

Indian Skimmer (*Rynchops albigollis*) from Jawai Dam, Pali district, western Rajasthan

On 18 March 2018 we photographed a pair of Indian Skimmer *Rynchops albigollis* at Jawai Dam (25.03°N, 73.09°E), Pali District, Rajasthan [131]. A globally 'Vulnerable' species, it is well known from the Chambal Valley in eastern Rajasthan. There are no reports of the Indian Skimmer, from the recent past, from western Rajasthan, which is much more arid than the Chambal Valley (Rahmani 2012). The species has been collected once in Dangiwas, Jodhpur District on 10 August 1966 by R. N. Bhargava (Majumdar & Roy 1994), and reported from Jor Beed, Bikaner District in March 1993 (Sangha 1998). Two nineteenth century reports of four birds exist, one from Abu Lake, Sirohi District, which is further southwards, another from Udaipur (BirdLife International 2001)—but these areas are more humid than Pali District.



131. Indian Skimmer in Pali District, western Rajasthan. Pic: Krishnapal Parangi

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– Omveer Dhawal & Krishnapal Parangi

Omveer Dhawal, Biodiversity Research Laboratory, Department of Zoology, Maharshi Dayanand Saraswati University, Ajmer, Rajasthan, India.
E-mail: omveer9dhawal@gmail.com [Corresponding author]
Krishnapal Parangi, Parangi Vas, Village & Post Bisalpur, Street Jawai Bandh, Tehsil Bali, District Pali, Rajasthan, India

Spot bellied Eagle Owl *Bubo nipalensis* in Vidarbha region, Maharashtra, India

During safari drive on 25 May 2018, from Khubada Gate (21.52°N, 79.03°E), Saleghat, in Pench National Park, Maharashtra, I saw two owls flying at 1756 hrs. As they had a large wingspan, I waited there to identify them; surprisingly they turned out to be Spot-bellied Eagle Owls *Bubo nipalensis*. One of them perched on a branch, and I photographed it [132].



132. Spot-bellied Eagle Owl in Pench National Park. Pic. Kapish Rai

The Spot-bellied Eagle Owl is well known from the Western Ghats south of Goa, the southern Eastern Ghats (Whistler & Kinnear 1935), and forests at the base of the Himalayas, from Uttarakhand up to north-eastern India (Ali & Ripley 1987; Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). The species is rare in western Maharashtra: a historical report from Pune (Prasad 2006), with no further details, and a recent report from Sindhudurg District (eBird 2018), not far from the Goa border, where it is expected (Lainer 2004). It has, however, been recently reported from central India: from the adjoining part of Pench Tiger Reserve in Madhya Pradesh (Jayapal *et al.* 2005, Majumdar *et al.* 2011), Bori Wildlife Sanctuary (Jayapal *et al.* 2005), and from Kanha National Park (D'Cunha & Ali 2001; Deshmukh 2008). Several photographic records have also been uploaded on eBird (2018). Though it has never been reported from the Vidharbha region of Maharashtra, its presence in the Khubada Gate area is not surprising, given its status on the other side of the state border (in Madhya Pradesh). It has also been reported from the northern parts of the Eastern Ghats of Andhra Pradesh (Srinivasan 2013), and from Nallamala Hills, in the central Eastern Ghats in Nagarkurnool District, Telangana (eBird 2018). It would be worth investigating whether the species is present in the forests of Gadchiroli, Indravati, and Kanger Ghati, between the central Indian population and the one in the northern Eastern Ghats.

I retrieved relevant literature from the online 'Bibliography of South Asian Ornithology' (Pittie 2018).

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– Kaphish Rai

21 Indraprasth Society, Near Rachna Meghsparsh, Swavalambi Nagar,
Nagpur 440022, Maharashtra, India
E-mail: kaphish@jyosan.com

Karnataka checklist: Corrections and additions

Praveen *et al.* (2016) compiled a list of 531 species of birds for the state of Karnataka. The evidence presented by them has undergone a wider review since then. Simultaneously, birders have been actively documenting more bird species in the state. Below is an update of additions and corrections to that list.

Common Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*: This species was conclusively photographed at Shettikeri Tank, Gadag District (Tamiliniyan *et al.* 2018).

