

NEWSLETTER

Vol. 2 | Issue No. 4 | April-June 2023




FAN TAIL
BIRDWATCHERS' SOCIETY NEWSLETTER
Vol. 2 | Issue No.4 | April-June 2023



 **birdwatchers**
 **Society**

RICOH
imagine. change.

PENTAX
BINOCULAR

Since 1938

EXTREME SHARPNESS FROM EDGE TO EDGE

A crystal-clear view to satisfy even
the most demanding users.



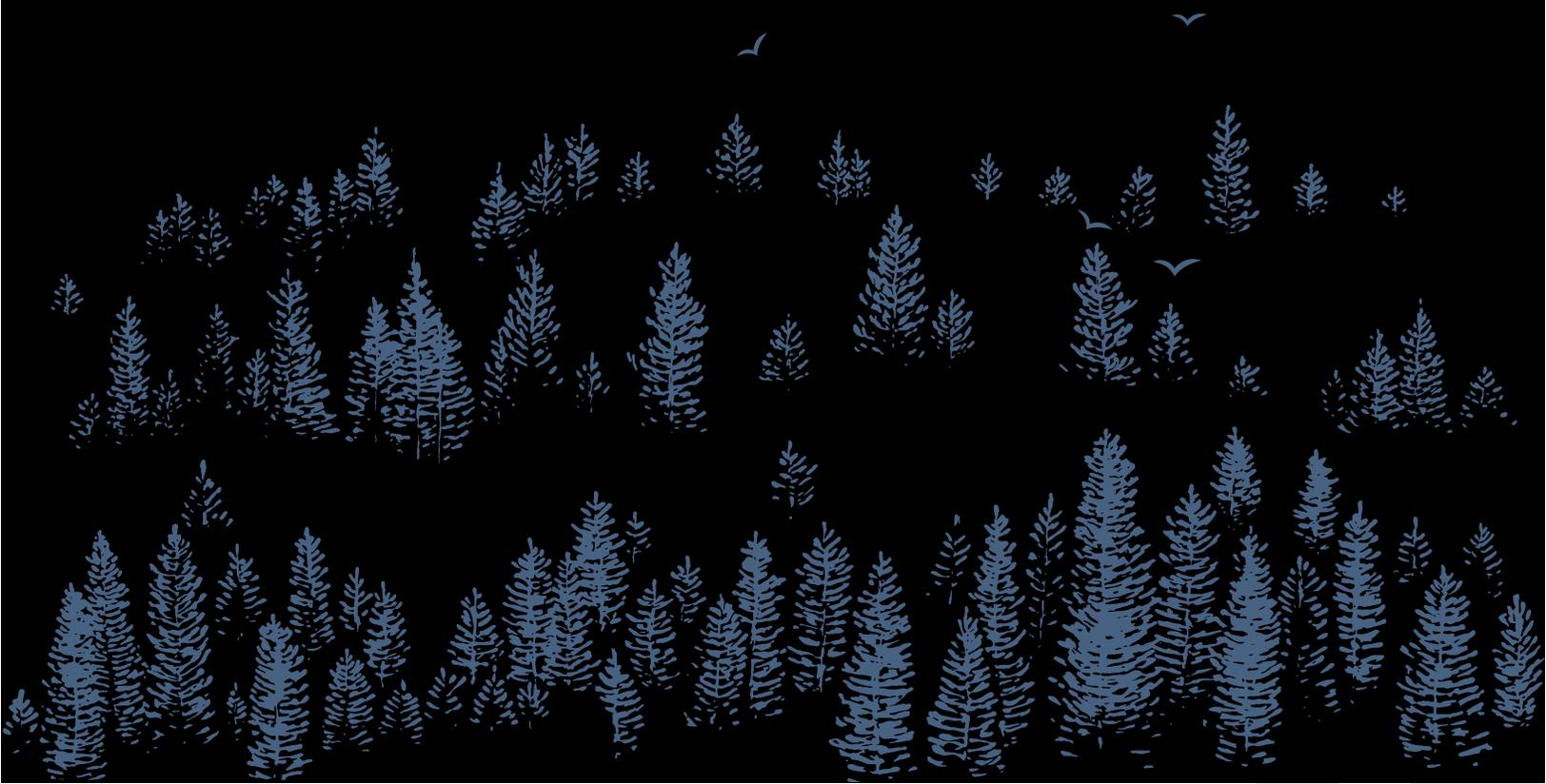


Buffy Fish Owl

“Monsoonderban in 2015 - the trip was organised by our dear friend Somraj and the memories are still afresh. It was drizzling when we saw these two Buffy Fish Owls. Never expected to see two of them posing for us merrily.

This remains my most memorable owling moment dedicated to our dear friend Somraj, who sadly is no longer with us.” - *Sudip Ghosh*

“When the owl sings, the night is silent”
—Charles de Leusse



Fantail is a newsletter published by Birdwatchers' Society. This newsletter's primary aim is collecting and disseminating learnings, experiences and anecdotes contributed by citizens through their observations from the field. While the emphasis is on the avian world, equally important are the observations of the habitat and environment of the avifauna including conservation, biodiversity and acknowledge citizen scientists of the region.

Front Cover (Mandala Art):
Shalini Iyengar

Theme Page:
Sudip Ghosh

Back Cover: (Painting)
Aindrila Sarkar

Design, Layout
& Graphics:
INTAGLIO
info@eintaglio.co.in

Publisher:
Birdwatchers' Society
Address: DB 75, Salt Lake,
Kolkata 700064, INDIA

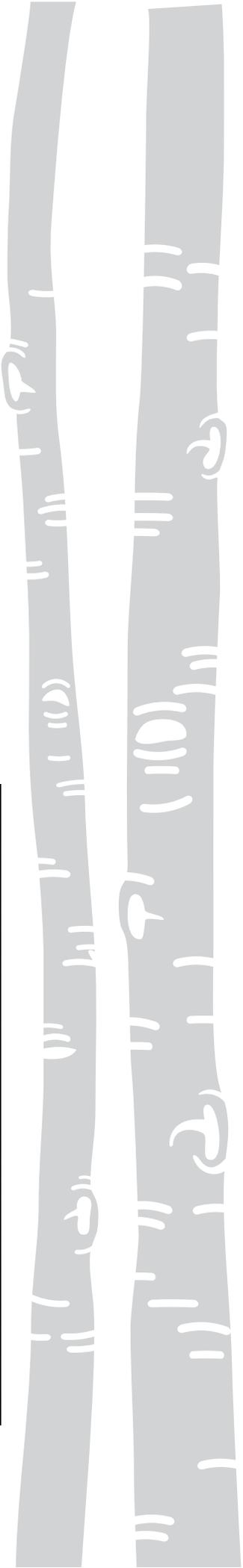
Email:
birdwatcherssocietywb@gmail.com

Website:
<https://birdwatcherssociety.org>

CONTENT

FROM THE EDITORIAL DESK	07
BIRD ARRIVALS FRESH & RARE Pampa Mistri	09
CROSSWORD FOR KIDS Dr. Sukanya Datta	11
SIGHTING THE BIRD ONCE DECLARED EXTINCT - FOREST OWLET Souvik Roychowdhury	12
CROSSWORD Dr. Sukanya Datta	17
HAI FIVE (FIVE HAIKU AND FIVE OWLS) Asani Bhaduri	18
RAINFALL AND HIMALAYAN OWL Rajdeep Mitra	20
OUR OWL STORY	22
OUR NOCTURNAL NEIGHBOUR Diprovo Majumdar	27
CARTOON Supriyo Ghatak	30

আমার বিদেশী পেঁচা দেখা নারায়ণ সরকার	31
“BE OBSERVANT, LIFE’S A HOOT” Sommouli Sarkar	33
লাইব্রেরী যখন প্যাঁচায় প্যাঁচাময় কনাদ বৈদ্য	35
OWLS OF MARATHWADA Kunal Sudhir Vibhandik	40
OWL AND MY GLASS PAINTED LAMPSHADES Dipabali Paul	44
BWS BIRD WALK – SALT LAKE Reported by Navin Agarwal and Major B Parihar	46
BWS EVENTS	48
OWL PHOTOGRAPHS	50



EDITORIAL

Hello Birders!

We are happy to bring you Fantail Volume 2, Issue 4 (April-May-June 2023). With this issue, we would complete 2 years of our publication! Though still in its infancy, we have come a long way! Thanks to the support we have received from our readers, sponsors, authors, BWS management, BWS members and editorial team members.

This issue is the 2nd and final part of our coverage of Owls. Being a trendy bird and a culturally auspicious subject, we had contributions covering various facets of Owls (history, religion, philosophy, culture, etc.) and birders' observations. This issue includes a fascinating story about the sighting of Forest Owlet by our senior member and birder Souvik Roychoudhury. While reading his article, I was taken back to Ms Rasmussen's classical quote -

"I was opening a water bottle," Rasmussen said when King suddenly whispered: *"Look at that*

owlet!" It was sitting on a bare branch flicking its tail. *"We all realized right away what it was,"* she said.

- Pamela C. Rasmussen of the National Museum of Natural History, as reported by Washington Post - Dec 1997.

Souvik's article would greatly help birders who wish to see this beauty soon.

An interesting collection of Haiku poems on owls - 'Five Haikus and Five Owls' has been contributed by Asani Bhaduri PhD a faculty member of Delhi University. In the same spirit, we have Sommouli Sarkar, Dipprovo Majumdar, and Narayan Sarkar recount their unique rendezvous with Owls. Also, in this issue, Rajdeep Mitra uncovers an exciting mystery about different morphs of the Himalayan Owl. Ratul (Adhirup) Ghosh contributed his collection of Indian Owls and their images. We also have Kunal Sudhir Vibhandika share his insights on the Owls of Marathwada, a drought-prone

region of Maharashtra. Owls being so photogenic, most birders are passionate about photographing Owls, we have thus included few images contributed by our members in this issue.

Beyond Owl birding, there are enormous other influences of owls. One such collection of books that carry Owl on the covers has been put together by our founder member Dr Kanad Baidya. A fascinating and unique perspective. Owl Art is yet another compelling area. We have Dipabali Paul present her creativity through glass-painted Owls.

