

Sighting of Blue-throated Flycatcher *Cyornis rubeculoides* in Gujarat

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Ms received on 31st January 2009.

On 26th October 2008 I was photographing a female Red-throated Flycatcher *Ficedula parva* on a tree behind my house in Morbi, Rajkot district, Gujarat (22°49' N 70°50' E) at approximately 1100 hrs. The Red-throated Flycatcher uses a branch on the tree behind my house as a perch quite regularly.

While photographing the bird, a very different type of flycatcher suddenly came on the tree. At first glance I thought that it was a Tickell's Blue-Flycatcher *Cyornis tickelliae*, but it was quite different, and since I had seen lots of Tickell's Blue-Flycatchers in Gir National Park (Gujarat), I realised that this bird was different. It had dark blue upperparts, much darker than *C. tickelliae*. It had a blue throat with a slight orange wedge, an orange breast with a white belly and vent. It had a slightly lighter blue on the crown. It was like a typical flycatcher, but perching high in the tree and making short sallies for insects.

I took photographs of the bird and looked up reference books. I identified the bird as a male Blue-throated Flycatcher *C. rubeculoides* (Fig. 1). It was seen only for two days and was probably a passage migrant. There are no records from western

India in the reference books that I have access to (Grimmett *et al.* 1998; Kazmierczak 2000). I have never seen it here before and I do not know if there are any previous records for Gujarat.

This sighting also shows that the migration routes of small birds, though widely studied, remain a mystery even today.

References

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Editor's note: Perusal of published literature shows a trickle of Blue-throated Flycatcher sightings from western India. Rajasthan: Robson (1997) reported a sighting by Paul Holt at Bharatpur in February 1996, and Sangha & Naoroji (2003) reported a bird from the Thar Desert region of Kishangarh, Jaisalmer district. Gujarat: Jain *et al.* (2005) listed it from Ahmedabad, but this is an erroneous record for they meant the resident and common Tickell's Blue-Flycatcher, making the above, the first report of the species from Gujarat. Maharashtra: Several reports listed in Prasad (2004, 2006). Goa: Saha & Dasgupta (1992) took a female specimen on 23rd March 1973 and stated mysteriously, that it is "common in Goa during winter." Several sightings reported by Lainer (1999, 2004), who also questioned Saha & Dasgupta's (1992) statement about its commonness in Goa. Could it be possible that a small number of vagrants of the nominate Himalayan race migrate southward, to the southern Western Ghats, directly across western India?

References

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—Aasheesh Pittie



Fig. 1. Blue-throated Flycatcher *Cyornis rubeculoides* in author's backyard in Gujarat.