/101 Avni Residence, Near Bansal Super Market, Gotri-Vasna Road, Vadodara. kartik_upadhyay35@yahoo.com



Photo: Rajvi Parikh

For birding in nearby places of Vadodara or in Vadodara, we never have advance planning. If we have the right time and good company, we plan out immediately. Sometimes, we plan and go for targeted bird's species otherwise, we wander along the bird's trail and may find something. On 6th February 2021, both authors and Vatsalbhair Patel, went for a routine birding. To gain knowledge from the second author (KU), who is an experienced birder and intellectual person we planned a birding trip to Pavagadh.

Pavagadh is the gateway to the Panchmahal district. The location of hilly areas around Halol provide good scenery and many scenic trails are there to climb, including waterfalls during monsoon time. Champaner, Pavagadh Hill forms the Champaner-Pavagadh Archeological Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

There was a lot of rush in Pavagadh and the ropeway had long queues as it was Saturday, weekend time. Soon after reaching there, we came to know that, the weather was very windy and the wind speed was high. Hence for safety reasons, the ropeway was closed and there was no certainty when the authorities would start the ropeway again. We discussed it for a few minutes and decided to climb Pavagadh. Slowly and gradually we started climbing. On the way, we came across small lakes where we saw Northern Shoveler, Black-winged stilt, Pond Heron, Red Shank, etc. While climbing KU shared his knowledge about the place, habitat and the types of birds that stay in these surroundings. Around 8.30 to 9 am, we reached the hill top. We were just looking around, and all of a sudden a bird flew away who was very close to us. Not so sure, it might be Red necked falcon (*Falco chicquera*). We walked down till Navlakha Kothar. Navlakha Kothar is situated on the edge of Navlakhi Valley, and it was used for food storage in ancient times (Highest peak of northern side). It is one of the best examples of Mughal architecture.

We were searching for birds in this area. KU was observing the surroundings with the help of binoculars while we were using our camera lens as binoculars. All of a sudden Kartikbhai's experienced eyes found a falcon sitting on the mountain cliff. We immediately clicked a photograph of the falcon and showed it to Kartikbhai and he confirmed that it was a Shaheen falcon (*Falco peregrinus peregrinator*). The falcon was sitting on the edge of the cliff. We saw white droppings on that rock. The falcon might have been here for approximately 30 minutes and it was preening every few minutes. We all were observing the falcon from a distance and all of a sudden, another falcon came from the opposite direction (the falcon's speed was incredible) and it approached the cliff and sat on

the first falcon. On seeing this, I realized that the sitting falcon was the female falcon and the one who swooped down on her was the male falcon. We could click 4-5 pictures of their mating. The male falcon flew away immediately while the female falcon sat there for some time and then flew away. We spent the whole afternoon in search of other birds. The heat was intense and our eyes saw Blue Rock Thrush (*Monticola solitarius*), Brown Rock Chat (*Oenanthe fusca*), White-eyed Buzzard (*Butastur teesa*), Rock Pigeon (*Columba livia*), and Laughing Dove (*Spilopelia senegalensis*), Crested bunting (*Emberiza lathami*) on the dried spiny branches of Babool trees. We even saw many Eurasian Crag Martin (*Ptyonoprogne rupestris*) over there. They were flying overhead and all would go and sit in the small cavities of the mountain. At approximately around 2 pm, we happened to see a falcon sitting in the corner on another side of the mountain. The falcon must have been sitting there since long and we might have not noticed it or else it just came and we noticed it. We are not sure whether we saw one of the previous falcons or the third falcon but we did see a lot of white droppings here also. From these observations, falcons do have a specific and a fixed place to sit. Around 3 pm or so, a Long-billed Vulture (*Gyps indicus*) soared high from the valley side near to us. The vulture swooped down and sat near a cavity in the mountain. It sat there for a while and then went inside the mountain cavity and we could no longer see from our side. We all waited for it to come out. After about an hour or so, another vulture landed at the same mountain cavity. On the arrival of second vulture, the first vulture came out of the cavity and flew away while the second vulture went into the cavity. On seeing this, we felt that the mountain cavity was a nesting place of the vultures and there would have been eggs too! However, there is earlier records of Long-billed Vultures are breeding on Pavagadh (Valodkar et al. 2018). It was an exciting day and we were all exhausted due to the afternoon heat so we returned back home.

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First Sighting Record of Yellow-legged Buttonquail *Turnix tanki* in Vansda National Park, Gujarat, India

Jayendrasinh Rathod: RFO Vansda East Range Gujarat forest division. jayendrasinh.rathod4@gmail.com (Corresponding Author)

Raj Desai: Wildlife Photographer, Brand Station, Valsad. raj_desai@hotmail.com



Photo: Raj Desai & Jayendrasinh Rathod

may associate with the Barred Buttonquail and display nocturnal migratory behaviour, being attracted to bright lights at night. When alarmed in open areas, they adopt a unique slow, wavering walk until finding cover (Ali & Ripley 1980 ; Eaton 2014). Breeding of the species occurs from March to November, with nests consisting of scantily lined scrapes partially covered by bent-over grass stems or other vegetation. The male takes responsibility for caring for the eggs and young (Baker 1928).



Map of Vansda National Park

The Yellow-legged Buttonquail, (YLB hereafter) possesses specific physical characteristics such as a dark crown with a pale median stripe or white stippling, greyish upper plumage with blackish and/or rufous blotches and scattered pale streaks, and whitish to pale buff underparts (Ali & Ripley 1980; Chandrakala et al. 2021). Female YLBs typically have a prominent rufous hind collar, absent in males, while juvenile YLBs may have fewer bars on their sides and more buffy spots above (Artuso 2005). During the flight, the species exhibits a stronger contrast between the wing coverts and flight feathers compared to other members of its family. Variations in subspecies have been observed in the Nicobar Islands, Assam hills, and the Andamans (Chandrakala et al. 2021).