In the field too, we have had an action-packed calendar during 2023. Apart from the monthly Bird-walks, the Great Backyard Bird Count, the first West Bengal Dawn Chorus, and Poila Boishak Bird Count have been great hits. The media, too, reciprocated by giving good coverage.

It is heartening to notice the packed schedule of birding activities initiated by the Birdwatchers' Society. And equally encouraging has been the enthusiasm and participation from BWS members and otherwise. As we step into summer, the likes of which we have never seen in a while, the excitement continues unabated.

We are happy to carry impressive owl paintings by Aindrila Sarkar and Shalini Iyengar, both members of BWS. Here is a bit of a background on the painting and the painters.

Front Cover: Mandala Art - is the sacred representation of the universe and the cosmos. Through the intertwining of lines and curves, this form of art illustrates the themes of repetition, perpetual movement and eternal renewal. Created by Shalini Iyengar: An engineer by qualification, a banker by profession, an aviphile by heart and a wildlife photographer by passion and sometimes an artist!!!

Back Cover: Painting by Aindrila Sarkar, an entrepreneur and creative head in her designing agency. A birdwatcher, butterfly gardener, travel enthusiast, vlogger and a social media influencer.

Before we sign-off We wish you all Happy Birding! See you on the other side with a new volume of Fantail! Stay safe, stay healthy and do remember to keep writing to us, share your feedback, comments & suggestions.

Cheers!

EDITORIAL TEAM



BIRD ARRIVALS FRESH & RARE

Pampa Mistri

We are happy to collate and present the fresh and rare bird sightings during January – March 2023. The winged guests have kept our folks busy and engaged as usual.

2023 Arrivals (January-March)				
Sr No	BIRD	LOCN - 1	LOCN - 2	DATE FIRST SIGHTED IN THIS SEASON
1	Greater White-fronted Goose	Gajoldoba		01 January 2023
2	Pied Avocet	Hijli Beach, Meidinagar		
3	Red-necked Stint			
4	Long-toed Stint		Nabadwip	01, 07 January 2023
5	Chestnut-eared Bunting	Baruipur, 24 PGS (S)		05 January 2023
6	Black Redstart			
7	Blue Rockthrush			
8	Red-necked Falcon	Burnpur, Asansol		06 January 2023
9	Short-eared Owl	Baruipur, 24 PGS (S)		07 January 2023
10	Fulvous-whistling Duck			
11	Smew	Gajoldoba		08 January 2023
12	Yellow-breasted Bunting	Kolaghat		
13	Broad-billed Sandpiper	HM		13 January 2023
14	Oriental Turtle Dove	CKBS		
15	Orange-breasted Green Pigeon			
16	Falcated Duck	Piyali		14 January 2023

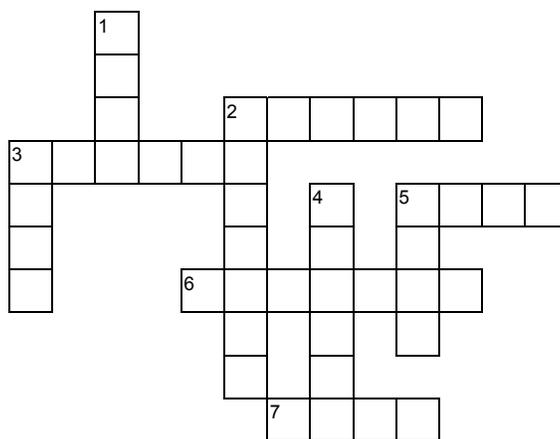
17	Rosy Starling	Fraserganj		20 January 2023
18	Common Starling			
19	Small Niltava	RS		
20	Grey-headed Parrotbill	Kalimpong, NB		21 January 2023
21	Greater Scaup	Gajoldoba		
22	Common Shelduck			
23	Eared Grebe (9 nos)			22 January 2023
24	Chestnut-bellied Rockthrush	Ramnagar Ghat, Murshidabad		
25	Common Goldeneye	Gajoldoba		
26	White-naped Woodpecker	Kakrajhor, Jhargram		23 January 2023
27	Siberian Blue Robin	Rongtong, NB		
28	Blue-breasted Quail	Baruipur, 24 PGS (S)		25 January 2023
29	Rosy Pipit			
30	Little Spiderhunter	CKBS		28 January 2023
31	Philippine Shrike	Baruipur, 24 PGS (S)		29 January 2023
32	Knob-billed Duck	Purbasthali		
33	Indian Nightjar	Gouripur, Murshidabad		30 January 2023
34	Hen Harrier	Hooghly		01 February 2023
35	Buffy Fish Owl	Dobanki, Sunderban		05 February 2023
36	White-capped Bunting	Biharinath, Bankura		
37	Chestnut-capped Babbler	Kolaghat		
38	Tundra Bean Goose	Dwip Rajar Beel, Raiganj		10 February 2023
39	Eurasian Wigeon	Purbasthali	Santragachi Jheel	10,11 February 2023
40	Broad-billed Sandpiper	Fraserganj		11 February 2023
41	Black-breasted Thrush	AF, North Dinajpur		12 February 2023
42	White-browed Bulbul	Mandarmani		
43	Eurasian Oystercatcher	G Plot, Sunderban		13 February 2023
44	Indian Scops owl	AF, North Dinajpur		14 February 2023
45	White-browed Fantail			
46	Brown-rumped Minivet	Gangarampur, South Dinajpur		17 February 2023
47	Mangrove Pitta	Dobanki, Sundarban		

48	Scarlet-backed Flowerpecker	CKBS		18 February 2023
49	Red-breasted Flycatcher	RS		19 February 2023
50	Northern Pintail	Nalban Bheri		25 February 2023
51	Sirkeer Malkoha	Aamjhorna, Jhargram		26 February 2023
52	Malabar Pied Hornbill			
53	Indian Grey Hornbill			

Legend: RS - Rabindra Sarovar; LCN- Location; NB - North Bengal; AF - Abdulghata Forest

Pampa Mistri a resident of Kolkata is a senior member of Birdwatchers' Society.

Crossword For Kids



Across

- Last Passenger pigeon.
- First Toucan to receive a prosthetic beak.
- A Goose born without feet who used sneakers to help him stand and walk.
- Author Gerald Durrell's pet owl when he was growing up in Corfu.
- The Siberian crane that continues to return to Iran.

Down

- Headless chicken that lived for 18 months after his head was cut off.
- First chicken recognised as World's Oldest Living Chicken by Guinness World Records.
- A Raven kept as a pet by Charles Dickens.
- Laysan albatross and oldest confirmed wild banded- bird in the world.
- Gray parrot whose name was an Acronym for 'avian language experiment'



SIGHTING THE BIRD ONCE DECLARED EXTINCT - FOREST OWLET

Souvik Roychowdhury

Forest Owlet, (*Athene blewitti*), is no ordinary bird. It's an Indian enigma, as Pamela Rasmussen once termed. Named after Francis Robert Blewitt, who first collected a specimen of it in 1872 in current-day Chhattisgarh, which was confirmed as a new species by Allan Octavian Hume. In the next 12 years, a couple of specimens were collected from places like Odisha, Maharashtra etc., but then they seemed to have vanished from the forests after 1884. For 113 years, nobody recorded any confirmed sightings, and the bird was deemed extinct. Dr. Salim Ali and Sidney Dillon Ripley ran 2 years of extensive unsuccessful searches starting in 1974 in places like Maharashtra, Odisha, where it was found earlier. They distributed pictures of the bird in mass campaigns yet failed to record any bird. Finally, on 25th November 1997, in the Nandurbar district of Maharashtra, three American ornithologists, Pamela Rasmussen, Ben King and David Abbott, saw and recorded a Forest Owlet and removed the extinct label.

Since then, it's been on the bucket list of all Indian birders, especially those who aspire to cover all owls in India. It's an Endangered species by IUCN and endemic to limited areas in western India. I had been planning a trip to Melghat Tiger Reserve, Maharashtra, a known hotspot, to see the bird. There were sighting reports from Gujarat also. But it seemed uncertain. It was precisely when social media platforms Facebook & YouTube came to our help. Indu Sekhar Deo, a birder from Delhi and a birding friend, noticed regular sightings of Forest Owlets from Tansa Wildlife Sanctuary (MH) by Rohidas Dagale. We spoke to him, and he gave us a fair chance of sighting if we travel there soon. We booked the date of 4th



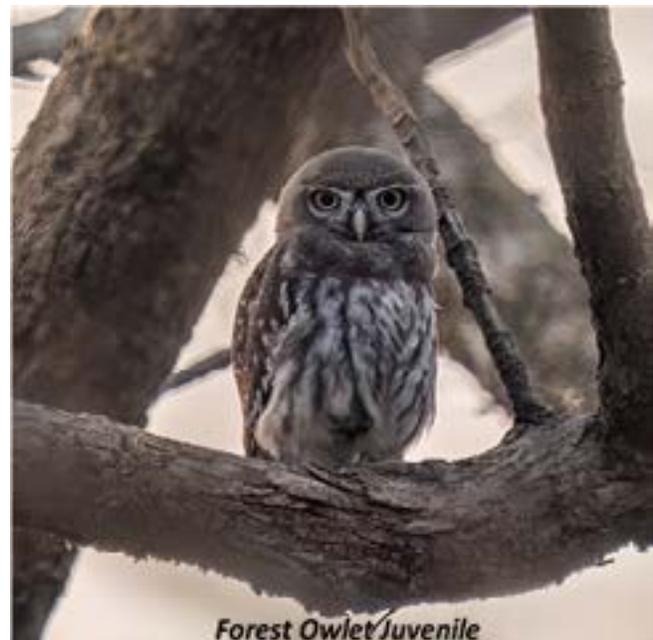
March 2023, and as the picture on the side shows, the trip was successful – we could see, photograph and record both video and audio of the bird - 1 adult male and 2 juveniles.

