

Sighting of Red Throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus* near Vadi Lake, Navsari District, South Gujarat

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Photo: Kavya Shah

On the 30th of December, 2023 my team and I were exploring Vadi Lake in Navsari District of South Gujarat when we came across this beautiful passerine bird called Red Throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus* wading in the grass along with the flock of Painted Storks, Indian Pond Heron and Purple Heron near the wetland. We came across this unusual bird during Bird Census 2023 organized by Gujarat Forest Department. Members of Navsari NGOs were with us. The bird was later identified by expert birders as Red throated Pipit (how can a pipit wade). We observed this individual at around 7.30 am searching for food in the short grass near a wetland at Vadi Lake. It was constantly moving along the edge of the wetland. This is probably the first record from South Gujarat and we assume it might be a winter visitor. We visited the same location on the following day (31st December 2023) but it was not observed.

More than 40 species of *Anthus* pipits are currently recognized worldwide (Tyler 2004). Many are long-distance migrants and most are difficult to identify in the field (Hall 1961, King 1981). About 14-15 cm in size, it is a distinctive pipit with seasonal differences in plumage. Male in breeding plumage has deep buffish-pink supercilium, buffish-brown lores and ear-coverts; pale brown upperparts with broad blackish-brown streaking, paler margins of mantle feathers usually forming double "V" or "braces"; primaries and secondaries are blackish-brown with narrow buff edgings, tertials and greater and median wing-

coverts dark brown with buffish-white tips and edges, lesser coverts dark brown with paler brown edges. Breeding female differs from breeding males in having pink breasts and heads less intensive and less extensive, and upper breasts usually buff and more heavily streaked; non-breeding females resemble males but lack a pink tinge on the supercilium and throat.

Its diet mainly consists of insects, other invertebrates, and some vegetative matter. Forages on the ground, often in muddy areas, and among the seaweed on the seashore; adopts horizontal posture, walks quickly, and wags tail often. Usually in small, loose flocks outside the breeding season.

References

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