

An observation of Greater Flamingos (*Phoenicopterus roseus*) in Chicharli wetland, Dhawa, Rajasthan, India

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Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus roseus* is a remarkable species of family *Phoenicopteridae* which is a widespread visitor to India. It is recorded to prefer shallow brackish lakes, mudflats and saltpans (Grimmette *et.al.* 1998). The species is hard to miss not only because of the striking pink colour of its legs and beak but also its large body and artistic posture. According to IUCN Red List it is categorized as Least Concern (BirdLife International, 2015).

On 2nd March 2015, during a socio-ecological survey in Chicharli village near erstwhile closed area, Dhawa of Jodhpur district, Rajasthan, the authors visited a small wetland near this village (26°11'38.23" N and 72°41'53.22" E) for recording of migratory bird species visiting the area (Fig 1). To our surprise, a lone adult greater flamingo was spotted to be standing in the middle of the water (Fig 2). After careful scanning of the water body, two more flamingos were noted to be happily foraging in the far end of the pond along with other wintering waterfowl (Fig 3). Out of these three individuals, the two foraging flamingos were immature while the lone one was an adult.

The authors enquired with the locals of Chicharli village to find out if they were aware of the majestic bird. The locals confessed that they had no idea regarding significance of the bird. They also accepted that they have witnessed such birds quite often in the area. The bird was found in a fairly open area, with access to practically everyone. It could have been easily hunted and eaten without anyone noticing it. It is indeed required to conserve this water body for species like greater flamingo that possibly visits the area regularly. Details of the birds observed in that wetland is given in Table 1.

Till date only a few observations of flamingos in Rajasthan were recorded and documented. Kumar 1996 and Kumar 2005 has provided us with some good details on the species in Sambhar Lake. Previous sighting of flamingos around Jodhpur was reported by Chhangani (2002a). Later in 2004, Chhangani again presented with a checklist of Kumbhalgarh Wildlife Sanctuary, Udaipur where Greater Flamingo was sighted. However, a much detailed study on avian diversity around Jodhpur (Chhangani, 2002b) did not mention this species. A study on foraging behaviour of flamingos in Rajasthan was also carried out by Yahya (2005). Another study on avian diversity was also carried out in Churu district by Singh *et.al.* (2009) where the species was only sighted once throughout the study period.



Fig 1. Aerial view of Chicharli wetland



Fig 2. An adult Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus roseus* in the Chicharli wetland

Apart from this, detailed studies on flamingos has also been carried out around Gulf of Kutch Gujarat (Jadhav and Parasharya 2004; Urfi *et.al* 2005; Pandya *et.al.* 2010 and Tere and Parasharya 2011) where they are known to have their breeding grounds (Ali 1960, 1974; Parasharya and Tere 2006). Flamingos are habitat specialists therefore, any kind of modification in their habitat may cause a serious threat to their survival. The flamingos have often been threatened due to collisions with the electric wires in Gujarat, India (Tere and Parasharya 2011). To conserve this species in an area like Jodhpur, continuous efforts and long term surveys are recommended for understanding the new visiting spots of this species. Due to water scarcity in the region, it is possible that the species has changed its visiting spots. People's participation is highly necessary for conserving and protecting this species

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Fig 3. Two immature individuals of Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus roseus* feeding alongside the boundary of the Chicharli wetland

Table 1. Checklist of the wetland birds observed in Chicharli wetland

S. No.	Family	Common Name	Scientific name
1.	Podicipedidae	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>
2.	Phalacrocoracidae	Little Cormorant	<i>Microcarbo niger</i>
3.	Ardeidae	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>
4.		Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>
5.	Phoenicopteridae	Greater Flamingo	<i>Phoenicopterus roseus</i>
6.	Anatidae	Gadwall	<i>Anas strepera</i>
7.		Northern Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>
8.		Common Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>
9.		Eurasian Wigeon	<i>Anas penelope</i>
10.		Ferruginous Pochard/Duck	<i>Aythya nyroca</i>
11.		Spot-billed duck	<i>Anas poecilorhyncha</i>
12.		Rallidae	Common coot
13.	Charadriidae	Red-wattled Lapwing	<i>Vanellus indicus</i>
14.	Scolopacidae	Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>

since the visited area is next to the main road and has complete human access. Initiatives of eco-tourism with engagement of the local people should be implemented. Conservation of these areas as Conservation Reserves (CR) or Community Conservation Reserves (CCR) is recommended for long term protection and conservation of the ecologically significant species.

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