Tansa Wildlife Sanctuary is around the catchment area of the Tansa River in Thane district, around 90 km from Mumbai airport. There is a water reservoir which supplies water to Mumbai, due to which there are security measures in that area. There is no good place to stay nearby. We reached Mumbai in the evening, stayed the night in a hotel near the airport (preferred north side as Tansa is on the north of Mumbai), started the journey at 3:45 am on a car booked for the whole day and reached there by 6:30 am. We picked Rohidas from an interim place. Please bring breakfast & water, as there is no food option within Tansa WLS. You can drive 20 mins to a rest area with



good food choices for lunch. Rohidas said the sighting chances were higher in the early morning, and if lucky, one session might be good enough. One may plan an earlier return trip in the second half (it took 3.5 hours to reach Mumbai due to evening traffic) and catch a flight on the same day. However, we didn't want to risk it and planned a whole day birding with a night stay in Mumbai and a flight back home the next morning.

Forest Owlets prefer Teak Forest. Before Rohidas Dagale & Sunil Laad found it in Tansa, most believed it could only be seen in the Satpura range. As the habitat image shows, Tansa being full of Teak trees with moderate undergrowth. The area has several small hills, and we saw the bird flying from one hilltop perch to another. The terrain was uneven and rocky, and we often had to climb up & down. The bird is resident there and one can see it year around. The best time for a good photograph is from February to March when the undergrowth has dried, and leaves have shed, thereby increasing visibility. In our 4/5 sightings, the bird was on open perpendicular perch, around 20-25 ft from the ground. Its breeding time is September to March. Rohidas said the calls increased significantly during



Forest Owlet Juvenile

October-November, especially the ka-wuuu call (which we missed during our trip).

We started our search at around 7 am. Rohidas kept occasionally stopping to listen to the call. Suddenly we heard a faint call. I had a shotgun microphone (Rhode VideoMic NTG) where sound could be amplified, and through an attached earphone, we could listen to the call loud and clear. I suggest others buy a powerful shotgun microphone as it helps reduce surrounding sound while audio recording and helps in hearing the bird calls from far. We followed the sound and



found a juvenile bird perched on a trailside tree. The bird was looking at us but didn't attempt to fly away. It had its eyes wide open and was occasionally preening. From time to time, it was making a Chaaa-Chaaa call. It was perched with its back towards the sun. We observed the juvenile bird from far for 20+ minutes, recorded audio & video and took different photographs. As we started walking away, I noticed it turned its head and watched us go.

Then we started our search for the adult. It was past 8 am, and sunlight started getting harsh. We were afraid that we were late. Suddenly at a distance, we found an owl flying from one tree to another. We followed it and climbed up a small hill where it was perched behind a branch. It was an adult male. We got our record shot. Then another group of birders approached that tree from the other side, and it flew towards our direction. This time it perched on an open branch facing the sun. We could observe and record the bird nicely for 2-3 mins. However, it was highly active and was not stationary in the same place for long. We followed it from a distance and could get better photo and video records. It didn't make any call. Forest Owlets are diurnal, and they hunt mostly during dawn & dusk. The last time we saw the bird, it was 10:30 am, more than 3.5 hours after sunrise. There were Drongo and other birds in that area (we heard calls of Jungle Owlet several times), but we didn't find any other bird to chase or disturb the Forest Owlet.

Rohidas told us there are around 42 Forest Owlets in that area. Melghat has more than twice that number. Then why did nobody, even Dr. Salim Ali couldn't find it before 1997? My guess is people

might have seen it but thought it was a Spotted Owlet, which looks very similar. However, if the face and underparts are observed, these two birds are easily differentiable. While academically, there are many differences; I found the following easier to apply in the field (others may prefer different ID pointers).



- The Spotted Owlet crown is heavily spotted, while the Forest Owlet seems unspotted (has pale spots).
- The Spotted Owlet's breast is white with grey-brown bars/spots, while the Forest Owlet's upper breast is uniformly grey-brown and lower mostly white with brown bars on the flanks. Female Forest Owlet has more barring on the flanks compared to male. You can compare the two pictures of Forest Owlet above, where right is female (photograph provided by Rohidas Dagale), and left is male.

In my experience, seeing this bird was not a difficult task, especially in Tansa, thanks to Rohidas Dagale. I encourage all birders to go and see this bird in Tansa, Melghat and other places and help raise awareness of its importance. Let's not forget it is still on the endangered list. It makes its nest in

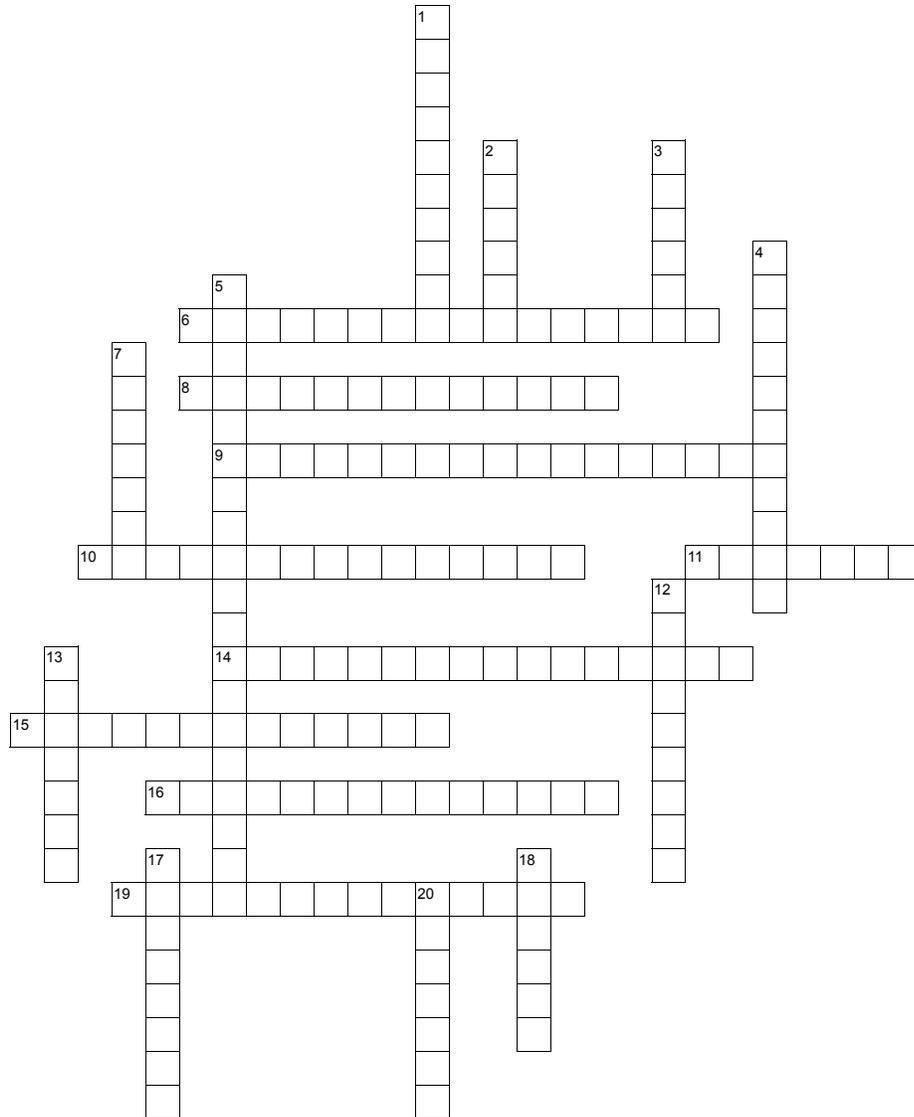


holes in the Teak trees. As more & more mature trees are logged for timber, their habitat continues to shrink as they lose mature trees to make right-sized holes for their nest. We observed farming is on the rise at Tansa, and it was evident that trees were felled for cultivation, causing habitat loss. While exiting the place, we observed wildfires, all likely set by humans. The entire area was full of smoke in the morning due to manmade fires. Burning undergrowth has a terrible effect on the food chain that Forest Owlets rely upon. We hope the habitat is kept intact and let them sustain, if not prosper.

Finally, can we see the bird in any place in West Bengal? I would dare say – why not? It was sighted in Odisha in the past, adjacent to our state. We have Teak Forests in West Bengal. For decades nobody knew it was there in Maharashtra. Even Dr. Salim Ali couldn't find it. With an increasing number of birders and increased information availability, we can launch a campaign to discover it in West Bengal. The best option would be to create awareness about the bird so that anyone who spots it can identify it and not confuse it with Spotted Owlet. Secondly, birders must familiarize themselves with the Forest Owlet call, especially the distinct ka-wuuu call. During its breeding season of September to March, who knows, we might hear the call and trace the bird in some Teak Forest of West Bengal. Pamela Rasmussen started her mission with this dream, if not the belief that “it is there to be found”. I cannot think of any better platform than the Birdwatchers' Society to lead that mission, and it would be wonderful to read that story in a future Fantail edition.

Souvik is a senior IT professional observing wildlife for over 2 decades. Started bird photography since 2017. Lives in Kolkata.

Crossword



Across

- 6 Can hit 135 decibels.
- 8 Uses bait to catch fish.
- 9 Has the longest beak.
- 10 Star migratory attraction at Khichan Village, India.
- 11 First avian genome to be sequenced.
- 14 Corvid that can manufacture tools.
- 15 First bird hatched in space-station Mir.
- 16 Longest toes of any bird, relative to body size.
- 19 Smallest bird; named after an insect.

