



### 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.

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### 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 Sx 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.

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### 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.

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### 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.

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## References

Ganpule, P., Varu, M., Trivedi, B., & Raina, A. D. 2022. *A field guide to the birds of Gujarat*. Bird Conservation Society, Gujarat. Ahmedabad. 488pp.