The YLB is a summer visitor to the northern and central subcontinent, including regions like Pakistan (Sind and Punjab) and northwest India (Baker 1928). It is a resident species in southwest Gujarat, extending through the Gangetic Plain and Nepal terai, with a potential eastward extension to Bihar, Orissa, and the Nicobar Islands (Ali & Ripley 1980). In winter, the YLB migrates to the majority of the Indian Peninsula, the Assam Valley, lower parts of the Assam hills, and the Andamans. The species primarily inhabits areas below 1200 meters but can occasionally be found at altitudes of up to 2000 meters (Ali & Ripley 1980). YLBs are commonly found in cultivation areas, grasslands, bamboo forests, scrublands, and other open habitats, often in disturbed environments. They

On the evening of June 15, 2023, the elusive Yellow-legged Buttonquail (*Turnix tanki*) was sighted for the first time in Vansda National Park, Gujarat, India. The last recorded sighting was by Urvashi Ravani in Rajkot, Gujarat, in 2020. A team of wildlife enthusiasts explored the park on June 15, 2023, and successfully located an adult YLB by following its distinct call a series of short, melodious whistles followed by a soft trill. This sighting holds great significance for the scientific community and conservationists as it confirms the effectiveness of the park's conservation efforts. The park's protected status and habitat management practices have created a favourable environment for the YLB to thrive. This remarkable sighting highlights the importance of preserving the park's unique habitat and showcases successful avian conservation efforts. This record captures the excitement and wonder of this ground-breaking discovery, inspiring hope for preserving endangered and threatened species and reaffirming the value of protecting our natural heritage.

Conclusion

The first sighting of the Yellow-legged Buttonquail in Vansda National Park represents a significant milestone for avian conservation. This discovery highlights the importance of

preserving unique habitats and reinforces the positive outcomes achievable through dedicated conservation efforts and scientific research. The presence of the Yellow-legged Buttonquail serves as an inspiration for all those committed to safeguarding our natural heritage and underscores the need to protect endangered and threatened species.

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Sightings of Pelagic birds in Gujarat around Cyclone Biparjoy, June 2023

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



On 16th June, 2023 very severe strong cyclone called Biparjoy, landed at Naliya, Kachchh, Gujarat. Due to very high wind speed, it's affected so many birds. Pelagic birds from the Arabian Sea blown by this cyclone diverted from their regular flying path had to travel to the Gujarat coast and landed there. There were 19 sightings of 7 pelagic bird species on the coastline and some at inland lakes. They were in the form of observation by birdwatchers or rescue by local people. These 7 species were previously sighted in Gujarat as vagrant visitors due to pre-monsoon winds, cyclones, and offshore trips by birdwatchers in the Gujarat Sea limit (See: Ganpule et al. 2022). I have collected details of sightings by different birdwatchers. The data was collected from various sources like newspapers, ebird websites, Pers. communication, and social media. Sighting details of all these pelagic birds recorded during the cyclone are mentioned in table (Fig. 1).

Sooty Tern *Onychoprion fuscatus* (Photo 1), Bridled Tern *Onychoprion anaethetus* (Photo 2), Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus* (Photo 3), Parasitic Jaeger *Sercorarius parasiticus*, Persian Shearwater *Puffinus persicus* and Masked Booby *Anous stolidus* (Photo 4) had stayed on shore some days. They have foraged in respective water bodies where observed. Subsequently, they might return to the native sea after the appropriate favorite climate. Many birdwatchers from Gujarat and India have visited places and took a chance to see these rarities as they stayed near land longer. I was one of them to observe Masked Booby *Sula dactylatra* at Porbandar, Brown Noddy (*Anous stolidus*) at Jamnagar & Nalsarovar, and Bridled Tern (*Onychoprion anaethetus*) at Nalsarovar. The recent sighting of Bridled Tern on 23 August 2023 by Mr. Ashvin Trivedi at Lakhota Lake at mid of the city of Jamnagar is very surprising. This compilation of data will be helpful in the study of future cyclone-diverted pelagic birds.

Sightings of Pelagic birds around cyclone Biparjoy (June 2023), in Gujarat.

Pelagic bird specie	Sr no.	Place of Sighting	Date of Sighting	Comment	Observer	Source
Unidentified Tropicbird	1	Mandavi Coast	15/06/23 to 21/06/23	Found dead	Milan Mehta Niki Shah Yashesh Shah	News Paper Divya Bhaskar dated 22/06/23
Sooty Tern <i>Onychoprion fuscatus</i>	2	Khadir Area	before cyclone land	Rescued	V J Rana, CCF, Kachchh	News Paper Divya Bhaskar dated 22/06/23
	3	Nalsarovar Bird Sanctuary	20/06/23	Stayed there for few days	Akabar Kasam Kamrudin A Latif Alvani Abdul Multani	Pers. Communication (Photographed)
	4	Gomati Ghat, Dwarka	14/06/23	Rescued	Dr Ravi Varotariya	Pers. Communication (Photographed)
	5	Sani Dam, Kalyanpur, Jamnagar	16/06/23	1 bird, Rescued & dehydrated, died	Kishan Vadhiya Vijay Gojiya Ramde Bhatia	Pers. Communication (Photographed)
Bridled Tern <i>Onychoprion anaethetus</i>	6	Nalsarovar Bird Sanctuary	19/06/23	Stayed there for a Week	Akabar Kasam Kamrudin A Abdul Multani	Pers. Communication (Photographed)
	7	Amreli, Dist. Anand	25/06/23	1 bird, Single Sighting	Vishal Mistry	Mistry 2023
	8	Sultanpur, Dist. Navsari	18/06/23	1 bird, Single Sighting	Rajendra Desai	Pers. Communication, Social Media (Photographed)
	9	Lakhota Lake, Jamnagar	10/08/23	1 bird foraging Possible long staying	Ashvin Trivedi	Pers. Communication (Photographed)
Brown Noddy <i>Anous stolidus</i>	10	Navlakhi coast	18/06/23	1 bird, Single Sighting	Prasad Ganpule	Pers. Communication (Photographed)
	11	Sachana beach, Jamnagar	18/06/23	3 birds on this day then 2 birds Stayed there for a Week	Maulik Varu Ashvin Trivedi	Varu 2023; Pers. Communication (Photographed),
	12	Nal Sarovar Bird Sanctuary	24/06/23	1 bird, Stayed there for a few days	Latif Alvani Sabbir Belim	Pers. Communication (Photographed)
	13	Mokersagar, Porbandar	18/06/23	2 birds, Single Sighting	Vikrantsinh Zala	Social Media with photograph
Parasiatic Jaeger <i>Sercorarius parasiticus</i>	14	Nal Sarovar Bird Sanctuary	19/06/23	1 bird, Single Sighting	Sabbir Belim	Belim 2023
	15	Hathab beach, Bhavnagar	18/06/23	1 bird in flight	Kandarp Andharia Vivek Upadhyay Raj Vala	Pers. Communication (Photographed)
Persian Shearwater <i>Puffinus persicus</i>	16	Koliak, Bhavnagar	17/06/23	1 bird, Single Sighting	Kandarp Andharia Raj Vala	Andharia & Vaja 2023
Masked Booby <i>Sula dactylatra</i>	17	Gosabara Tukada Bridge, Porbandar	21/05/23	2 birds, Stayed there since 21/05/23 to 11/06/23 last sighting	Gaurang Bagada Vishwajitsinh Solanki	Bagada et. al. 2023
	18	Kanewal lake, Kheda	18/06/23	1 bird, Single sighting	Monal Trivedi	Trivedi 2023
	19	Gorinjia, Dwarka	17/06/23	1 bird, single sighting	Chirag Solanki	Pers. Communication



