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104a, b. Nest with egg, of Slaty-breasted Rail near Navsari.

Early in the morning of 05 September 2018, we visited the nest again. Even after two hours of waiting at a safe distance, we did not observe any activity in the area. We approached the nest and found it empty. We do not know what happened to the egg, and the adults were also not seen. The most likely cause for its absence could be predation by snakes, mongoose, or other predators, which are frequently seen there.

Though the guidelines for nesting biology studies by Barve et al. (2020) had not been published when we carried out our observations, we retrospectively verified our practices against the guidelines. The species is not classified as 'Threatened' under the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species (<https://www.iucnredlist.org/>), and we were not inside a protected area. Hence, those guidelines are not applicable in our case. Our discovery of the nest was opportunistic, and we did not intend to carry out any detailed breeding study on the nest we had discovered.

Therefore, we seem to have taken sufficient care in ensuring that the breeding birds were not disturbed. Unfortunately, the nesting was not successful. We believe that the nest predation happened due to circumstances that were beyond our control. Our actions near the nest may not have been responsible for the nest predation as other than observing the nest, we did not clear any vegetation nor make any changes near the nest site. We infer this from the fact that the incubating bird returned within seven to eight minutes after our observations, and that we immediately left the area. When we left the area, the bird was still on the nest. The reasons for the nest predation remain unknown.

It has been observed during detailed breeding biology studies that eggs/chicks are predated and it is the natural order that these things happen. Are these nests predated because they are being observed? Would this particular nest of the Slaty-breasted Rail not have been predated if we had not observed it? That is something we cannot answer. Our observation has contributed to the knowledge that the Slaty-breasted Rail breeds in Gujarat, something that was speculated, but was directly observed this time. We endorse Barve et al. (2020) in that nest predation is a matter for serious concern and that the guidelines for nesting studies should be rigorously followed and that all precautions should be taken to ensure that the welfare of the birds should be the only priority when doing these studies.

This is the first time that a nest of the Slaty-breasted Rail has been found in Gujarat, and this sighting confirms that it does breed here. Since the habitat observed here is seen in other parts of southern Gujarat, especially between the Narmada and

Tapi River areas, it is possible that the Slaty-breasted Rail could be breeding in this region. Suitable habitats should be scrutinised for the Slaty-breasted Rail in the summer/monsoon months in this region.

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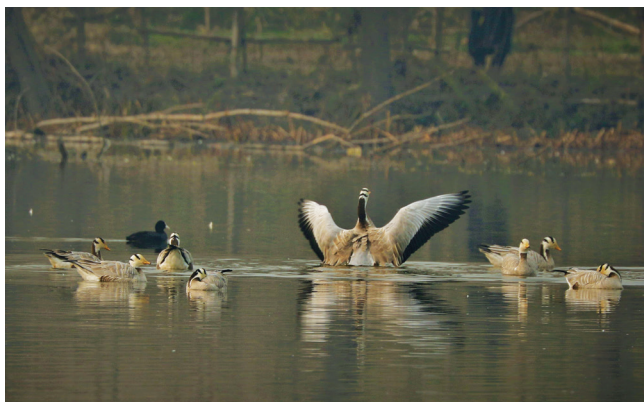
The Bar-headed Goose *Anser indicus* in the wetlands of Kashmir Valley, India

The Bar-headed Goose *Anser indicus* breeds in Ladakh, (India), Tibet (China), Mongolia, Uzbekistan, Tadjikistan, and Kyrgyztan (Rahmani & Islam 2008). It winters in lowland swamps, marshes, lakes, and rivers throughout northern India and the Gangetic Plain (including the Nepal *terai*), to Assam, Gujarat, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala (Ali & Ripley 1987; Rahmani & Islam 2008). Although the Bar-headed Goose is a common summer visitor to its breeding habitats in the high altitude plains of eastern Ladakh, its presence in the adjoining Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir is quite sparse.

On the foggy morning of 06 December 2019 following an unconfirmed report from one of the field staff, Abdul Rauf, we visited the Manibugh Wetland (34.18°N, 74.81°E; c. 1610 m asl) in Pampore, Srinagar. On reaching the wetland we observed a fairly good population of Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*, Common Teal *A. crecca*, and Eurasian Coot *Fulica atra* present there. While we were busy watching them we spotted a flock of seven Bar-headed Geese flying in to the wetland, probably from the nearby paddy fields to its north-eastern side. We followed the flock with binoculars and camera till the birds settled in the water [105]. Although the weather was foggy, we managed to photograph the birds. At 0915 h we heard another flock of 16 Bar-headed Geese coming in towards the wetland from the same direction.

