

# Notes on the nesting of Slaty-legged Crake *Rallina eurizonoides* from the Dangs, South Gujarat

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## Introduction

The Slaty-legged Crake *Rallina eurizonoides* is a monsoon migrant in the northernmost part of the Western Ghats in Gujarat. Elsewhere in India it is described as a resident and local migrant of well-wooded, well-watered country, most often seen during the monsoon (Sonawane & Sonawane 2022). Previous sightings in the region include one at Silvassa in August 2017 (S. Mishra) and one in Vandsa National Park in June 2020 (M. Desai). More recently, a pair was recorded in July 2026 at Mahal Campsite, Purna Wildlife Sanctuary, by A. Parikh (eBird checklist, 4 July 2026), and J. Patel photographed the species with chicks at Mahal Campsite on 3 September 2026.

Breeding of the species has been described from Nilambur, Kerala (Murukesh & Balakrishnan 2015), from Bison Valley, Idukki, Kerala (Bison Valley report 2015) and from the Philippines (Kaufman 2011). Here we report an active nest found in August 2026 near Uga Rambhas, Dang district, South Gujarat, and describe the nest, its habitat and the incubation behaviour of the pair. To our knowledge, this is the first nest of the species documented in Gujarat.

## Nesting area and habitat

The nest was found near Uga Rambhas, a small village in Dang district, Gujarat (approximately 20.73°N, 73.48°E), on the road near Chichpada village on the outskirts of Waghai. It was a shaded area where light barely reached the ground even when it was raining. The nest was in a bifurcation of the twigs of a teak tree (*Tectona grandis*) at a height of 86 cm, 6 cm deep and 23 × 24 cm wide (Table 1). A water stream was 20 m away, the main road was around 100 m away, and the nearest village houses were about 500 m away. The nesting area was surrounded by broad-leaved vegetation in which the birds roamed. The forest floor was made of decomposed leaves, with many insects (Figures 1, 2). The trees and plants in the area included teak, umro (*Ficus racemosa*), kesudo (*Butea monosperma*), aavdi, bili, dhamani (local names; scientific names to be confirmed) and bamboo.

## Methods and materials

Observations were made by DP between 29 June and 22 August 2026, and DBP joined him on 3 August (Table 2). From 2 August, the nest was observed from an elevated position on the slope, which gave a direct view of the nest from a distance.

We used a Nikon P1000, a Canon R6 with an RF 200–800 mm lens, 10 × 52 binoculars, a smartphone camera with a telephoto lens, and a Solognac photo-blind hide. We took care not to disturb the birds while observing. The observers went to the nest tree only on 2 August, when the nest was found, and on 19 August, when it was found empty.

We did not see nest building, pairing or courtship behaviour, and we do not know since when the bird had been incubating. The nest was observed from 2 to 16 August 2026 (15 days), and on 19 August the bird had left the nest. The sexes were assigned provisionally from head colour: the female has a less brownish-orange head and the male has a bright orange head (Figures 7, 8).

## Observations and results

**Sightings.** On 29 June 2026, DP saw a reddish bird with a barred belly walking near a stream near Chichpada village and confirmed it as a Slaty-legged Crake (Figure 3). On 14 July he saw a pair at the same place at 17:00. After two weeks of heavy rain he returned on 2 August and found the nest (Table 2; Figure 4).

**Nest.** The nest was made of teak leaves, small twigs and grass or leaf particles, in a bifurcation of a small teak tree at a height of 86 cm (Figure 5, Table 1). The forest floor around the nest was made of decomposed leaves, and many insects were present.

**Incubation behaviour.** Both birds incubated (Table 3). Duty exchanges were mostly seen in the morning, between 07:30 and 07:57. In the evening the bird left the nest for a few minutes and returned after bathing in the nearby stream. Each time a bird left the nest, it carried small twigs or similar material back to the nest, throughout the incubation period (Figure 10). A bird was estimated to incubate for about 6 to 8 hours at a time. Whenever a bird returned to the nest, it used the same path and the same point to enter it. The birds foraged mostly in the nearby broad-leaved vegetation, where they were easily visible, and sometimes called. The male was quite bold: he came very close to the place where we sat and passed us without concern.

**Tolerance to disturbance.** On 3 August, a farmer with bullocks passed just 2 feet from the nest tree, which is a common trail for people, and the incubating bird sat quietly with no panic.

movements. The birds therefore appeared to be habituated to people and cattle passing by.

