

# The status and distribution of Amur Falcon *Falco amurensis* in Gujarat, India

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Fig. 1. Female Amur Falcon *Falco amurensis*.

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## Introduction

Amur Falcon *Falco amurensis* is a long distance migrant, occurring as a passage migrant in Gujarat. It breeds in central Siberia east to Amurland, south to northern and eastern China and winters in eastern and southern Africa (Naoroji 2006).

There is very little published data regarding the Amur Falcon in Gujarat. Naoroji (2006) has listed four sight records for Gujarat during autumn passage. Kazmierczak (2000) shows two records, Grimmett *et al.* (1998) show only one record, while Rasmussen & Anderton (2005) show its occurrence in southern Gujarat and southern Saurashtra areas during passage migration. Ali & Ripley (1978) did not show a single record for Gujarat. Ali (1954) did not record it during the surveys carried out in Gujarat. Dharmakumarsinhji (1955) also does not mention the bird.

## Sightings

On 17 February 2011, I saw and photographed a single female Amur Falcon in the Little Rann of Kachchh area. On 24 April 2011, I again observed a female (Fig. 1), and a juvenile Amur Falcon near Navlakhi, Morbi. The sighting in February could be considered as autumn passage and the sighting in late April was indicative of the bird being seen during spring passage migration. Naoroji (2006) considered it to be only an autumn passage migrant to the Indian Subcontinent and states that, "From the scattered sight records it is difficult to build up a complete picture of the migration routes taken, especially the return migration route."

Amur Falcon has been observed and photographed recently

from different areas in Gujarat. Sight records have been published in *Vihang*, and *Flamingo*, the local birdwatching journals published in Gujarati, and English respectively, and many photographs from Gujarat have been put up on birding and bird photography websites. I have tried to collect the published sight records (Table 1, Fig. 2), and as many photographs as possible that have been posted on different websites, to bring up to date our knowledge about its status and distribution in Gujarat state.

## Results

An analysis of the records shows that the earliest sighting is on 31 October, and the last, 7 May. Maximum records here are during the autumn migration from December to February. There are four records from late April–May, which suggest a spring migration. These records are the western-most sight records for India.

Recently, Meyburg and his team (<http://www.raptor-research.de>) have been tracking the migration of the Amur Falcon by satellite telemetry. The data has been published on the web (<http://www.kestreling.com>), and on other web based birding groups. The data relevant for Gujarat shows a satellite-tracked Amur Falcon was tracked crossing Gujarat during its spring migration. A rough migration path for Gujarat is shown in the map. It appears that the falcon travelled, roughly, in a straight line from the Gulf of Kachchh, eastward, up to north-eastern India. Co-incidentally, my sighting of the Amur Falcon in late April falls almost directly on the migration route as shown by the satellite-tracking project.

Table 1. Recorded sightings of Amur Falcon in Gujarat

St No	Place	Date	Observer
1	Naliya, Kutch (23°15'N 68°56'E)	7 May 2010	Gadhvi: INW
2	Positra Bay, Dwarka (22°23'N 69°10'E)	2 Feb 1996	Khacher 1997
3	Porbander area	Unknown	Mundkur in Naoroji 2006
	Near Madhavpur, Porbander (21°36'N 69°38'E)	16 Jan 1989	Mundkur & Pandya 1992
4	Gir National Park area (21°10'N 70°36'E)	Feb 1984	Mundkur & Pandya 1992
4	Gir National Park area	24–27 April 2010	Joshi 2010
5	Velavadar National Park, Bhavnagar (21°50' 72°06'E)	Unknown	Prakash in Naoroji 2006
5	Victoria Park, Bhavnagar	Nov 2008	Gadhvi 2009
6	Dharasana, Valsad District (20°36'N 72°54'E)	31 Oct 2009	Jat 2010
7	Dang Forest, Ahwa (20°45'N 73°41'E)	14 April 2008	Joshi 2010
8	Wadhwan, Surendranagar (22°43'N 71°38'E)	Nov 2010	Mori: INW
	Surendranagar	13 Nov 2010	Parmar 2011
9	Navlakhi, Near Morbi (22°58'N 70°27'E)	24 April 2011	Prasad Ganpule: author's sighting
10	Venasar area, Little Rann of Kachchh (23°20'N 71°15'E)	17 Feb 2011	Prasad Ganpule: author's sighting
11	Bajana area, Little Rann of Kachchh (23°12'N 71°34'E)	Feb 2008	Shah: INW
	Little Rann of Kachchh	Jan 2009	Shah: INW
	Little Rann of Kachchh	24 Dec 2008	Shah: OBI
	Little Rann of Kachchh	Jan 2011	Dutt: INW
	Little Rann of Kachchh	Jan 2011	Parekh: Delhibirdpix

Abbreviations: INW: <http://indianaturewatch.net>; OBI: <http://orientalbirdimages.org>; Delhibirdpix: <http://groups.google.com/group/delhibirdpix>

## Conclusion

Looking at the available data and sightings it is clear that the Amur Falcon occurs in Gujarat during the autumn, as well as the spring migration. It is quite uncommon but not a vagrant. It can be said that a small number of these birds are regular passage migrants in Gujarat, though they are rarer during spring migration. Their distribution in Gujarat is widespread, with sightings from coastal areas, forest areas as well as from the desert areas, with the maximum sightings from the Little Rann of Kachchh area.

