

Occurrence of Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus* in Gandhinagar, Gujarat

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Introduction

The adult Red-throated Pipit (*Anthus cervinus*) in breeding plumage is characterized by a reddish throat and upper breast, with females typically displaying a paler coloration. In its non-breeding or first-winter plumage, distinguishing features include a yellowish base on the lower mandible, a heavily marked back and crown, a pronounced dark malar patch, boldly streaked breast and flanks, and buff-coloured edges on the primary and secondary feathers. The species primarily forages on the ground, often in muddy or marshy habitats. It moves with a quick, deliberate walk, frequently wags its tail, and maintains a horizontal posture. Its diet consists mainly of invertebrates, supplemented by some vegetable matter (Tyler, S., 2020). When in flight, it frequently utters a thin, high-pitched, distinctive "pssseeii" call.

The Red-throated Pipit (*Anthus cervinus*) is a Palearctic species that breeds from Scandinavia eastward to Siberia (Dementiev & Gladkov, 1954; Glutz von Blotzheim & Bauer, 1985), with a small breeding population in northwestern Alaska (Kessel & Gibson, 1978). It is a long-distance migrant, wintering primarily south of the Sahara in Africa and in Southeast Asia. Eastern populations mainly migrate to Southeast Asia, southeastern China, and Taiwan, with smaller numbers

reaching the northern part of the Indian subcontinent. The return migration occurs from March to April in Kenya and the Middle East, and in early May in Central Europe, with birds reaching their breeding areas from late May (Tyler, S., 2020). In the Indian subcontinent, the Red-throated Pipit is a scarce passage and winter migrant (Ali & Ripley, 1998; Kazmierczak, 2000). According to Rasmussen & Anderton (2012), it is a passage migrant in northeastern Afghanistan, the Indus Valley (Pakistan), and occasionally through the Himalayas and northeastern India. It winters in the Maldives, the Andaman Islands, and possibly the Nicobar Islands, with an old sighting reported from Camorta, Nicobar Island. In India, it is considered a rare winter migrant, with scattered records across the country, except for the Andaman Islands, where it is known to winter (Rasmussen & Anderton, 2012). In Gujarat, the Red-throated Pipit is an exceptionally rare migrant. Its status and distribution in the state are categorized as "vagrant," with only isolated winter records from various parts of Gujarat (Ganpule et al., 2022).

Observation

The Sabarmati Riverbank between Juna Koba, Nabhoi village, and the Karai Police Training Centre exhibits a distinct habitat compared to other parts of the river. While much of the



Sabarmati consists of loose, flooded, and unsettled sand deposits, this stretch—spanning approximately 3–4 km—features extensive grass cover interspersed with small, undulating sand mounds. These grass-covered mounds trap shallow mud and water, forming small to large pools that create diverse microhabitats attracting a variety of aquatic and terrestrial bird species. Additionally, the area's relative isolation shields it from disturbances such as sand mining and heavy human activity. Notably, this region contains a siphon structure where the Narmada Main Canal crosses above the Sabarmati

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River, alongside a nearby barrage that regulates the discharge of Narmada water into the riverbed.

On January 9, 2025, the first author, accompanied by Pratik A. Bhatt, Ravi K. Patel, and Sunny J. Vaghadiya, went birdwatching along the Sabarmati Riverbank behind Juna Koba village (23°8'20.97"N, 72°38'45.78"E) in Gandhinagar. While observing and photographing various waterfowl species—including the Ruddy Shelduck (*Tadorna ferruginea*), Knob-billed Duck (*Sarkidiornis melanotos*), and Northern Pintail (*Anas acuta*)—as well as raptors such as the Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*), the first author noticed a pipit foraging alongside Western Yellow Wagtails (*Motacilla flava*). Initially presumed to be a Tree Pipit (*Anthus trivialis*), the bird was later confirmed to be a Red-throated Pipit (*Anthus cervinus*) upon closer examination of its diagnostic plumage features in photographs.