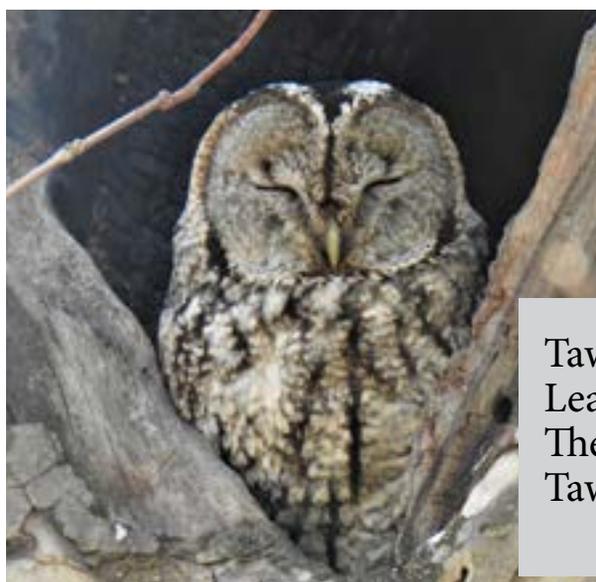
Down

- 1 Migratory bird that sees more daylight than any other creature.
- 2 Heaviest parrot, flightless parrot too.
- 3 The only bird with green pigment in its feathers.
- 4 Beta male unselfishly helps the Alpha male to woo the female.
- 5 Tallest living bird.
- 7 The World Bird database.
- 12 A female of this species was photographed with 76 ducklings.
- 13 Chicks born with claws on wings.
- 17 Name of the first chicken hatched in space- project sponsored by KFC.
- 18 Heaviest vertebrates to walk on water.
- 20 Archaeopteryx lithographica was found in this country.



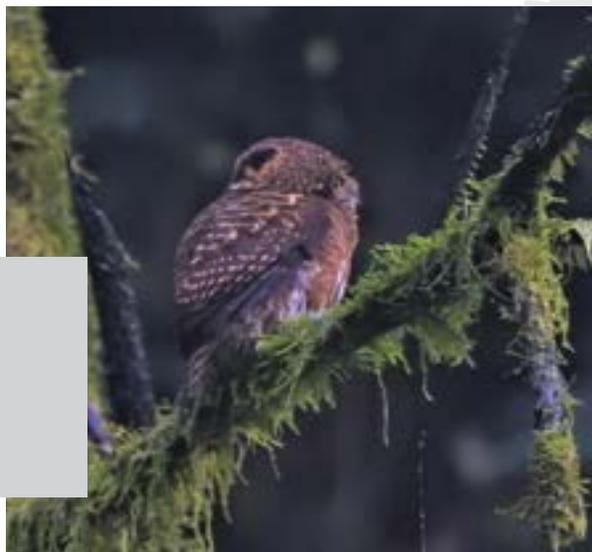
HAI FIVE (FIVE HAIKU AND FIVE OWLS)

Asani Bhaduri



Tawny Owl
Leafless Chinar branches touching sky
The dark hole contrasting with pale bark
Tawny gazes on the ground

Collared Owlet
Drooping moss bed, patchy forest
The false eye rotating back and forth
Collared unfazed in incessant rain





Forest Owlet
Back from bird world obscurity
Forest Owlet enjoys the Swarovski Scope glances
...and goes back into the forest



Indian Eagle Owl
Camouflaged in thickets and burrows
The Eagle Owl emerges with orange-red eyes
Sun sets



Andaman Hawk Owl
Night, black blind night, night
With glazing eyes Hawk Owl flutters
The Mangrove grows denser, darker

Haiku is a Japanese short poetry form which consists of three lines. Often the syllables or words in these lines are in 5/7/5, 3/5/3 or 5/3/5 format. Haiku is known for the vivid nature imagery captured in few words. This series consisting of five Haiku can even be called Haiga which is a similar Japanese art form where poetry coalesces with the painting (here photograph) to form a visual treat.

All photos taken by the author himself.

Asani Bhaduri, a faculty member at Delhi University, frequently writes and speaks on birds and wildlife. A birder of ten years of experience and 1000 birds in his bag, is a poet also.



RAINFALL AND HIMALAYAN OWL

Rajdeep Mitra

The mystery surrounding different morphs of the same bird has been around for ages. The difference in plumage colour sometimes can make a simple identification very difficult. Take the Himalayan Owl (*Strix nivicolum*) for example. This species is distributed in the Himalayan mountains of Himachal Pradesh in India to China and even to Taiwan. Three subspecies of the Himalayan Owl have been recognized due to this large distribution range. *Strix nivicolum nivicolum* is the nominate subspecies and it is distributed throughout the Himalayas.

The very much similar looking Tawny Owl (*Strix aluco*) which is found only in the Kashmir Valley in India is allopatric to the Himalayan Owl, meaning from a single ancestor these two species have branched because of the presence of a geological barrier. This barrier made it impossible for them to mate; thus, two different species evolved. In this case, the Pir Panjal Mountain Range worked as the major zoogeographic barrier preventing the two owl populations from coming in contact with each other. Even though they look very similar but Himalayan Owl is a little darker than Tawny Owl with broadly banded wings and tertials, it is also more coarsely marked.

The Himalayan Owls of the Western Himalayas are relatively greyish, just a little darker than the cousin species Tawny Owl. However, the further east we go towards the Eastern Himalayas a change in plumage colour is distinctly visible. Himalayan Owls of the Eastern Himalayas have rufous plumage.

Constantin Gloger was the first to notice that tropical regions' animals tend to be more pigmented. He later on elaborated the reason behind such darker pigmentation, according to Gloger's Rule animals are darker in warmer and wetter regions possibly to help them camouflage with the environment. However, according to Charles Mitchill Bogert, as dark colour absorbs more solar radiation, animals in colder regions would be darker which helps them with thermoregulation, this hypothesis was later known as Thermal Melanism Hypothesis. Apparently, there seems to be a contradiction between these two hypotheses.

Recent research supports both hypotheses to a certain extent. Ornithologists have found that a connecting link between the two hypotheses is rainfall. Darker plumage in birds is found in areas with high rainfall and cold temperatures. The research suggests that the type of climatic gradient

would determine if both rules work together or not. In areas where rainfall is more impactful than the cold temperature birds would be darker as the light pigmentation due to cold temperature would be overwhelmed by the high precipitation.

The average rainfall in Himachal Pradesh is around 2250mm but in Arunachal Pradesh which is located in the far east of India, the average rainfall is 3000mm. So naturally, the Himalayan Owls inhabiting the dry deciduous or subtropical pine forests of Himachal Pradesh in India would be lighter in plumage (Grey morph) whereas, the owls residing in the tropical rainforests of Arunachal Pradesh would be much darker (Rufous morph).



Tawny owl (*Strix aluco*) from Kashmir Valley (Left) and Himalayan Owl (*Strix nivicolom*) from Himachal Pradesh (Right).



Himalayan Owl (*Strix nivicolom*) from Himachal Pradesh (Left) and Arunachal Pradesh (Right)

Rajdeep Mitra, is a researcher at the Wildlife Institute of India Dehradun. Rajdeep has been watching and photographing birds for the last 12 years, with a keen interest in bird migration and morphology.

*“The path was purple in the dusk.
I saw an owl, perched,
on a branch.” -- Our Owl Story*



PALLID SCOPS OWL

The photo was taken in Dec 2021 at a reserve forest named Manethi in the Rewari District of Haryana. Pallid Scops Owl generally migrates across North and West India during winters. While Gujarat and Rajasthan remain the well-known locations in India to spot this elusive owl, there are increasing records from places like Haryana and Uttar Pradesh also. With tufted horns, this pale grey owl camouflages extremely well and prefer thorny, shrubby habitat where it is harder to spot. May be this is also one of the reasons why there are less records of this species barring a few states. Strangely there is one report of this species from Kerala as well.

HIMALAYAN OWL

One of those mysterious big owls strictly restricted to the Himalayas. The bird has two different morphs-rufous and grey (found only in Western Himalayas though a bit rare). There are reports of both morphs from the Eastern Himalayas (based on eBird data). This photo was taken at Narkanda (Himachal Pradesh) in November 2022.

An interesting note-

The bird was photographed at place which was a few hours drive from Shimla. Salim Ali in his book notes that in Himachal Pradesh, Shimla onwards only Tawny owls are usually seen. However, we only noticed Himalayan Owl at the location which Salim Ali mentioned in his book.





HUME'S HAWK OWL (BOOBOOK)

The image was shot in Dec 2021 at Chidiyatapu (Andaman Islands). Endemic to Andaman Islands, this owl is highly nocturnal and prefer lowland moist forests. In some areas, its territory overlaps with another endemic Andaman Owl species namely Andaman Boobook. However, a study on Andaman Owls by Santhanakrishnan Babu, Shanmugavel Sureshmarimuthu, Honnavalli Nagaraj Kumara shows that Hume's Boobook and Walden Scops Owl (a subspecies of Oriental Scops Owl) are in abundance in Andaman Islands due to conducive habitat compared to the other three endemic owls found in the islands.

SRI LANKA BAY OWL

The Sri Lanka Bay Owl is a species of Bay Owl in the family Tytonidae. It is endemic to the island of Sri Lanka and the Western Ghats including Kerala, Southwestern India. It was earlier considered a subspecies of the Oriental Bay owl (*Phodilus badius*) but is now treated as a full species due to its distinctive call, plumage and disjunct distribution. They relatively shy in nature, and prefer typical thick tropical forests, hence quite difficult to spot. The photo was taken in August 2022 from Thattekad in Kerala.





MOUNTAIN SCOPS OWL

More heard than seen, this owl is again widely spread across the Himalayas with two existing morphs-Grey and Rufous. Very rarely a rufous morph is seen in the Western Himalayas while in the East, mostly the rufous morph is seen. The image was shot in Manila (Nov 2020).

LONG-EARED OWL

Initially, from around 4pm, we used to stand in an open field in the area to look for and observe owl calls in surrounding bamboo and pine forest of Pangolakha WLS. As the evening approached, we had noticed 6 individual owls. This group would fly very close to us. When it got dark, they would be sitting on the tree stumps by the roadside, possibly for hunting purposes. On the first two days, the weather was very clear, so the car headlights would scare them off. The third night was foggy, and we found 2 individual owls - the second of whom did not fly away in our light, letting us take the pictures.





EURASIAN SCOPS OWL

Very small owl with golden-yellow eyes. Well-camouflaged with streaky gray-brown plumage. Small ear tufts raised when alert.

There was a huge outcry in Kolkata Birding Circle during end of October, 2021 regarding sighting of an Eurasian Scops-Owl which was last seen in India in Bombay in 1919. This photo was taken on 28.10.2021.