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- [www.kestreling.com](http://www.kestreling.com) For the map showing the details of the passage migration route of the Amur Falcon from South Africa to its breeding grounds in Russia. [Accessed on 12 May 2011.]

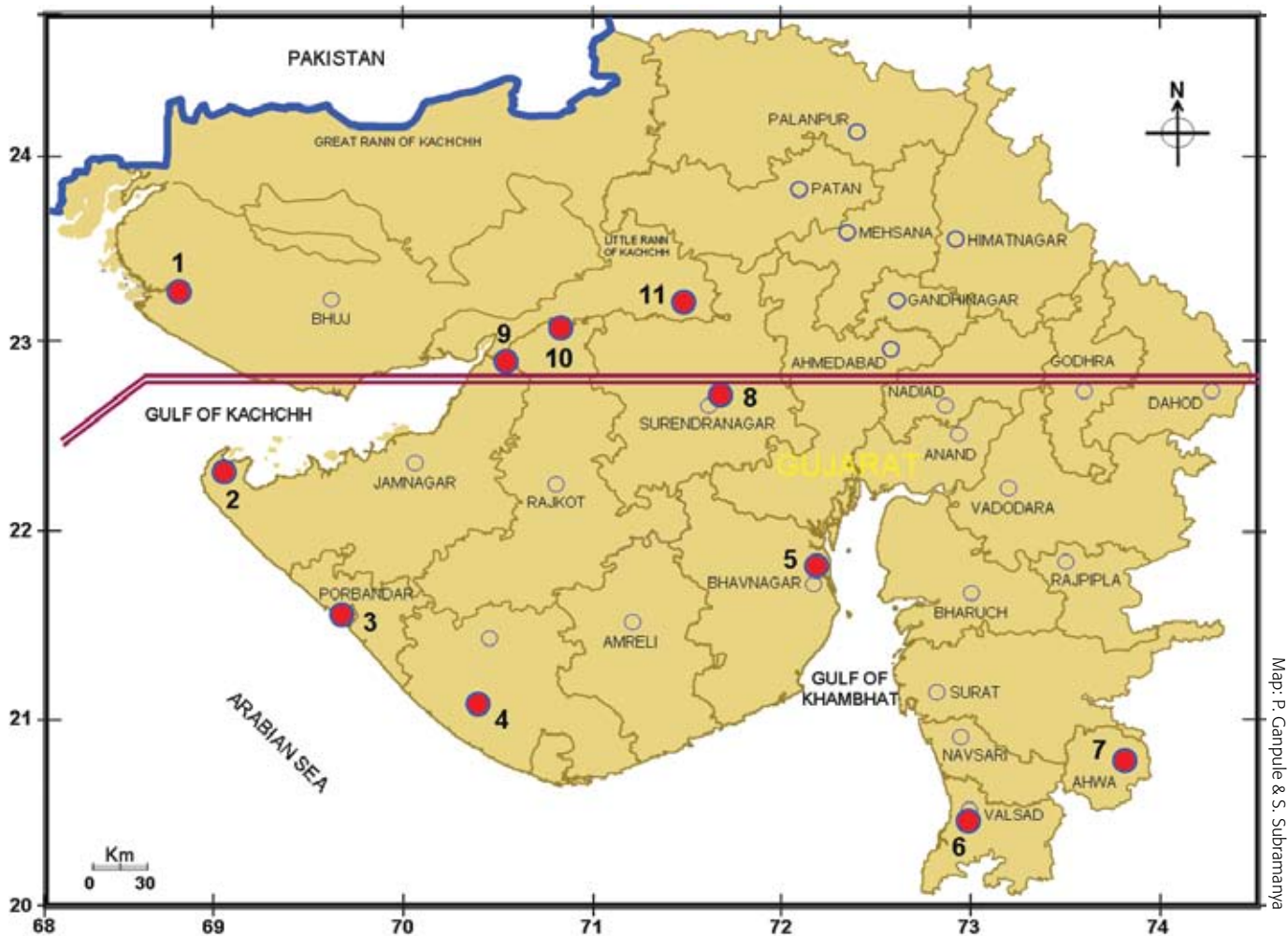


Fig. 2. Sightings of Amur Falcon *Falco amurensis* in Gujarat. "=="Approximate migration path of satellite tracked Amur Falcon through Gujarat.