

# NEWSLETTER

Vol. 4 | Issue No. 1 | July-September 2024





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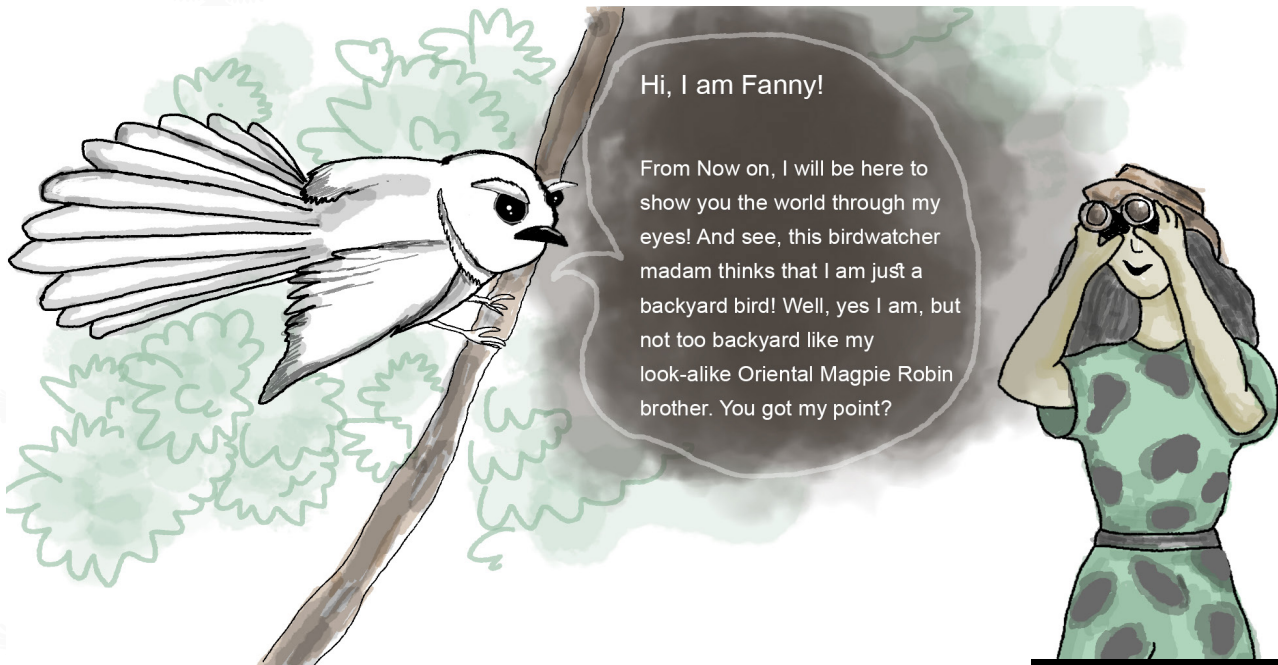


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## PERSPECTIVES



Courtesy : Aindrila Sarkar Deb

“

**In order to see birds, it is necessary to  
become a part of the silence.**

”

**Robert Lynd**





Himalayan Woodpecker Pic- Arunava Dutta



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.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

01	<b>Editorial</b>
03	<b>Fresh &amp; Rare Sightings (Arrivals)</b> PRIYAM CHATTOPADHYAY
07	<b>West Bengal Rarities First Record of Red-billed Starling</b> NITYANANDA CHOWKIDAR
09	<b>Chakrashila, Birding in a Neglected IBA</b> DR ASAD RAHMANI
13	<b>Vanishing Backyard Sanctuaries</b> AMITAVA DUTTA
18	<b>Kavaratti Chronicles</b> RAJDEEP MITRA
22	<b>Birding Near Home – Kablong Forest – A Trip Report</b> NILAY RAHA
26	<b>ঘুঘুদের হাঁহিরাইজ</b> AINDRILA SARKAR DEB
28	<b>Artificial Nest Boxes for Urban Birds – Boon or Bane?</b> BATUL PIPEWALA
30	<b>School Of Birds</b> TITASH CHAKRABARTI
33	<b>Pentax 65 EDA Scope - A Review</b> ARIJIT BANERJEE
36	<b>SNIP it! SIZE it!!</b> SRIJAN ROY CHOUDHURY, ANNWOY ROY CHOUDHURY
44	<b>কাঠোঁকরা পাখি</b> বিশ্ব রঞ্জন গোস্বামী
48	<b>Dawn Chorus 2024</b> HIYA CHATTERJEE
52	<b>PBBC 2024</b> PAMPA MISTRI
54	<b>BWS Activities</b> Draw a Bird Day The Wetlands 'Jolabhumi Utsav' 2023-24 Birdwatching & Nature Workshop Earth Day Bird Walk BWS Pocket Guide – Birds Of Sikkim & North Bengal North Bengal School Program
17	<b>Crossword</b> HIYA CHATTERJEE
53	<b>Perspectives</b> AINDRILA SARKAR DEB, TITASH CHAKRABARTI



# EDITORIAL

Hello Birders,

**'Birds In Our Backyards'** offer a delightful connection to nature and serve as vibrant indicators of environmental health. How have the birds in our vicinity behaved during this summer's unprecedented heatwave? Do their arrivals and departures signify changes around us? Do you see a strong connection between weather and birds or between trees in your backyard?

*Sujan Chatterjee - Birdwatcher & Secretary of BWS, says, "Birds are an integral part of our world. Whether you live in an urban area or the middle of the wilderness, chances are you hear or see birds daily. They serve as ecosystem engineers, constructing structures (like nests and tree holes) that are used by other organisms when abandoned by the birds. If enough people watch birds in their backyards, communities, or wild places, they can provide a 'snapshot' of bird populations. These 'snapshots' can be compared with data from previous years to see what's happening with global bird populations. Are they increasing or decreasing? Does a species' range seem to expand, shrink, or shift? Noticing these 'snapshots' changes can alert scientists to potential problems that warrant more investigation."*

Monitoring these avian visitors is essential, as it helps track changes in biodiversity and alert us to potential ecological issues. Regular observation and recording of bird activity can reveal shifts in migration patterns, population dynamics, habitat preferences, and often

signals to broader environmental changes. Citizen science initiatives of BWS like the Poila Boishak Bird Count (PBBC) or the Dawn Chorus (DC) rely on backyard observations to gather critical data, underscoring that "every sighting counts". By paying close attention to the birds that visit our backyards, we not only enjoy their beauty and songs, but also contribute to the conservation of wildlife and natural habitats.

**We commence our fourth year of FANTAIL publication (Volume 4; Issue#1 July - September 2024) with this theme, which focuses on what's happening in and around our backyard. This issue thus carries reportage on backyard patches that are hotspots for birders.**

Dr Asad Rahmani, who led the Important Bird Areas (IBA) programme 25 years ago, writes about Chakrashila Sanctuary in west Assam and how Bablu Dey, a passionate and dedicated conservationist, convinced the scientists of Birdlife International to affirm Chakrashila's eligibility as an IBA.