The solitary Red-throated Pipit, in non-breeding plumage, was actively foraging on damp ground within the muddy, marshy habitat. It appeared relatively tolerant of human presence but was observed being chased by other resident and migratory pipits, including the Paddyfield Pipit (*Anthus rufulus*) and Tawny Pipit (*Anthus campestris*). This sighting represents the first photographically documented occurrence of the Red-throated Pipit in Gandhinagar district. The bird remained at the site for at least 18–20 consecutive days and was subsequently observed and documented by the authors alongside several local birdwatchers and photographers.

Previous sightings from Gujarat

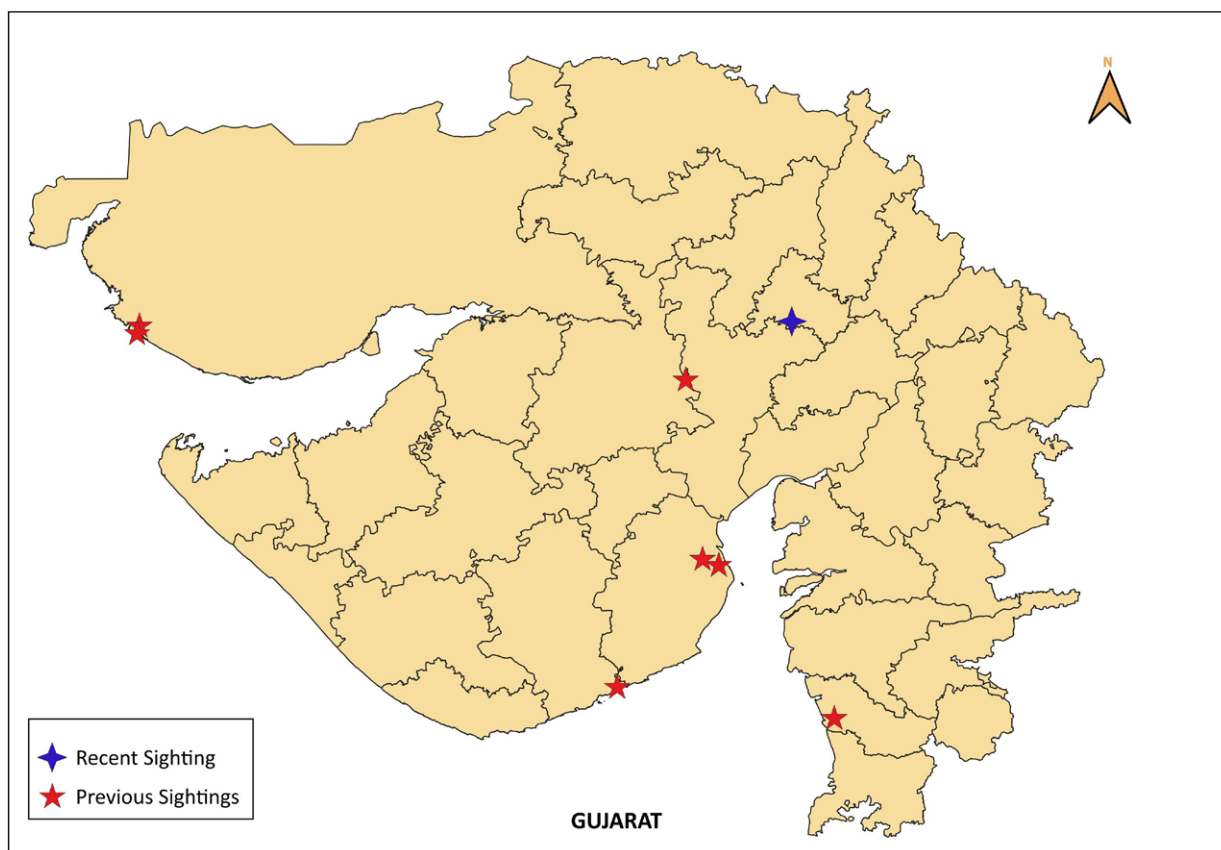
All the previous sightings records from eBird which are confirmed and having a photograph attached are considered for this note along with other published sightings till February-2025.

