



Sighting of Leucistic Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius* in Anand district

This small shorebird, observed on May 13, 2023, at Deva Village, Mahi Canal, Anand District, exhibited partial leucism, with white feathers on its wings, back, and tail, while the primary feathers and crown retained their normal brown colouration. Its eye-ring was distinctly yellow, and its legs were pale pink.

Leucism and albinism are rare genetic conditions affecting pigmentation in birds, leading to partial or complete loss of colouration. In Gujarat, several documented instances involving various bird species provide insight into these phenomena in the state (Khachar 1983; Parasharya et al. 1996; Patel 2016; Trivedi 2016; Vaghashiya 2016; Rafique 2017; Patel 2018; Shah 2018; Bhattacharya et al. 2020; Kaur et al. 2023).

The wetlands of Kheda and Anand are vital ecological zones, providing essential services such as water supply, agricultural irrigation, and critical habitats for migratory and resident bird species. A Sarus Crane (*Antigone antigone*) with significant white colouration on its neck and lower body was observed during a summer congregation at Bherai Village Wetland, Kheda (Kaur et al., 2023). This bird inhabited a heavily polluted reservoir, where hunting with poison has been reported.

Environmental degradation caused by pollution and unsustainable practices threatens the health of these ecosystems and their dependent bird populations. Documenting such rare occurrences offers valuable insights into pigmentation anomalies among bird species in Gujarat, enriching the understanding of avian colour aberrations in the region.

Vishal S. Mistry: Coexistence Consortium, TDU, Bengaluru, India. vmistry@vncindia.org

Anirudhkumar Vasava: Voluntary Nature Conservancy, 101, Radha Darshan, Behind Union Bank, Vallabh Vidyanagar 388120. Salim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History, Anaikatti, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu 641108, Gujarat, India. aniruddh.vasava@gmail.com



Sighting of Red-necked Stint *Calidris ruficollis* at Mahuva, Bhavnagar

On May 13, 2024, we reached Malan Bandhara (check dam) at 5:30 PM for birdwatching, specifically in search of the Black-bellied Tern (*Sterna acuticauda*), which was not recorded in Mahuva. During the hot summer days, most wetlands had dried up, except for Malan Bandhara, which attracted a diverse congregation of birds. We thoroughly searched for the Black-bellied Tern using binoculars but could not find it. However, we observed a flock of approximately 500 birds, including the Tibetan Sand-Plover (*Anarhynchus atrifrons*), Ruddy Turnstone (*Arenaria interpres*), Kentish Plover (*Anarhynchus alexandrinus*), Little Stint (*Calidris minuta*), Terek Sandpiper (*Xenus cinereus*), Curlew Sandpiper (*Calidris ferruginea*), and Black-bellied Plover (*Pluvialis squatarola*). To our delight, we spotted a Red-necked Stint (*Calidris ruficollis*) among them, displaying its beautiful breeding plumage. The bird was easily identifiable due to its entire breeding colours, which were later confirmed by experts based on high-quality photographs. After some time, the whole group of waders flew in the opposite direction and settled in a distant area inaccessible to us. The Red-necked Stint was previously sighted on May 16, 2019, in the salt pans near Victor Port, Rajula. This observation was documented in FLAMINGO Gujarat (Bhil, 2019). The aerial distance between the two locations is 22 km, suggesting that the Red-necked Stint may visit this area regularly. However, a definitive conclusion cannot be drawn due to limited observations and difficulty detecting a single tiny bird within a large flock. The status and distribution of this species in Gujarat are classified as "Vagrant, winter isolated records from coastal Kachchh and Saurashtra" (Ganpule et al., 2022).

Batuk Bhil: Po. Nikol, Taluka: Mahuva Dist. Bhavnagar. batukbhil@gmail.com

Mahendra Bhil: Po. Nikol, Taluka: Mahuva Dist. Bhavnagar. mahendrabhil@gmail.com



Sighting of Colour Aberrant Red-wattled Lapwings *Vanellus indicus* at Rajkot

On November 18, 2023, I was birdwatching near Parapipaliya village, Rajkot, with my friends Dharmrajsinh Jadeja and Pinkesh Tanna. While heading towards AIMS Hospital Road, we noticed a water-filled ditch on the roadside. We stopped to look closer and spotted a flock of 35 Red-wattled Lapwings (*Vanellus indicus*), among which two had white-coloured wings. We took photographs of them.

Recently, I posted these photos on social media, and Mr. Ashok Mashru, a senior birdwatcher, inquired about the details of the observation. He forwarded the pictures and information to Mr. Hein van Grouw, Senior Curator in the Bird Group, Department of Life Sciences, The Natural History Museum, UK. Van Grouw et al. (2016) had previously studied and reported colour aberrations in Indian birds in the journal *Dutch Birding*.

His response regarding our observation is as follows:

"This is an interesting aberration. First of all, it is not leucism. Typically, aberrations affecting pigments (melanin), such as Dilution, Brown, and Ino, impact all pigments across the plumage. In this particular case of these Lapwings, only the melanin on the back and the wings (wing coverts) is affected, while the rest of the plumage appears normal. The brownish pigment on the back and wings is the same as the black pigment elsewhere on the bird, as both are eumelanin. However, the brownish form is not fully synthesized naturally, and the aberration responsible for this different plumage colouration only affects the incompletely synthesized eumelanin. As a result, those parts appear paler than usual, while the initially black parts remain unaffected.