The destruction of wetlands and grasslands in the guise of urban development in most of our urban areas is a common phenomenon. The article 'Vanishing Backyard Sanctuaries' highlights the loss of such wetlands around East Kolkata. Krisnendu Sar, a fellow BWS member, contributed the striking photograph of a Siberian rubythroat in a burnt-out



grassland, which inspired me to pen this article. 'Karavatti Chronicles', recounted by Rajdeep Mitra, will make you fall in love with Lakshwadeep. As you read the article, you will undoubtedly be drawn to the island and realise it is a must-visit destination for birding. Talking about backyard birding, Nilay Raha, through his trip report, takes us on a trip to Kablong Forest, situated an overnight journey away. Aindrila Sarkar, in her unique, witty style, tells us about the all-year opera of pigeon nesting and fledglings in her roof garden. In another interesting article, 'Nest Boxes for Urban Birds—Boon or Bane' by Batul Pipewala highlights the risks and their likely impact on the skills & behaviour of the birds in our cities.

**'School of Birds' is the prima donna of the Birdwatchers' Society (BWS)**, curated for school children, our future torch bearers. This flagship educational project, with its aim to introduce children to the magical world of nature, which all life, including humans, is a part of, is making a significant impact. In this dire hour for the environment, the project aims to plant the seeds of conservation as a way of life, birds being the couriers of this important message. *"Birds are a gateway to the natural world," says School of Birds founder Titash Chakrabarti, "and through 'School of Birds,' we aim to inspire a new generation of conservationists."* The program's success, which is largely due to your support, lies in its ability to blend scientific tools with accessible, enjoyable experiences, making it a cornerstone of BWS's mission to protect and celebrate our avian friends.

Creating a photo archive of birds in our vicinity (to start with the state of West Bengal) is critical for several reasons. It provides a visual record while monitoring local species, helping

to track their presence and abundance over time. As part of this drive, Srijan and Annwoy Roy Choudhury have created guidelines for sharing bird photographs by BWS members for the Photo Archive.

It's always a pleasure to share Arijit Banerjee's reviews of birding optics. In this issue, read about his evaluation of the Pentax 65EDA Spotting scope.

Concurrent with our theme, we have included updates on two critical backyard events recently concluded – Dawn Chorus (DC) and the Poila Boishak Bird Count (PBBC). While Dawn Chorus is trending to become a national event, both events saw chores of birdwatchers reporting on their observation in and around their neighbouring areas. Hiya Chatterjee has compiled a report on Dawn Chorus, Pampa Mistri scores the Big Day of the Bengali calendar through her despatch on Poila Boishak Bird Count.

The woodpecker is a common backyard bird and a critical one too. Biswa Ranjan Goswami shares a comprehensive update on these fabulous birds. Our regular feature Rare Bird Alert has been compiled by Priyam Chattopadhyay, while Nityananda Chowkidar has done the reportage on the first sighting of Red-billed Starling in the state. With this issue we introduce 'Persepectives through Humor' contributed by our very own Aindrila Sarkar & Titash Chakrabarty. The Crossword is created by Hiya Chaterjee.

As we commence a new Volume, please, as always, share your feedback, criticism, or appreciation. It certainly helps us strive for better.

Here's to Happy & Responsible Birding!

**Fantail Editorial Team**



# FRESH & RARE ARRIVALS

## PRIYAM CHATTOPADHYAY

During the period spanning from March to 5th June 2024, our community of birders were active and enthusiastic about their passion and dedication towards this beloved pastime. Along with migratory birds, recent cyclone named 'Remal' over Sundarbans (Bangladesh & India) has brought some pelagic delight along the riverside too.

Here is the list of the stop-over guests that enthralled us.

### 2024 Arrivals - April-May-June (till 5th)

Sr No	BIRD SPECIES	LOCN - 1	LOCN - 2	SIGHTING DATES
01	Indian Blue Robin	Rabindra Sarovar, Kolkata	Nepalgaunge, South 24 Parganas	30 March, 7 May 2024
02	Thick-billed Warbler	Rabindra Sarovar, Kolkata	Nepalgaunge, South 24 Parganas	5 April, 7 May 2024
03	Upland Pipit	Gidda Pahar, Darjeeling		6 April, 2024
04	Short-eared Owl	Karandighi, Uttar Dinajpur		9 April, 2024
05	Chestnut-eared Bunting	Baruipur, South 24 Parganas		11 April, 2024
06	Olive-backed Pipit	Baruipur, South 24 Parganas		11 April, 2024
07	Oriental Pratincole	Baruipur, South 24 Parganas		11 April, 2024
08	Banded Bay Cuckoo	Bishnupur, Bankura	Chilkigarh, Jhargram	30 March, 2024
09	Indian Pitta	Rabindra Sarovar, Kolkata	Shyamkhola, South 24 Parganas	14 April, 1 May 2024
10	Gray-headed Parrotbill	Buxa Forest, Alipurduar		9 April 2024
11	Blood Pheasant	Singalila NP, Darjeeling		20 April 2024
12	Eurasian Oystercatcher	Hijli Beach, Purba Medinipur		21 April 2024
13	White-winged Tern	Hijli Beach, Purba Medinipur		21 April 2024
14	Kentish Plover (Hanuman)	Hijli Beach, Purba Medinipur		21 April 2024
15	Broad-billed Sandpiper	Hijli Beach, Purba Medinipur		21 April 2024
16	Dunlin	Hijli Beach, Purba Medinipur		21 April 2024
17	Western Hooded Pitta	Buxa Forest, Alipurduar	Mahananda WLS, Darjeeling	22, 28 April 2024



Sr No	BIRD SPECIES	LOCN - 1	LOCN - 2	SIGHTING DATES
18	Abbott's Babbler	Buxa Forest, Alipurduar	Bibhutibhushan WLS, North 24 Parganas	22 April, 18 May 2024
19	Red Phalarope	Nayachar, Burdwan		1 May 2024
20	Crow-billed Drongo	Rabindra Sarovar, Kolkata		5 May 2024
21	Amur Falcon	Tarakeshwar, Hooghly	CKBS, South 24 Parganas	6, 8 May 2024
22	Forest Wagtail	Nepalgaunge, South 24 Parganas		7 May 2024
23	Great Parrotbill	Senchal WLS, Darjeeling		7 May 2024
24	Red-necked Falcon	Suri, Birbhum		8 May 2024
25	White-gorgetted Flycatcher	Sukhiapokhari, Darjeeling		10 May 2024
26	Gray-necked Bunting	Tenyasi, Purulia		12 May 2024
27	Gray-bellied Cuckoo	Tenyasi, Purulia		12 May 2024
28	Fork-tailed Drongo-Cuckoo	Garh Jungle, Paschim Burdwan		13 May 2024
29	Tiger Shrike	Kargil Beach, South 24 Parganas		14 May 2024
30	Purple Cochoa	Kaffergaon, Kalimpong		15 May 2024
31	Chestnut-winged Cuckoo	Bibhutibhushan WLS, North 24 Parganas		18 May 2024
32	Sooty Tern	Ganges, Kakdwip, South 24 Parganas	Ganges, Akra, South 24 Parganas	28, 29 May 2024
33	Bridled Tern	Ganges, Kakdwip, South 24 Parganas		28 May 2024
34	Wilson's Storm Petrel	Ganges, Akra, South 24 Parganas	Rupnarayan, Bagnan, Hooghly	29 May 2024
35	Arctic Skua	Ganges, Chandannagore, Hooghly	Rupnarayan, Bagnan, Hooghly	29 May 2024
36	Short-tailed Shearwater	Rupnarayan, Bagnan, Hooghly	Ganges, Akra, South 24 Parganas	29 May 2024
37	Greater Frigatebird	Rupnarayan, Bagnan, Hooghly		29 May 2024
38	Red-billed Tropicbird	Rupnarayan, Bagnan, Hooghly		29 May 2024
39	Indian Skimmer	Rupnarayan, Bagnan, Hooghly		29 May 2024



## About Author

### **PRIYAM CHATTOPADHYAY**

Priyam Chattopadhyay is an IT Professional based out of Kolkata with a passion for birdwatching and photographing birds with special interest in studying varied habitats and bird migration. He has been watching and photographing birds for the last 8 years.