List of eBird and published sightings of Red-throated Pipit from Gujarat

Sr. No.	Date	Location	District	References
1	19-11-2007	Jakahu Salt Pans	Kutch	https://ebird.org/checklist/S96340648
2	25-10-2016	Naliya Outskirts	Kutch	https://ebird.org/checklist/S32350674
3	26-02-2021	Avania Lake	Bhavnagar	Andharia, K. & Upadhyay, V., 2024
4	12-04-2021	Bor Talav (Gaurishankar Lake)	Bhavnagar	https://ebird.org/checklist/S85395015
5	06-02-2022	Samdhiyala Bandhara wetland	Bhavnagar	https://ebird.org/checklist/S102432515
6	08-01-2023	Samdhiyala Bandhara wetland	Bhavnagar	https://ebird.org/checklist/S125681696
7	30-12-2023	Vadi lake	Navsari	Shah, K. et al., 2024
8	07-01-2024	Nalsarovar Bird Sanctuary	Ahmedabad & Surendranagar	Alvani, K. et al., 2024
9	08-01-2024	Nalsarovar Bird Sanctuary	Ahmedabad & Surendranagar	https://ebird.org/checklist/S158425282
10	08-01-2024	Nalsarovar Bird Sanctuary	Ahmedabad & Surendranagar	https://ebird.org/checklist/S158426693
11	08-01-2024	Nalsarovar Bird Sanctuary	Ahmedabad & Surendranagar	https://ebird.org/checklist/S158425302
12	08-01-2024	Nalsarovar Bird Sanctuary	Ahmedabad & Surendranagar	https://ebird.org/checklist/S158418146
13	09-01-2024	Nalsarovar Bird Sanctuary	Ahmedabad & Surendranagar	https://ebird.org/checklist/S158493078
14	10-01-2024	Nalsarovar Bird Sanctuary	Ahmedabad & Surendranagar	https://ebird.org/checklist/S158555766
15	11-01-2024	Nalsarovar Bird Sanctuary	Ahmedabad & Surendranagar	https://ebird.org/checklist/S158626130
16	11-01-2024	Nalsarovar Bird Sanctuary	Ahmedabad & Surendranagar	https://ebird.org/checklist/S158610883
17	13-01-2024	Nalsarovar Bird Sanctuary	Ahmedabad & Surendranagar	https://ebird.org/checklist/S170667766
18	14-01-2024	Nalsarovar Bird Sanctuary	Ahmedabad & Surendranagar	https://ebird.org/checklist/S170667325
19	20-01-2024	Nalsarovar Bird Sanctuary	Ahmedabad & Surendranagar	https://ebird.org/checklist/S159326150
20	24-01-2024	Nalsarovar Bird Sanctuary	Ahmedabad & Surendranagar	https://ebird.org/checklist/S159666135
21	27-01-2024	Nalsarovar Bird Sanctuary	Ahmedabad & Surendranagar	https://ebird.org/checklist/S160347146
22	28-01-2024	Bor Talav (Gaurishankar Lake)	Bhavnagar	https://ebird.org/checklist/S160089619

Sr. No.	Date	Location	District	References
23	28-01-2024	Nalsarovar Bird Sanctuary	Ahmedabad & Surendranagar	https://ebird.org/checklist/S160096648
24	29-01-2024	Nalsarovar Bird Sanctuary	Ahmedabad & Surendranagar	https://ebird.org/checklist/S160099143
25	30-01-2024	Bor Talav (Gaurishankar Lake)	Bhavnagar	https://ebird.org/checklist/S160162998
26	31-01-2024	Bor Talav (Gaurishankar Lake)	Bhavnagar	https://ebird.org/checklist/S160237877
27	02-02-2024	Bor Talav (Gaurishankar Lake)	Bhavnagar	https://ebird.org/checklist/S160390193
28	03-02-2024	Bor Talav (Gaurishankar Lake)	Bhavnagar	https://ebird.org/checklist/S160480045
29	04-02-2024	Nalsarovar Bird Sanctuary	Ahmedabad & Surendranagar	https://ebird.org/checklist/S160771522
30	04-02-2024	Nalsarovar Bird Sanctuary	Ahmedabad & Surendranagar	https://ebird.org/checklist/S160604081
31	07-02-2024	Bor Talav (Gaurishankar Lake)	Bhavnagar	https://ebird.org/checklist/S160832981
32	07-02-2024	Nalsarovar Bird Sanctuary	Ahmedabad & Surendranagar	https://ebird.org/checklist/S160840137
33	21-02-2024	Bor Talav (Gaurishankar Lake)	Bhavnagar	https://ebird.org/checklist/S162421909
34	24-02-2024	Bor Talav (Gaurishankar Lake)	Bhavnagar	https://ebird.org/checklist/S162957483
35	16-03-2024	Bor Talav (Gaurishankar Lake)	Bhavnagar	https://ebird.org/checklist/S162421909
36	26-03-2024	Bor Talav (Gaurishankar Lake)	Bhavnagar	https://ebird.org/checklist/S166233049
37	29-03-2024	Bor Talav (Gaurishankar Lake)	Bhavnagar	https://ebird.org/checklist/S166307485
38	21-12-2024	Bor Talav (Gaurishankar Lake)	Bhavnagar	https://ebird.org/checklist/S206054135
39	12-01-2025	Bor Talav (Gaurishankar Lake)	Bhavnagar	https://ebird.org/checklist/S209597189
40	12-01-2025	Bor Talav (Gaurishankar Lake)	Bhavnagar	https://ebird.org/checklist/S208992002

