

Recent sighting records of Bridled Tern *Sterna anaethetus* in Mumbai (Maharashtra) and Surat (Gujarat)

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Bridled Tern *Sterna anaethetus* is a breeding visitor (resident) on Vengurla Rocks (off South Maharashtra), Island of Adam's Bridge (between Indian and Sri Lanka), Lakshdweep, Chagos and perhaps Maldives (Rasmussen and Anderton, 2012). It is a non-breeding visitor to seas of Pakistan, west India, Sri Lanka and Andaman (specimen from south Sentinel, South Andaman, Ross Island and off Narcondam). Hereby, we give recent sighting records of the species from Mumbai (Maharashtra) and Surat (Gujarat).

Sightings at Surat, Gujarat:

On September 7, 2011 a tern was rescued by the second author (PT) in Gabheni village (Geographical location 21°08'50"E and 72°82'69"N) in Surat district of Gujarat. Gabheni village is inland and is near to the Mindhola Creek. This bird had a ring in its leg and the ring number read as NCWCD RIYADH- E001886 (see photo-1). The author (RK) sent the details of this ring recovery to the bird ringing agencies in the Middle East countries. Unfortunately there was no reply from the ringing agencies about the details of the ringed bird. Possibly, bird was ringed by the ornithologists somewhere in the Persian Gulf in Saudi Arabia as Riyadh is in Saudi Arabia. The tern was identified as Bridled Tern from the photographs.

Another Bridled Tern was found at Ghoddod road in Surat city in Gujarat on August 16, 2014. The

bird was fed small prawns. But the tern died. The tern was identified as Bridled Tern from the photographs.

Sightings at Mumbai:

On August 5, 2014, a tern was brought to BNHS office by an employee of Indian Navy, who had spotted the bird, in an exhausted condition on a naval ship in the Arabian sea off Gateway of India. The authors (RK and ND) force fed the tern with some fish which it took. They even tried to release the bird, but it could not take off properly. Hence the bird was kept for the night. However, it was found dead in the morning. The bird was identified as Bridled Tern from the white forehead patch which was extending beyond eye as broad white supercilium (Grimmett *et al.* 2012). The mantle and wing coverts were brownish grey. The black crown extended on the nape. Underside was white. The beak and feet were black. The bird was very elegant the wings were long and pointed.

The fourth author (PM) had seen Bridled Tern thrice around Mumbai. He saw and photographed one bird on September 12, 2011 in the evening near Mora Jetty, Mumbai (see photo-2). The bird was identified as Bridled Tern from the photograph. Next day (September 13, 2011) he visited the place again in the afternoon and saw one Bridled Tern foraging with other terns (Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*, Whiskered Tern

Chlidonias hybridus). He sighted another Bridled Tern on August 12, 2014 at around 10am at Sassoon Dock in Mumbai.

Discussion:

'Annotated Checklist of the Birds of Western Maharashtra' was published by Bombay Natural History Society in ENVIS Newsletter (Prasad 2003), which compiled all the historical sighting records of birds. According to this checklist specimens of Bridled Tern were collected from: Bombay (eight birds), Alibag, Raigad district (one bird), in BNHS Collection (Abdulali 1970); (Keswal, 1886) said that it was located in Konkan region near to Bombay but is not sparingly common. There are some old records from Alibag, Dighi, and Rajhuri creeks, total 11 in the month of February between on dated 23-28 (Gole 1994); there are several sighting among Karachi (Pakistan) and Bombay (Ali & Ripley 1983).

According to Ali and Ripley (1987) it breeds on Islands off the Maharashtra coast, on Vengurla Rocks off Ratnagiri, in Lakshadweep on Balliapanni or Cherbaniani Atoll, and reportedly on other atolls (Mathew and Ambedkar, 1964).

According to Lainer (2003), he saw a Bridled Tern fly between Vengurla Rock (Burnt Island) and the mainland, towards the breeding ground in the Middle East, on September 17, 1989. At Vengurla Rocks recorded 3000 to 4000 breeding pairs were recorded in 1989 (Lainer 2003). Pande (2002 a, b) observed chicks on different ages on the Burnt Island.

Recently a dead Bridled Tern was found in Ahmedabad, Gujarat on August 3, 2012 (Rafique 2013). The location of this sighting is 23°37'75"E and 72°34'70"N). As claimed by Rafique (2013) this is the first record of the species from Gujarat.

That means the Bridled Tern breeds on the Vengurla Rocks but it seems to migrate northwards either in small numbers or keep only to the high seas where there are not many observers. Hence there are very few recent

sighting records of the species from coastal city like Mumbai and inland city like Surat. Hence these records are important.

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Photo-1: Bridled Tern found at Surat with a ring. Photo - Palak Thakor



Photo-2: Bridled Tern at Mumbai. Photo - Pradnyawant Mane

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