

Status and distribution of Broad-billed Sandpiper *Calidris falcinellus* in Gujarat, India

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Introduction

Broad-billed Sandpiper *Calidris falcinellus* is a long-distance migrant occurring as a winter visitor to the Indian Subcontinent. The nominate *falcinellus* breeds in Scandinavia and north-western Russia, and winters from eastern, and southern Africa, through Arabia, to western and southern India, and Sri Lanka. The race *sibirica* breeds in Taymyr, and River Lena, east to River Kolyma, and winters from north-eastern India through Southeast Asia, the Philippines and Indonesia, to Australia (Van Gils & Wiersma 1996).

In Gujarat, the Broad-billed Sandpiper is a winter migrant mainly in the Gulf of Kachchh (Kazmierczak 2000; Grimmert *et al.* 2011). Ali & Ripley (2007) and Rasmussen & Anderton (2012) give its distribution along the entire coast of Gujarat, while Chandler (2009) gives its winter distribution for inland as well as coastal Gujarat. Dharmakumarsinhji (1955) gives its distribution as, 'coastline of Saurashtra and possibly Kachchh.'

Naik *et al.* (1990) list it as a migratory species to the intertidal areas and salt pans along the Gulf of Kachchh.

Here we describe the current status, and distribution, of Broad-billed Sandpiper in Gujarat. We carried out surveys in different areas in the Gulf of Kachchh and along the coast near Bhavnagar. We also collected records of the species from literature, and from websites, and asked birdwatchers to provide information on the species in Gujarat.

Observations

Our sightings of Broad-billed Sandpipers, between April 2008 and October 2013, and those of others, are summarised in Table 1.

Published reports are mainly from Kachchh (Varu 1988, 2010; Akhtar & Tiwari 1991), and Jamnagar (Varu *et al.* 2009), and the photos on the birding websites—www.indianaturewatch.net; www.orientalbirdimages.org—are also from these two places,

Table 1. Sightings of Broad-billed Sandpiper in Gujarat (2008–2013)

Date	Place	Habitat	Activity	No. of birds	Remarks ¹
13 April 2008	Salt pans near INS Valsura, Jamnagar	Salt pans	Feeding	5	
15 April 2008	Salt pans near INS Valsura, Jamnagar	Salt pans	Feeding	3	
26 September 2008	Creek near Madhapar Bhunga, Jamnagar	Intertidal mudflats	Roosting	2	
17 September 2009	Bedi Port road, Jamnagar	Salt pans	Feeding	65	Varu <i>et al.</i> 2009
24 September 2009	Bedi Port road, Jamnagar	Salt pans	Feeding	71	Varu <i>et al.</i> 2009
28 October 2009	Near Bedi Port gate, Jamnagar	Salt pans	Feeding	5	
30 October 2009	Near Bedi Port gate, Jamnagar	Salt pans	Feeding	4	
20 November 2008	Gujarat (Details not Known)	Not known	Not known	3	Deomurari 2008
28 November 2009	Mudflats near Samlasar Salt pans, Dwarka	Sandy beach/mudflat	Feeding	1	
20 December 2009	Samlasar Salt pans, Dwarka	Salt pans	Not recorded	3	
December 2009	Pingleshwar Coast, Kachchh	Not known	Not known	1	Devasar 2009
January 2010	Narara, Marine National Park, Jamnagar	Not known	Not known	1	Subramanya 2010
23 January 2010	Gagva Salt pans, Jamnagar	Salt pans	Not recorded	1	
14 February 2010	Creek near Madhapar Bhunga, Jamnagar	Intertidal mudflats	Feeding	2	
17 March 2010	Bedi Port road, Jamnagar	Salt pans	Feeding	300–350	In breeding plumage
21 March 2010	Near Bedi Port gate, Jamnagar	Salt pans	Feeding	300–350	In breeding plumage
04 April 2010	Century Salt pans, Jamnagar	Salt pans	Feeding	4	
11 April 2010	Balachadi Coast, Jamnagar	Intertidal mudflats	Feeding	1	
12 April 2010	Digvijay Salt pans, Jamnagar	Salt pans	Feeding	2	
13 April 2010	Digvijay Salt pans, Jamnagar	Salt pans	Feeding	2	
25 April 2010	Jamnagar	Not known	Not known	1	Trivedi 2010
08 May 2010	Near Bedi Port gate, Jamnagar	Salt pans	Feeding	15	
10 October 2010	Balachadi Coast, Jamnagar	Intertidal mudflats	Feeding	1	
31 October 2010	Digvijay Salt pans, Jamnagar	Salt pans	Not recorded	3	
01 May 2011	Navlakhi Coast, Near Morbi	Intertidal Mudflats	Feeding	10	
15 August 2012	Navlakhi Coast, Near Morbi	Intertidal Mudflats	Feeding	15	
20 January 2013	Haathab Coast, Bhavnagar	Intertidal Mudflats	Feeding	2	
16 October 2013	New Port road, Bhavnagar	Salt pans	Feeding	1	