Showing locations of recent and previous sightings of Red-throated Pipit



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The first eBird checklist documenting the Red-throated Pipit in Gujarat was submitted from the salt pans of Jakhau, Kutch, on 19 November 2007. Nearly a decade later, on 25 October 2016, another individual was reported from the outskirts of Naliya, Kutch. More recently, on 26 February 2021, the species was recorded at Avania Lake, Bhavnagar, with sightings subsequently published on eBird and in the *Flamingo* newsletter by Andharia & Upadhyay (2024). Following this, additional eBird records emerged from Bor Talav (Gaurishankar Lake) and the Samdhiyala Bandhara wetlands in Bhavnagar district between 2021 and 2023. In December 2023, a single individual was sighted at Vadi Lake in Navsari district (Shah et al., 2024). On 7 January 2024, Alvani et al. (2024) reported the occurrence of the species from Ranagadh village—part of the Nalsarovar Bird Sanctuary—on eBird and in the *Flamingo* newsletter. Numerous sightings of 1–2 individuals followed from the same area, continuing until 7 February 2024. During this period, between 28 January and 29 March 2024, multiple eBird checklists recorded 1–4 individuals at Bor Talav. Additionally, further sightings at Bor Talav (Gaurishankar Lake) were reported on 21 December 2024 and 12 January 2025.

The distribution map of past and recent Red-throated Pipit sightings in Gujarat reveals a distinct concentration around

the Gulf of Khambhat, with only two records from Kutch. Although the species is classified as a "vagrant" in the state and no empirical evidence yet confirms a specific migratory corridor through this region, the observed spatial pattern suggests that certain individuals may follow a repeated route. However, given the limited sample size of records, this hypothesis remains speculative.

The recent sighting along the Sabarmati Riverbank in Gandhinagar (marked in blue) is farther inland than all previous state records, suggesting an occasional stopover by a vagrant individual rather than a regular passage route. Similarly, recurring observations at Bor Talav (Gaurishankar Lake) indicate that it could serve as a temporary wintering or stopover site, though additional systematic surveys are needed to confirm this pattern across central and northern Gujarat.

Conclusion

The Red-throated Pipit remains an exceptionally rare vagrant in Gujarat, with only a few confirmed records documented over the past two decades. The recent record in Gandhinagar marks the first documented occurrence for the district, expanding the known distribution of the species within the



state. While the spatial concentration of records around the Gulf of Khambhat suggests a potential flyway or stopover cluster, empirical evidence remains insufficient to confirm a regular migratory corridor. Instead, these observations highlight the ecological significance of inland riverine, wetland, and coastal habitats as potential stopover sites for vagrant passerines. The species' overall scarcity indicates that it remains an irregular—and likely under-reported—visitor to Gujarat. Continued field surveys, particularly in under-explored inland wetlands, are essential to determine whether these records represent an overlooked regular migration pattern or isolated vagrancy events.

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