Photo: Ashok Mashru

Photo 2



Photo: Ashok Mashru

Photo 4



Photo: Ashok Mashru

Photo 3

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Predation pressure of Oriental Rat Snake *Ptyas mucosa* causing nesting adaptation in Streak-throated Swallows *Petrochelidon fluvicola*

Anika Tere: A-17 Janki Duplex, Behind Manjalpur Township No. 2, Darbar Chokdi, Manjalpur, Vadodara 390 011. anikatere@gmail.com

Ajay Dhamecha: D. P. Art Studio, Bambhasheri, Dhangadra, Surendranagar. ecotourcamp@gmail.com

Raju Vyas: Sashwat Apartment, BPC-Haveli Road, Nr. Splatter Studio, Alkapuri, Vadodara 390007. razoovyas@gmail.com

The streak-throated swallow or the Indian cliff swallow (*Petrochelidon fluvicola*) is a small brown-black passerine bird with a short tail and blackish-brown streaks on white underparts, including chin, throat and upper breast (Ali & Ripley 1987). It is the Least Concerned resident bird of South Asia, found in India, Pakistan, Nepal, and Afghanistan (BirdLife International 2023). It is gregarious and builds nests in colonies under natural cliffs or on the roof of man-made structures such as buildings, bridges etc. The nests are gourd-shaped with a narrow tunnel-like opening and are generally built near water sources (Ali & Ripley 1987). Their nests are made up of mud

with an appropriate proportion of silt and sand (Kilgore & Knudsen 1977). The entire process of nest building lasts between 20-25 days and the eggs are laid before the completion of the gourd shape of the nest, within a week of the construction of the nest, first egg is laid (Chaya & Channaveerappa 2012). The birds possess site fidelity for nesting and are reported to rebuild their nest on the same site after disturbances (Ranga *et al.* 2011).

A huge flock of Streak-throated Swallows was observed on November 9, 2021, flying in air while passing by a small bridge

Oriental Rat Snake...



Photo: Anika Tere

Photo 1: Location of nests of Streak-throated Swallow during 2021. The nests are raided by Oriental Rat Snake *Ptyas mucosa*.

over the channel from Brahmani River near Tikar village (23° 08' 11.36"N; 71° 05' 54.65"E) located in Halvad tehsil of Surendranagar district, Gujarat state. The birds seemed disturbed and kept on flying around the bridge and frequently entering the space below the bridge. A careful observation under the bridge revealed their nesting colonies, which were raided by two meters long Oriental Rat Snake *Ptyas mucosa* (Photo 1). More than 230 nests were found in four groups built on side walls of bridge pillars. The lowermost nests were about 1m above the water level (photo 1) which made it easy for the snake to access the nests. The snake crawled over the nests and entered its head in a few nests to feed on the eggs or chicks (Photo 2 & 3).



Photo: Anika Tere

Photo 3: Oriental Rat Snake *Ptyas mucosa* entering its head into the nest to access prey.



Photo: Anika Tere

Photo 2: Oriental Rat Snake *Ptyas mucosa* on the nests of Streak-throated Swallow.

The Oriental Rat Snake or Indian Rat Snake is a non-venomous snake found throughout South Asia except Nicobar Islands (Whitakar & Captain 2008; Uetz *et al.* 2023). It is the Least Concern snake species in the IUCN category (Wogan *et al.* 2021). However, its population is exposed to threats like loss of habitat, pollution, loss of prey from agricultural fields due to the use of pesticides, road kill, trade, etc. (Wogan *et al.* 2021). It is a terrestrial snake found in the surroundings of urban gardens and forests, freshwater wetlands, and paddy fields and feeds chiefly on various types of tetrapods, including frogs, fishes arthropods and rodents and birds (Whitakar & Captain 2008). It is a strong swimmer and diver, capable of climbing trees and capturing even Flying Fox *Pteropus giganteus* (Daniel 2002; Mallick *et al.* 2022).



Photo: Ajay Dhamecha

Photo 4: Streak-throated Swallow shifted nests on roof of underside bridge in the following year.

The site was revisited in the following years. The birds had built nests at the same site for three successive years. However, the nests were shifted to the roof of the bridge's underside, leaving the side walls to avoid the raiding by the water snake (Photo 4). The Indian Rat Snake feeds various types of tetrapods and also raids the nests on trees (Daniel 2002). Predation of swallows is reported here along with the swallows shifting to the new place at the same site. Shifting the nests on roof shows the adaptation of swallows to avoid predation but maintain the site fidelity.

Acknowledgments

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First record of Jungle Nightjar *Caprimulgus indicus* from Kachchh district.

Lalit Tank: Shagun City, Nr. Mahadev Hill, Kesar Bag Road, Madhapar, Bhuj. lalithtank@gmail.com



Photo: Lalit Tank

On 30 August 2023 at 10:00 a.m., I went to a scrub forest area near Madhapar, Bhuj for birding. There I saw a Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*, perched on a *Prosopis juliflora* tree. I followed it to get some record shots. To my surprise, that bird flew away, but a nightjar roosted on one inside branch of the same tree caught my attention. It was very well camouflaged. I observed the bird carefully. It had greyish-brown upperparts, creamish buff throat and sides of the neck, tawny brown spots on wings with dark centers, and finely barred pale underparts. After capturing a few record shots, I left the place without disturbing the bird. After sharing the

Jungle Nightjar....

photos with Mr. Prasad Ganpule, I learned that it was a Jungle Nightjar *Caprimulgus indicus*.

Salim Ali did not come across this species during his Kachchh survey (Ali 1945). I have checked the distribution maps in a few field guides (Kazmierczak 2000; Grimmet 2011). They have not shown any record of this species in the Kachchh district. As per the recently published field guide of birds of Gujarat (Ganpule et. al. 2022), this species is considered an uncommon resident in some well-wooded parts of Gujarat, and the distribution map has not shown any record for Kachchh district. There is no mention of a record of this species from Kachchh in eBird platform, too. Hence this sighting should be considered as the first record of this species from Kachchh district and is worth publishing.

