

in a harvested paddyfield. Suddenly a juvenile Purple Heron flew in, swooped over the flock of birds on the ground, and grabbed a lark by its wing [68]. The flock immediately scattered and dispersed. The lark tried to escape, but the heron held it firmly in its beak. The lark struggled to free itself by beating its wings, but it did not succeed. The heron put the lark down, striking it repeatedly, and then grabbed it again by the neck [69]. These activities went on for nearly five minutes. The heron seemed vigilant and frequently looked around. When the lark had totally wilted, and heron gulped it down.

In this area, VM had earlier observed Purple Herons using techniques of either chasing, or standing hunting snakes and frogs. So, it was quite unusual to see this foraging technique.

Paddy is harvested in Kheda District in November–December, at the commencement of winter. After the harvest, fields remain fallow for three months, attracting flocks of many small migratory species of birds like pipits (Motacillidae), larks (Alaudidae), and buntings (Emberizidae) that consume spilt grain.



68. The Purple Heron holding the lark by its wing.



Both: Vishal Mistry

69. The heron holding the dead lark by its throat.

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– Vishal Mistry [VM] & Niyati S. Patel\* [NSP]

Voluntary Nature Conservancy

101-Radha Darshan, Behind Union Bank

Vallabh Vidyanagar 388120, Gujarat, India

E-mail: niyati.patel145@gmail.com [\*Corresponding author.]

## Red-necked Falcon *Falco chicquera* nesting on an electricity pylon

While birding on 27 December 2014, around Chotila village (22.42°N, 71.19°E), Surendranagar, Gujarat, I spotted a nest of the Red-necked Falcon *Falco chicquera* on an electricity pylon [70]. The surrounding area comprised mixed open scrub, and agricultural lands. The pylon was adjacent to the national highway (NH 47) and was about a kilometer away from the village of Chotila, the nearest human habitation. The birds were observed



70. Red-necked Falcon nesting on an electricity pylon.



71. Red-necked Falcon juveniles in the nest.

Both: D. Mori

bringing nesting material to the nest. The nest was c. 20 m above the ground, and it comprised primarily of dry twigs. On a subsequent visit, on 12 April 2014, two juvenile birds were seen on the nest [71]. Both the adults were feeding the juveniles, which seemed ready to fledge.

Nesting reported on a market-place tower within Pune city for three consecutive years (Gole, 1980), and another nest on an electrical pylon in Saurashtra are the only non-tree nesting records of this species till date (Naoroji 2006).

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– Devvratshinh Mori

Opp. Darbargadh  
Wadhwan 363030, Gujarat, India  
E-mail: [devvratshinhmori@gmail.com](mailto:devvratshinhmori@gmail.com)

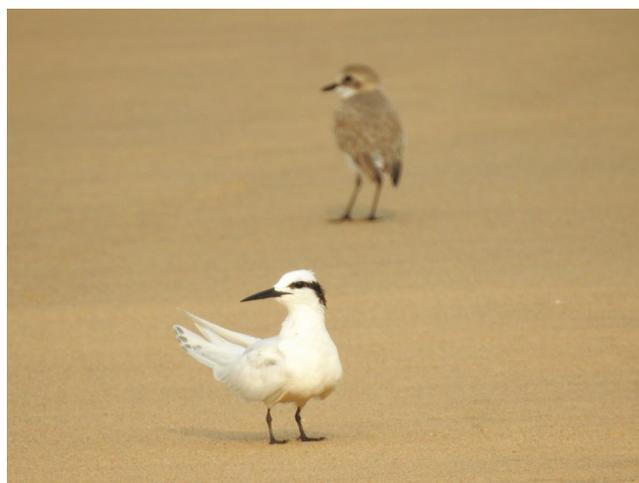
## Black-naped Tern *Sterna sumatrana* in Kerala: An addition to avifauna of Indian mainland

The Black-naped Tern *Sterna sumatrana* has a widespread distribution in the Indian Ocean, South-east Asia, the Indo-Malaya region, and the western tropical Pacific Ocean. Within Indian territorial limits, it has been reported only from the Andaman & Nicobar Islands (eBird 2018), and the Lakshadweep Islands. Its nearest breeding grounds to India are in the Maldives (Philips 1959) and Chagos Islands (Carr 2015), where the *mathewsi* race is found (contra nominate found on the Andaman & Nicobar Islands). There was a single sight record of a flock of eight birds at Fort Kochi on 05 May 1990 apart from 35 White-cheeked Terns *S. repressa* (Neelakantan *et al.* 1993; Rasmussen & Anderton 2012), but without any documentary evidence, and hence not considered for the Kerala state checklist (Sashikumar *et al.* 2011).

On 28 April 2018, I went to Ponnani beach (10.78°N, 75.91°E), Malappuram District, Kerala with the intention of observing shore birds. I reached the spot at 0720 hrs and was observing some Lesser/Greater Sand Plovers *Charadrius mongolus/leschenaultii* and a few gulls present there, when a flock of around 30 terns came flying in from the sea. They were



73. Black-naped Tern showing black nape line, sitting along with Common Terns.



74. Black-naped Tern.

a mixed flock of Whiskered- *Chlidonias hybrida* and Common Terns *S. hirundo*. A soaring Black Kite *Milvus migrans* stooped at them and dispersed them. However, three terns from the flock settled at a distance on the shore. Upon zooming on them with my super zoom camera, I noticed that one tern amongst them looked very pale and different from others. I took some photographs and shared them immediately with my birding friends, Vivek Chandran and Praveen ES. They advised me to take photographs and videos of the individual from different angles, including flight shots [72, 73, 74, 75].



72. Paler Black-naped Tern alongside Common- and Little Terns.



75. A Black-naped Tern in flight with a deeply forked tail.