

# Ring recoveries of Lesser Crested Tern *Thalasseus bengalensis* along the Maharashtra coast, India

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According to Ali & Ripley (1987) the Lesser Crested Tern *Thalasseus bengalensis* is, "Resident? According to Ticehurst [it is] the commonest tern of Karachi Harbour and coast-line. [It] Occurs commonly along the western and eastern seaboard of India, Andaman and Nicobar Is., and in Ceylon [Sri Lanka] waters practically throughout the year; more abundant between September and end April. Presumptively breeding on the Makran coast (W. Pakistan), Rameswaram Island, Laccadive and Maldive Is. ... but no direct evidence as yet." Rasmussen & Anderton

(2005) state that it, "Breeds towards end of monsoon in Pakistan ... [It is] Resident, breeding on small islets on Sind coast, possibly Lakshadweep and Maldives, and reported breeding Orissa coast. [It is a] Winter visitor to coasts of rest of region, from Mekran Coast to Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Andamans ... and Nicobars."

We report three instances of ring recoveries of Lesser Crested Terns along the Maharashtra coast, which are significant in understanding the migration pattern of the species.

Fig. 1. Map showing Migration of Lesser Crested Tern *Thalasseus benghalensis*.

**Ring recovery at Arnala Beach, Mumbai:** D. P. Bannerjee found a sick Lesser Crested Tern at Arnala Beach, Virar, along the Mumbai coast on 31 December 2009. The exhausted bird had a ring embossed with, "Inform British Museum London, SW-DD08695." The bird died subsequently. The author (RK) reported the ring recovery to the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO). The Ringing Unit of BTO provided the ringing information (Table 1).

**Ring recovery at Sindhudurg:** A ringed Lesser Crested Tern was found dead at Sindhudurg Fort near the coastal Sindhudurg town in Maharashtra (south of Mumbai) on 11 November 2010. It was widely reported in local newspapers, which gave the ring number as, "ENVIRONMENT TEHRAN DH2377." This information was given to RK by his friends, Vinod Patil, and Bhau Katdare. RK contacted **Hamid Amini**, Senior Ornithologist at the Wildlife Bureau of Tehran. The latter provided the ringing details of the tern (Table 1).

**Ring recovery at Alibag, Raigad:** VD found a dead Lesser Crested Tern at Akshi beach near Alibag, in Raigad dist., Maharashtra on 9 January 2010. It had a ring on its left leg with, "ENVIRONMENT TEHRAN DW07196," embossed on it. **Hamid Amini**, Senior Ornithologist of Wildlife Bureau of Tehran once again provided the ringing details of the tern (Table 1).

## Conclusion

These recoveries of ringed Lesser Crested Terns from the Maharashtra coast have thrown light on some facts about their

migration. All the birds were recovered between November and January indicating that they migrate towards the Indian coast as soon as their breeding is over. All the birds were ringed as chicks (pullus) as they breed on the islands in the Persian Gulf. Though the breeding status of the species in India remains a question, these records indicate that we do get migratory birds from the Persian Gulf, which travel nearly 2500 km to reach our coasts for wintering (Fig. 1).

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## References

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**Table 1.** Ring recovery data on three Lesser Crested Terns *Thalasseus benghalensis* along the Maharashtra Coast, India

Ringing Information			Recovery Information			Findings	
Date	Location	Coordinates	Date	Location	Coordinates	Lifespan	Distance
27 June 2008	Jarim Island South, Baharin and Qatar	26°23'N, 50°28'E	31 December 2009	Mumbai	19°27'N, 72°44'E	One year and seven months	2428 km
16 July 2006	Nakhilu Island, Iran	27°49'N, 51°28'E	11 November 2010	Sindhudurg	16°02'N, 73°27'E	Four years and three months	2599 km
9 August 2009	Nakhilu Island, Iran	27°49'N, 51°28'E	9 January 2010	Alibag	18°37'N, 72°53'E	Five months	2400 km