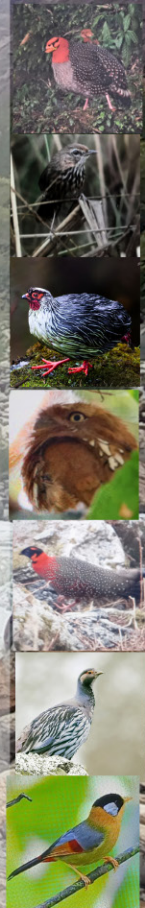


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## AGREEMENT SIGNING WITH DURGAPUR GOVERNMENT COLLEGE



In a historical first, BWS and Durgapur Govt. Degree College, Durgapur, West Bengal, signed an MOU for three years, to collaborate and work jointly in the field of education and conservation of birds and their habitats.

The MOU was signed by Dr. D Palit, Principal, Durgapur Govt. Degree College, Durgapur and Mr. Sujan Chatterjee, Secretary, BWS, at Durgapur, on 07 June 2024.

Both institutions pledged to pool in their resources in furthering the cause of habitat conservation and the study of birds in West Bengal.





# WEST BENGAL RARITIES

## FIRST RECORD OF RED-BILLED STARLING

(*Spodiopsar sericeus*)

**NITYANANDA CHOUKIDAR**

### NITYANANDA CHOUKIDAR

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### Recommended Citation:

Choukidar, N., 2024. First record of Red-billed Starling *Spodiopsar sericeus* in West Bengal. Fantail. 4 (1): Page 7-8

**O**n a foggy morning on 19 October 2021, I embarked on a birdwatching trip with some friends, starting at 6 am by boat from Pakhiralay, 24 Parganas (South), in Sundarban National Park. After half an hour, we entered the National Park and navigated slowly through the mangrove forest. I attentively listened to every bird call, hoping to spot something rare. For the first few hours, nothing extraordinary appeared. However, around 11:30 am in the Pirkhali zone VI (22°2'0.25"N, 88°47'44.09"E, c. 23 m asl), I noticed a bird perched alone on a high branch of a *Avicennia alba* tree (Common name: Api Api, Bengali name: Baine Tree). Initially, I mistook it for an albino Indian Pied Starling (*Gracupica contra*) due to its dull colour. I snapped a few photos from the boat, and after a few minutes, the bird flew away.

I didn't think much of this sighting at the time and took it casually. However, upon reviewing my photographs at home, I realized I was not convinced about its identification. I had never seen such a bird in my birdwatching career. I sent the photos to some bird experts for proper identification, and they later identified it as a Red-billed Starling (*Spodiopsar sericeus*).

The bird's distinctive features—a white head, grey body, dark wings with a white patch, white belly



and undertail-coverts, and a black-tipped red bill with dull orange legs—confirm its identification as a Red-billed Starling (*Spodiopsar sericeus*). The grey mantle, as opposed to brown, indicates that this bird is a male (Birds of the World).

The Red-billed Starling (*Spodiopsar sericeus*) typically found in China, Vietnam, Taiwan, Japan, Korea, was now spotted in West Bengal in October. When I realized that this sighting represented the first record of the species in West Bengal, I was overjoyed. Contributing to the ornithological history of my country in such a significant way is incredibly fulfilling, and I am proud that this discovery will be remembered for a long time.

Previously, the Red-billed Starling (*Spodiopsar sericeus*) had been sighted in Shillong of Meghalaya State (eBird) and Waithou Lake of Manipur State in north-east India (Jyotin et al 2020). Notably, no preserved specimens have been recorded in India according to GBIF. Starlings are generally expanding westward, as evidenced by the increase in White-cheeked



NCHOUKIDAR  
Pic- Nityananda Choukidar

Starlings (*Spodiopsar cineraceus*) in northeastern India and the spread of Daurian Starlings (*Agropsar sturninus*) across various parts of the mainland. These three sightings of the Red-billed Starling in India further suggest that this species is expanding its non-breeding range. Consequently, we should expect more records of the Red-billed Starling in the future.

**Species Status:** IUCN: Least Concern. SolB: NA. WPA: Schedule-IV (Praveen 2022)

**Acknowledgement:** I extend my sincere gratitude to Santanu Manna for the write up, Jayanta Manna for the identification and Praveen J for his expert advice.

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### About Author

## NITYANANDA CHOUKIDAR

Nityananda Choukidar, a registered Sundarban Nature Guide and a keen bird watcher.





## CHAKRASHILA: BIRDING IN A NEGLECTED IBA

DR ASAD RAHMANI

I remember nearly 25 years ago, when we started our Important Bird Areas programme, we conducted many workshops in the northeast, and Bablu Dey, a young man at that time, insisted that 'his' Chakrashila Sanctuary should be included as an IBA. The Important Bird Area (IBA) is one of the most prestigious activities of BirdLife International, a UK based bird conservation organization. BirdLife International (henceforth BLI) works with its partners in about 122 countries. In India, the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS), a BLI partner, assumed the responsibility of identifying IBAs, with myself at the helm of this endeavour.

With a team of five young staff, we organized nearly 45 consultative workshops all over India. Our aim was to involve local area experts and species experts for identification of IBAs in their regions/states. While many proposed their cherished birding spots, BLI employs four primary criteria, supplemented by various sub-criteria, for IBA designation, ensuring consistency globally. Presently, there are close to 13,000 IBAs worldwide, including 556 in India.

Bablu Dey, an active participant in our Assam workshops, later presented compelling evidence affirming Chakrashila's eligibility as an IBA. I deeply admire individuals like Dey, driven by a passion for their local habitats, ecosystems, and wildlife. Effective conservation hinges not only on empirical data but also on fervent dedication. Since the early 2000s, I have maintained contact with Bablu Dey, a testament to our enduring collaboration in safeguarding avian habitats.

The Chakrashila Complex encompasses the Chakrashila Wildlife Sanctuary, spanning 4,556 hectares, and three adjacent wetlands: Dhir, Diplai, and Dakra. Situated 68 kilometers from Dhubri, the district headquarters, and 219 kilometers from Guwahati city, the sanctuary can be accessed via Kokrajhar, the nearest railway station on the broad gauge line from Howrah to Guwahati. From Salkocha, a small town on National Highway 37, Chakrashila is approximately 10 kilometers away. Known mainly to local birdwatchers, this sanctuary boasts diverse biodiversity, providing habitats for numerous resident and migratory bird species.