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Struggles at Sea: Unravelling the fate of the Persian Shearwater amidst the Biparjyo Cyclone

Chitra Goyani: 9, Ashapuri Soc., D. K. Nagar Rd., Nr. Dholakiya Garden, Katargam, Surat 395004. chitrapatel42@gmail.com

Prince Shah: 801, Siddhshila residency, Galaxy Circle, Pal, Surat 394510. princeshah5953@gmail.com



Photo: P. S. Patel

The Persian Shearwater (*Puffinus persicus*) is a species with an uncertain status in Gujarat. While its presence off the Gujarat coast is not well-documented, previous observations during pelagic cruises and rescue incidents in Porbandar suggest its occurrence in the region (Munshi & Naik 2016, 2017; Tank & Vargiya 2021). Sightings have also been reported along the

Kutch shoreline and off Pakistan's Makran Coast (Ganpule 2021). Describing the Persian Shearwater is characterized by dark brown axillaries, light to dark brown upperparts with less contrast between the face and throat, pale primary and secondary coverts, and white underparts (Grimmett *et al.* 2014). This article introduces the first confirmed record of a

Persian Shearwater being rescued from Surat. Furthermore, it aims to investigate the potential impact of monsoon winds and cyclonic activities cyclone on marine avifauna.

On June 19, 2023, a Persian Shearwater was rescued from Dhanmora Char Rasta, Katargam, Surat (21°13'25.6" N, 72°49'39.4"), coinciding with the occurrence of the Biparjoy cyclone. Even though there were no visible injuries or oil contamination, the bird's dull calls and drooping eyelids indicated it was in distress. It was incapable of surviving, even with veterinary aid.

Over the ten years, from 2013 to 2023, it seems from table, that the majority of the pelagic bird rescues (n = 5) took place along the Gulf region of Gujarat's coastline. This may be due to the large number of islands and inlets in the Gulf of Khambhat (Shaikh *et al.* 1989) that are covered in mangroves, which serve as the ideal breeding ground for pelagic birds (Wynn & Knefelkamp 2004). In Porbandar, the entire landscape is covered in scattered wetland islands (Gujarat Maritime Board 2018), which may work as a suitable habitat for these birds. Furthermore, Cyclonic activities, including strong monsoon winds, storm surges, and turbulent seas, can disorient and exhaust birds during their migratory journeys or disrupt their foraging patterns. Furthermore, changes in water temperature, salinity, and nutrient availability resulting from cyclonic events can affect prey distribution and abundance, ultimately influencing the foraging success of marine birds (Weimerskirch & Prudor 2019).

Conclusion

Understanding the complex interactions between monsoon cyclones and marine avifauna is essential for assessing the resilience of these bird populations to climate change-related events. The occurrence of a stranded Persian Shearwater in Surat serves as a significant reminder of the vulnerability of marine birds to extreme weather events. This highlights the

importance of conducting further research and implementing effective conservation strategies to safeguard these species.

Acknowledgments

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Details of Pelagic birds rescued in a decade, from 2013 to 2023

Sr. No.	Species	Date of Rescue	Place of Rescue	Sources
1	Persian Shearwater	June, 2022	Porbandar	Kateshiya 2022
2	Christmas Island Frigatebird	May, 2021	Mahuva	Bhil & Bhil 2021
3	Lesser Frigatebird	May, 2021	Mahuva	Bhil & Bhil 2021
4	Persian Shearwater	April, 2021	Porbandar	Tank & Vargiya 2021
5	Persian Shearwater	June, 2023	Surat	--
6	Red-billed Tropicbird	June, 2015	Surat	Patel 2015
7	Short-tailed Shearwater	May, 2017	Mahuva	Shah et al. 2017
8	Jouanin's Petrel	Oct., 2014	Porbandar	Vargiya et al. 2017

Persian Shearwater....

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Rescue of Red-tailed Tropicbird *Phaethon rubricauda* at Porbandar: Adding to Gujarat Avifauna

Modhwadiya Nagajan Chana: Marutinagar, Navapara. Chhaya, Porbandar.



Photo: Modhwadiya Nagajan Chana

My work in the Porbandar area is the rescue of snakes, birds, and other wildlife, too. I have been doing this work for many years, so I received a call on 16th April 2023 from an unknown person for rescue from Javar village, near Porbandar city, that some injured bird is near the coast. I visited the place immediately around 10.30 am. I had rescued the unknown whitish bird from there. After necessary primary treatment, the bird was improving. I took some photographs from my mobile. After 4 days, on date 20/04/23, the bird looked perfectly cured, so I released the bird at the same place on the coast.

I posted an image of the bird in a social media group for identification. There was discussion about identifying birds, either Red-billed tropicbird *Phaethon aethereus* or Red-tailed Tropicbird *Phaethon rubricauda* (Billerman et al. 2022). Some birdwatchers in the group identified as Red-tailed Tropicbird because of their dark beak. Mr. Ashok Mashru, a birdwatcher, contacted me for details and sent the photo to Prasad Ganpule (Editor, Flamingo Gujarat) for further identification. He also agreed to identification as a Red-tailed tropicbird based on a completely dark blackish beak. Mr. Prasad Ganpule sent a

photograph to Mr. Dipu K, a seabird expert in South India, to confirm identification. Mr. Dipu K opined and replied that the White-tailed Tropicbird Juvenile may show some dark on the beak, but here beak is entirely dark, so this is a juvenile of the Red-tailed Tropicbird.

Red-tailed Tropicbird (Family: Phaethontidae) is the rarest of all three Tropicbirds in North America, nesting in the Hawaiian islands and dispersing widely across the central and south Pacific Ocean during the non-breeding season (Schreiber & Schreiber 2020). It looks like it may be diverted here as a vagrant due to bad sea weather. There are few records of the Red-billed Tropicbird from Gujarat, but finding this rare vagrant Red-tailed Tropicbird is the first time in Gujarat. It is a very important record through rescue and a new add-on to the Gujarat bird list

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Observation of Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos* hunting a Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* in Palanpur

Nirav Bhatt: birdwatchernrb@gmail.com

Dhairya Dixit: dhairya.dixit@yahoo.com

Kailash Jani: kailashjani007@yahoo.com



Photo: Nirav Bhatt

The Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*) is a rare vagrant winter visitor to Gujarat, with only 3 sightings of the species in the state (Ganpule et al. 2022). Although there was one previous photographic record of Golden Eagle from Desert National Park (a desert habitat in Rajasthan a few years back), the first photographic record for Gujarat was a juvenile male Golden Eagle observed in Palanpur (Prajapati et al. 2018). The second record of this species was from Banni, in Kachchh, which was also a photographic record (Khojani 2020) and the third record of the species was a sight record by Prasad Ganpule and others near Vighakot in January 2021, in Greater Rann of Kachchh at the Indo-Pak border area, where photography is prohibited (Ganpule 2021). However, the most popular sighting of the Golden Eagle for Gujarat till date is the Palanpur bird, which stayed in the same area for about three months (from 9th December to 17th March).

