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References


Red Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicaria*:

An addition to the avifauna of Peninsular India

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We report two back-to-back sightings of the Red Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicaria* from two localities in peninsular India during April–May 2013. This is probably the first time it has been reported from this region and there exist only a handful of records from the Indian subcontinent (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012; Grimmett et al. 2011).

Osman Sagar (17°23’N, 78°18’E), Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh

It was a regular day out bird watching on 28 April 2013 at Osman Sagar, Gandipet, Hyderabad, when one of us (HK) with another birder Iqbal Siddiqui came across this bird. This beautiful bird was seen on the edge of a small water body. We initially thought that it was a chick of some regular wader, as this is was the breeding season and we took several photographs [107-109] casually. As we moved in closer, the bird appeared quite approachable. We took many photographs at close range. Later, these photographs were posted on forums on Facebook where it was identified as said species. The short, thicker beak clearly eliminated the Red-necked Phalarope *P. lobatus*. The bird was not sighted when we visited the place the next day.

Red Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicaria* at Osman Sagar, Hyderabad. Photo: Hemant Kumar.
Wena Lake (21°09’N 78°52’E), Nagpur, Maharashtra

We (TSR & KS) could not have been in for better luck. We were birding at a lake around Nagpur (21°09’N 78°52’E) on 1 May 2013, and we noticed a bird dabbling like a duck, but looking more like a shore bird. KS suggested that it was certainly a sea bird. Using the method of elimination, we both knew that we had struck gold: none of the known species came in closer to its description. Later when we discovered that it was the Red Phalarope after sharing pictures [110-112] on Facebook forums, our joy knew no bounds.

It was swimming in the shallower part of the lake and would create a whirlpool around itself, feeding on insects and small fish disturbed in the pool. The bird allowed us to approach it as close as just a meter away from where we stood. We spend almost an hour taking pictures of the bird. Its forehead, throat, and under parts were white. A blackish-grey cap extended onto the hind neck, and a dark mark through and behind the eye also extended on to the hind neck. The upper parts and wings retained some dark juvenile feathers, and the bird seems to be a second-winter juvenile. The short, straight, stout bill was yellow at the base. The species is likely to be confused with Red-necked Phalarope, which has a slender needle-like, pointed, blackish bill, and is smaller than the latter.

Discussion

The bird is a surprise vagrant not only to the sites where it was found, but for the Indian sub-continent as well. Though the birds were seen back-to-back within a span of three days; from the plumage characteristics, they appear to be different individuals. Our hypothesis is that these birds made a small stopover while traveling to the Arctic. We feel that even the path they had taken was not the routine migration route and they might have lost their way. However, what made the birds come so deep inland, far away from its natural habitat, remains a mystery for us.

References