The sanctuary's landscape is characterized by hills and is adorned with three lakes—Dhir, Diplai, and Dakra—on its southern edge. The Chakrashila sanctuary primarily consists of a moist deciduous forest dominated by Sal (*Shorea robusta*), along with grasslands, shrubs, and bamboo thickets, enriched with orchids and other climbing plants. A total of 213 bird species have been documented in Chakrashila and its surrounding waterbodies. Within the sanctuary, three significant perennial springs—Haohaowi Jhora, Mauriya Jhora, and Bamuni Jhora—

are present. Identified by the Asian Wetland Bureau and the International Waterfowl and Wetlands Research Bureau, Dhir and Diplai lakes are recognized as internationally significant sites for waterfowl. A plus point of this small sanctuary is that birding can be done without the fear of tiger, elephant and rhinoceros as they are not found here. An occasional leopard is not a threat to bird groups if they stick to road and forest trails.

Dhir Beel, located 30 kilometers from Kokrajhar town at the base of Chakrashila Wildlife Sanctuary, connects with the Brahmaputra River during the rainy season. These wetlands, covering over 800 hectares collectively, harbor abundant aquatic flora and fauna, serving as breeding grounds for fish and other species. As in other wetlands of Assam, Dhir Beel is also heavily fished, almost throughout the year, creating disturbance to waterfowl. Poaching is also not unheard off.

Historically, Chakrashila served as a hunting ground for local landlords and others, leading to the indiscriminate hunting of birds, particularly waterfowl in the surrounding wetlands. This activity, coupled with habitat destruction and overexploitation, resulted in the local extinction of species like the Swamp Francolin (*Francolinis gularis*). Despite these challenges, globally threatened species like the Greater Adjutant (*Leptoptilos dubius*), Lesser Adjutant (*Leptoptilos javanicus*), and vulture species still inhabit the area.



A birding path in Chakrashila Sanctuary, 21 Feb. 2024,  
Pic- Dr Asad Rahmani



Golden Langurs feeding in a tall tree in Chakrashila, 21 Feb. 2024  
Pic- Dr Asad Rahmani,



The wetlands, especially Dhir and Diplai, attract numerous migratory birds during winter, including the Near Threatened Ferruginous Duck (*Aythya nyroca*) and Critically Endangered Baer's Pochard (*Aythya baeri*). The Greater Spotted Eagle (*Clanga clanga*) has been recorded in Dakra Beel.



**Oriental Pied Hornbill, Pic- Dr Asad Rahmani**

On April 21, 2024, I did bird watching with Bablu Dey, Dr Hilloljyoti Singha, Head, Department of Zoology, Bodoland University, and his students. In about three hours, we were able to see about 50 species, including Black Crested Bulbul (*Pynonotus flaviventris*), Red Junglefowl (*Gallus gallus*), and Bronze Drongo (*Chaptia aenea*). The calls of Lineated (*Megalaima lineata*) and Blue-throated (*Megalaima asiatica*) barbets could be heard everywhere, with an occasional call of Coppersmith Barbet (*Xantholaema haemacephala*). The birds that excited the students – some had come for the

bird watching for the first time – were Scarlet Minivet (*Pericrocotus speciosus*), Oriental Pied Hornbill (*Anthracoceros albirostris*), and Crested Serpent Eagle (*Spilornis cheela*). I do not blame the young students as bright and big things attract people, not the drab, brown little warblers, which Bablu was keen to point out to students. Bablu is an excellent birdwatcher and knows most of the birds in his area, including some extremely difficult ones found in dense thickets and identified by their calls. I am not good in bird identification by calls, but Bablu was, so he would point the elusives birds to me.

The Chakrashila Sanctuary is renowned for its population of Golden Langurs (*Trachypithecus geei*), which we observed peacefully foraging in a troop atop the lush canopy along the winding road. These primates are assured of their safety, shielded both by legal protection and societal norms. Much like many other monkey species in India, Golden Langurs coexist with humans and can be spotted near human settlements in certain regions. As per the findings of Dr. Dilip Chetry and his research team, approximately 500 Golden Langurs inhabit the Sanctuary, in about 57 troops. The population of these langurs in Assam has shown a positive trend, largely



**Male and female Red Junglefowl, Pic- Dr Asad Rahmani**





**Bablu Dey teaching birdwatching to students of Bodoland University in Chakrashile RF on 21 Feb. 2024, Pic- Dr Asad Rahmani**

attributed to community engagement and habitat enhancement efforts. Interestingly, Chakrashila marks the southernmost extent of their habitat range. The communities residing in the vicinity of the sanctuary encompass a diverse array of ethnic groups, including Bodo, Rabha, Garo, Rajbanshi, Nepali, and Muslim populations.

Dr. Hilloljyoti Singha, who pursued his Ph.D. under my guidance on the Greater Adjutant, has dedicated his life to education, research, and conservation endeavours. His unwavering dedication to wildlife conservation resonates through his lectures and mentorship of aspiring students. Hillol's vision encompasses establishing a comprehensive Wildlife course at Bodoland University, aimed at nurturing a proficient cadre of local wildlife researchers and conservationists. The entire Bodoland Autonomous Region, nestled in northern Assam and bordered by Bhutan, stands as a veritable treasure trove of biodiversity. However, akin to other parts of India, this region grapples with a host of challenges stemming from human exploitation of natural resources. Sanctuaries like Chakrashila serve as poignant reminders of the resilience of nature amidst human-dominated landscapes.



## About Author

### Dr Asad Rahmani

Dr Asad Rahmani is an ornithologist and conservationist who was also the former Director of Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS). He is currently the scientific adviser to The Corbett Foundation, and governing council member of Bombay Natural History Society. He has been member of several committees of Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) and was Global Council member of BirdLife International, UK for eight years. Having authored about two dozen books and over 150 peer-reviewed research papers in scientific journals, Dr. Rahmani has also guided scores of scholars of biological sciences. He is deeply interested in grassland and wetland birds and often highlights the plight of bird species and bird habitats.



# VANISHING BACKYARD SANCTUARIES: KOLKATA'S DISAPPEARING GRASSLANDS AND WETLANDS

AMITAVA DUTTA

**I**n the bustling metropolis of Kolkata, a silent crisis is unfolding. This year, we have had an unprecedented heat wave, with temperatures above 40° C for days on end. The nor'westers during March and April (north-western storms that usually bring rain) that were common until a few years ago, have altogether disappeared. Even the winter that has just gone by has seen a significant decrease in the number of migratory birds visiting the city and its fringes. All in all, we are steadily heading into a messy situation.



During a recent walk with schoolchildren along the East Kolkata Wetlands (EKW), some of us from the Birdwatchers' Society happened to interact with the ex-chief executive responsible for the rapidly developing urban cluster in and around Rajarhat and Newtown, who had also joined the walk. What was alarming and saddening as we listened to him during the walk, was his portrayal of a highly concretized township in the near future. He was categorically emphatic that the development plan cannot be stopped, and the patches of grassland that do exist will soon be cleared of munias and jacanas to make space for buildings and bastions. Environment has been relegated to take a back seat in this developmental agenda. This

unrestrained carnage is happening all across the city and its suburbs, Rajarhat and Newtown are no exception.

Historically, Kolkata had been endowed with vast expanses of grasslands and wetlands, providing a haven for numerous bird species. These ecosystems, characterized by their rich biodiversity and unique environmental conditions, supported a plethora of avifauna -ranging from resident species to migratory birds. The once vibrant grasslands and wetlands that dotted the city's outskirts have been disappearing at an alarming rate, taking with them crucial habitats for a myriad of flora and fauna.