Lesser Flamingo *Phoeniconaias minor*: It was added based on field notes provided in a sight record from 1996. However, more field notes available from other observers (Prasad 1996) have been uploaded on eBird. The eBird editors' team retained this record as unconfirmed as the notes do not conclusively eliminate a juvenile Greater Flamingo *P. roseus*. Hence, a record that is in review cannot stand as the only evidence for its occurrence in the state. Hence this species is deleted from the state checklist.

Cinereous Vulture *Aegypius monachus*: This species was included purely on sight records, but Biddappa P. A. has since photographed it conclusively in Nagarhole National Park in December 2016 (Biddappa 2017).

Crab-Plover *Dromas ardeola*: Roshan Kamath photographed a sub-adult in Chitrapu Estuary, Dakshin Kannada District on 14 December 2017 (Kamath 2017). Several other birders saw it subsequently in the same location. Birders reported another bird from the Kundapura-Gangoli Estuary in April–May 2018.

Great Eared-Nightjar *Lyncornis macrotis*: Included in the state checklist mainly based on aural evidence from the Western Ghats. However, this has been questioned, and rejected, as its vocalization could be confused with that of a Sri Lanka Frogmouth *Batrachostomus moniliger* (Praveen & Baidya 2018). This species stands deleted from the state checklist.

Himalayan Cuckoo *Cuculus optatus*: Included based on a photograph from Ganeshgudi by Niranjan Sant in Oriental Bird Images (Sant 2010), which has since been correctly identified, and relabeled, as a Eurasian Cuckoo *C. canorus*. Unbarred rump, visible in these photographs, is considered diagnostic for the latter, and strong evidence to eliminate a Himalayan Cuckoo. This species stands deleted from the state checklist.

Pacific (Blyth's) Swift *Apus pacificus leuconyx*: This species was included purely on sight records, but Harshith J. V., Vinay K. L., and Dwiref Oza, along with other Manipal birders photographed one on 05 February 2017 at Hegra, Udupi District (Harshith 2017).

Common Swift *Apus apus*: One of the two birds seen along with Little Swifts *A. affinis* that Ramit Singal, Ashwin Viswanathan, and Vrinda Lath photographed in Shantinagar, Udupi District on 02 December 2017 (Singal 2017).

Blue-cheeked Bee-eater *Merops persicus*: Vinay K. L., Gururaj Moorching, and Vasudev Prasad photographed a flock of three birds on 26 May 2018 at Kenjar Wetlands, Mangalore (Vinay 2018); subsequently seen by others that evening.

Red-naped Shaheen *Falco peregrinus babylonicus*: This subspecies of Peregrine Falcon has been conclusively photo-documented in Belgaum (Sant & Shelke 2018).

Chestnut-eared Bunting *Emberiza fucata kuatunensis*: Bishan C. Monnappa and Santhosh Kumar P. A. photographed male in non-breeding plumage on 17 March 2018 in Virajpet, Kodagu (Monnappa & Kumar 2018). A prior record from Kerala (George 2015), earlier considered of unknown origin, is now accepted as supporting this observation, as both these southern Indian records are from March.

Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla*: Adithya Bhat, Arun Prabhu, and Sahana M conclusively photo-documented this bird in the Barkur Wetlands, Udupi (Sahana 2018); now added to the state checklist.

Yellow-headed Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava lutea*: Sivaguru Nupuran conclusively photo-documented this subspecies of the Western Yellow Wagtail in Hoskote, Bengaluru (Nupuran 2018).

White-headed Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava leucocephala*: Mohit Aggarwal conclusively photo-documented this subspecies of the Western Yellow Wagtail in Hoskote, Bengaluru (Aggarwal 2017), as did several others later; now added to the checklist.

Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*: Abhishek Maiya, G. Kanaka, Mohith Shenoy, and Vrinda Lath conclusively photographed this species in Manipal, Dakshin Kannada (Maiya 2017). Other birders also photographed it on subsequent days; it is now added to the state checklist.

With this update, three species have been deleted from the state checklist and seven added to it. This increases the total number of species in the Karnataka checklist to 535. Most of the documentation of the state's birds has moved to eBird, where 511 (496 in 2016) species have been reported, of which 503 (446 in 2016) have media documentation. The following three birds find a place in the state checklist purely based on sight records: Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*, Dollarbird *Eurystomus orientalis*, and Grey-throated Martin *Riparia chinensis*. Though the taxonomic update of 2018 (Praveen *et al.* 2018) elevated a number of subspecies, found in the country, to species level, this does not impact the number of species found in Karnataka.