

Sighting of Parasitic Jaeger *Stercorarius parasiticus* in Little Rann Of Kachchh, Gujarat

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On 27 September 2009, at 1600 hrs, I went to the western most point of the Little Rann Of Kachchh near Venasar village (23°08'N, 70°56'E), which is c. 45 km from Morbi, Rajkot district, Gujarat.

This is a coastal lagoon with a freshwater lake on one side. The area is quite large and is usually flooded till the month of February.

I was observing birds at the coastal lagoon and saw hundreds of Black-headed Gulls *Larus ridibundus* along with good numbers of Pallas's Gulls *L. ichthyæus*, Caspian Terns *Sterna caspia*, etc.

I then observed a large bird in flight, which I could not identify. It had a white belly with a darker breast band, long wings of dark brownish colour, and darker patch on head. It had slightly elongated tail feathers. Its flight was fast. I then saw that a similar bird, which had an overall darker brown colour i.e., the underparts and upperparts including head were of similar colour, joined it. The beak, long wings, the flight jizz, and the overall structure of the birds were different from other birds in the area, and did not seem like either a tern or a gull.

The birds flew in from the sea towards the fresh water lake and then went out towards the sea. The total observation time was about one minute.

I took photographs of both the birds, and from Grimmett *et al.*, (1998) identified one as a pale phase of an adult Parasitic Jaeger *Stercorarius parasiticus* (Fig. 1), and the other as either a

juvenile or a dark-phase bird.

The pelagic Parasitic Jaeger is reported from the coast of Pakistan, and off the western coast of Sri Lanka (Kazmierczak 2000). There are a handful of records from the western coast of India during winter. It is reported from Colaba Point, Mumbai (Sinclair 1977), and from Gokarn, Karnataka (Madsen 1990).

The only previous record of the Parasitic Jaeger from Gujarat is of a possible juvenile bird from Diu, which was identified tentatively as this species or a Pomarine Jaeger *S. pomarinus* (Mundkur *et al.* 2009). The present record is the first photographic documentation of the species from Gujarat.

References

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Fig. 1. Parasitic Jaeger *Stercorarius parasiticus*.