## A 30-Year Journey of the East Kolkata Wetlands – Degraded and Diminished



Bonani Kakkar and Pradeep Kakkar

27/Mar/2024 ·

The Wire

*In the last 30 years, the East Kolkata Wetlands have lost 36% of their total area – from 65,300 sq. km in 1991 down to 42,000 sq. m in 2021.*

Survey result published in The Wire 27Mar2024

One of the most striking impacts of disappearing grasslands and wetlands is the decline in bird diversity and population numbers. Many species that once were familiar sights on Kolkata's outskirts are now becoming increasingly rare or disappearing altogether. Apart from threatening a diverse avian population, this degradation signifies the build-up of an ecological imbalance with catastrophic consequences.

Rampant urbanization, unauthorized filling of water bodies, audacious burning of grassland in the name of development, and unchecked real-estate expansion have encroached upon these natural landscapes, resulting in their rapid disappearance. Many bird species are forced to adapt or face extinction because of the destruction of their natural habitats. Grasslands, in particular, serve as vital breeding grounds for



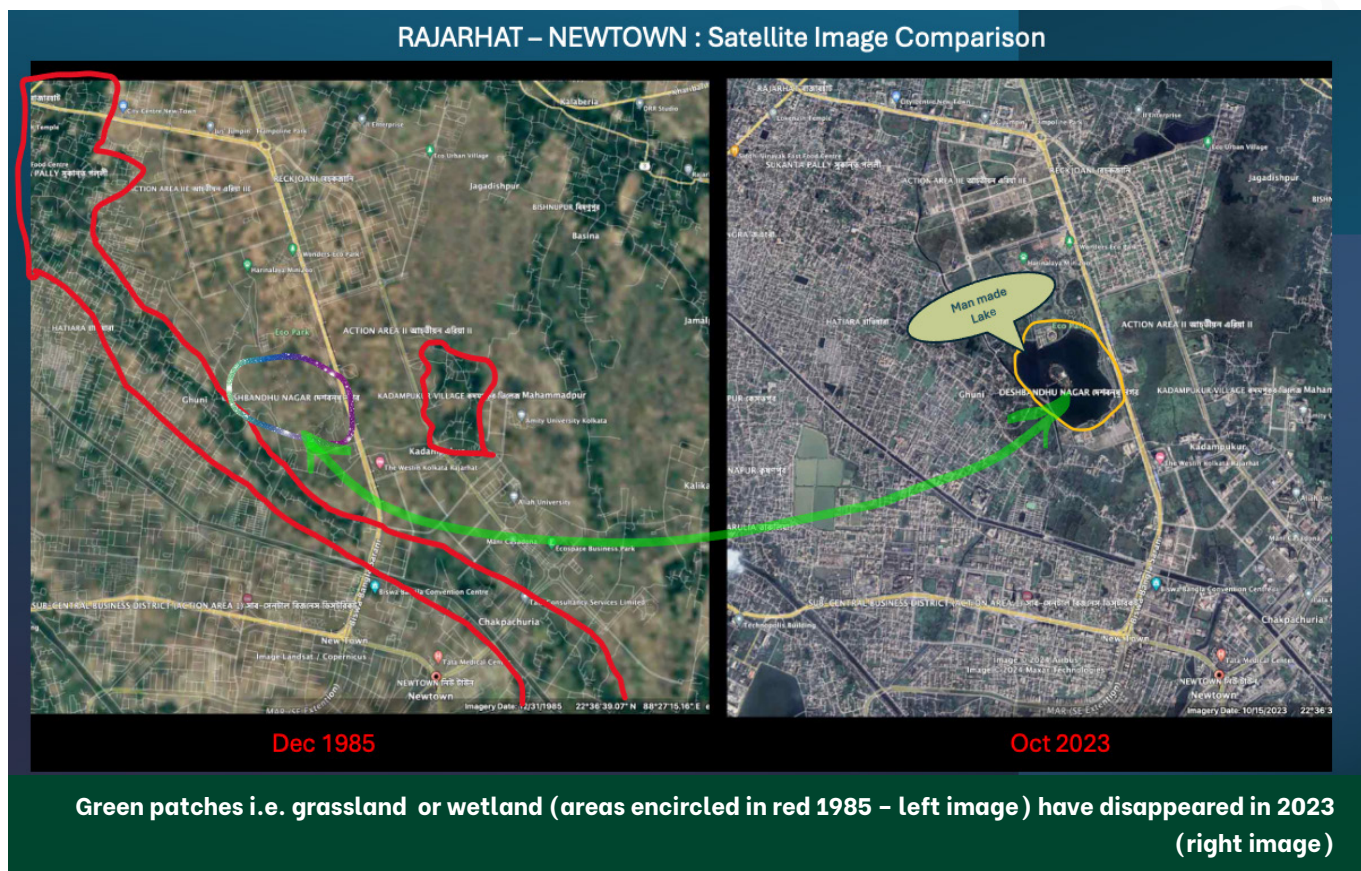
The burnt abode of a Siberian Ruby-throat (a winter visitor) in Rajarhat  
Pic- Krisnendu Sar



numerous bird species, providing shelter, nesting sites, and food sources. Similarly, wetlands are crucial in supporting diverse aquatic ecosystems, attracting waterfowl and wading birds. The disappearance of these habitats disrupts the intricate balance of ecosystems and threatens the survival of countless avian as well as other species.

In the last four decades it seems over 109 species of birds (mostly waders) have disappeared from EKW due to various anthropogenic activities (Ghosh et al 2018). The consequences of this ecological upheaval are dire for human life in general and Kolkata in particular.

Furthermore, the loss of grasslands and wetlands exacerbates environmental challenges such as climate change and pollution. These natural ecosystems act as carbon sinks, helping to mitigate the negative effects of climate change, such as flooding and extreme weather events, while also filtering pollutants from water sources. Their disappearance diminishes these vital environmental services, and leaves Kolkata more vulnerable to these impacts of climate change. The Council for Energy, Environment & Water (CEFW) and Water states in its report that cyclones have increased fivefold between 1970 and 2019. In addition to ecological implications, the degradation of these ecosystems threatens the livelihoods of those dependent on these services. It undermines their cultural and recreational value for Kolkata residents.



(source Google Earth)

There are a plethora of acts, agreements, court verdicts (<https://ekwma.in/ek/>) that lay down criteria / guidelines for protection of EKW. In spite of such dictates 'we the people' often overlook and ignore when it comes to hurting self-interest. Unless 'We' step out and raise a hue & cry, sooner than later our homes will turn into a steaming sauna or get submerged in filth and water.

Addressing the crisis of disappearing grasslands and wetlands in Kolkata requires concerted efforts at multiple levels. It necessitates a three-pronged strategy:

a) Targeted, systematic, and periodic monitoring of bird populations is needed, which is something that the Birdwatchers' Society has taken up with exemplary zeal via events like Poila Boishak Bird Count, Great Backyard Bird Count, and Annual Waterfowl Census, to name a few.