THE JUNGLE OWLET

Very little owl with dense barring all over the body. Gives bursts of loud hollow trills. A forest species, found in densely wooded areas in lowlands and foothills. Most active at dawn and dusk. This photo was taken at Purulia during June end 2022.



BROWN HAWK OWL

My first sighting of Brown Hawk Owl, which is recently renamed as Brown Boobook, happened during my Sundarban visit on 14th January'2023. The owl was with a catch. It was sighted on Bali Island at around 7:30 PM in the night. We all photographed the owl using spot lights.



Ratul Ghosh, a resident of Delhi is a passionate nature lover and birdwatcher. He has travelled across India in search of birds following their migratory and breeding patterns.

Photograph(s): Pallid Scops Owl, Himalayan Owl, Hume's Hawk Owl, Sri Lanka Bay Owl, Mountain Scops Owl

Sourav Mondal, a keen, sincere and tough birder. His most extensive work has been in and around hilly parts of India.

Photograph(s): Long Eared Owl

Navin Agarwal, a birder cum nature lover cum photography enthusiast. Started birding since May 2021 during Covid 2nd Wave.

Photograph(s): Eurasian Scops Owl, Jungle Owlet

Sukanta Kundu, a passionate photographer since his early age, started wildlife photography from 2020.

Photograph(s): Brown Hawk Owl



OUR NOCTURNAL NEIGHBOUR

Diprovo Majumdar

In the global birding community, Owls are one of the most widely and keenly sought species. Show me a birder who dislikes night birding for owls; I bet it would be tough. The thrill, the constant hunt, and the adrenaline rush after nailing the targeted species are always inexplicable. That's human nature; we run after the things that are challenging to get. That is why Owls are included in 99% birders' target list.

While owls are the most overlooked, least read and sometimes misunderstood creatures for ordinary people despite the fact that some owl species are very commonly seen and heard in our surroundings. Urban or rural, they are there in our neighbourhood.

Today, we will talk about one such neighbour.

Maybe while you read this article in your study room or as you scroll through your mobile, you hear a sharp, harsh scream close to your window. Well, nothing to be afraid of; it's likely to be a Barn Owl. Our closest nocturnal neighbour.



© Diprovo Majumdar

Here are some facts about these cute creatures:-

Before we jump into the facts, do you know the taxonomic name of the species? It is 'tyto alba'. {Greek: tutous - owl; Latin: albus - white}

They are the most common and widely seen Owl species across the world. Yes, Barn Owls are found in every part of this world except the Polar regions. Their ability to live in any habitat makes them a species with versatile habitat preferences, from urban to suburb, from grassland to woodland. They don't seem to complain about their home. More often found around human settlements and agricultural lands.

Barn Owls love barns, thus the name. They tend to inhabit farmlands or open fields, and their roosting place may differ from a safe and peaceful corner of a barn to an abandoned building, or it may include a tree branch, window shed etc.

Farmer's friend and Pest controller. For a farmer, rodents are the most devastating enemy. Barn Owl's presence around cultivation land is the best natural solution. Rodents are their most appetizing dish, which makes them a 'Farmer's friend'. In this way, they naturally play the role of a pest controller.

Protein lover. Rodents mostly dominate this owl's diet list, but they are often seen to prey upon lizards and other small mammals and birds too.

They swallow. Barn Owls swallow the whole prey..with furs, bones etc. Then the indigestible parts come out as their pellet.

Food availability. If the food source is in abundance, then Barn Owl population increases a lot in a particular region.

Frequent clutches. Food availability also influences the clutch (the number of eggs per nest). With a plentiful food source, Barn Owls can lay 3 clutches a year with 2-15 chicks.

Night predator. Being nocturnal, this calm and shy bird of daytime becomes a grim killer during the night.

Ears help. Barn owls use their excellent hearing skill to locate and hunt their prey.

Lowlight vision. Apart from their acute hearing skill, Barn Owl's accurate lowlight vision helps them to spot even slightest of the movement inside thick bush or grass.

Asymmetrical ears. Do you know? Their ears are on different levels on their heads. The left ear opening is higher than the right one. This actually helps them to locate their prey without even turning their head.

Precise and silent flight. In the field, we birders sometimes spot a bird by the sound of their movement, flight or wing flaps, but this ain't gonna work for Barn Owl. They fly in total silence.

Long legs and wide talons. Barn Owls have pretty long legs to help in flying. It helps in weight distribution. Their relatively wide talons help them to grab prey from inside thick grass.

They don't Hoot. The term we generally use for an owl's call is 'Hoot.' right? But not in the case of Barn Owls. Yes, unlike other owl species, they don't hoot. Instead, their call is more like an eerie sharp pitched harsh screech.

Fly to impress. Studies have shown that to win the love of a female, a male Barn Owl displays varieties of flight patterns.

Monogamous creature. While studying Barn Owls, their pairing for life nature greatly impressed me. They are monogamous birds. This means the male and female form a pair for a lifetime. They remain mated forever. Which is not seen in most of the species in the wildlife kingdom. So, in this toxic world of negativity, if you want to learn loyalty, then you have a perfect example around you.

Threats:

Being a species common in almost every part of the world, Barn Owls do not face any significant threat at the present time. In some areas, grassland destruction can be an issue of habitat loss, and road kills due to vehicles in populated areas are sometimes the reason for bird fatality. In a few countries, they are considered a symbol of evil, and such negative beliefs also result in their killing. Consequently, farmers or tribal people sometimes hunt this bird, unaware of its benefits.

While in India, Barn Owls are considered holy birds as this bird symbolizes the goddess Lakshmi, which brings wealth and fortune. During Lakshmi puja, people often, in sheer disregard for wildlife laws and out of stupidity, catch this bird and worship it by putting vermilion on their heads. Now if you are a non-birding person, then I hope you know why they are called 'লক্ষীপ্যাঁচা' in Bengali.

That's all for today. When you are done reading this article, check out your window sheds or edges of the rooftop. Maybe there is a pair of Barn Owls spending a quiet evening before they set out to hunt.

Diprovo - a nature lover, wildlife photographer, traveller, sports-freak and a student with keen interest in conservation of threatened & rare species. Currently pursuing his Bachelors' study at Siliguri.



Supriyo Ghatak is an engineer turned teacher. Now posted near Jalpaiguri, where wandering through the hills and forests form his favourite relaxation. While he paints and sketches, drawing cartoons is a subject close to his heart.



আমার বিদেশী পেঁচা দেখা

নারায়ণ সরকার

দীর্ঘদিন পরে আমি আবার রাজারহাটে ফটো তুলতে বেড়িয়েছি। সময়টা রেড মুনিয়া তোলা। চলে গেলাম রেড মুনিয়া জোনে। অনেক খুঁজেছি, দেখেছিও রাস্তার পাশে কাছের ঝোপে কিন্তু ভালো ছবি তোলা যায়নি। তারপর হঠাৎ ইন্ডিয়ান রোলার (নীলকণ্ঠ) -এর ছবি তোলা কথা জানলাম অরিন্দমদার থেকে। আমিও গেলাম এবং ছবিও তুললাম। কিন্তু ভালো ছবি হলো না। সে লাইটপোস্টে বসে থাকে। একদিন দেবতাপসদা একটা তিলা মুনিয়ার ছবি তুলে পাঠালো। খুব ভালো লাগলো ছবিগুলো। আমিও গেলাম এবং কিছু ছবি তুললাম। এটা রাম মন্দিরের কাছে। ছবি তোলা পর সবাই গেলো ক্লথোট আর অরেঞ্জ-হেডেড থ্রাশ (কমলা দামা)-এর জন্য। আমি গেলাম সিলিকন ভ্যালি, রাজারহাটের চারিদিকটা একটু ঘুরে দেখতে। আমি গত ৩ বছর ধরে ইন্ডিয়ান রোলার (নীলকণ্ঠ), পেঁচা এগুলো খুঁজছি। গত বছর ভালো পেঁচার ছবি পেয়েছি স্পটেড আউলেট (কুঠুরি পেঁচা), ব্রাউন ফিশ আউল (ভূতুম পেঁচা), বার্ন আউল (লক্ষ্মী পেঁচা)। ইন্ডিয়ান রোলার (নীলকণ্ঠ) দেখেছি, কিন্তু ভালো ছবি একটাও নেই। সবাই বলে হুগলী যেতে, কিন্তু দূরে যাওয়ার সময় খুব একটা হয়ে ওঠেনি। ইন্ডিয়ান রোলারের সম্ভাব্য লোকেশন আমি গত কয়েক বছর দেখছি। সেই মতো আমি জায়গাগুলো দেখতে থাকলাম। পেয়েও গেলাম ভাগ্যক্রমে! সেদিন আরও পেলাম ইউরেশিয়ান রাইনেক। সেদিন দেখলাম ইন্ডিয়ান রোলারটা একটা নিচু গাছের ডালে বসে আছে। আমি বাকি সবাইকে ডেকে দেখলামও। সবাই এত কাছে থেকে ছবি পেয়ে খুব খুশি হলো। দিনে দিনে পাখিটা খুব ফ্রেন্ডলি হয়ে গেলো। আমরা রাস্তার ওপর বসে থাকতাম আর পাখিটা খাবার ধরে সামনের বেড়ার ওপর বসতো। আমরা সবাই মন ভরে ছবি তুললাম। এবার একদিন তপুদা একটা চেস্টনাট-টেল্ড কুক্কু পেলো। উনি আমাদের ডেকে দেখালেন। ছবি হলো না। খুব লাজুক পাখি। ঝোপের বাইরে আসতেই চায় না। অনেক খোঁজার পর একটু মাথা অথবা একটু লেজের ছবি হলো। এমনই একদিন আমি খুব সকালে চলে গেলাম। তখন সাড়ে পাঁচটা; হঠাৎ দেখলাম কিছু একটা গাছে বসে। ক্যামেরা দিয়ে দেখলাম ওটা একটা স্কপস আউল! আবার সবাইকে ডেকে দেখলাম। সবাই মন ভরে ছবি তুলল। কিন্তু মোষেদের ভয়ে পালিয়ে পেঁচাটা পেছনের দিকে গাছে গিয়ে বসলো। সেই দিন বিকেল থেকে গাড়ি আর ফটোগ্রাফারদের আনাগোনা শুরু হলো ওই জোনটাতে। লোক রোজই এসেছে দল বেঁধে ছবি তুলতে। পরে জানা গেলো ওটা ইউরেশিয়ান স্কোপস আউল। এই প্রজাতিটি দক্ষিণ ইউরোপ, পূর্ব এবং পশ্চিম এশিয়াতে প্রধানত বসবাস করে।