Eggs and chicks. On 5 August, three eggs were visible through the feathers of the female, as the eggs were mostly hidden by the incubating bird (Table 2). On 14 August, the female left the nest for about 30 minutes, and seven white, oval eggs

were confirmed (Figure 6). On 19 August, the nest was empty, and about five small, black, downy chicks were seen moving with the female in the bushes, in low light and heavy rain. We could not photograph them.

Other birds and animals. The birds and other animals seen in the area are listed in Table 4.

**Table 1. Details of the nest and nesting area**

| Parameter                          | Measurement                                          |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| Nesting tree                       | Teak ( <i>Tectona grandis</i> )                      |
| Nest position                      | Bifurcation of the branches                          |
| Nest material                      | Teak leaves, small twigs and grass or leaf particles |
| Height of the nest above ground    | 86 cm                                                |
| Depth of the nest                  | 6 cm                                                 |
| Width of the nest                  | 23 × 24 cm                                           |
| Eggs                               | 7 white, oval eggs (Figure 6)                        |
| Distance to water stream           | 20 m                                                 |
| Distance to main road              | c. 100 m                                             |
| Distance to nearest village houses | c. 500 m                                             |

**Table 2. Observations at the Uga Rambhas nest, Dang (29 June – 22 August 2026). [DP] = Divyesh Patel; [DBP] = Dharmesh B. Patel.**

| Date            | Observer     | Time           | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|-----------------|--------------|----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 29 June 2026    | [DP]         | evening        | While passing along the Uga Rambhas road near Chichpada village, on the outskirts of Waghai, a single reddish bird with a barred belly was seen walking in vegetation near a stream. It vanished into a bush (Figure 3).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| 14 July 2026    | [DP]         | 17:00          | A pair (a male and a female) was seen in the same area. One bird was calling; the other walked to the stream, bathed and vanished into the bushes.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| 15–31 July 2026 | –            | –              | No visit; heavy rain for two weeks.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| 2 August 2026   | [DP]         | 10:30 to 11:42 | After an hour of watching near the stream, a bird carrying small twigs in its bill was seen roaming near a bush. It stopped near a small teak tree, jumped into the bifurcation of the tree at about 1 m height and was then hidden among small branches. A few minutes later DP walked to the tree and saw a bird sitting quietly on a nest made of leaves and twigs. He withdrew immediately and watched from a distance; the other bird was not around. The bird on the nest was first photographed at 11:42 (Figure 4). |
| 3 August 2026   | [DP] & [DBP] | 16:00 to 18:00 | Observed for two hours. The bird was incubating, sitting quietly with small movements, adjusting its feathers and preening. A farmer with bullocks passed just 2 feet from the nest tree, a common trail for people, and the bird sat quietly with no panic movements. The eggs were not visible from a distance.                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| 5 August 2026   | [DP]         | 10:00 to 12:00 | Observed for two hours. The female was on the nest and three eggs were visible from under the belly feathers. She continued to incubate.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |

| Date           | Observer | Time           | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|----------------|----------|----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 7 August 2026  | [DP]     | 07:00 to 07:45 | The female was on the nest. After a few minutes a bird appeared from nearby broad-leaved bushes with small twigs in its bill, walked quietly to the tree and jumped to the nest. The female jumped down, walked into the bushes and vanished. The male then incubated (duty exchange at 07:45).                                                                             |
| 10 August 2026 | [DP]     | 07:30          | Duty exchange: the female came with twigs and the male left the nest to forage. The male was quite bold and not in panic, while the female was in a hurry.                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| 12 August 2026 | [DP]     | 07:15 to 07:57 | The male was on the nest and calling. At 07:57 the female came to the nest and duty was exchanged.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| 14 August 2026 | [DP]     | 07:15 to 07:43 | The male was on the nest. At 07:43 the female came to the nest for the duty exchange.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 14 August 2026 | [DP]     | 15:25          | The female was on the nest and quietly left it. The male was not there. She walked towards the stream, took a bath and came back to the nest, so the nest was left unattended for 30 minutes. Seven eggs, white and oval, were seen from afar (Figure 6). On the way back another pair was noticed about 1 km from the area, near the stream.                               |
| 16 August 2026 | [DP]     | morning        | The male was incubating. No duty exchange was observed.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 19 August 2026 | [DP]     | 07:30          | No bird on the nest from afar. After 30 minutes of watching, DP walked to the nest tree and found the nest empty. He walked towards the stream and, after an hour, saw the male walking and calling. In the bushes the female was roaming with about five small, black, downy chicks were moving with her, but it was low light and raining heavily, and he left the place. |
| 19 August 2026 | [DP]     | evening        | Visited again, but no bird was in the area.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| 22 August 2026 | [DP]     | afternoon      | The male was near the stream, but because of human activity nearby it ran into the bushes.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |

Table 3. Incubation duty exchanges observed at the nest

| Date      | Time  | Bird arriving (took over) | Bird relieved | Remarks                                                  |
|-----------|-------|---------------------------|---------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| 7 August  | 07:45 | Male                      | Female        | Arriving bird carried twigs; female left into the bushes |
| 10 August | 07:30 | Female                    | Male          | Female came with twigs; male left to forage              |
| 12 August | 07:57 | Female                    | Male          | Male was on the nest and calling from 07:15              |
| 14 August | 07:43 | Female                    | Male          | Male was on the nest from 07:15                          |

Table 4. Birds and other animals seen in the nesting area

| Common name                  | Scientific name               |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Greater Racket-tailed Drongo | <i>Dicrurus paradiseus</i>    |
| Fork-tailed Drongo-Cuckoo    | <i>Surniculus dicruroides</i> |
| Greater Coucal               | <i>Centropus sinensis</i>     |
| Rufous Treepie               | <i>Dendrocitta vagabunda</i>  |
| Oriental Honey-buzzard       | <i>Pernis ptilorhynchus</i>   |
| Tickell's Blue Flycatcher    | <i>Cyornis tickelliae</i>     |

|                                           |                              |
|-------------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Black-naped Monarch                       | <i>Hypothymis azurea</i>     |
| Brown-headed Barbet                       | <i>Psilopogon zeylanicus</i> |
| Shikra                                    | <i>Tachyspiza badia</i>      |
| Puff-throated Babbler                     | <i>Pellorneum ruficeps</i>   |
| Indian Grey Hornbill                      | <i>Ocyrceros birostris</i>   |
| Oriental Dwarf Kingfisher (flying nearby) | <i>Ceyx erithaca</i>         |
| Madras Treeshrew (mammal)                 | <i>Anathana ellioti</i>      |



Figure 1: Nesting tree in the centre of the frame  
(Photo: Divyesh Patel)



Figure 2: Forest floor made up of decomposed leaves, with many insects present (Photo: Dharmesh B. Patel)



Figure 3: First photograph of the bird, 29 June 2026  
(Photo: Divyesh Patel)



Figure 4: First photograph of the bird on the nest, 2 August 2026  
(camera screen) (Photo: Divyesh Patel)



Figure 5: Bird on the nest in the fork of the teak tree  
(Photo: Divyesh Patel)



Figure 6: Eggs in the nest (Photo: Divyesh Patel)



Figure 7: Female, with a less brownish-orange head  
(Photo: Divyesh Patel)



Figure 8: Male, with a bright orange head  
(Photo: Dharmesh B. Patel)



Figure 9: Female bird on the nest; an egg was visible while she dusted her feathers (Photo: Divyesh Patel)



Figure 10: Male carrying nesting material while returning to the nest after foraging (Photo: Dharmesh B. Patel)

## Discussion

We found an active nest of the Slaty-legged Crake near Uga Rambhas, Dang, during the monsoon, and observed it from 2 to 16 August 2026. Both the male and the female incubated and exchanged duties mostly in the early morning, and about five chicks were seen with the female on 19 August after the nest was found empty. The clutch of seven eggs is similar to the seven eggs reported from Nilambur, Kerala (Murukesh & Balakrishnan 2015), and larger than the six eggs reported from Bison Valley (Bison Valley report 2015) and the four eggs reported from the Philippines (Kaufman 2011). The Bison Valley nest was on the ground, while the nest in the Philippines was about a metre above the ground (Kaufman 2011), similar to the height of 86 cm of our nest in a tree bifurcation.

Incubation periods of about 20 days have been reported from Kerala and the Philippines (Murukesh & Balakrishnan 2015;

Kaufman 2011). We did not see laying or hatching, so the incubation period of this nest is unknown. Kaufman (2011) was not sure whether both parents incubated; at our nest, both sexes were seen on the nest and exchanging duties.

The nest was close to a trail used by people and cattle, and the incubating birds were not disturbed by passing people and cattle. A second pair was also seen about 1 km from the nest, near the stream.

Our observations were limited to 15 days at the nest. We did not see nest building, pairing or courtship, and we do not know since when the bird had been incubating. To our knowledge, this is the first documented nest of the Slaty-legged Crake in Gujarat, and we hope that these notes will be useful for future studies of the breeding of this species in the State.

## References

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