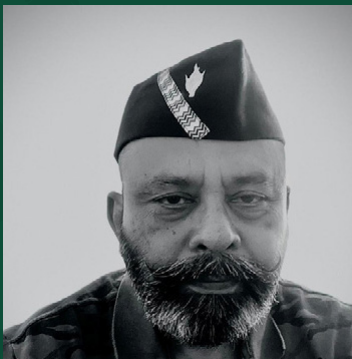
b) Spearheading awareness about birds and their habitats, education, and training towards

conservation initiatives. Birdwatchers' Society commenced a 'School of Birds' program to spread awareness to the grassroots level by, enabling and empowering children with knowledge and citizen science tools.

c) Citizen-led judicial activism. With rising public consciousness against governments' failures to tackle such lapses and corrupt indulgence, young citizens must take up the cause of protecting these habitats. Mitigations of such threats must be local and driven by collaborative, coordinated, and concerted action.

In conclusion, the disappearance of grasslands and wetlands in Kolkata's backyards poses a grave threat to ecological integrity. Urgent action is needed to preserve these vital habitats and ensure the survival of the diverse avian species that depend on them. Collectively, we must reverse this alarming decimation.

*P.S. : I was inspired to write this article during days of scorching heat that had engulfed the city, and suddenly one day the picture taken by Krisnendu Sar popped on my mobile. It got me thinking about the destruction to habitats in the name of development that is happening in our city.*



## About Author

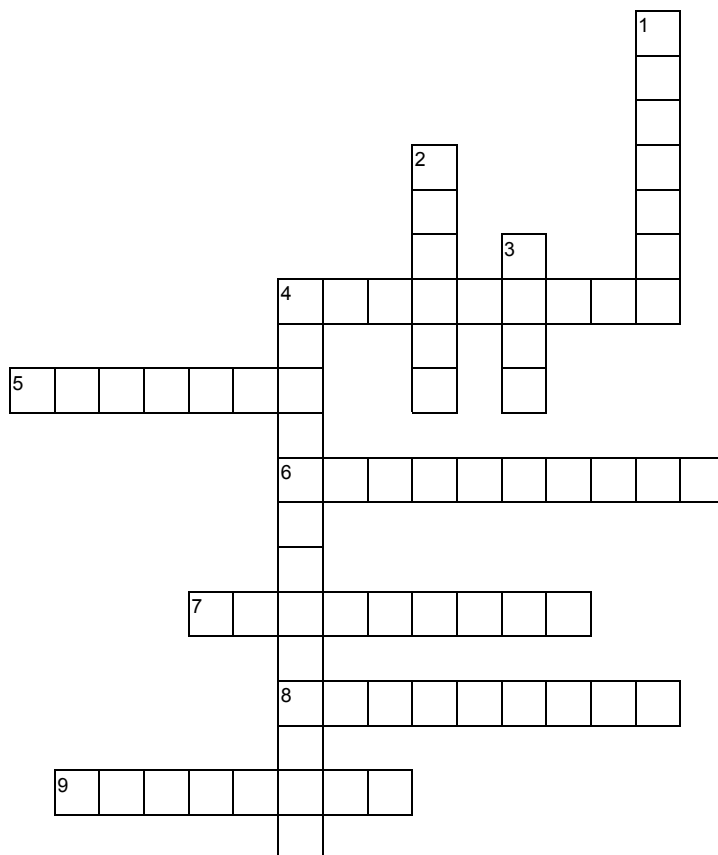
### Amitava Dutta

Amitava is a freelance technology consultant. His goal is to explore the wilderness of India and promote conservation efforts. He is part of Fantail editorial team at BWS.



## Birds in Your Backyard

Crossword for Birds in Your Backyard



### Across

- 4 Don't throw these away, they make for great nesting material.
- 5 Male birds of this common urban species have beards.
- 6 One for sorrow, two for joy?
- 7 A tiny home with a small hole, often found in balconies.
- 8 This vibrant flower's seed is a favourite food of many birds.
- 9 Kind souls often put these out for the winged creatures to cool themselves in summer heat.

### Down

- 1 Notorious for their dirtiness, these birds were once domesticated but many have turned feral.
- 2 Hanging treats for our feathered friends.
- 3 When this species flock together, they can scream bloody 'murder'.
- 4 This day is meant to celebrate the birdsong of backyard birds on the first week of April in India.



# KAVARATTI CHRONICLES

RAJDEEP MITRA

## “WHY DO YOU WATCH BIRDS?”

**I** looked back, startled, to find my house owner, a lady in her mid-30s, looking quite awkwardly at me as I held my binoculars.

“Well aunty, because watching birds makes me sane,” I replied, a hint of a smile playing on my lips.

It was on the 14th day at Kavaratti island when I finally found a house on rent at the Kavaratti island in the Lakshadweep archipelago. Two rooms, one kitchen, a moderate-size washroom and a lawn facing the lagoon. It felt like a sanctuary. The landlord’s young son, Azil, seemed very interested in my spotting scope and the binoculars, likely the first he’d ever seen. Azil with a little hesitation asked me if he could look through the binoculars. Instead, I suggested he use the spotting scope. I had kept the scope focused on a flock of 17 Ruddy Turnstones, shorebirds named after their unique foraging behaviour, often they would turn stones on the

beach to feed on the invertebrates.

“Wow!! What are these?” Azil asked, his eyes wide in awe.

“Ruddy Turnstones Azil, these birds come from a land far north of India. They spend their winter months in this tropical climate along the coastline of the mainland and these islands,” I explained, watching his face light up.

“When they will go back?”

“As the temperature will rise here, they will return to their summer home in the Arctic Circle”

“I like them, why can’t they stay all year here?”, His questions were endless, and each one made me smile.

“Look Azil, their summer home is a place called tundra, a treeless grassy area. The tundra in summer is full of small insect, so lot of food to feed their young and also it has very few predators, very different from your Lakshadweep”.



Unlike the mainland, in the islands, it is difficult to spot any other birds other than the waders and seabirds, with very few to no songbirds at all. Since my arrival, the sole bird I hear consistently is the rooster, its grating call echoing through the stillness. Every morning, it pushes me closer to Khan's hotel, just 100 meters away, where the thought of savouring a spicy chicken curry becomes my only solace from the rooster's relentless serenade.

On my 20th day in Kavaratti following my daily routine, I just got out of the house to swim in the ocean. As I took probably my first 10 steps on the small 6 ft wide road, a snow-white bird with long tail streamers and a red beak flew right above my head. I froze, my heart pounding. It was a Red-billed Tropicbird. I'd never seen one before, and there it was, gliding charmingly above my head I chased after it, breathless, watching it soar towards the ocean and disappear from sight. Seeing a tropicbird was beyond my wildest dreams, something I hadn't even dared to imagine before setting foot in Lakshadweep. I could not figure out what it was searching for, my interpretation was that the bird was simply moving northern direction with the wind. Tropicbirds are pelagic species and as the name suggests they inhabit the tropical waters of the world.

As days turned into weeks, my research on seabirds deepened. I spent countless hours observing the nesting colonies of Sooty Tern and Brown Noddy on Pitti Island, a small sand flat around 24 km off Kavaratti. One evening at the house, as the sun started to set, Azil came running to me in excitement "Bhaiya bhaiya!! Come out, a large bird is sitting on the beach," he exclaimed.



Sooty Tern Pic- Rajdeep Mitra

We hurried to the shore and my heart was pounding with anticipation. To an utter surprise, I found a Lesser Frigatebird sitting on a giant boulder. For a few seconds, I could not even understand what to do, I was rooted to the spot. First of all, I could not believe I would encounter a Frigatebird then for the bird to sit on a rock is quite unbelievable.

