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A specimen of Sooty Shearwater *Ardenna grisea* from Porbandar, Gujarat

Pelagic birds, which typically live and forage over open oceans, are sometimes blown toward the Indian coast during the monsoon season due to strong winds. These seabirds can become disoriented or exhausted, leading them to appear unusually close to shore or even inland. From May to July 2025, during the peak of the southwest monsoon, 15 such exhausted or stranded pelagic seabirds were discovered along the Porbandar coast in Gujarat. The birds were found at various locations, including Subhashnagar, Chowpaty, Miyani, Lakadi Bandar, Mokarsagar Wetland, and near the Nirma Factory. The stranded birds included four Wilson's Storm-petrels *Oceanites oceanicus*, along with several Masked Boobies *Sula dactylatra*, unidentified shearwaters, and unidentified tropicbirds. While some of the birds were successfully rehabilitated and released, most did not survive (unpublished data compiled by NT).

One of the unidentified shearwaters, found in a weak state on 28 June 2025, at Porbandar Chowpaty (21.628°N, 69.613°E), was handed over to the Porbandar Bird Sanctuary by a good Samaritan. Local forest guard NM alerted birders NT and PP, who shared the sighting and initiated discussions on regional bird discussion groups on the bird's identification. Unfortunately, the bird died the next day. EM formally requested the Gujarat Forest Department to donate the deceased specimen to the Feather Library, a curated collection of salvaged bird feathers, archived with associated biological and ecological data (Munshi & Everett 2025).

The bird was collected by EM on 07 July 2025. The combination of dark body, moderately long tail, long, slender dark beak and whitish underwing coverts matched only Sooty Shearwater *Ardenna grisea* and Short-tailed Shearwater *A. tenuirostris*. These two species differ primarily in size, bill structure and underwing patterns. However, there is a good amount of individual variation in the underwing pattern in both species. Assessing these minor differences in size, structure and plumage of an isolated fast-moving bird is tricky, especially in unfavourable light. Since the bird was in hand, EM could clean the specimen on 22 July and take photographs of underwing, head and beak [216]. EM also recorded the detailed morphometric measurements.

The bird was an immature female. The complete morphometric data are as follows (all lengths in mm): Weight: 429 gm, Wingspan: 1030; Right wing: 467; Body length (bill tip to tail tip): 414; Tail: 108.9; Primary projection: 100.8; Wing to tail: -26.8; Head: 92.5 x 28.4; Bill length: 41.39; Bill width: 13.8;

Gape length: 55.8; Gape width: 24.1; Femur: 45.7; Tibiotarsus: 89.3; Tarsometatarsus: 50.5; Digit (i): 4.4; Digit (ii): 45.8; Digit (iii): 53.5; Digit (iv): 50.7; Claw (i): 0; Claw (ii): 2.8; Claw (iii): 8.4; Claw (iv): 6.3.

We used Flood & Fisher (2020) for analysing the plumage features and measurements. Though the total length of the Porbandar bird fell short of the expected range for Sooty Shearwater, other characteristics matched those of a Sooty Shearwater:

- The wing span and beak length fell within the expected ranges for Sooty Shearwater and does not fit Short-tailed Shearwater.
- The bill proportions matched Sooty better than Short-tailed Shearwater, with the nasal tube noticeably shorter than culminicorn and maxillary unguis.
- The underwing showed a "butter knife" shaped white patch with prominent white median and lesser primary coverts showing dark shafts. The white in the primary coverts was more extensive than the amount of white in the secondary coverts. This is typical for a Sooty Shearwater.
- The throat was darker compared to the chin, which is a supporting feature.

The photographs and measurements were also shared with Robert Flood, who confirmed the identification as Sooty Shearwater (Robert Flood in email dated 11 August 2025).

Sooty Shearwater is one of the most common seabirds in the world. They breed in large colonies in the southern Pacific and southern Atlantic Oceans, particularly on islands off south-eastern Australia, New Zealand, and Tierra del Fuego (Carboneras et al. 2024) and are known for their long-distance migrations from the southern hemisphere to the northern hemisphere. While the species has a broad marine distribution, they are relatively rare in the north Indian Ocean (Anderson et al. 2016; Carboneras et al. 2024) and there is only one previously published record from Indian waters - off the coast of Mangalore, Karnataka in 2023 (Srinivasan et al. 2023; Praveen 2025).

