Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana* sightings in Saurashtra, Gujarat, India

Ashok Mashru & Bhavesh Trivedi


Ashok Mashru, A-7 Alap Heritage, Kalawad Road, Rajkot, Gujarat, India. Email: mashruashok@gmail.com [AM]

Bhavesh Trivedi, “Shree”, Malvanagar, Rajkot, Gujarat, India. [BT]

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On 6 February 2011 we were birdwatching at Ishwaria pond (4 km from Rajkot city), with the Rajkot unit of the Bird Conservation Society of Gujarat. In a reedy, grassy, patch adjoining the pond, BT spotted an unusual crake with lots of white spots on its body, and red at the base of its bill. The crake was walking there freely, unconcerned by the group of birdwatchers. We identified it with the help of Sonobe & Usui (1993) as the Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana*. We saw it again on 9 February 2011 at same place. It was photographed on both visits.

The bird has been sighted again by AM, and photographed, at the same place on 22 January 2012 (Fig. 1).

Viral Joshi had also seen the Spotted Crake c. 100 km south of Rajkot, at at Saladi pond near Amreli city (pers. comm., verbally), on 20 January 2011. At the same place, Viral Joshi saw it again on 7 December 2011. Chetan Vala photographed it on 2 January 2012, and Arpit Deomurari on 8 January 2012. Images of theses sightings are on website ‘Oriental Bird Images.’

The earliest record of a Spotted Crake from Gujarat is of a bird shot at Devisar Lake, Kachchh, in the winter of 1892 (Palin 1904). Dharmakumarsinhji points out that it is uncommon in Saurashtra, not very rare, but difficult to find. Rasmussen & Anderton (2005) state that it is a ‘widespread passage migrant and winter visitor mainly NW and NC plains with scattered records from the peninsula. It is scarce, or overlooked in region in shallow freshwater wetland with areas of dense reeds and grasses.’

Considering the scarcity of records of the Spotted Crake in Gujarat, these sightings, along with the photographs are an important record of the bird’s winter distribution.

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References


