

Sighting Note – Black Bittern *Ixobrychus flavicollis* with Chicks at Palanpur, Banaskantha

Tarun Sutaria: Palanpur, Banaskantha, Gujarat. tarun.vets@gmail.com

On 17 August 2025, I, along with fellow birder Mr. Kailash Jani, observed a Black Bittern *Ixobrychus flavicollis* with two chicks near the Gangasagar Dam wetlands, Palanpur, Banaskantha district, Gujarat.

The birds were found in *Typha* reeds at the wetland edge. The chicks stayed hidden most of the time but emerged when the adults arrived to feed them. The adults made several feeding trips, flying low over the grassland, and rested on Babul (Acacia) trees between trips. Other birds noted in the same habitat included Tricoloured Munias (busy nest-building), a White-breasted Waterhen with chicks, and several Pond Herons feeding along the water's edge.

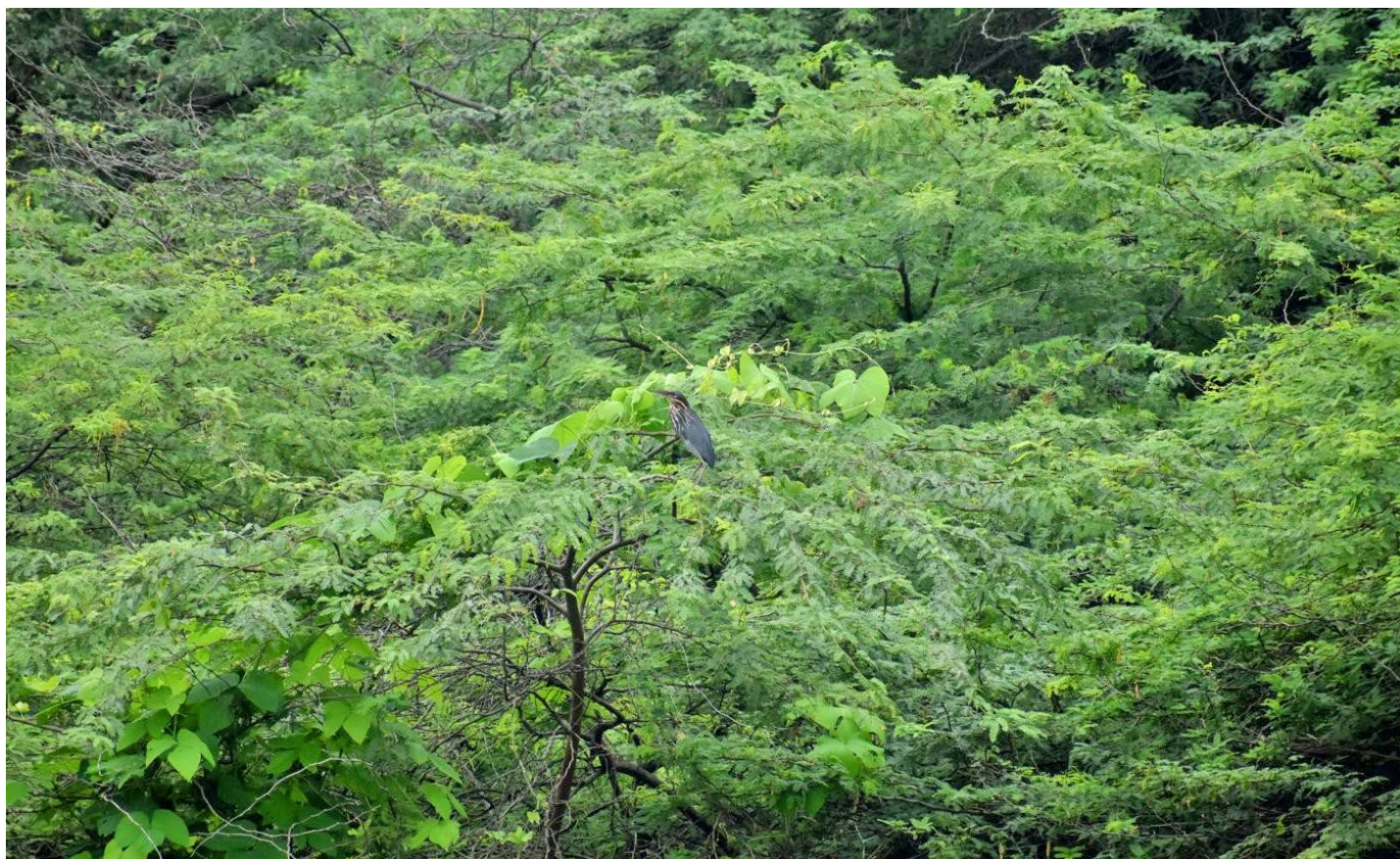
The Black Bittern is a secretive heron, rarely seen due to its habit of staying within thick vegetation. It is medium-sized,

dark brown to black, with a streaked yellowish neck and breast, and broad, rounded wings. In flight it appears heavy and slow, staying low over the grass. When disturbed, it often freezes in an upright "bittern posture," blending with the surrounding reeds. It feeds mainly on small fish, frogs, insects, and other aquatic prey.

Breeding records of the Black Bittern are uncommon in Gujarat, largely due to its shy, cryptic habits. This sighting indicates that the Gangasagar Dam wetland and adjoining grassland provide suitable nesting and feeding habitat for this and other waterbirds.



Black Bittern chicks in *Typha* cover, Gangasagar Dam wetlands, Palanpur. Photo: Tarun Sutaria



Adult Black Bittern perched in Babul (*Acacia*) between feeding trips. Photo: Tarun Sutaria

