

Note on first record of Asian Desert Warbler *Sylvia nana* at Mokarsagar Wetland Complex, Gujarat, India



Asian Desert Warbler *Sylvia nana* photographed from Gosabara Wetland.

The Mokarsagar Wetland Complex, formally known as the Gosabara Wetland, is located in the Porbandar district of the Kathiawar peninsula in the state of Gujarat, India.

The Mokarsagar Wetland Complex, formed by the Karli Recharge Reservoir and Karli Tidal Regulator, contains a group of wetlands, including the Medha creek, Kuchhadi, Subhashnagar, Zavar, Kurly I, Karly II, Vanana, Dharampur, Gosabara, Bhadarbara, Mokarsagar, Bardasagar, and Amipur (Nagar 2017). The Mokarsagar Wetland Complex is a combination of estuary and fresh-water habitats.

It is dominated by sedges and other hydrophytic vegetation (Nagar 2017).

The wetland is a lifeline for the community and for its dependent biodiversity, comprising both flora (mangrove, macroalgae & macrophytes) and fauna (birds, reptiles, insects, & mammals).

During winter season, many migratory birds such as Demoiselle Crane, Common Crane, Pelican, and many species of Duck can be seen here. After the water dries up, birds such as Larks, Pipits, and Pratincole can be seen. At 14:39hr on 26 January, 2017, the author was carrying out vegetation

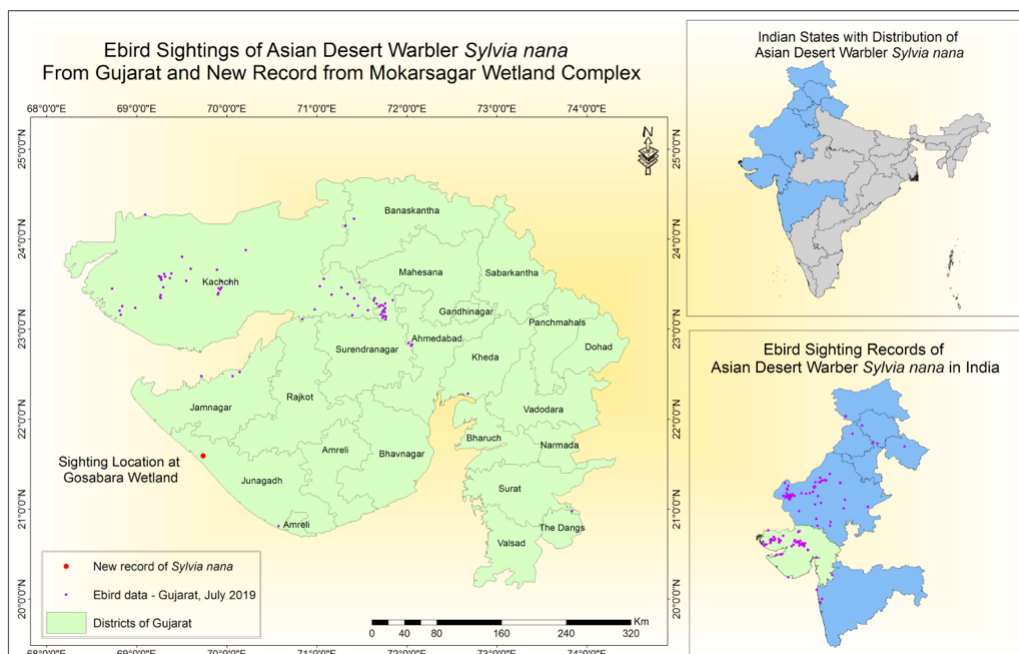
quadrat sampling at the Prosopis Island in Gosabara wetland. Suddenly, a bird that looked very different, flew across the authors and perched on a branch of *Suaeda nudiflora*.

The author followed the bird and observed it for a few seconds and could photograph it before it flew out of sight. The bird was short and compact, pale sandy brown with a pale rufous rump and tail, white outer rectrices, and whitish under-parts. It had yellow-coloured eyes, bill (except on the tip), and legs, all characteristics that match with the characteristics of an Asian Desert Warbler (*Sylvia nana*) (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). Later that evening, the bird was confirmed as Asian Desert Warbler *Sylvia nana* (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012; Grimmett et al. 2013). Identification of the

bird was strengthened by its longitudinal tail-flickering behaviour observed in the field.

Sylvia nana is an arid bird species which breeds through North and East Caspian Sea coasts and Northeast Iran, East to Central and South Mongolia and Northwest China. It is a winter visitor (mainly Dec–Feb) to drier plains of Pakistan and deserts of adjacent Northwest India (mainly Haryana, Rajasthan, & Kutch) (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012; Del Hoyo et al. 2006; Del Hoyo & Collar 2016; BirdLife International 2017).

Ebird Basic Dataset (June, 2019) suggests that the distribution of the species has extended to eight states of India, including Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh,



Ebird sightings of Asian Desert Warbler *Sylvia nana* from India and New Record from Mokarsagar Wetland Complex.

Punjab, Uttarakhand, Haryana, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Maharashtra. Among these, the main wintering sites are Gujarat and Rajasthan, while all the other states have made a few sporadic records (Sullivan et al. 2009). In Gujarat, the major population of the bird is concentrated around the Kutch District, Little Rann of Kutch, and Nalsarovar, while a few sporadic records have been recorded from other parts:

- Three in Jamnagar coast
- One in Junagadh coast
- One in Khambhat coast
- One in the Tapi district

(eBird Basic Dataset, June, 2019)

The sighting of *Sylvia nana* at the Mokarsagar Wetland Complex forms the first recorded sighting in the area. Moreover, the sighting is 100km away from the nearest sporadic sighting and 200 kms away from the regular wintering grounds. This sighting provides ornithologists with a new understanding of the distribution of the bird. Further studies may enunciate proper distribution range of the species.

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