"What the heck?" I shouted within myself with excitement.

"What is it bhaiya?" Azil asked.

"It is a Lesser Frigatebird Azil," I explained. "Look at the brownish-black color and those long, narrow wings. This individual is a male—see that bright red patch at its throat?" I pointed towards the most distinct identification feature of the bird.

"Yes, I see it!" Azil's eyes lit up.

"That is known as the gular sac" I continued. "The male inflates it to attract a female".





The beach in front of my house Pic- Rajdeep Mitra

“Do the females also have it?” he quickly responded back.

“No, my dear. They have a white breast and belly area,” I explained as Azil kept watching the bird preening its wings.

“What do they eat?” he asked with a growing curiosity.

“They are thieves of the bird world Azil. Even though they catch flying fish, they prefer to steal food from



other birds. They are known as “kleptoparasites”, I replied with a grin.

“Wow!!” He fell silent, clearly captivated by the information.

I could practically feel the wheels spinning in his brain, and I wanted to nurture that creative flame. I leaned in closer “Azil, visualize the Frigatebird soaring above this Arabian sea, its eyes concentrated and keen; below it, it notices another bird with a freshly caught fish; the Frigatebird lunges in with amazing speed and agility, slashing the air with its huge wings; the other bird is forced to drop its prey as it swoops in and snags the fish in midair. A sky chase takes place, but the Frigatebird’s exceptional flying abilities allow it to effortlessly avoid any reprisals. It constantly scans the skies for its next opportunity, much like a pirate in the sky”

As I started to slowly turn back towards my room to get my camera, the frigatebird got flushed. Azil stood beside me, his eyes wide with wonder, transfixed by the disappearing silhouette of the forked-tailed frigatebird. In that fleeting

moment, a revelation struck me like a bolt of lightning. At that moment something hit me. I realized that my journey in the Lakshadweep archipelago was not just research-oriented. It was to ignite a passion for nature and birds in young minds like Azil’s. It was to help plant the seeds of appreciation towards nature, towards the fragile ecosystems of these islands.

As I finish writing this sitting under the shade of a swaying coconut tree, the cool oceanic breeze fondling my face, I feel my connection with nature has deepened in these last four months. I feel a part of this intricate web of life that flourishes in these tropical islands. My bird-watching journey has turned into exploration not just for me but also for people around me as well. I feel every second spent here is evidence of the transformational and inspirational power of Mother Nature. More than just a memory, the Frigatebird’s flight represents the limitless opportunities that await individuals who dare to see past the common place and appreciate the remarkable beauty of our planet.



## About Author

### Rajdeep Mitra

A researcher affiliated with the Wildlife Institute of India, focusing on the intricate movements of pelagic birds within the captivating ecosystem of Lakshadweep. With a passion for understanding wildlife behaviour and movement ecology, Rajdeep’s work delves into the fine-scale dynamics of avian species in these marine habitats. “Through rigorous field studies and innovative tracking techniques, I aim to unravel the mysteries of bird migration patterns and contribute to the protection of seabird populations” says Rajdeep.

# BIRDING NEAR HOME

## A TRIP REPORT KOLBONG FOREST

**NILAY RAHA**

**A**fter busy office hours, our journey started from Esplanade, Kolkata on the evening of March 22nd 2024. This time, we were a little privileged to book “sleeper tickets” for the Volvo Bus.

With a massive rush at the Esplanade bus stand (school summer holidays and a long weekend), despite the scrambles, our bus started at the right time, 7 pm. It made an on-time arrival at Siliguri the next day at 8 am.

Upon arrival, we had a pre-booked cab for our journey to Lava in Kalimpong District of West Bengal. On the way, we halted at Chel Bridge for some yummy local momo and did some quick

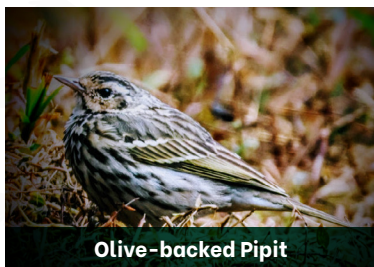
birding. We spotted Asian House Martin, Nepal House Martin, Himalayan Bulbul, Blue-whistling Thrush, and Plumbeous Redstart.

We arrived at our place of stay adjacent to Kolbong Forest around 12 noon. We were very excited to explore the Forest area. The only dampener was the weather. It was drizzling outside with dark clouds strewn across the sky.

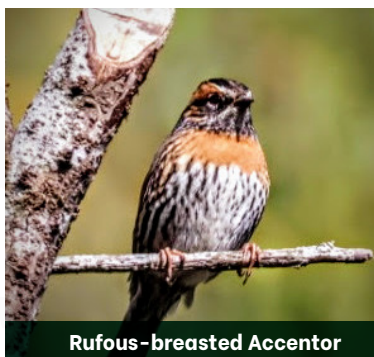
After a quick fresh up and a hurried lunch, we set off on the trail next to our homestay. This time, we were thrilled to explore the forest area independently instead of engaging a bird guide. With rain cover and an umbrella, we trekked through the trails within the Kolbong Forest with excitement running high. With restricted vision due to bad weather conditions and clouds across, we still encountered several bird species.



Chestnut-bellied Rock-Thrush



Olive-backed Pipit



Rufous-breasted Accentor



Blue-fronted Redstart (female)

After 3 hours on the Kolbong trail, we set course on another trail, the pathway surrounding Lava Forest Lodge (following earlier updates on eBird). Despite the downpour, we were fortunate to find the mentioned species:

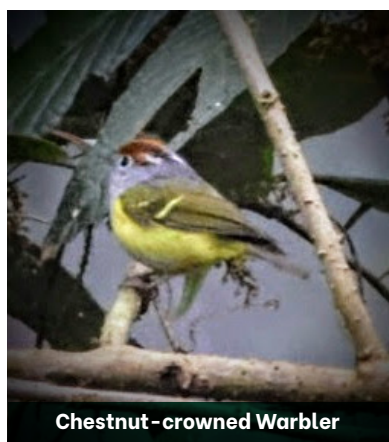
- ✓ White-throated Fantail
- ✓ Himalayan Bulbul
- ✓ Whiskered Yuhina
- ✓ Rufous Sibia
- ✓ Red-bellied Leiothrix
- ✓ Verditer Flycatcher
- ✓ Gray Buschchat
- ✓ Rufous-breasted Accentor
- ✓ Mrs Gould's Sunbird
- ✓ Green-tailed Sunbird
- ✓ Olive-backed Pipit
- ✓ Oriental Turtle Dove
- ✓ Large-hawk Cuckoo



As the day unfolded into dusk and darkness began to creep in, we switched our focus to nocturnal birds. High on the priority list was the Himalayan Scoops Owl, whose call we had heard during our last visit (in December 2023) but failed to see. This time, too, there were no signs of its presence on that day, and neither did we hear any call. Finally, we called it a day.