As the Palanpur bird preferred roosting in the same area, which was a carcass dumping site located near Palanpur which is surrounded by hilly terrain and adjacent to Banas River (the river is dry close to the dumping site during observation months), many birders from Gujarat and outside of Gujarat visited the place. They were able to take good



Photo: Nirav Bhatt

photographs of this rare bird in Gujarat. The first and second authors also visited a few times to observe the bird and we were happy to get a few recorded photographs of the bird perched on *Butea monosperma* tree, which is popularly known as *Kesudo*, *Khakhro*, or *Palash*, which in itself is a rare combination as mostly the Golden Eagles are seen in hilly terrain with forest or mountain habitat, while this tree is a specific tree of arid areas. Although many photographers visited the location and the bird was continuously under observation almost daily, there were no photographs of what

Golden Eagle....

the eagle was feeding on. Therefore, we decided to visit the location with the aim of observing the eagle continuously and trying to find out if the eagle was hunting or feeding on carrion, as Golden Eagles are known scavengers.



Photo: Nirav Bhatt



Photo: Nirav Bhatt

We reached the location before sunrise and as per our expectation, after a bit of scanning, the bird was seen at 07:30 hrs perched on a tall bare tree in a relaxed posture having a vantage point providing a clear view of the dumping site. While observing the eagle, we met Vipul and Catherine, who were also there searching for the bird. The bird was bold and it was not bothered with human presence around it. It kept preening the feathers and scanning the surroundings. Occasionally, it would gaze at the birders nearby and continue scanning the habitat. At around 08:55 hrs, the bird took off and casually flew directly to the dump yard where the fresh carcass had been dumped recently. As the area was densely covered with trees, obstructing the uninterrupted view of the eagle. However, we immediately followed the direction where it flew and within 60 seconds, the authors witnessed the eagle carrying some prey in its talons and being mobbed by about 10-12 crows. It perched on top of the *Butea monosperma* tree clutching a live Cattle Egret (*Bubulcus ibis*) in its talons. The eagle's powerful grip prevented the egret from escaping,

despite its attempts. We managed to take good photos and videos of this natural history moment. Two additional intriguing observations of this bird were the presence of a hole in one of its primary feathers and the absence of a few tail feathers, which had not regrown during its stay at the dump yard. It is again very surprising to note that even with almost daily observations of this bird, which stayed here for more than three months, there have been no published observations of the prey of the eagle. This raises curiosity about the eagle's diet and hunting habits during its stay in Gujarat throughout the winter. Further observations on the Golden Eagle's food preferences and hunting methods in Gujarat's unique terrain would be valuable. The authors hope that similar vagrant birds will provide opportunities for further observations in the future.

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DISAPPEARING OF A ROYAL ART: Falconry or Hawking

Compiled by: Raju Vyas, Sashwat Apartment, BPC-Haveli Road, Nr. Splatter Studio, Alakapuri, Vadodara 390007. razoovyas@hotmail.com



Photo 1: A trained falcon: The best high-demanding bird of prey for the falconry worldwide is known as Peregrines *Falco peregrinus*.

(Photo Credit: Raju Vyas).

Falconry or hawking is a royal game that has disappeared entirely from India as many species of raptors have vanished from their habitats (See: SolB 2023) (Photo 1). However, I briefly introduce this subject based on an attentive compilation of the published literature. Classified as a hunting sport, falconry refers to hunting birds or mammals with the help of trained birds of prey. Whether practiced for its original purpose to obtain supplementary food or, as is the case almost exclusively today, for sport or recreation, falconry is considered an art of ancient origins (Freeman 1869).

Few raptorial bird species are suitable for falconry as they sport a naturally aggressive hunting style, namely Short-winged Goshawks (*Accipiter gentilis*) and Sparrow-hawks (*Accipiter nidus*), which are best suited for hunting in the woods, along with the long-winged falcons, principally the Peregrines *Falco peregrinus* (Photo 2), the Gyrfalcon *Falco rusticolus*, the Saker Falcon *Falco cherrug*, and the Merlin *Falco columbarius*. In some parts of Central Asia and Kazakhstan, Golden Eagles (*Aquila chrysaetos*) are traditionally used to hunt smaller fur animals, such as foxes. Arab falconers favor the long-winged

falcons in pursuit of an ancient art that represents links with a way of life that has changed in the upheavals of massive social and economic change (Michell 1900).



Photo 2: A group of Indian falconers with its favorite special falcons as Sakers (*Falco cherrug*) and Peregrine (*Falco peregrinus*)

(Photo Credit: D.C. Phillott, after James, Edmund Harting, Bibliotheca Accipitraria).

The geographical origins of falconry are yet to be discovered, but there is good reason to believe that the sport might have originated in the Middle East. It is believed that the earliest evidence of falconry was found on an Assyrian bas-relief from the period of Sargon II from 722-705 BC (Epstein 1943). Traditional Arab falconry (*qans*) necessitates the development and successful completion of three different but complex tasks: trapping, training, and hunting, the skills for each of which have been honed through countless generations of people that were as much a part of the deserts of the Arabian Peninsula as their prey (Photo 3).

The traditional season for falconry starts in the Autumn (now it is changing), around October each year, when the cooler weather conditions welcome the first batch of the first migrating falcons, moving south from their northern breeding grounds in the Arabian Peninsula. Trappers congregate in

Falconry....

camp at critical points along the migration paths to lure and trap falcons using a variety of baits, including songbirds, pigeons, and small mammals, and traps such as the Bal-Chatri Noose Trap. The traditional falconer uses various traditional equipment and types of furniture for trapping birds of prey (Photo 4). Also, the use of traditional various types of equipment (handmade) and preparation of the furniture for the birds of prey (specific species and age) is an art and a kind of practice for an expert falconer (Vyas 1999), without such special knowledge about it, the falconer would be zero in the falconry. However, falconers use desired to train various species of falcons, the most sought-after ones are the Saker falcon (*saqr*) *Falco Cherruq* and the Peregrine *Falco peregrinus*, with the more prominent female saker (*al hurr*), and peregrine (*shahin*) being preferred over the rest (Photo 5).