¹ Unless stated the observations are by the authors

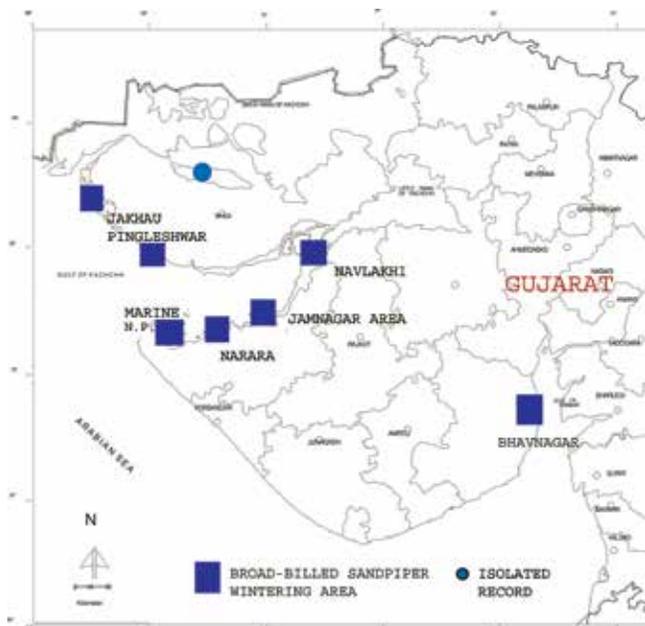


Fig. 1. Distribution of Broad-billed Sandpiper in Gujarat.

with a majority of the photos being from Jamnagar. Current distribution of Broad-billed Sandpiper based on our data, other published records, and from website reports, is given in the map (Fig. 1).

Our observations indicate that the Broad-billed Sandpiper arrives in Gujarat in August, with 15 August being its earliest arrival date. The birds seen in August are in partial breeding plumage [137]. They are usually seen till the second week of May, when most birds are in full breeding plumage. Broad-billed Sandpipers are usually seen in small numbers in Gujarat. They associate with other waders like Dunlin *Calidris alpina*, Little Stint *C. minuta*, Curlew Sandpiper *C. ferruginea*, and other small waders. Their usual habitats are inter-tidal mudflats, muddy creeks, and salt pans. They have been observed feeding, as well as roosting, on salt pans, and intertidal mudflats.

Discussion

As seen from the above observations, the Broad-billed Sandpiper is mainly seen in coastal areas around Jamnagar and Kachchh. The records from Bhavnagar indicate that it occurs in coastal areas around the Gulf of Cambay (Khambhat) as well. It has not been



137. Broad-billed Sandpiper starting to moult out of breeding plumage. Jamnagar, September 2009.



Photos: Ashwin Trivedi

138. A small flock of Broad-billed Sandpipers. Jamnagar, March 2010.

recorded commonly from Gujarat earlier and it is possible that it may have been overlooked due to its similarity to Dunlin. There are no published records of Broad-billed Sandpiper from coastal areas of southern Gujarat, and from around the Porbander coast. As there appears to be suitable habitat, there is no reason why it would not be occurring there; towards this, intensive surveys in southern Gujarat, and other areas of Saurashtra, are highly recommended, since there is a 06 August 2015 record of two Broad-billed Sandpipers from Porbandar (Rughani 2015), which is earlier than the first arrival date we noted. Though occurring mainly in coastal areas, there is an inland record from Kachchh (Akhtar & Tiwari 1991).

The sighting of flocks of more than 300 birds is significant; as such large flocks have not been noted here previously, though Dharmakumarsinhji (1955) notes that 'fairly large' flocks sometimes occur, without mentioning the number of birds. Broad-billed Sandpipers are known to flock before spring migration (Van Gils & Wiersma 1996). Ali & Ripley (2007) mention that, 'segregated flocks in breeding plumage are seen in early May', but here the flocks were seen in March [138]. The sighting of 65 and 71 birds in September (Varu *et al.* 2009) may indicate that the birds are staging in Gujarat, on autumn migration, to fly further south into the Indian Subcontinent, with Ali & Ripley (2007) noting that, "at first they are usually seen in pairs".