ছবি তুলতে এসে লোকজন ভালো ছবির আশায় গাছের ডাল ভেঙে দিয়েছে। অন্য পাখির খাবার জায়গা নষ্ট করেছে। উল্লেখ্য যে চেস্টনাট-টেল্ড কুক্কু-কে আর দেখাই যাচ্ছে না! সেদিন একটা ছবি দেখলাম লোকজন ইন্ডিয়ান রোলার যে মাঠে খায় সেখানে ভিতরে ঢুকে দাঁড়িয়ে আছে। লোকেশন জানিয়ে আমরা

অনেককে ছবি তোলার সুযোগ করে দিতে পেরেছি। যেটা সবসময় করি। কিন্তু এটা ভেবে খুব খারাপ লাগছে যে জেনে বা না জেনে জায়গাটা অনেকে নষ্ট করে দিচ্ছে। আমাদের প্রত্যেকের উচিত পাখি বা বন্য জীবদের সম্মান দেওয়া। সম্মান এই অর্থে যে প্রত্যেকটা জীব-এর একটা কমফোর্ট জোন আছে। সেটা আগে সবাইকে বুঝতে হবে এবং সেই বুঝে আমাদের তার দিকে এগোনো দরকার। অযথা তাড়াহুড়ো না করে সব সময় আগে তার অবস্থান আর গতিবিধি সম্পর্কে ধারণা করে নেওয়া দরকার। সেইটা বুঝতে পারলে ভালো ছবি হওয়ার সম্ভবনা বেশি। আমি আমার নিজের মতো করে লেখার চেষ্টা করলাম।



Narayan Sarkar, by profession is a Software Developer who is passionate about wildlife photography. Photography gives him immense pleasure and is his stress reliever.



“BE OBSERVANT, LIFE’S A HOOT”

Sommouli Sarkar

My rendezvous with Ladakh landscape started when I visited a photography exhibition at ICCR Kolkata by renowned photographer Sandipan Mukherjee. A few days later, I saw snow leopard images taken by Dhritiman Mukherjee, one of the finest wildlife photographers in India. These are the reasons for me to fall in love with Ladakh.

Wildlife pictures have always fascinated me; more often than not, they would be of Ladakh and Masai Mara. Unconsciously, I started dreaming of this experience, hoping that one day I would make this dream come true. I always wondered about Ladakh’s exceptional landscape and wildlife, and I finally got to explore it with my friend Santanu Manna in June 2019.



The terrain is rough but captivating, the atmosphere is highly challenging, and the wildlife is gifted. The landscape is spectacular. Denuded mountains, unblemished lakes, high mountain passes, and treacherous roads.

After covering several birding spots near Leh city, like Shey marshes, Sindhu ghat etc., we finally reached Pangong lake. It's a beautiful lake with the ever-changing colours of its waters, and so very vast. Surrounded by mountains on every side literally means enchanted lake.

Pangong Tso is an important breeding area for a variety of birds, including Ruddy Shelduck. The Bar-headed Goose occurs in significant numbers on migration and could be breeding there. We found at least 50 Brown-headed Gulls, Common Tern, and Lesser Sand-Plover at Pangong lake, and near our camp, we found Horned Lark, Hill Pigeon, and Black-winged Snowfinch. Near Merak campsite, we found Bar-headed Goose, Ruddy Shelduck and Common Merganser, one adult with five juveniles swimming in the lake.

We finally bid goodbye to Pangong lake and left for Hanle. Just when we thought that the Pangong lake was done, the lake appeared again and kept surprising us all along the way with its enticing beauty. We drove for several kilometres, and it was just never-ending. I had never even imagined I would witness something so beautiful in the course of this trip. Trust me; it is the dreamiest part of Pangong Lake that one must experience.

Most tourists who come here only explore a highly crowded and commercialised area. Only a few drive further to Hanle, where they witness the unbelievable, untarnished beautiful part of the lake. To be honest, we were fortunate enough to have seen that part of Pangong Lake.

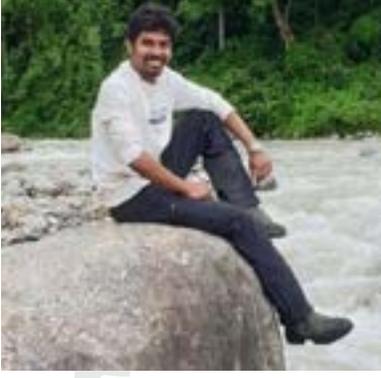
Hanle was the best birding and wildlife area I have ever visited. It's a different story that I will definitely share in another article. Today I want to share my first experience of meeting "Mr Little Owl".

After 3 days of extensive birding around Hanle, We were travelling towards Tso-Moriri lake. While crossing Puga valley, along the way, I spotted a small owl-like bird on the ground and immediately asked the driver to stop. As it turned out, the only "Little Owl" to grace our viewfinders during this trip. It was extremely well camouflaged with the terrain, making it difficult to spot.

Our driver Rigzing stopped the car, and we tried to click a few record shots from the car window because Mr Little Owl was seated on the open grassland. I had seen several images on the internet of this particular species, and most of the time, I found it sitting on rocky stones. Never seen it on the grassland. Finally, we slowly came down from the car, held our breath and tried to crawl towards the owl slowly to get a few better shots. Countless shutter clicks later, we managed a few good images of this bird.

What a fantastic experience. Eventually, engulfed in happiness, we thoroughly soaked in the moment's joy. Every single moment in wildlife is a story in itself. This trip to Ladakh and spotting Mr Little Owl will always remain close to my heart.

Sommouli Sarkar, photographer and photo educator is based in Kolkata. His career started as a software development professional, having worked for various multinational IT companies for almost 2 decades. Sommouli is passionate about birdwatching and consequently a nature lover too.



লাইব্রেরী যখন প্যাঁচায় প্যাঁচাময় কনাদ বৈদ্য

আমরা যারা বার্ডিং করি, ফিল্ডে প্যাঁচা দেখলে তাকে উপেক্ষা করে এগিয়ে যেতে পারি এরকম সাধ্য কতজনের আছে! ওই রকম ঘাড় ঘুড়িয়ে, জুলু জুলু চোখে, চোখে চোখ রেখে আর কোনও পাখি আছে নাকি যে আমাদের সম্মোহিত করে রাখতে পারে! অন্তত মিনিট খানেক হলেও আমরা থমকে দাঁড়াই। তা সে আগে যতবার খুশি মোলাকাতই হোক না কেন। তাই না!

এবারে ভাবুন তো যদি সেই প্যাঁচার দলবল বেঁধে আপনার পড়ার ঘরে ঢুকে পড়ে তাহলে কেমন হবে! এই ধরুন আপনি গল্প, উপন্যাস, ছড়া, কবিতা, প্যারোডি, লিমেরিক, ভূত-প্রেত, গোয়েন্দা, রহস্য-রোমাঞ্চ, রূপকথা, পঞ্চতন্ত্র, লোকশিল্প, লোকসংস্কৃতি, সংস্কার-কুসংস্কার, প্রবাদ-প্রবচন ইত্যাদি যেকোনও বিষয়ের ওপর বই হাতে নিলেই দেখলেন কভারে তারা নানা আঙ্গিকে হাজির হয়েছে - ছবি, কার্টুন, স্কেচ, নয়তো গ্রাফিক্সের ওপর ভর করে। এমনকি বিয়ের তত্ত্ব সাজানোর বইও বাদ পড়েনি; পাতা উল্টালেই সবিস্তারে তরমুজ, শসা, কুমড়া, লেটুশ, বীন, লক্ষা দিয়ে লক্ষী প্যাঁচা রূপ পাচ্ছে। এরকমই বাছাই করা বাংলা ভাষায় প্রকাশিত প্রায় ষাটখানা বই এবং পত্রিকার কভারের ছবি এখানে দিলাম। এগুলোর বেশিরভাগই আমার নিজস্ব সংগ্রহ করা। বাকি কিছু নেটমাধ্যম থেকে নেওয়া। আশা রাখছি ভালো লাগবে।











Kanad Baidya, founder member of the Birdwatchers' Society, is a doctor by profession. He is also the co-author of "Banglar Pakhpakhali" which some consider as the "Bible of Bengal Birds".



OWLS OF MARATHWADA

Kunal Sudhir Vibhandik

Marathwada is a drought prone region. Marathwada consists of 9 districts located in the central part of Maharashtra. The main habitat of this area is grassland. Only the Satmala mountain range, a sub-branch of the Satpuda mountain range on the border of Aurangabad and North Maharashtra, is somewhat greener than that of whole Region. As soon as the Gautala wildlife Sanctuary and the entire natural green corridor of Ajantha to Gautala Sanctuary ends, the entire Marathwada area becomes dry. At the other border, in Nanded district, on the Telangana border, exist dense forests of teak. In this way, Marathwada is divided into two habitats mainly dense forest and grassland. A total of seven species of owls are found in Marathwada. All these owls are found in almost all parts of Marathwada.



In Aurangabad district of Marathwada, there is a 400-year-old garden in the central part of the city, Himayat Bagh. Spread over an area of 300 acres, many of the trees are 150 to 200 years old. This very beautiful area has recently been included as a biodiversity heritage site. A total of 130 species of birds can be found in this garden, and it is impossible not to see owls in the old trees and very beautiful surroundings. This entire garden is famous for spotted owlets. These Owlets can be seen in the dholis on various trees in this garden. Especially in the garden of coconut trees, 6 to 7 generations of these Owlets are still living there. There isn't a single wildlife photographer in the whole of Marathwada who doesn't have a photo of the Owlets peeking through the coconut trees in this garden. These little spotted owls have been seen by every crowd coming to the garden, isn't this kind of public awareness...?