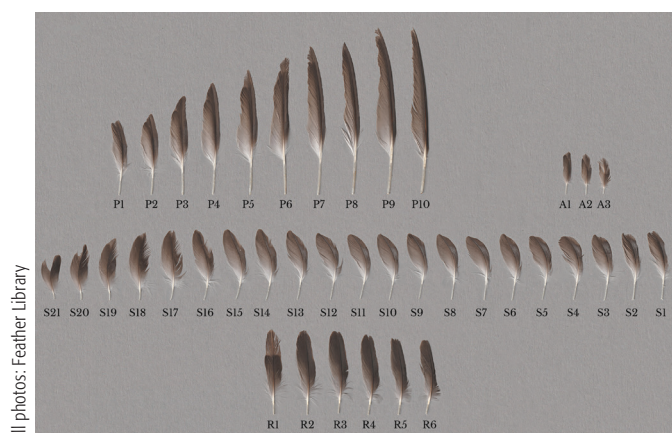
A study skin with extended wing, and individual flight feathers were prepared and preserved by the Feather Library in collaboration with the Research Collections Facility at National Centre for Biological Sciences (NCBS-TIFR), Bangalore [217]. Tissue samples were also preserved at NCBS Research Collections Facility. The voucher codes for the specimen are FTLB-GJ-152001 (Feather Library www.featherlibrary.com/specimen/ftlb_gj152001/) and NRC-AA-5873 (NCBS Research Collections Facility), linking all associated data and materials.

Table 1. Key measurements of the specimen in comparison with the typical range of Short-tailed and Sooty Shearwater (Flood & Fisher 2020).

	Range for Short-tailed Shearwater	Range for Sooty Shearwater	Specimen
Total length	400-430 mm	430-460 mm	414 mm
Wingspan	910-990 mm	970-1060 mm	1030 mm
Bill length	29-34 mm	37-43 mm	41.4 mm
Ratio of nasal tubes vs total bill length	30.9%	25.7%	27.1%
Ratio of culminicorn vs total bill length	28.0%	34.4%	33.9%
Ratio of maxillary unguis vs total bill length	41.1%	39.9%	39.0%



216. Specimen (FTLB-GJ-152001) of Sooty Shearwater at Feather Library. (a) Dorsal view (b) Ventral View (In collaboration with Research Collections Facility, NCBS-TIFR).



217. Feather plate of FTLB-GJ-152001

EM further documented the feather microstructure of the specimen using a scanning electron microscope (SEM, Zeiss The MERLIN Compact VP) (Fig. 1). This high-resolution imaging contributes to a growing comparative dataset for seabird feather microanatomy, which is valuable for species identification, aerodynamic studies, and forensic feather analysis (Kashyap et al. 2024).

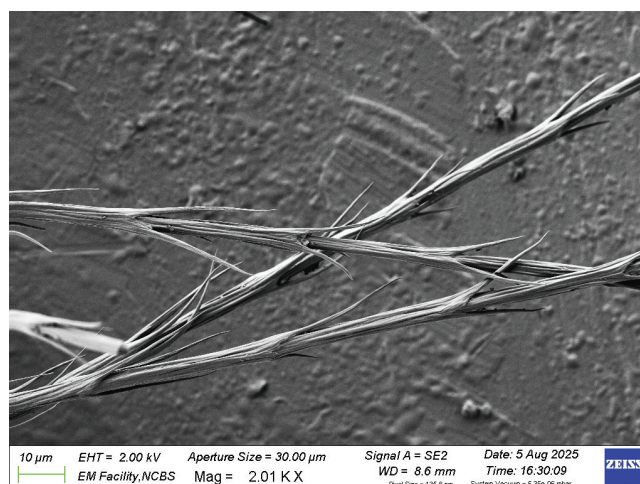
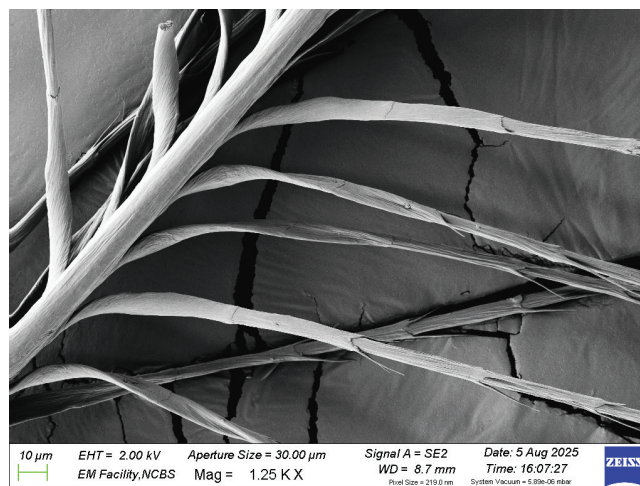
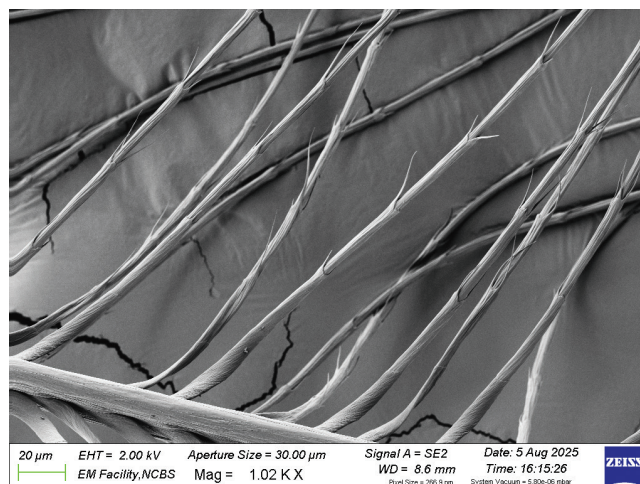


