

Short Article

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Important Second Vagrant Record of Eastern Marsh Harrier (Juvenile) *Circus Spilonotus* from Jakhaoo, Kachchh, Gujarat, India.

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Abstract: The Eastern Marsh Harrier (*Circus Spilonotus*) is a rare winter vagrant in India, with only a few scattered records across the northeastern and southern regions. This paper documents an important second vagrant record of a juvenile Eastern Marsh Harrier from Jakhaoo coastal wetland in Kachchh, Gujarat, observed on 7 December 2017. The bird was identified based on distinctive plumage features, including a blackish-brown crown, nape, mantle, wing coverts, and tail, along with white spotting on the breast and belly—traits separating it from the Western Marsh Harrier and Pied Harrier. The habitat closely resembled previously noted wintering sites of the species. This record, together with earlier sightings from Nal Sarovar and South India, highlights a possible westward extension of the species' winter range and underscores the need for careful field identification of harriers in Gujarat.

Species authority: - Kaup, 1847

Domain: Eukaryote

Genus: - *Circus*

Family: - Acciptridae

Order: - Accipitriformes

Class: - Aves

Phylum: - Chordata

Kingdom: - Animalia

Scientific name: - *Circus spilonotus*

Common name: - Eastern Marsh Harrier

Gujarati name: - Purva ni paan patai

Japani name: - Chu-hi

Keywords: Important Second Vagrant Record, Eastern Marsh Harrier, Juvenile, *Circus Spilonotus*, Jakhaoo, Kachchh

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INTRODUCTION

The Eastern Marsh Harrier (*Circus spilonotus*), a member of the genus *Circus* and family Acciptridae, closely related and resembles of the Pied Harrier, but is larger in size. Earlier, it was regarded as a subspecies of the Western Marsh Harrier, which is listed on the IUCN Red List of threatened species. As reported by Bird Life International, the species breeds and nests in tall grasses near coastal wetlands, marshes, and large lakes such as the Baikal and Ussuri regions of Mongolia and Southwest Asia. During the winter migration, it is primarily found across East Asia (Del Hoyo, H., Tosiaki, Myanmar — Robson, 2015). A female was recorded at Kaziranga National Park, Assam, by Naoroji (1996), while Ali (2006) did not include it in *Birds of Eastern Himalayas* (1993). Later observations by Rasmussen (2012) and Grimmett (2011) identified it as a winter visitor to Northeast India and a vagrant in other parts of the country. Further south, Kesavabharathi G. and Sundaram C. sighted a male bird at Irungattukottai Lake, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, and Kallettumkara R. reported one from Irinjetumkara Wetland, Thrissur, Kerala. These records collectively confirm the extension of the Eastern Marsh Harrier's range into southern India. Recent record

by Author. Bird was sighted at Vadla wetland, Western range of Nal Sarovar Birds Sanctuary on 20th January, 2019 – Indiana Journal (<https://indianapublications.com/journal/IJALS>).





On 7th December, 2017, I was birding at Jakhaoo coastal wetland/salt pams (), District – Kachchh, tehsil - Abadasa. Site is largest wintering site of Harrier, Guls, Tern and thousands of water fowls. On 0345 hrs, I came across bird perched on ground. Has a broad based hooked greyish bill, crown, nape, mentle, wing coverts, tail, breast, belly blackish-brown, pale spots on upper breast, white spots on belly, legs yellowish, thigh blackish-brown, under waves white, bird was distinguished from Female of Western Marsh Harrier, checking on consulting literature, bird was female (Juvenile) of Eastern Marsh Harrier. Has a crown, nape and throat creamy, characteristic differences make it different and separate species after checking on consulting literature on Raptors (Lees J. F. & David C.), it was juvenile Male of Eastern Marsh Harrier.

Eastern Marsh Harrier is resembling of Pied Harrier, but female bird (juvenile) was very similar with female (Juvenile) of Western Marsh harrier. Eastern has black crown, nape, throat, wing coverts, mentle, tail, breast and belly (with white spots), lack in Female (juvenile) of Western Marsh Harrier. Has a nape, crown, throat creamy or white, black eye strips, distinguished to Female (Juvenile) of Eastern Marsh Harrier. Characteristic differences disconnect it and consider as a (Juvenile) of Eastern Marsh Harrier *Circus spilonotus*.

The eastern marsh harrier is winter vagrant in East India, Bangladesh and South India. One isolated record from Gujarat, one adult bird was recorded by Author in Western range of Nal Sarovar birds Sanctuary. Ali (1945, 1954 & 1955) did not come across bird in Kachchh – Gujarat, even Dharamkumarsinhji (1955), noted that not a single bird was recorded in Saurashtra

region of Gujarat. Habitation of recent sighting was very similar to description of Naoroji, 2007. Grimmett, 2011, Kry's, 2012, Rasmussen, 2012, didn't showed in distribution map of Eastern Marsh Harrier.

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