A similar mutation has been observed in other species. While colour aberrations in birds, in general, are rare, this particular mutation is extremely rare. There is no specific name for it, but as far as I know, it can be considered a form of Dilution."

Thus, our observation highlights a sporadic mutation in the Red-wattled Lapwing, making it a significant finding worth noting.

Jaymin Panchasara: B-121, Shashtrinagar, Nana Mava Road, Rajkot. jaymin17288@gmail.com



The Majestic Crab Plover *Dromas ardeola*: A Call for Conservation

As a wildlife and nature photographer, my journey has taken me to various regions of Jamnagar has been filled with awe-inspiring encounters which have provided profound insights into the avian diversity, with the Crab Plover (*Dromas ardeola*) standing out as a species of a particular ecological significance. This distinctive black-and-white bird is primarily restricted to the coastal belt of Jamnagar, a habitat increasingly threatened by urbanization, industrial expansion and other anthropogenic pressures. The region's salt pans and coastal flats serve as crucial roosting and foraging grounds for the crab plover, underscoring the ecological importance of these fragile coastal ecosystems. While the species maintains a relatively stable population in Gujarat, habitat degradation necessitates immediate conservation efforts to ensure its long term survival.

A particularly noteworthy experience occurred during a bird conference in Jamnagar, where I documented a Crab Plover's persistence in capturing an octopus. After seven attempts, the Crab Plover methodically subdued the octopus, sequentially dismantling its limbs to facilitate feeding. This rare behavioral display offered valuable insights into the species' feeding strategies and adaptability within its marine environment.

However, this sense of fulfilment is tempered by an acute awareness of the precariousness of the Crab Plover's existence. The conservation of this species extends beyond its own survival, representing a broader commitment to preserving the biodiversity and ecological integrity of coastal ecosystems. Collective efforts must be undertaken to protect "The Black and White Beauty" and the myriad species that share our planet's fragile ecosystems.

Manish Trivedi: 304, Gangeshwar Apartment, Vanda Fali Number - 2, Jamnagar 361001, Gujarat. manish.trivedi011@gmail.com



Sighting of Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica* at Nal Sarovar Bird Sanctuary

On September 27, 2023, at approximately 14:38 hrs, I was immersed in birdwatching at Nal Sarovar Bird Sanctuary. The water levels were notably shallow as I scanned the area with my binoculars, spotting waders such as Kentish Plover (*Anarhynchus alexandrinus*), Little Stint (*Calidris minuta*), and Common Sandpiper (*Actitis hypoleucos*). Suddenly, amidst this flock of waders, I noticed a larger-sized bird. I quickly retrieved my camera and captured photographs of a Bar-tailed Godwit (*Limosa lapponica*). I spent nearly an hour photographing this bird from a close vantage point. The Bar-tailed Godwit is classified as a common to uncommon winter visitor in the coastal areas of Saurashtra and Kachchh in Gujarat while being isolated and rare in inland regions, as documented by Ganpule (2022). This noteworthy sighting represents a significant inland record within the sanctuary's freshwater habitat.

Kamrudin Alvani: Bird guide at Nal Sarovar Bird Sanctuary, Gujarat

References

- Bhil B. 2019 Sighting of Red-necked Stint *Calidris ruficollis* *FLAMINGO Gujarat* Vol. XVII-2 Apr-June 2019 P. 9-10.
- Ganpule, P., Varu, M., Trivedi, B., & Raina, A. D., 2022. A *Field Guide to the Birds of Gujarat*. Bird Conservation Society, Gujarat. Ahmedabad. P. 176
- Kaur, J., Mistry, V., Patel, J., and Sindh P., (2023). Partially leucistic Indian Sarus Crane in Kheda district, Gujarat, India. *Jalaplavit* 13 (2):4:8.
- Khachar, S., 1983. Albino crows and one-way migration in Kutch. *Newsletter for Bird Watchers* 23 (11-12): 12.
- Parasharya B., Chauhan R. & Sukhadia A. G., 1996 A white coot at Kanewal, Gujarat. *Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society* 93 (3): 586.
- Patel, J. H., (2018). Sightings of colour aberrant birds in the Ankleshwar area. *Flamingo* 16 (2): 15–16.
- Patel, M. 2016. Sighting of aberrant coloured Red-wattled Lapwing in LRK. *Flamingo* 14(3):20
- Shah, T. K., Amin, S. M., & Patel, H. J., 2018. A note on progressive greying in Ashy Prinia *Prinia socialis* in Vadodara city, Gujarat, India. *Birding ASIA* 30: 88–89.
- Trivedi, R., 2016. Observations of some colour aberrations in birds seen in Gujarat. *Indian Birds* 12 (2&3): 74–75.
- Vaghashiya, P., 2016. Sighting of aberrant coloured Little Cormorant near Junagadh. *Flamingo* 14 (2): 17.
- Van Grouw, H., Mahabal, A., Sharma, R. M., & Thakur, S. (2016). How common is albinism really? Colour aberrations in Indian birds reviewed. *Dutch Birding*, 38: 301-309.