Photo 3: Two Arabian falconers in traditional outfits with their Lanner falcon (*Falco biarmicus*) (after James, Edmund Harting, Bibliotheca Accipitraria).

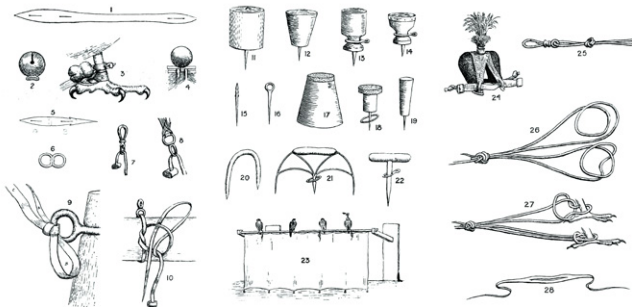


Photo 4: Illustration of traditional falconers using various hand-made equipment and types of furniture for trapping birds of prey.

Training of falcons begins immediately in the trapping camps where the priority is to accustom them to being held and entice them to feed by offering them scraps of meat while being handled. As opposed to the European falconers, who took 50 days to train a wild falcon, the Arabs could get a bird ready in only two weeks because they were never separated from them (Thesiger 1999). The trainer (*saqqar*) would talk to the falcon, stroke their feathers, and hood-unhood (*burga*) them. The falcon quickly learns to fly to a lure (*tilwah*) made from the wings of a prey species, and this lure may be used to entice the falcon back after every flight.



Photo 5: The illustration of an Indian falconer with a trained Shaheen Falcon *Falco peregrinus perginator*

In a typical falconry trial, a trained falcon would be unhooded and launched, quickly sighting the fleeing prey and starting its pursuit. The thrill of pitting a Saker Falcon or Peregrine Falcon against a Houbara Bustard (*Chlamydotis undulata*) is that these slender falcons ordinarily would not tackle a bird the size of the bustard but must be trained to do so. The falcon will stoop on the Houbara, knocking it to the ground but seldom killing it with the first strike. The falconer will then race to the spot to retrieve the falcon, feeding it some tasty morsel from the Houbara, such as its brains (or, usually, they killed a

pigeon before and moved the falcon away from the dead Houbara by giving it some pigeon to feed upon). The falconers were mindful not to want the falcon to get used to eating Houbara while hunting before hooding the falcon. Traditionally, at the end of the hunting season, coinciding with the arrival of spring during March or April, the trained falcons were released back into the wild, presumably allowing them to return northward, back to their breeding areas after a foreshortened but eventful migration.

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Short Birding Notes



Forest Owlet *Heteroglaux blewitti* preying on Garden Lizard *Calotes* sp.

On 29th January 2023, we observed a pair of Forest Owlets (*Heteroglaux blewitti*) in their usual habitat. The pair was vocalizing the whole evening, but we could not get any visual on them; we waited at a distance, observing the valley for any movement. After a few minutes, I heard one individual close by and followed a trail leading downhill of the same valley. We followed the duetting calls of this pair and saw one individual flying to a tree. When we approached a bit closer, we were surprised to witness a forest owl catching a garden lizard (*Calotes* sp.) And feeding on the lizard. By the time we reached the Owllet had eaten almost the whole lizard, and the remains, including its tail, were visible, which was later also photographed for evidence of the hunting behaviour of this pair. I have been observing this pair for two years now, and they have successfully multiplied in numbers and established new territories around the same valley.

Saswat Mishra, Feneel Patel: Dadra and Nagar Haveli (Union Territory of India)



Sighting of Sirkeer Malkoha *Taccocua leschenaultii* at Jambughoda WLS

On the morning of 1st April 2023, Parag Parikh, Vatsal Patel and I decided to go towards Pavagadh and Jambughoda. First, we went to Bhat eco campsite and clicked on common birds found there for around half an hour. Then we drove around Jambughoda randomly clicking the birds and enjoying nature. Suddenly, while driving around (towards Hathini Mata road), Parag Parikh spotted a bird in the grass by the road and drew my attention to it. I immediately focused my camera on it and identified it as a Sirkeer Malkoha (*Taccocua leschenaultii*) that was busy eating insects. We quietly got out of the car and clicked a few pictures but noticing us, the bird flew to a nearby tree. We followed it and clicked a few more shots. Then we retreated back to the car to see if it came out in the open again and it indeed did — oblivious to our presence and snacking on insects in peace. I could not believe my eyes when I saw it because it is a lifer for me and to find it here so unexpectedly was truly breathtaking. The Sirkeer Malkoha has been generally spotted in Dahod, Rajkot and Nalsarovar, however as per my knowledge it was last spotted in Jambughoda in 2015-16. No records of this bird have been made since then in Jambughoda and hence my sighting is a noticeable find. Editor Note – The Sirkeer Malkoha is an uncommon bird and is found in many parts of Gujarat.

Parag Parikh, Rajvi Parikh: (rajvi77@gmail.com), **Vatsal Patel:** Baroda



Ringed Demoiselle Crane *Grus virgo* near Nal Sarovar Bird Sanctuary

While photographing the birds at Wadala dam, Nalsarovar, we saw a big flock of about 5000+ Demoiselle Cranes (*Grus virgo*) in the evening. All the birds may be there for roosting, small groups were coming and joining the flock one by one. I knew that there could be tagged birds as nowadays more bird tagging is done, and I have heard about tagged Demoiselle Cranes in Gujarat. While checking the first day's evening photos, I could not find such a picture, but the next evening, we went there and clicked so many photographs. I saw one bird that may have a tag on its leg, and we tried to click as many pictures as we could because the birds were moving slowly. It was a very tough job that needed extreme luck to see or click a bird's leg in a flock of thousands of birds.

Finally, we found Demoiselle Crane with a Green colour tag on the right thigh with mark H 87. The next day, I searched for the ringer of that Demoiselle Crane with some friends, including Mr Bohra of Rajasthan, and on the Internet. After some hard work in search, I finally found the details and got a reply from the ringer, Nyambayar Batbayar. This demoiselle crane was ringed by my team on 22 July 2021 in Khuiten Valley (N48.24453, E110.7648). Thank you very much for sharing this wonderful observation and photos. Demoiselle Crane was tagged in Mongolia at Khurkh Valley, which is on the China-Mongolia border.