In winter, the Bar-headed Goose has been recorded only from the Gharana Wetland in Jammu District (Rahmani & Islam 2008). Tahir Shawl reported up to 2,000 were reported from the wetland in 2006 (Rahmani & Islam 2008). Khursheed Ahmad reported that c.50 birds stayed on the Hygam Wetland in Kashmir for a very brief period in February 2006 (Rahmani & Islam 2008). Since then, there has not been any report from the Kashmir wetlands (Suhail et al. 2020). The 23 birds that we spotted remained for nearly a month, 06–29 December 2019, and were probably using the wetland as a stopover site.

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105. Bar-headed Geese on Manibugh Wetlands.

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A breeding record of the Blue-breasted Quail *Synoisus chinensis* from West Bengal

On 14 July 2019, we were watching birds near Baruipur (22.36°N, 88.39°E), South 24 Parganas, West Bengal. At 0725 h, we noticed a quail family moving so fast from side to side through the dense part of the grass that none of us could take pictures. As the covey seemed to have chicks, we decided not to go closer, lest they feel threatened in any way. After waiting for a while, when they crossed the road for the second time, we took pictures [106] that readily identified the birds as Blue-breasted Quails *Synoisus chinensis*; basis, the bright blue colour on the chest of the male. We waited there for some time and finally decided that we would observe them for as long as possible. Two to three times, in quick succession, when they were moving from side to side of the grassland, we realized how much they were moving inside the thick, 50–60 cm tall grass on a 30 cm wide trail. Ahead were two shallow waterbodies. How quickly they moved in the grassland. We had been waiting there for about three hours since we first saw them. The male peeped out from the grassland and stared at us. We assume that when he did not perceive any danger from us, he almost stood up on the road, and with a special gesture (an up-and-down movement of his head), gave a quick signal to the rest of his family to cross the road. Three chicks and the female crossed the road behind him. The chicks seemed about 14–15 days old. They are known to prefer dense and swampy grassland, like this site, that also has

some waterbodies. Later we saw them feeding, possibly on grass seeds or insects, well inside the grassland, and sometimes just visible alongside the road.



106. A male Blue-breasted Quail with chick. (Click for video)

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We decided to visit the site regularly to study these quails. PrBi and SaDa visited every day and PrBi, occasionally; all observations from the period are tabulated in Table 1. We observed that they appeared two to three times on an open trail in a day. When they scamper across an open trail, from one side to the other, there is a long gap (up to five to six hours) before they return to the earlier side. We studied them for 23 days and realized how well adapted they were to the habitat. While our observations were made in 2019, when *Indian BIRDS* has not published their nesting biology guidelines (Barve et al. 2020), we have now reviewed the guidelines as applicable to our study. By the time we saw the chicks of the quail, they were no longer in the nest and we estimated they were at least two weeks old. Being nidifugous birds, they would have left the nest immediately after hatching. Our studies were non-intrusive, despite the challenge of long waiting periods. When other birdwatchers came to see the quails, the protocol of wait and watch continued without disturbing them. In a way, we took the responsibility of guarding them while studying them, until the chicks have grown up.

Table 1. Significant observations of breeding Blue-breasted Quail during the fledgling period

2019	Observation	Observers
14 July	A pair with three chicks observed [XX1, 2]	AbRo, PrBh, PrBi, SaDa
15 July	Two more chicks observed, hence the pair had at least five chicks	PrBi, SaDa
17 July	Chicks seen taking a short flight of c.2–3 m	PrBi, SaDa
19 July	Saw the family four times (maximum for any day)	PrBi, SaDa
21 July	Full family with five chicks observed foraging in the open while crossing a narrow walk path	PrBh, PrBi, SaDa
23 July	Spotted two chicks with patches of blue on their breast, indicating males	PrBh, PrBi, SaDa
28 July	One male chick and three female chicks observed. Video 1	SaDa
05 August	Last observation	SaDa
06 August	Area flooded and remained inaccessible henceforth	