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Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii* along with Lesser Sand Plover *C. mongolus* at Siswan Dam Lake bed, Sahibzada Ajit Singh Nagar, Punjab

Siswan (30.87°N, 76.75°E) is a small village, c.22 km from Mohali and 15 km from Chandigarh, on the Chandigarh–Baddi road, in Sahibzada Ajit Singh Nagar District, Punjab, India. The village is situated in the foothills of the Shivalik Range, next to a reservoir that was created when a check dam was constructed on a seasonal rivulet.

On 29 May 2021, at 0800 h, I had gone birding to Siswan Dam, and Siswan forest. A large part of the lake-bed was dry, due to a severe summer and the consequent evaporating water, so it was easy to walk closer to the waterline. Migrating birds, on passage, are noticed every week at the Siswan Dam Reservoir and so it was a mandatory exercise to scan the area before going into the forest. I could see Lesser Whistling Ducks *Dendrocygna javanica*, Knob-billed Ducks *Sarkidiornis melanotos*, Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius* and two small plover-sized birds through my binoculars. I clicked pictures of the two small plovers. I had not seen the latter on the previous weekend, and seemed they had arrived recently. One of them was creamish in colour, with yellow-orange on the breast, and a black eye patch, and the other was cream-coloured with buff colour on the breast; both were seen running about, in short spurts, on the lake bed. The plovers appeared to be similar to each other, but for the size of bill, length and colour of legs, and a few other distinctions. With my rudimentary knowledge of birds, I assumed them to be plovers and clicked many pictures of both the birds before moving into the forest.

On my way back, I tried to identify the two birds on eBird India and also shared the pictures with a friend. From the photographs it is clear that both the plovers were Sand Plovers based on their pale throat and brown back. The bird with pale throat, brown back, white belly, black mask, and bright orange chest and neck [102] was identified as a Lesser Sand Plover *C. mongolus*. The other, as a Greater Sand Plover *C. leschenaultii* based on its dark eye mask and light orangish chest, neck, and forehead [103], which features differentiating it from similar plumages of Lesser Sand Plover.



102. Lesser Sand Plover.



103. Greater Sand Plover.

Both: Neeraj Vora

In perusing extant literature, it is evident that sightings of these plovers in northern India, on passage, is not rare, but neither is it common, especially that of the Greater Sand Plover. Maps in Grimmett et al. (2011), and Sangha (2021) indicate that the Greater Sand Plover is a winter visitor to the coasts of India, and one isolated record is indicated in Punjab, probably at Harike. On being contacted, Tim Inskipp said, "The location was Harike, as you surmised, and the observer was Per Undeland. He recorded one male Greater Sand Plover on 14, 18 & 25 May 1995, presumably referring to the same individual, though this is not stated. I don't think it will be possible to obtain any further details as Per was unable to provide a description and no photos were taken," (*in litt.*, e-mail dated 6 August 2021). Therefore, this record cannot be assessed. Further, the nearest reported records of a Greater Sand Plover from north-western India are very few: mostly from the east and south of Chandigarh, near Nathusari (Chopta) in Uttarakhand, Sirsa in Haryana on 17 July 2016, and Sambar Lake in Rajasthan on 15 August 2015. There is no other record of the Greater Sand Plover sighted in Punjab (Singh 2018).

The Lesser Sand Plover breeds in the Himalayas and winters on the coasts of the Indian Subcontinent. One bird was recorded at Pong Dam, Himachal Pradesh, on 10 March 2018, three birds at Yamuna Khadar, Hiranki, north of Delhi on 18 September 2016, and four sighted at Sukhna Lake, Chandigarh, on 13 May 2018—all may have been on a brief stopover enroute to high altitude lakes (Singh 2018).

Hence, it seems that my sighting of these plovers, is a significant and an important photographic record. However,

the presence of the birds comes as no surprise as Rasmussen & Anderton (2012) include the Punjab for both the species' passage migration.

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Juvenile Lesser Flamingos *Phoeniconaias minor* in Najafgarh Drain, Haryana, India

The Lesser Flamingo *Phoeniconaias minor* is known to breed at the Little Rann of Kachchh in Gujarat (Ali 1974; Parasharya & Tere 2006; Tere & Parasharya 2011), and in the non-breeding season, it disperses to the coasts of Gujarat, Maharashtra, and various inland wetlands of northern India (Parasharya & Tere 2006). It is a vagrant to Delhi, presumably from its nearest habitat in Rajasthan's Sambhar Salt Lake (Vyas 2019). Prince (2003) recorded a single Lesser Flamingo at Basai Wetland in 2003.



104. Resting Lesser Flamingos in Najafgarh Jheel, Haryana, India.



105. Lesser Flamingos foraging in shallow water in Najafgarh Jheel, Haryana, India.

Both: Amit Kumar

Najafgarh Drain (28.49°N, 76.95°E), which is also known as Najafgarh Jheel, is part of the Sahibi River, located at the Delhi-Haryana border. As it receives untreated sewage, the jheel is one of the most contaminated, and yet a very productive, habitat for plants and bird species. Najafgarh Jheel is the only site in Haryana where Flamingos are found throughout the year (Vyas, 2019; Kumar & Rana 2020; 2021).

We have been monitoring Najafgarh Jheel for a few years (November 2018 to August 2021). On 2 February 2020, we observed four juvenile Lesser Flamingos [104, 105] feeding in shallow water in the Najafgarh Jheel, along with an adult Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus roseus* and this continued till March 2020. When seen well, a juvenile Lesser Flamingo can be easily distinguished from a juvenile Greater Flamingo by its smaller size, a dark smaller bill, and short legs and neck (Grimmett et al. 2011). This is one of the northern-most Lesser Flamingo distributions recorded in India.

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Opportunistic feeding by *Psittacula krameri* on white efflorescence salts at building wall

The Rose-ringed Parakeet *Psittacula krameri* is a native species of sub-Saharan Africa and the Indian Subcontinent. It is highly adaptive of a wide array of habitats, ranging from forests, grasslands, deserts, wetlands, foothills, agricultural fields, and urban environments. It is highly commensal, living in close association with human beings, and found across human settlements, roadsides, and urban parks. The Rose-ringed Parakeet is a widespread resident in the Indian Subcontinent, inhabiting forests, gardens, cultivations, towns, and cities (Ali & Ripley 1983; Rasmussen & Anderton 2005).

The species is, primarily, an opportunistic granivore and is known to feed on a wide variety of cereals, grains, seeds, fruits, berries, nectar, etc., and interestingly, also on food provided by people on the roadside, and in urban parks. It flies in small,