The status and distribution of Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni* in Gujarat, India

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Introduction

Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni* is a long-distance migrant occurring as a rare passage migrant in Gujarat, India. It breeds in Europe, Central Asia, China, and Mongolia, and spends the non-breeding period in central and southern Africa, particularly South Africa (*BirdLife International* 2012).

There is very little published data regarding the Lesser Kestrel from Gujarat. Naoroji (2006) lists only one sight record for Gujarat and states that it is generally overlooked or mistaken for Common Kestrel *F. tinnunculus*. Khacher (1996) also lists a single sighting, which is probably the same given in Naoroji (2006), Grimmett *et al.* (2011), and Kazmierczak (2000). Rasmussen & Anderton (2005) show it as a passage migrant in the Western Ghats and do not show any record from Gujarat.

Sightings

One of us (NB) has observed the Lesser Kestrel in the Little Rann of Kachchh on several occasions [40, 41; back cover] while PG has observed it once in the western part of Little Rann of Kachchh. It has also been recently observed and photographed from a few more areas in Gujarat. We have tried to collate the published sight records (Table 1) and photographs, from different websites, to consolidate information about its distribution in Gujarat.

Conclusion

Looking at various sight records, especially in the last two years, it seems that Lesser Kestrel is a rare but regular winter (autumn) passage migrant in Gujarat. Some stragglers over-winter in India (Naoroji 2006), but the wintering status is still uncertain for Gujarat.

Most of the sightings are from desert and arid areas. While the similarly migrating Amur Falcon *F. amurensis* is an autumn as well as spring passage migrant in Gujarat (Ganpule 2011), there are no records of Lesser Kestrel crossing Gujarat during spring migration. Spring migration of Lesser Kestrel has been recorded from the Delhi area (Harvey *et al.* 2006). Naoroji (2006) states that Lesser Kestrels associate with Amur Falcons during passage and follow a similar migration pattern; hence it is possible that Lesser Kestrel could occur in Gujarat during spring migration.

References


Shivkar, A., 2010. Lesser Kestrels and Caracals in Kachchh, Gujarat. URL: http://groups.google.com/group/orientalbirding/browse_thread/thread/cf41b6a09b72c357/b9918195b08e1bd9?in=td&q=Adesh+Shivkar+Lesser+Kestrel#b9918195b08e1bd9 [Accessed on 1 July 2012].

Table 1. Records of Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni* from Gujarat, India

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No.</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Observer</th>
<th>Observations</th>
<th>Abbreviations: OBI: <a href="http://orientalbirdimages.org">http://orientalbirdimages.org</a>; OBPix: <a href="http://groups.google.com/group/orientalbirdingpix/">http://groups.google.com/group/orientalbirdingpix/</a></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Little Rann of Kachchh (23°12’N, 71°34’E)</td>
<td>15 January 2006</td>
<td>Nirav Bhatt</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Little Rann of Kachchh (23°12’N, 71°34’E)</td>
<td>19 December 2010</td>
<td>Nirav Bhatt</td>
<td>Adult Male</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Nalaya, Kachchh (23°15’N, 68°56’E)</td>
<td>24 December 2010</td>
<td>Shivar: OBPix</td>
<td>Flock of more than 15 individuals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Little Rann of Kachchh (23°20’N, 71°15’E)</td>
<td>25 December 2010</td>
<td>Prasad Ganpule</td>
<td>Sub-adult male and female</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Little Rann of Kachchh (25°12’N, 73°45’E)</td>
<td>16 January 2011</td>
<td>Nirav Bhatt</td>
<td>Sub-adult male</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Velavadar National Park, Bhavanagar (21°50’N 72°06’E)</td>
<td>30 December 2011</td>
<td>Shah: OBI</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Little Rann of Kachchh (23°12’N 71°34’E)</td>
<td>29 February 2012</td>
<td>Nirav Bhatt</td>
<td>Juvenile Female</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>