



### Sighting of Black Eagle *Ictinaetus malaiensis* at Pipalset Village, Dist. Valsad

On April 28, 2024, I was driving through the jungle near Pipalset village (taluka Kaparada, dist. Valsad), to collect seeds as a part of my duty. I observed a raptor flying, clicked few pictures, of the bird and reviewed but was unable to identify. To make sure I checked on the Merlin app and asked few experts, and finally it was identified as Black Eagle *Ictinaetus malaiensis*. There was also a Shikra *Accipiter bandius* flying along with Black Eagle for few moments. The location was at the junction forest and a village. According to published records there have been two previous sightings of Black Eagle in areas near Rajkot (Trivedi & Acharya, 2021; Dhami, 2021). The Field Guide to the Birds of Gujarat describes the Black Eagle as "rare winter visitor in some well-wooded parts of the state" (Ganpule 2022). My observation of the species in late April hints that Black eagle might prolong their stay in the wintering areas.

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### Sighting of Chestnut-tailed Starling *Sturnia malabarica* at Jamnagar, Gujarat

Ranjit Sagar Dam at Jamnagar, is a popular birding area. On the morning of 25th January 2024, I went for bird-watching along with Yashodhan Bhatia and Ashish Pankhania. We observed common birds which are usually sighted in the parking lot area. Red vented bulbul *Pycnonotus cafer*, Common myna *Acridotheres tristis*, Brahminy starling *Sturnia pagadarum*, Rose-ringed parakeets *Psittacula krameri*, Coppersmith barbet *Psilopogon haemacephalus* were present. There was also a pair of Brahminy Kite *Haliastur indus* busy in nest building activity on a nearby Pipal tree *Ficus religiosa*. While I was engaged in shooting the courtship behaviour of Brahminy Kites, Yashodhan Bhatia spotted a Chestnut-tailed Starling *Sturnia malabarica* on a nearby gulmohar tree *Royal poinciana*. He whispered and called me to see it. I was excited as it was a lifer for me and took few record shots. There are regular sightings of Chestnut tailed starlings in forests areas of Barda hill ranges in Jamnagar, as they breed there, but it is a rarity to spot them in a garden area like Ranjit Sagar. All in all, it was a fantastic sighting for me and made my day!

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### Different behavior of Steppe Eagle *Aquila nipalensis*

It was early morning, January 21<sup>st</sup> 2024, during peak winter at Little Rann of Kachchh. I was enjoying the morning drive and looking for wildlife around with my family. We found harriers and a Steppe Eagle *Aquila nipalensis* perched on the ground. While driving through the area, we observed one raptor sitting on the ground. I had not seen a raptor sitting on the ground with its wings slightly spread before, so I found it strange. We could not recognize the bird from far away, so we drove near it. We then stopped at a safe distance and saw that it was a Steppe Eagle. At first, I thought it might be hiding, but there was no other raptor, predator or car around, and it did not panic or fly away when we drove towards it. After one month, I observed similar behaviour from another Steppe Eagle on 9<sup>th</sup> March 2024 at Thol Bird Sanctuary near Ahmedabad. In this case, the Steppe Eagle was lying so close to the ground that it looked like it was trying to hide from danger or was injured. The wings were spread a little more than what I had seen in the Little Rann of Kachchh. But again, there was no danger around. With curiosity, I crawled towards it and photographed it from a safe distance. It allowed a close approach, and I was thrilled to get photographs from a short distance. I could not understand the reasons for this behaviour. On contacting Mr Nirav Bhatt, who has extensive experience with the Raptors identification. He said, this behaviour is commonly seen in Steppe Eagles and has been photographed many times. This is probably because the bird is resting or trying to camouflage itself on the approach of a car or a predator. The Steppe Eagle is known to rest or roost on the ground (GRIN 2021).

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