Jaysukh Parekh 'Suman': 'Shilp', Plot No. 19A, Vardhman Nagar, Hospital Road Bhuj, Katchchh. nisusuman@gmail.com

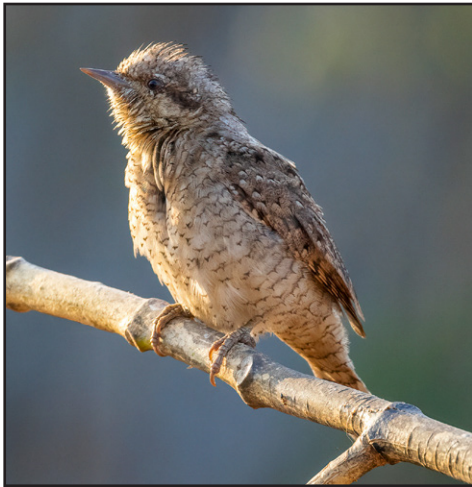


Orange-headed Thrush *Geokichla citrina* in Bharuch

I have made a small kitchen garden in my backyard in GNFC Township, Bharuch. On 7 June 2018, I saw a bird here that was unfamiliar to me. At first, I thought it was an Indian Pitta (*Pitta brachyura*). After some time, it came out and I could see it properly. I identified it as an Orange-headed Thrush (*Geokichla citrina*). I took some photos and confirmed the identification. It was seen in the GNFC Township again by Darshan Patel on 14 June 2018. As per senior birders of this area, this species is rare in the Bharuch area and was recorded for the first time in GNFC Township. The Orange-headed Thrush is seen in Saurashtra and South Gujarat. This sighting from Bharuch adds to the records of the species from our region.

Hiren Majithiya: Bharuch. hirenmajithiya@outlook.com

Photo: Devvratsinh Mori



Juvenile Eurasian Wryneck *Jynx torquilla* at Aji, Rajkot

On the morning of March 1st, 2023, I, along with Dr. Ketan Bavishi and Maharshi Dave, visited the Aji 2 dam area in search of the White Stork (*Ciconia ciconia*). Unfortunately, we were unable to locate any White Storks that day. However, while returning from the area, I spotted a small bird, which, upon checking the camera, turned out to be a Eurasian Wryneck (*Jynx torquilla*). I believe it is juvenile based on the pin feathers on its head and its small size. I know there are no records of juvenile Eurasian Wrynecks sightings in Gujarat. I am sending the photos to confirm this sighting and to determine whether the bird is a juvenile. If it is, are there any early records of juvenile Eurasian Wrynecks in Gujarat?

Priyank Dhami: Rajkot



Sighting of Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva* at Mangrol

During my Sunday morning visit on 9th April 2023 to Mangrol with friends, I was at the New Jetty developing area. Being a birder, I have taken my camera along with me. There were many bird flocks, and most of them were routine species. I have seen one bird flock setting over a cement tetrapod and the distance was far away for my 70-300 mm lens, but for record purposes, I have taken one picture of them. After editing the picture, I sent it to my birding mentor and friend, Dr. Gaurang Bagda, for identification verification and he told me that there are near about 30 Pacific Golden Plovers (*Pluvialis fulva*) and many Lesser Sand Plovers (*Charadrius mongolus*). My experience justified that many times pictures/videos taken during our routine field trip for record purposes can be very useful for finding unusual species & behavior of the bird for that particular area.

Dr Anand Vachhani: vachhanianand@gmail.com



Sighting of Puff-throated Babbler *Palloroneum ruficeps* and chicks at Padam Dungari, Vyara, Navasari

On the late evening of 9th July 2021, we, and Bhavesh Trivedi, returned from a nearby trek to eco campsite of Padam Dungari, Navsari District. We saw 2 chicks of birds at side of inside road of the campsite. They were fledglings, could not fly, but jumped slowly in dry moist leaf beds. I could not identify the chicks of which species. Waited there a few minutes and a bird perched to a nearby bush of chicks. I instantly identified bird as a female Puff-throated Babbler (*Palloroneum ruficeps*). In a minute, chicks and bird disappear into the bush. By this observation, it is confirmed that Puff-throated Babbler has brood there in the surrounding area of Padam Dungari. The Bird is an uncommon resident in the forest belt of Gujarat (Ganpule et al. 2022). There are records of bird sightings in Ratanmahal, Shoolpaneshwar, and Dang forest.

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



Note on Blue-throated Flycatcher *Cyornis rubeculoides* in Gir

I attended a nature education camp by Sky Forest Youth Club at the Batheshwar Campsite near Jamwala, Gir last winter. During one of our treks on 17th January 2023, campers noticed a small dead bird and discussed that it was a Tickell's Blue Flycatcher (*Cyornis tickelliae*) ubiquitous in that area. When it was given to me to check whether it was still alive, I realized the bird had been dead for quite some time. However, we couldn't figure out the cause of death. While examining, I immediately noticed the blue color extending over the throat and realized it was, in fact, a Blue-throated Flycatcher (*Cyornis rubeculoides*). The ID was later confirmed with Mr. Bhavesh Trivedi, an experienced birdwatcher from Rajkot. The habitat was a typical riverine belt along the Dhatardi River, and the canopy mainly consisted of Karanj (*Millettia pinnata*) and Jambu (*Syzygium* sp.) trees. The shaded, moist stretch along the small river and the abundance of small flying insects seemed to make for an ideal habitat for the bird. There are only a few records of this bird from Gujarat and most of them are around wintertime, indicating some seasonal movements or migration. Most areas where it's found in Gujarat seem to have populations of Tickell's Blue Flycatcher residing there as well. This would explain this bird's surprisingly smaller number of sightings since it is often mistaken as a Tickell's Blue Flycatcher and overlooked.

Shivam Bhatt: Ahmedabad



Sighting of Common Swift *Apus apus* at Nal Sarovar

On 24th June 2023, I, Mr Ashokbhai Mashru and Manojbhai Finava went to Nal Sarovar, Sanand, Gujarat. We went there for Bridle Tern (*Onychoprion anaethetus*) but could not locate it. So, I was capturing some birds around. At that time, two large swift along with Wire-tailed Swallows (*Hirundo smithii*). Initially, I thought it was Barn swallow (*Hirundo rustica*), because large size and the cloudy weather could not allow for a proper look. So, I took some photos and we went into water. After checking my photos at home, it looks different bird than a Barn swallow. It is long, large, swift, with a deeply forked tail, black-brown mantle, small off-white patch on forehead and throat, not white rump. So, it is Common Swift (*Apus apus*). I sent the picture to Mr Prasad Ganpule, he confirmed it is Common Swift. Common Swift is a vagrant in Gujarat. Isolated records from Kachchh and Saurashtra. Probably occurs as an autumn passage migrant in Gujarat but is overlooked due to identification difficulties. Still, this sighting in June is somewhat more interesting. We urge bird watchers to be keener about the identification of this bird. I am thankful to Mr. Prasad Ganpule for identification help.