Fig. 1. Scanning microscopic image showing the nodes of the plumulaceous barbles of FTLB-GJ-152001.

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The Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola* from Hokersar Wetland, Jammu and Kashmir, India

Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola* is a medium sized wader, also known as Common Pratincole, Red-winged Pratincole or European Pratincole (Sangha 2021). In India, it is a local summer visitor to Gujarat, where it breeds, and a passage migrant elsewhere (Sangha 2021; Praveen 2025). In non-breeding season, it spreads thinly in Peninsular India, locally in Chilika (Odisha) and south-western coastal plains. Inland reports from Deccan, Andamans, northern and central India are likely to be of migrating birds (Praveen 2025).

On 08 May 2024, HS visited Hokersar Wetland, Srinagar District, Jammu & Kashmir (34.102°N, 74.715°E; c. 1,600 m asl). At 1150 h, he observed a pratincole resting close to the lake and took some photographs. It was in breeding plumage [217]. The lores were black and the black gorget was encircling the pale throat. The red at the base of bill was prominent and present on both the upper and lower mandibles. The eye-ring was pale and tail was deeply forked and extended beyond the wingtips. A white trailing edge to the secondaries, a feature diagnostic for separating it from similar looking Oriental Pratincole *G. maldivarum* (Grimmett et al. 1998; Rasmussen & Anderton 2012), was also observed [218]. Based on these features, it was identified as a Collared Pratincole in breeding plumage. The images were sent to Ashwin Viswanathan, (pers. comm. dated 08 May 2024) and later to Prasad Ganpule (pers. comm. dated 28 February 2025), both confirmed the bird as a Collared Pratincole. The bird was seen again the next day, on 09 May 2024 at the same place, but was not seen after that. It was probably migrating to its breeding grounds in Central Asia (Maclean & Kirwan 2020).



217. Collared Pratincole in breeding plumage photographed from Hokersar Wetland, Jammu & Kashmir.



218. Collared Pratincole photographed from Hokersar Wetland, Jammu & Kashmir showing white trailing edge to the secondaries.

Both photos: Hafizullah Sofi

On 05 May 2025, HS again saw a pair of Collared Pratincole, c.200 m away from the previous site [217]. These were also identified by the above-mentioned features. The birds were regularly seen thereafter by various birders. A maximum of seven birds were recorded at the same spot on 25 May 2025 by HS. The last sighting was on 06 June 2025, when three birds were seen (Sofi 2025). A single bird was also photographed on 07 May 2025 at Wular Lake in Bandipora District, Jammu & Kashmir (Jeelani 2025).

These sightings were not surprising, as there have been records from neighbouring Ladakh (Pfister 2001, 2004), Himachal Pradesh (Dhadwal & Kanwar 2018) and Punjab (Grimmett et al. 2011; Sangha 2021). There were no previous records of this species from Jammu & Kashmir before these sightings and it is included in the bird checklist of Jammu & Kashmir (Kichloo 2025) based on these observations.

We thank Ashwin Viswanathan and Prasad Ganpule for confirming the identification.

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