

Interesting feeding record of Grey Plover at Gulf of Mannar

Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola* is a medium-sized wader migrating from the Arctic breeding ground to the wintering sites. Conservation status is Least Concerned. They are 27–30 cm long with a wingspan of 71–83 cm and a weight of 190–280 g (up to 345g in preparation for migration). In spring and summer (late April or May to August), the adults are



first-winter plumages, held by young birds from fledging until about one year old, are similar to the adult winter plumage but with the back feathers blacker with creamy white edging. In all plumages, the inner flanks and axillary feathers at the base of the underwing are black, a feature that readily distinguishes it from the other

spotted black and white on the back and wings. The face and neck are black with a white border; they have a black breast & belly and a white rump. The tail is white with black barring. The bill and legs are black. They moult to winter plumage in mid-August to early September and retain this until April; this being a fairly plain grey above, with a grey-speckled breast and white belly. The juvenile and





due to heavy wind on the Palk Bay due to the onset of the north-east monsoon. The entire lagoon from Konthandaramar Koil to Aricahalmunai was flooded by the early morning. After a few hours, around 11 in the morning water had receded and seaweeds and other bycatches from the sea were washed ashore. This helped the waders to feed on the mollusks and polychaete worms. They forage for food on beaches and tidal flats, usually by sight. The food consists of small mollusks,

three *Pluvialis* species in flight. On the ground, the Grey Plover can also be told from the other *Pluvialis* species by their larger (24–34 mm), heavier bill (Hayman et al. 1986; Snow & Perrins 1988).

During our September survey of 2020, we found some 50 individuals in Dhanushkodi lagoon of Rameswaram Island on the eastern coast of India and more than a hundred numbers in November 2020. In our November survey, the tides were high



polychaete worms, crustaceans, and insects. They are less gregarious than the other *Pluvialis* species, not forming dense feeding flocks, instead feeding widely dispersed over beaches, with birds well spaced apart. They will, however, form dense flocks on high tide roosts.

Grey Plover forage visually in a run-stop-search manner. Each foraging move ends in a search, pause, or prey-capture



attempt. One of the Grey Plovers ate a mollusk. Then it found a Neries, a polychaete worm which was more than a feet long intertwining its left leg while attempting to eat. It held on to the leg for a few minutes as it was difficult for the bird to drag from the feet and eat. A few steps of the walk couldn't help the bird to drag the feed to the mouth. The bird flew a short distance into the seawater and the stretch freed the worm from its leg; it then dragged the worm with the beak and swallowed it. In north temperate zones, the Grey Plover diet is dominated by polychaetes and other small prey (Baker 1974; dir Durell et al. 1990; Kersten & Piersma 1998). Grey Plover diet are observed recorded to eat bivalves and crabs. Grey Plover diet reflects the regional availability of prey types, with the birds consuming more large prey in tropical and southern temperate regions than in northern temperate regions (Turpie & Hockey 2008).

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H. Byju

Independent Researcher, No. 35, Rakatchi Garden, Ganapathy P.O., Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu 641006, India. Email: byjuhi@gmail.com

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