Gaurang Bagda: 22/44, 'Ujash', Morarinagar, Near Alpha school-2, Junagadh- 362001.
gaurangbagda@gmail.com



Leucistic Sarus Crane *Antigone antigone* sighting at Bherai, Kheda

On Sunday, 21st May 2023, I set out for a birding trip to Bherai wetlands in Kheda. Bherai wetlands is a birder's paradise. There are many birds like Flamingoes, Sarus (*Antigone antigone*), Painted Stork, Herons, Ducks, Lapwings, and many others. While clicking Flamingoes, the call of Sarus was heard. Upon following the call from Sarus, I approached to click them and surprise awaited there. I noticed unusual, uncommon, leucistic Sarus in the flock of Sarus. Sarus is the tallest flying bird, a grey crane with a red head and upper neck. Leucistic Sarus is a rare sighting. It was white with a red head and upper neck.

Manish Sitlani: manisitlani@yahoo.com



Leucistic Jungle Babbler *Argya striata* at Anand District

I work at ONGC as a Vigilance officer and usually do my duty at field Crude oil line check-ups at Kheda, Anand, and Vadodara District. On 30th July 2012 at around 12.30 hrs, I noticed a flock of Jungle babblers (*Argya striata*) at Dadavadi Farmhouse (22°54'05.09"-72°89'10.500"), Valasan village, Anand district they were feeding rice and insects on the ground. Suddenly I notice an unusual colour babbler on an unannounced visit to their feeding location, and immediately I capture it later on, I realize it is a leucistic Babbler.

Sahdevsinh Zala: email: wildlifesz2005@gmail.com



Sighting of Leucistic Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollisat* at Barvada, Junagadh.

It was a hot afternoon, on date 7th May 2023, 2nd day of the leopard census 2023. We were crossing a small check dam amidst farmlands and grazing land, I witnessed a familiar water bird I could not identify. It was a Little Grebe (*Tachybaptus ruficollisat*), but mostly with bright colours. Later, I sent the image to Dr. Gaurang Bagda, Junagadh, who identified the bird as Little Grebe with Leucistic Little Grebe/ Diluted Little Grebe. I found a broad grey line from head to back, a light green colour chest, and a whitish belly. Around 2 p.m., the bird was observed swimming in the water, occasionally coming out on the ground and trying to rest. However, the small check dam was filled with unseasonal summer rainwater, and the place seemed new to the bird as it didn't seem familiar. It looked restless, also frightened easily by the red-wattled lapwings. I thank Dr. Gaurang Bagda, Junagadh, for the bird identification.

Vishvajeetsinh Solanki: 31, 2nd street, Radhanagar Society, Girnar Darvaja, Junagadh-362001. vishvajeet.solanki@gmail.com



Sighting of Leucistic Rufous-tailed lark *Ammomanes phoenicura* at Jamnagar

Finding a leucistic Rufous-tailed lark (*Ammomanes phoenicura*) when I am going birding with my Canon S x 540hs camera in the early morning of 8th November 2022, at Fulzar-2 dam located near Daltungi village 40 km away from Jamnagar city. A Pair of Rufous-tailed larks: one was normal colour, and another was leucistic. Both are foraging & feeding grass seeds on the north side sloped soil wall of the dam. It's feeding for almost 30 minutes in the same location.

Anish Khira: Email: khira.anish1985@gmail.com



The Crested Bunting *Emberiza lathami* at Foothill of Ranitunk, Banaskantha

On 26th August 2023, the crested bunting was sighted during my bird trail with my friends near Ranitunk Hill beside Dantiwada Dam, Banaskantha. I saw a bird preening its wings and body in the distance, which I initially believed was a male Indian robin due to its feather colouration. However, when I approached it slowly, I noticed a unique black crest on its head. As soon as I took my first shot, I realized it was a male Crested Bunting (*Emberiza lathami*). The crested bunting has a spiky crest and distinctive appearance with glossy black feathers, bright chestnut wings for males, streaky dirt-brown feathers, and duller wings for females. They are hill specialists typically found in rocky, bushy hillsides and terraced fields, moving around in pairs or small flocks. This male bird was sighted alone in the bushes at the foothill of Ranitunk. Their short song begins with buzzy notes and ends with mellow whistling, while their call is a hard "chik" (E-bird). Only thirteen sightings of this beautiful bird have been reported on eBird from Banaskantha, including this one. This sighting of the rarely reported crested bunting highlights the dynamic nature of local bird populations in Banaskantha.

Tarun Sutaria (Tarun'S): Palanpur, Banaskantha. tarun.vets@gmail.com



Sighting of Masked Booby *Sula dactylatra* at Porbandar coast

On 30th April 2023, Punitbhai Karia, my mother Ami, and I were birding along the Porbandar Coast. Porbandar has several waders' coastal birds that are both resident and wintering species. At around 7h00, I was scanning a big group of Gulls including Lesser-black Backed and suddenly saw a different looking larger bird and photographed it. I immediately identified it as an adult Masked Booby and slowly approached it to take a clear shot. Later on after a couple of hours, I spotted another adult individual in the same area. Both birds were always seen with gulls. The Masked Booby is a pelagic bird which is usually found in the seas though there are around 25 records from the Okha and Dwarka region in Gujarat. I suspect these are wind-blown birds that have been drifted to the coast due to the recent rains around that time. There are also some records of injured/dehydrated Masked Booby(s) in the state but these individuals looked healthy and were flying normally. I would like to immensely thank Punitbhai Karia for accompanying us and providing local insights.

Madhav Murthy: - madhavmgis@gmail.com

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To contribute, please submit your submission (Full-length article/short note/short birding note) in accordance to the following guidelines:

When a bird species is first mentioned, both the English and scientific name must be given; thus, “Laggar Falcon *Falco jugger*”, thereafter, only the English name, thus, “Laggar Falcon” will suffice. English, Scientific names (Italic) and Birds Classification should follow the South Asia Checklist, or Please refer to “A field guide to the birds of Gujarat. Bird Conservation Society, Gujarat.”

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Book & Book Chapter

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The Editor, FLAMINGO GUJARAT – Bulletin of Gujarat Birds.

Editor's E-mail: editor@flamingogujarat.com or devvratinhji.flamingogujarat@gmail.com