Spotted Owlet – Kunal Vibhandik

I have been working in the field of environment and mainly birds for the last 8 years, with Dr. Dilip Yardi, a renowned name in ornithology in Aurangabad and across Maharashtra. Sir has been studying birds for the last 45 years. Our organization conducts awareness programs and ornithology courses amongst various other activities. So, we also get phone calls related to bird rescue. One such day we received a phone call, “Something like a strange bird is stuck in our building, its face looks like an alien...” Of course, Sir, since he has experience with such descriptions, told us not to panic, it must be a Barn owl. When we finally reached there, Sir’s prediction turned out to be exactly right. It was a white and full-grown beautiful Barn owl, and being an old construction building, it was stuck in its intricate design and couldn’t get out. He was called an alien because of his facial features. At last, he was carefully taken out by Sir and released again in the same area. Probably all owls do not leave soon after choosing a place to live. Even if the owls stray elsewhere, they should be brought back to the same area and released. We continued to receive messages from people in the area about sightings of the owl. As owls are nocturnal, people still get afraid after seeing an owl.

To reduce this fear, we also organize evening birdwatches to raise awareness and observe nocturnal birds. In one such nocturnal birdwatching, it was just about getting dark in the evening and all the bird watchers were looking for the nocturnal bird like Indian Nightjar when suddenly there was a sound of “bhoooo bhooo”. Being aware of this sound, our joy was doubled, but the rest of the bird watchers were terrified. It was the voice of the Eurasian Eagle Owl. Finally, everyone was happy to see that very charismatic owl. This owl, which always rests on the sides of mountains during the day, comes out to hunt at night. We saw it perched on a tall tree looking out for its prey. This owl

is very good at hiding and is rarely seen during the day. At night it can be located by its sound. It is found in rocky mountain slopes.



While returning from one such bird watching trip one evening, in the university area of Aurangabad, we all heard what sounded strange but was actually an owl's call. Those who heard that voice for the first time literally felt goosebumps. This was the sound of the Mottled Wood Owl. Everyone saw this highly camouflaged owl flying and heard its voice again. Owls of this type also make a distinct call during the mating season. Their color and overall body structure are such that they blend in with the tree, making them very difficult to spot during the day.

Also, all species of owls are top predators, nature has provided them with plenty of camouflage skills, skin characteristics and unique talents such as their very silent flight including the use of sound waves to find prey in the dark of night. One day, we suddenly found an Indian Scops Owl on a teak tree in the middle of the city. We observed him for 8 days in a row; he would disappear in the evening as darkness fell and return to the same spot in the morning.

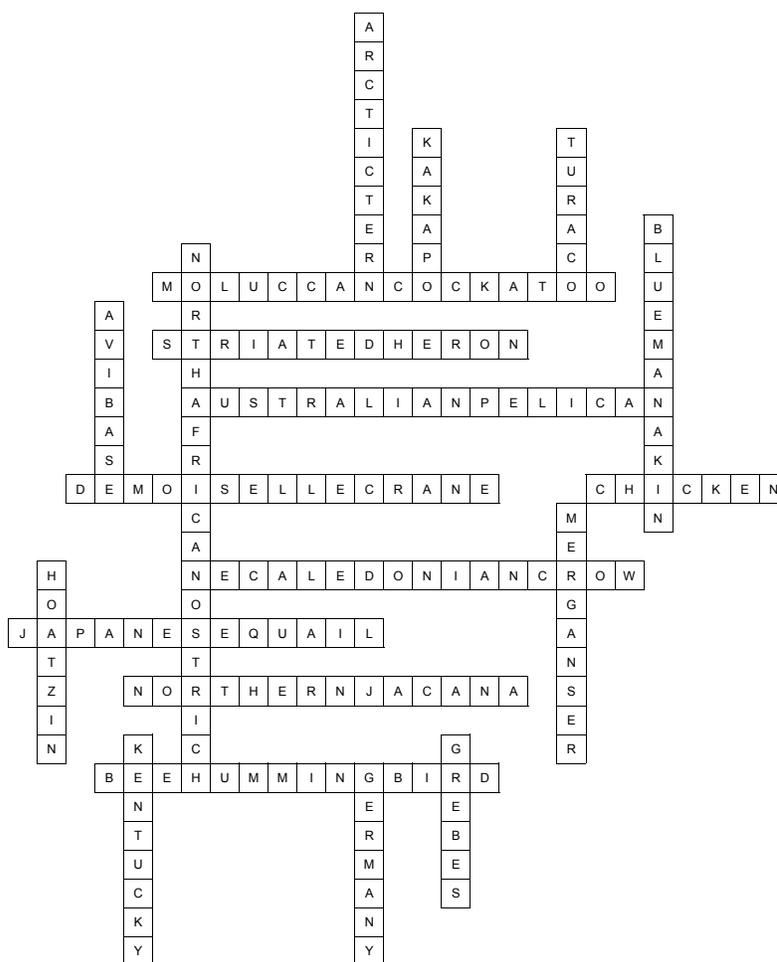
Brown Fish Owl is another owl that can be found with difficulty in the forests of Gautala, Ajantha and Kinwat areas and lives entirely in the forest along the water banks. Very few people have seen it hunting fish at night and it is also seen with difficulty during the day. We saw this owl during the day one summer when the natural water bodies dried up during the hot summer days. Now we are currently studying what these owls do when all the natural water bodies in the forest dry up, usually in January or February.

As a result of climate change or natural change, the Short Eared Owl, which was never seen before, has started appearing in our area since 2019. Of course, it is very rare, and being a migrant, we never saw it except in December.

These 7 different types of owls are seen in our area. Of course, it remains to be studied extensively. Most of these owls live in and around the city. We currently are studying the effect of climate change, pollution etc. on them.

Kunal Sudhir Vibhandik, historian turned nature lover and wildlife photographer. Working with NGO named Environmental Research Foundation and Educational Academy, Aurangabad. Working in ornithology and environmental awareness in the division.

Crossword



Across

- 6 Can hit 135 decibels.
- 8 Uses bait to catch fish.
- 9 Has the longest beak.
- 10 Star migratory attraction at Khichan Village, India.
- 11 First avian genome to be sequenced.
- 14 Corvid that can manufacture tools.
- 15 First bird hatched in space-station Mir.
- 16 Longest toes of any bird, relative to body size.
- 19 Smallest bird; named after an insect.

Down

- 1 Migratory bird that sees more daylight than any other creature.
- 2 Heaviest parrot, flightless parrot too.
- 3 The only bird with green pigment in its feathers.
- 4 Beta male unselfishly helps the Alpha male to woo the female.
- 5 Tallest living bird.
- 7 The World Bird database.
- 12 A female of this species was photographed with 76 ducklings.
- 13 Chicks born with claws on wings.
- 17 Name of the first chicken hatched in space- project sponsored by KFC.
- 18 Heaviest vertebrates to walk on water.
- 20 Archaeopteryx lithographica was found in this country.



OWL AND MY GLASS PAINTED LAMPSHADES

Dipabali Paul

Glass painting is one of the independent art form of visual arts, which is a combination of both folk and fine art. Glass paintings are executed with oil and hard resin or with water color and gum on glass sheets. These have been a folk art tradition in Europe and North America. By 17th century this art started spreading to different countries across the globe. In the mid of 18th century, it spread to Europe and the artists of China learnt the art of glass painting from Europeans. Later in early 19th century the trade relations between East India Company and China brought this art to India.

From my childhood one of my favorite hobbies was drawing and as I grew older trekking and birdwatching got added to the list of favorites. Visiting hill stations was almost a routine. At a very early age I developed a spiritual connect with nature and mountains. Birdwatching bug stuck me during my B.Sc. days. The chirping of birds and the solace of mountains bring me eternal peace of mind.



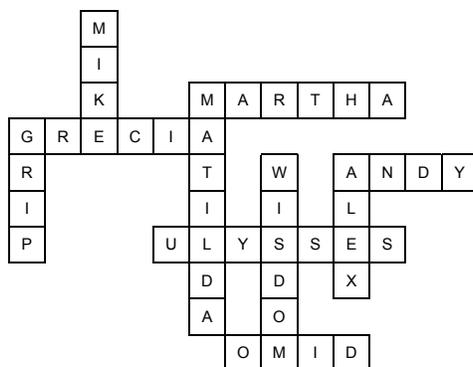
Meanwhile, I initiated my small art and craft house named “Proyash” in 2018, emphasizing on glass painting. The mountains and the vibrant colors of nature have always been a source of inspiration for me. I love to incorporate these natural elements into my art, creating a beautiful and harmonious blend of nature and creativity. And I found Glass painting, the best way to express with the blend of colors and light.

Owls have always been a subject of interest for me, and it has also become a subject of my glass paintings. Owls are fascinating creatures that have captured the human imagination for centuries. I am passionate about glass painting and love to use the owl as my favorite subject. I hope to continue to grow and develop my skills as an artist and create even more beautiful pieces of art in the future.



Dipabali Paul, MSc in Zoology, a biology tutor. “Proyash” is another part of her profession. In her leisure time she loves to do trekking and birding.

Crossword For Kids



Across

- 2 Last Passenger pigeon.
- 3 First Toucan to receive a prosthetic beak.
- 5 A Goose born without feet who used sneakers to help him stand and walk.
- 6 Author Gerald Durrell's pet owl when he was growing up in Corfu.
- 7 The Siberian crane that continues to return to Iran.

Down

- 1 Headless chicken that lived for 18 months after his head was cut off.
- 2 First chicken recognised as World's Oldest Living Chicken by Guinness World Records.
- 3 A Raven kept as a pet by Charles Dickens.
- 4 Laysan albatross and oldest confirmed wild banded- bird in the world.
- 5 Gray parrot whose name was an Acronym for 'avian language experiment'

BWS BIRD WALK – SALT LAKE

Reported by Navin Agarwal and Major B Parihar

BWS organized a bird walk in Central Park of the Saltlake area on 12th March 2023.

