

Desert Wheatear

The Desert Wheatear is a winged wanderer of the arid lands, a small but hardy species adapted to the harsh conditions of the desert. With feathers the color of the sun-baked sands, it flits and dashes across the rocky terrain, darting after insects and foraging for sustenance in the unforgiving landscape.

Serial Number	Characteristics	Description
1	Common name	Desert Wheatear
2	Scientific name	Oenanthe deserti
3	Colour	Males have grey backs, black wings and white undersides. Females are browner with a pale throat and chest.
4	Average length	14-15 cm
5	Average height	12-14 cm
6	Type of bird	Ground-dwelling
7	Found in India in states	Rajasthan, Gujarat and Haryana
8	Habitat	Sandy and stony deserts, semi-deserts, and arid grasslands
9	Status	Least Concern

Features

The Desert Wheatear is a small passerine bird species that belongs to the family Muscicapidae. The Desert Wheatear has a slender body, a short tail, and a pointed bill. The males and females have different plumages. The male has a black face mask that extends to the neck, a black throat, and a white belly. The back and wings are light greys, and the tail is

black with white outer feathers. The female has a grey-brown back and wings, a light brown throat, and buff-colored underparts. Both males and females have a white stripe above the eye. The Desert Wheatear's body measures around 14-16 cm (5.5-6.3 inches) in length, and its wingspan is about 26-28 cm (10-11 inches).

Habitat and Food

Desert Wheatears can be found in a variety of arid and semi-arid habitats, including desert scrub, rocky terrain, and sand dunes. They are also known to inhabit man-made structures such as buildings, walls, and fences in desert areas. These birds are typically found at lower elevations, but they may be found at higher elevations during migration.

The Desert Wheatear is primarily insectivorous, feeding on a variety of insects and other invertebrates, including beetles, grasshoppers, and spiders. They may also consume small lizards and other small vertebrates. During the breeding season, they may supplement their diet with seeds and other plant material.

These birds are well adapted to obtaining water from their food and from other sources such as dew, which allows them to survive in areas where water is scarce. They are also capable of surviving for extended periods without water by reducing their metabolic rate and minimizing water loss.

Nesting and Nurturing

The Desert Wheatear build its nest on the ground, usually in a shallow depression that is well-hidden in a clump of grass or under a rock. The nest is made of dry grass, twigs, and sometimes feathers.

The female Desert Wheatear typically lays 4-6 eggs per clutch. The eggs of Desert Wheatear are pale blue-green in color with

dark spots or blotches. They are oval in shape and measure about 19 mm x 15 mm. The female Desert Wheatear incubates the eggs for about 12-14 days before they hatch. Both the male and female Desert Wheatear birds take care of the hatchlings. They feed their chicks with insects and other small invertebrates. The chicks fledge in about 14-16 days after hatching.

IUCN Status

The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species currently lists the Desert Wheatear as a species of “Least Concern” as it has a large global population and is not facing any major threats to its survival. However, as with many species, habitat loss and degradation due to human activities, as well as climate change, may pose a threat to the species in the future.