



Range Extension of Asian Pied Starling (*Gracupica contra*) in Gujarat state, Western India

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India has more than 1300 bird species, which is about 12.5% of world's total avifauna (Grimmett et al. 2011). Among them, a total of 576 bird species have been reported from Gujarat state (Ganpule, 2016). Asian pied starling (*Gracupica contra*) commonly found in foothills of south Asia until elevation of 700m. It is also commonly found near water bodies of human dominated areas, grasslands and farmland (Ali & Ripley, 1983). Ali & Ripley (1983) recorded three subspecies of Pied starling in India, whereas Grimmett et al. (2005) mentioned only two subspecies of Asian pied starling in India; viz. *G. superciliaris*, observed around Manipur only while, *G. contra* is widely observed in North, central and Eastern parts of India (Grimmett et al. 2005). Monga & Naoroji (1983) mentioned sighting of pied starling in Jamnagar and south Gujarat as rare/vagrant. Presence and breeding of *G. Contra* was also reported from Rajkot and Dahod districts of Gujarat consequently (Rasmussen & Anderton, 2005; Ganpule, 2016) this species was introduced in Mumbai of Maharashtra state, India (Rasmussen & Anderton, 2005).



Asian pied starling (G. contra) in Vadnagar town of northern part of Gujarat (N 23.7896, E 72.6291)

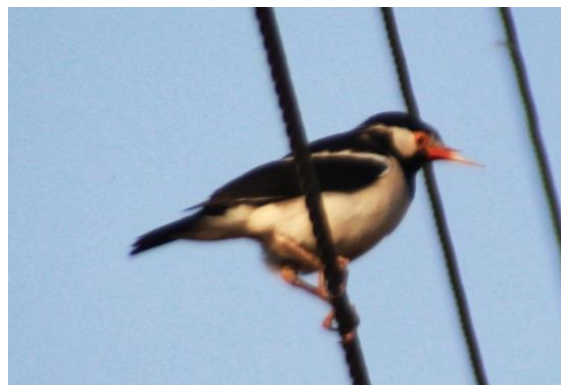
During field visit of Vadnagar, Mehsana district in northern part of Gujarat (February 28, 2021), we have observed bird with white on the black wings with white ventral mark and orange bill at 07:30 hrs. After validation through reference book (Grewal, 2016) we have identified it as Asian pied starling (*Gracupica contra*). We have found this individual near the water body of human habitation (N 23.7896, E 72.6291). The individual was



observed for 10 minutes and its behaviour was recorded. Bird was feeding on some unknown excreta material while foraging with other bird species viz., Glossy ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*), Streak-throated swallow (*Petrochelidon luvicola*). Another individual of the same species pair was observed on April 5, 2021, 16:13 hrs at Kheralu town, approximately 11 km far from previous observation (N 23.8831 E 72.6109) where the bird was sitting on electric wire above the agriculture farm.



Asian pied starling (G. contra) perching on electric wire above the agriculture farm (N 23.8831 E 72.6109)



Asian pied starling (G. contra) feeding on some unidentified excreta

Asian pied startling was recorded for the first time the semi-arid region of Gujarat, as we did not found any record of this species in this area. This observation reflects the possible range expansion of species. Both of our sightings were around agriculture and human dominated areas indicating the generalist niche and adaptability of this species in human dominated landscape.



References

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