The park's actual name is Banabitan Biodiversity Park, an urbanized park located at the centre of the Saltlake area in Kolkata. It's a natural habitat for many species of birds and butterflies. As per earlier records, roughly 60 odd bird species are resident, and quite a few migrant birds visit the park in winter and monsoon. A few reptiles like Rat-snake and Oriental Garden lizards and mammals like Mongoose are also seen in the park.

Birds are an essential biodiversity indicator because their population greatly varies with changing habitats. Hence, BWS organized the bird walk at Banabitan to assess the bird biodiversity and, more importantly, encourage the younger generation to bird watching and educate them about the diversity in our surroundings.

BWS Bird-walks are becoming quite popular, and we have observed a steady increase in participants. Children aged between 7 to 15, along with their parents and many adult bird & nature enthusiasts, also participated in the event. Overall 40 participants, including 14 BWS members, joined the bird-walk. The children, 9 of them, showed great enthusiasm. A significant highlight of the day was the impromptu flash card quiz conducted on the spot. All present participated. The stars of the day were two 7-year-old sisters who identified most of the birds shown on the flash cards.

Zeiss's team collaborated in the event with their scopes and binoculars, helping the participants learn to use the equipment.

The species we observed during the walk were -

- Brown shrike
- Common moorhen
- Black-hooded Oriole
- Alexandrine Parakeet
- Rose-ringed parakeet
- Spotted owlet
- Coppersmith Barbet
- Indian pond heron
- Black drongo
- White-throated Kingfisher
- Jungle Babbler
- Yellow-footed Green pigeon

The overall outcome was very positive, with a request for more such events and quizzes.





BWS LAUNCHES FIRST DAWN CHORUS DAY OF BENGAL

The General Body Meeting of BWS held on Feb18, 2023, discussed celebrating a ‘Dawn Chorus Day’ here in India in our own way. Taking a cue from the international dawn chorus day, celebrated worldwide on the first Sunday of May every year, BWS decided to recreate Bengal’s Dawn Chorus Day in its own unique way.

Dawn Chorus is the sound birds in a particular area make together in unison early in the morning before sunrise. Apart from being pleasing to the ears, it is a significant tool for conservationists as it gives a idea about the health of the environment and its avian population.

BWS will celebrate Bengal’s Dawn Chorus Day on the first Sunday of April each year. In 2023 the first Sunday fell on 2nd April. This day each year, birders from across West Bengal would gather to catch a glimpse of the avian symphony at the break of day.

While we will have an elaborate article shortly explaining the significance and our assessment of the Dawn Chorus, we present the news and media clippings that reported the event and its criticality.



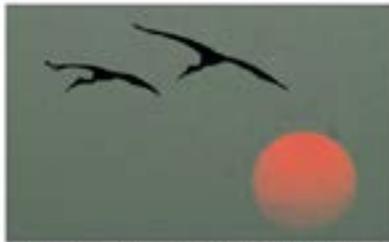
রাতি পোহাইতেই রেকর্ড হবে পাখির সব কলরব!

এই সময়, ‘সন্ধ্যাবেলা পখির কলরব’ নামে পরিচিত। তাই এখন থেকেই ‘রাতি পোহাইতেই রেকর্ড হবে পাখির সব কলরব’ নামে পরিচিত।

‘রাতি পোহাইতেই রেকর্ড হবে পাখির সব কলরব’ নামে পরিচিত। তাই এখন থেকেই ‘রাতি পোহাইতেই রেকর্ড হবে পাখির সব কলরব’ নামে পরিচিত।

এই সময়, ‘সন্ধ্যাবেলা পখির কলরব’ নামে পরিচিত। তাই এখন থেকেই ‘রাতি পোহাইতেই রেকর্ড হবে পাখির সব কলরব’ নামে পরিচিত।

‘রাতি পোহাইতেই রেকর্ড হবে পাখির সব কলরব’ নামে পরিচিত। তাই এখন থেকেই ‘রাতি পোহাইতেই রেকর্ড হবে পাখির সব কলরব’ নামে পরিচিত।



উদয়গঙ্গার অরণ্যে কলরব শুনতে পাওয়া যায়।

এই সময়, ‘সন্ধ্যাবেলা পখির কলরব’ নামে পরিচিত। তাই এখন থেকেই ‘রাতি পোহাইতেই রেকর্ড হবে পাখির সব কলরব’ নামে পরিচিত।

‘রাতি পোহাইতেই রেকর্ড হবে পাখির সব কলরব’ নামে পরিচিত। তাই এখন থেকেই ‘রাতি পোহাইতেই রেকর্ড হবে পাখির সব কলরব’ নামে পরিচিত।

এই সময়, ‘সন্ধ্যাবেলা পখির কলরব’ নামে পরিচিত। তাই এখন থেকেই ‘রাতি পোহাইতেই রেকর্ড হবে পাখির সব কলরব’ নামে পরিচিত।

‘রাতি পোহাইতেই রেকর্ড হবে পাখির সব কলরব’ নামে পরিচিত। তাই এখন থেকেই ‘রাতি পোহাইতেই রেকর্ড হবে পাখির সব কলরব’ নামে পরিচিত।

POILA BOISHAK BIRD COUNT 2023

Poila Boishak, the first day of the Bengali calendar, is a cultural heritage of humanity for most of the eastern region of India. Celebrated on the 14th or 15th of April every year. April is also an exciting time for birds in the region – many are already singing and breeding, while many are still moving towards more northerly breeding grounds. A count during this crucial period across the state can help monitor the status of breeding birds and migrants moving through. Over time, these snapshots will tell us the impacts of habitat loss & climate change on migration and breeding.

Poila Boishak Bird Count (PBBC) is another annual initiative of the BWS. The idea is to watch and count birds across West Bengal over 2 days. Which happened to be the 15th and 16th of April in the inaugural year 2023.

387 species reported from 19 districts of West Bengal with over 127 participants made it a resounding success covered by almost all major news and media entities, glimpses of which are presented herewith. We will bring you the report of the PBBC data shortly after it has been analysed and synthesised by experts.





Short-eared Owl (Female) @ Santanab Majumder



Short-eared Owl (Male) @ Santanab Majumder



Andaman Boobook @ Bibaswan Sarkar



Indian Scops Owl @ ArijitBanerjee



Hume's Boobook @ Bibaswan Sarkar



Spotted Owlet @ Srijan Roy Choudhury



Spotted Owlet (Mother & Fledgling) @ Arunava Dutta



Pallid Scops Owl @ ArijitBanerjee



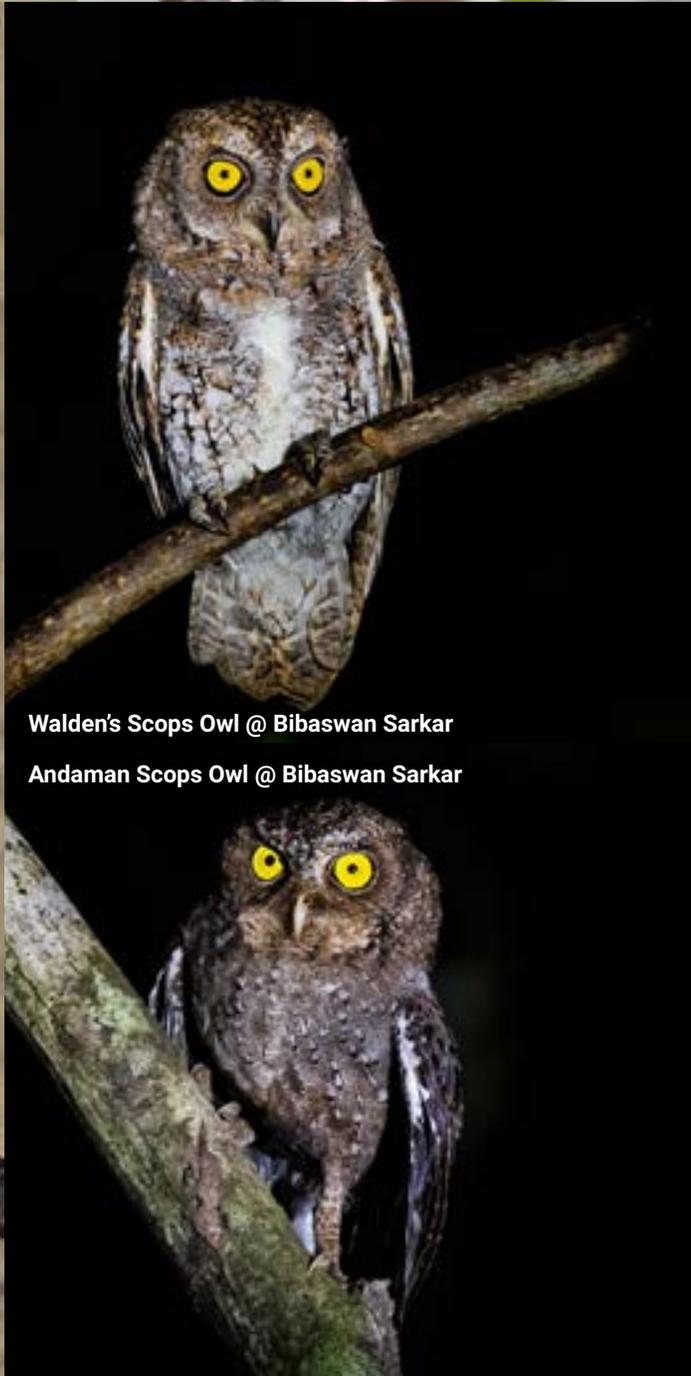
Asian Barred Owlet @ Srijan Roy Choudhury



Oriental Scops Owl
@ Debmalya Roy Chowdhury



Rock Eagle Owl @ Souvik Roychoudhury



Walden's Scops Owl @ Bibaswan Sarkar

Andaman Scops Owl @ Bibaswan Sarkar



Aindrilla Sarkar

Birdwatchers' Society

DB 75, Salt Lake, Kolkata-700064, INDIA

Email: birdwatcherssocietywb@gmail.com

Website: www.birdwatcherssociety.org