

First photographic record of Slaty-legged Crake *Rallina eurizonoides* from Dang District, Gujarat

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The Slaty-legged Crake (*Rallina eurizonoides*) is a secretive, forest-dwelling rail distributed across South and Southeast Asia. In India, it is primarily known from the Himalayan foothills, northeastern India, central India, and the Western Ghats. Due to its elusive behavior and preference for dense undergrowth in moist forests, the species is rarely encountered and remains poorly documented across many parts of its range. The species was not included in the original baseline checklists of Gujarat avifauna and remained unrecorded from the state until 2017.

On 18 June 2026, during a birding survey in the Dang district, Gujarat, we observed and photographed a single Slaty-legged Crake in dense undergrowth within a moist deciduous forest habitat. The bird was detected while moving quietly through thick vegetation adjacent to a seasonal forest stream. It remained visible for several minutes, allowing detailed observation and photographic documentation.

The bird was identified by its distinctive combination of a rich chestnut-rufous head, neck, and upper breast, contrasting white throat, dark brown upperparts, bold black-and-white barring on the flanks and vent, and greyish-green legs. These diagnostic features clearly separated it from other rallids

known from Gujarat, including the Brown Crake (*Zapornia akool*), Ruddy-breasted Crake (*Zapornia fusca*), White-breasted Waterhen (*Amaurornis phoenicurus*), and Slaty-breasted Rail (*Lewinia striata*).

The present record is significant within the context of the species' status in Gujarat and adjoining regions. The first documented occurrence from the region was reported by Saswat Mishra on 26 August 2017 from Madhuban Dam Forest, Dadra & Nagar Haveli. An adult bird accompanied by two juveniles was photographed, suggesting local breeding and constituting a new addition to the regional avifauna (Ganpule, 2020). The second documented record originated from Madhavpur-Ghed, Porbandar District, and was published as a rescue and sighting record in 2020.

Subsequently, a Slaty-legged Crake photographed by Mitul Desai in Vansda National Park, Navsari District, on 12 June 2020 was reviewed in the Third Update to the Gujarat Checklist. Ganpule (2021) noted that only two previous records existed—Madhuban Dam and Madhavpur-Ghed—and considered the Vansda observation as the third record for Gujarat.



The present record from Dang District therefore constitutes the fourth documented record of the Slaty-legged Crake for the state/region and the first photographic record specifically from Dang District. It further extends the known occurrence of the species within the forested landscape of southern Gujarat and strengthens evidence that the species regularly occurs in the northern extension of the Western Ghats biogeographic zone.

Interestingly, three of the four known records from Gujarat and adjoining Dadra & Nagar Haveli have originated from the moist forest belt of southern Gujarat—namely Madhuban Dam, Vansda National Park, and Dang District. These areas are characterized by high rainfall, dense undergrowth, seasonal streams, and moist deciduous to semi-evergreen forests—habitats closely matching those occupied by the species elsewhere in the Western Ghats. The concentration of records in this region suggests that the Slaty-legged Crake may be a scarce resident or an overlooked monsoon breeding visitor rather than a true vagrant.

The species is currently included in the Gujarat bird checklist with the status code "V, MB" (Vagrant, Monsoon Breeder; Ganpule, 2020). However, the growing number of records from southern Gujarat, including direct evidence of breeding near Madhuban Dam and repeated observations from the contiguous forested districts of Navsari and Dang, indicate that targeted surveys during the southwest monsoon may reveal a wider distribution than presently understood.

This observation highlights the ornithological importance of the forests of Dang District and underscores the need for systematic, targeted monitoring of secretive rallids across southern Gujarat.

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Date	Location	Remarks
26 August 2017	Madhuban Dam Forest, Dadra & Nagar Haveli	First record for Gujarat region; adult with two juveniles photographed Saswat Mishra 2017
17 October 2020	Madhavpur-Ghed, Porbandar District	Second documented record from Gujarat -Niranjani 2020
12 June 2020	Vansda National Park, Navsari District	Third documented Gujarat record; photographed by Mitul Desai 2021
18 June 2026	Dang District, Gujarat	First photographic record for Dang District; fourth documented record for Gujarat

References

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