Ali & Ripley (2007) further reported that the nominate *falcinellus* occurs along the western coast of India, and that the birds occurring in eastern India comprised *sibirica*. However the occurrence of both races along the eastern coast is mentioned in Balachandran & Natarajan (1997). The birds observed in breeding plumage, in Jamnagar, lack rufous tones on upperparts and are of the nominate race. Whether the race *sibirica* occurs in Gujarat is not known, and further observations are needed to ascertain this.

Conclusions

From recent observations, it would appear that the Broad-billed Sandpiper is a fairly common, and widespread, winter migrant to the Gujarat coast. It is widely distributed along the Gulf of Kachchh and along the Bhavnagar coast in the Gulf of Khambhat. Further surveys are needed along the mainland coast of the eastern part of the Gulf of Khambhat, and southern Gujarat, to determine its status there. It is usually seen in small numbers in suitable intertidal habitat, but has not been recorded inland recently.

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A monospecific colony of Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* in agricultural landscape of central Uttar Pradesh, India

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Dwevedi, R., Kumar, A., & Mylswamy, M., 2015. A monospecific colony of Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* in agricultural landscape of central Uttar Pradesh, India. *Indian BIRDS* 10 (6): 149–150.

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Introduction

The Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* is widely distributed across the world. It is found all over India, from coastal areas up to 1500 m asl (Ali & Ripley 1968). It is also a species that is rapidly expanding its range across the globe (Lowe-McConnell 1967; Ali & Ripley 1968; Jenni 1969; Arendt & Arendt 1988; Si Bachir *et al.* 2011).

The breeding biology of the Cattle Egret has been studied in detail across the globe (Jeni 1969; Dusi & Dusi 1970; Siegfried 1972; McKilligan 1997; Parejo *et al.* 2001), and in India (Hilaluddin *et al.* 2003; Patankar *et al.* 2007; Joshi & Shrivastava 2012; Kour & Sahi 2013). It is known to nest in, both, monospecific- (Samraoui *et al.* 2007; Si Bachir 2008), and in mixed colonies (Dusi & Dusi 1970; Ranglack *et al.* 1991; Hilaluddin *et al.* 2003). A colony of Cattle Egrets may have from a few dozens, to thousands, of nests at once (Siegfried 1972; Fujioka 1985; Hilaluddin *et al.* 2006; Kour & Sahi 2013). This species has been well documented to be nesting in variety of nesting substrate and landscape (Hilaluddin *et al.* 2006; Parkes *et al.* 2012; Kour & Sahi 2013). This study describes a large monospecific colony of Cattle Egrets found in Aladapur village, Barabanki District, Uttar Pradesh.

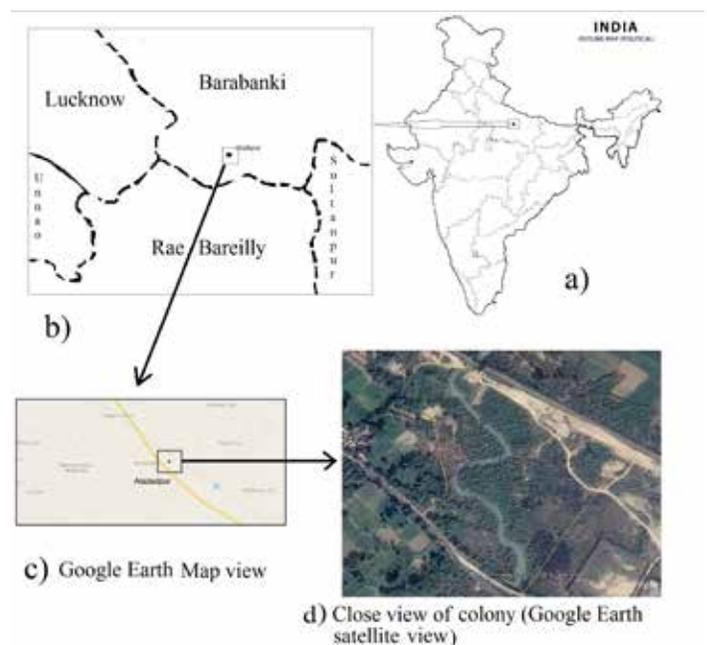


Fig. 1. Location of Cattle Egret colony

★ Map not to scale