

Shrike....

migrate in India and is typically found in forested areas during winter. The sighting at Vansda National Park adds significant data to Gujarat's bird distribution records. This cuckoo is an impressive bird, known for its distinctive appearance and striking plumage. In the field, this species can be identified by its vibrant chestnut wings and a long, graduated tail that gives it an elegant profile in flight. It has a dark, glossy black head, neck and upperparts, contrasting sharply with its white underparts. One of the most notable features is its prominent crest, which adds to its unique silhouette. Typically found in dense forests and well-wooded areas, the Chestnut-winged Cuckoo is known to forage actively for insects, often perching conspicuously as it scans for prey. Its elusive nature and striking colouration make it a prized sighting for birdwatchers.

The reappearance of the Chestnut-winged Cuckoo in Gujarat after such a long interval raises queries about changes in the

bird's migratory patterns and habitat preferences. Vansda National Park, with its mixed forest types, provides a suitable environment for many migratory birds, suggesting that similar habitats might support more vagrant species.

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Sighting of Orange-breasted Green Pigeon *Treron bicinctus* in South Gujarat

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Photo: Rajarshi Uttambhai Gangurde

As a native of Dang district, on February 25th 2024, at around 09:30 hours, I was birdwatching at a roadside area between Jamalpada and Mahal road (20°52'01.9"N, 73°40'19.4"E) in Dang. I spotted a small bird in the canopy and waited for it to reappear on a branch for a clear view, but another movement distracted my attention. A green pigeon was walking along the branch, and as it turned towards the light, I clearly saw its orange coloured breast, confirming it as the Orange-breasted Green Pigeon *Treron bicinctus*. The bird moved along the branch for few minutes before settling. It remained there for about 15 minutes. During this time, I managed to take several clear photographs. The bird made no sound. I searched nearby trees for other individuals or a flock but found none. This area of Jamalpada is located on the edge of Purna Wildlife Sanctuary. For confirmation, the photographs were shared with a few birding experts at the Department of Zoology,

Gujarat University. 'A Field Guide to the Birds of Gujarat' (Ganpule 2022) was also referred for confirming the identification. The morphological description matched the photographs, showing yellowish-green underparts with a band of lilac across the upper breast, followed by orange on the lower breast. The under tail-coverts were cinnamon, edged with pale yellow on the outer and longest feathers. The tail was slaty grey above with a broad blackish sub-terminal band (except on the central pair of rectrices) and black below with a grey tip (Ali & Ripley, 1983).

As per information provided by the range forest officer of the Gujarat forest department, Dang district encompasses tropical moist deciduous forest and includes the northern part of the Sahyadri mountain range, which forms part of the Western Ghats. Orange-breasted Green Pigeon, known to inhabit the Himalayas, as well as the hills of India, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka (Grimmett et al., 2011), exhibits gregarious behaviour, frugivorous diet and arboreal habits, similar to other green pigeon species. These birds are commonly found in evergreen and moist deciduous environments (Ali & Ripley, 1983).

The abundance of various ficus species, particularly the Gular fig *Ficus glomerata*, provides a staple food source for numerous bird species, including pigeons. After observing the forest area for six months, I noted a significant presence of Gular fig trees in Dang forest, which supports a diverse bird population. Consequently, the combination of habitat

suitability and resource availability increases the chances of the sightings of Orange-breasted Green Pigeon in this region.

The first photographic sighting of Orange-breasted Green Pigeon was from Gir National Park (Dave 2020). According to the Checklist of Birds of Gujarat (Ganpule 2020) one sighting of Orange-breasted Green Pigeon is shown as 'Vagrant' to Gujarat. A Fieldguide to the Birds of Gujarat (Ganpule 2022) has shown a solitary record of the species in Gir (Gujarat). In the Checklist of Birds of Surat-Dangs (Jambu and Patel 2021), this bird is not listed. Therefore, this sighting marks the second record of the species in Gujarat.

I was fortunate to spot the bird by positioning myself right under the tree, which provided a clear view. The leaves of the tree displayed shades of yellow, orange, and green, which likely made it difficult to spot the bird due to its excellent camouflage. This camouflage is perhaps why the bird had not been sighted previously in densely canopied forest areas like in Dang.

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Sighting of the Fulvous Whistling Duck *Dendrocygna bicolor* in Surat

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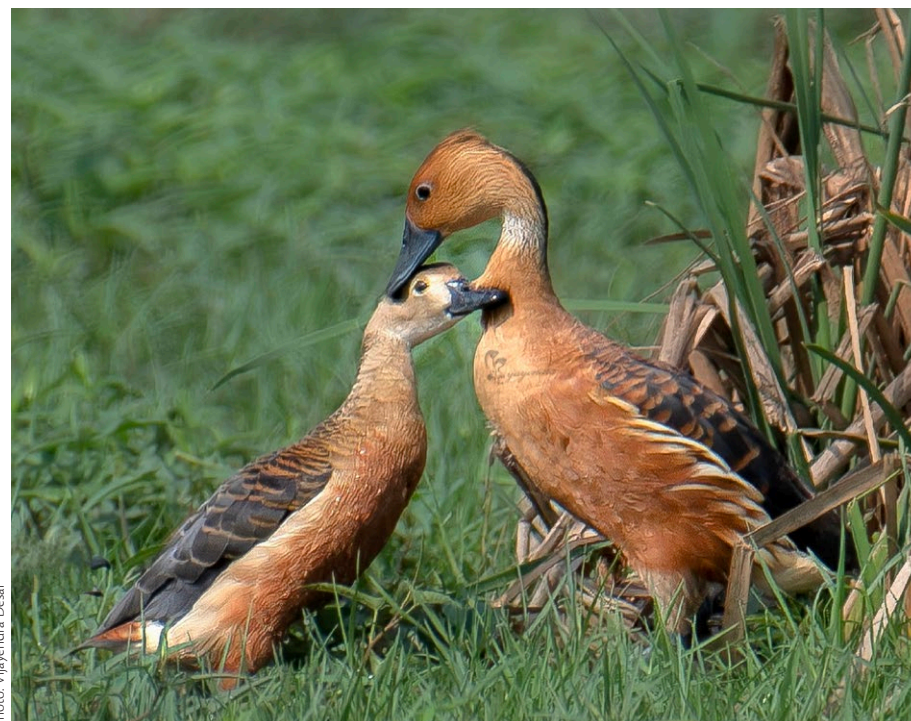


Photo: Vijayendra Desai

With my friends, Dr Neha and Kashyap Jariwala, I went for bird photography in the surrounding area of Damka village near Surat, on April 19th 2024. During this outing, I identified a different kind of duck, which was recognized as the Fulvous Whistling Duck *Dendrocygna bicolor*.

Fulvous Whistling Duck is a rich caramel coloured duck with a long neck and legs. It has blue-grey legs and bill and prominent pale/white stripes in the flanks. In flight, it has all dark wings and is usually found in flocks in marshes, marshy ponds and flooded rice fields. The species is active day and night and frequently gives whistled calls (eBird 2024). This sighting is notable for several reasons. Fulvous Whistling Duck is a vagrant to Gujarat (Ganpule 2016).