The next day, i.e. March 24th 2024, we were up and out at 6:30 am. After around four hours of birding, we decided to return to our homestay and recharge ourselves with a steaming Momo breakfast. Post breakfast, we decided to bird around Lava Forest Guest House and had some excellent sightings as below:

- ✓ Orinetal Turtle Dove
- ✓ Large Hawk Cuckoo
- ✓ Green-backed Tit
- ✓ Scaly-breasted Cupwing
- ✓ Lemon-rumped Warbler
- ✓ Gray-hooded Warbler
- ✓ Chestnut-headed Tesia
- ✓ Brownish-flanked Bush Warbler
- ✓ Whiskered Yuhina
- ✓ Rusty-cheeked Scimitar-Babbler
- ✓ Rufous-winged Fulvetta
- ✓ Chestnut-crowned Laughingthrush
- ✓ Rufous Sibia
- ✓ Rusty-fronted Barwing
- ✓ Red-billed Leiothrix
- ✓ Verditer Flycatcher
- ✓ Blue-fronted Redstart
- ✓ Chestnut-bellied Rock-thrush
- ✓ Gray Bushchat
- ✓ Fire-tailed Sunbird
- ✓ Rufous-breasted Accentor
- ✓ Eurasian Tree Sparrow
- ✓ Olive-backed Pipit
- ✓ Dark-breasted Rosefinch



Recharged after lunch, we chose to walk along the Lava - Lolegaon trail, an 8 km stroll (from Lava Bazar –to and fro). Soon after crossing Lava Bazar, we heard loud calls of Streaked Laughingthrush, which appeared to be playing hide and seek with us. Out there, we also saw a flock of Sunbirds, Leiothrix, Warblers and other birds, as listed below:

- |                     |                                   |
|---------------------|-----------------------------------|
| ✓ Green-backed Tit  | ✓ Whiskered Yuhina                |
| ✓ Large Hawk Cuckoo | ✓ Red-billed Leiothrix            |
| ✓ Rufous Sibia      | ✓ Chestnut-crowned Laughingthrush |
| ✓ Great Barbet      | ✓ Blue-fronted Redstart           |
| ✓ Green-backed Tit  | ✓ Chestnut-bellied Rockthrush     |
| ✓ Pygmy Cupwing     | ✓ Fire-tailed Sunbird             |
| ✓ Hume's Warbler    | ✓ Green-tailed Sunbird            |



Black-faced Warbler

Eventually, after a long walk, we reached the road connecting to Lolegaon. Bird activity was limited in this area due to ongoing road construction work (it seemed a massive landslide had occurred recently). March 25th 2024, the following day, we were up early. We were delighted to see the sun rising. We decided to make the most of the first couple of hours since we had to pack up our luggage and start for Siliguri by afternoon to catch the evening bus to Kolkata. Without wasting time, we took the trail beside Lava Forest Lodge. We came across significant bird activities in the wee hours. We managed to get good images of Laughing thrush and Leioethrix, and we could hear the sweet call of Chestnut-bellied Rock-Thrush. We also managed to get a few clicks of the Himalayan Squirrel on the go. During our time in the forest, we encountered many Warblers, Whiskered Yuhina and Sunbirds. In fact, they seemed fearless and came up close to us. Their super fast movement was a challenge to capture them through our lens. Nevertheless managed some record shots. The species observed are listed below:

- |                                  |                                   |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| ✓ Red Junglefowl                 | ✓ Blue-Whistling Thrush           |
| ✓ Oriental Turtle-Dove           | ✓ Blue-fronted Redstart           |
| ✓ Large Hawk Cuckoo              | ✓ Gray Bushchat                   |
| ✓ Green-backed Tit               | ✓ Olive-backed Pipit              |
| ✓ Brownish-flanked Bush-Warbler  | ✓ Streaked Laughingthrush         |
| ✓ Rusty-cheeked Scimitar Babbler | ✓ White-browed Scimitar-Babbler   |
| ✓ Rufous Sibia                   | ✓ Chestnut-crowned Laughingthrush |



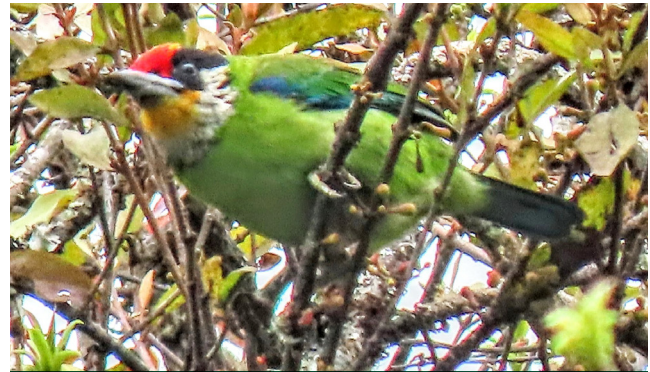


Gray-headed Canary Flycatcher

Since breakfast time was approaching and the sky was getting darker, which implied probable rain, we wrapped our birding equipment and returned to our homestay after birding for around three hours. Though we had some more time for birding, due to rain, our further plan was washed off, and we commenced our return journey to Siliguri. This trip (without any local guide) was exhilarating & memorable. Eventually, we managed to observe 54 species. All sightings have been reported in eBird.



Rufous-winged Fulvetta



Golden Throated Barbet

eBird Trip Report Link:  
<https://ebird.org/tripreport/216978>

“ Birds are, perhaps, the most eloquent expression of reality. ”

**ROGER TORY PETERSON**

Naturalist, ornithologist, illustrator, and educator.



### About Author

#### Nilay Raha

A Banker by profession, nature lover and an avid bird watcher. He started bird watching since 2009. Lives in Kolkata.

Pictures are taken by author

Golden Throated Barbet Pic Bhaskarjyoti Banerjee





## ঘুঘুদের হাইরাইজ

ঐন্দ্রিলা সরকার দেব

ক

তোই না আমোদ হতো যদি আমাদের কষ্ট করে খেটেখুটে উপার্জন করে বাড়ি বানাতে না হতো! রেডিমেড ফ্ল্যাটে এক পয়সাও খরচ না করে পরিবার পালন করার আলাদাই মজা। কিংবা ধরুন কেউ আপনার রাজারহাটের থ্রী বিএইচকে ফ্ল্যাটের ৯০% ডাউন পেমেন্টটা করে দিয়েছে। আপনাকে এখন মাস দুয়েক একত্রিশ টাকা করে দিলেই ফ্ল্যাট আপনার! খুব মজা, আপনি বিয়ে শাদি করে বউকে এনে তৈরী ফ্ল্যাটে ঢুকিয়ে দিলেন! বৌও ইমপ্রেসড “ওমা তুমি কীভাবে এতো বড় ফ্ল্যাট! তাও সেই ৩৫ তলায়! কী

করে ম্যানেজ করলে গো!” আপনি বলবেন না একদম, যে কেউ করে দিয়েছে, আপনি কলার তুলবেন! বউয়ের চোখে হিরো সাজবেন! এতে অন্যায় নেই কোনও।

আচ্ছা বেশী গৌরচন্দ্রিকা হয়ে যাচ্ছে। সিরিয়াস পাখিপ্রেমী পাঠক ভাববেন এটা আবার কি ব্যাপার! পাখির ম্যাগাজিনে বিয়ে, ফ্ল্যাট, বউ, ইএমআই এটা কী! আসলে হয়েছে কি বাড়িতে পর্দার ওপর একদিন এক ছিটেঘুঘু (Spotted dove) বর দুটো কাঠি গুঁজে একটা বাসা করে দুদিন বাদে ছিটেঘুঘু বউমা এনে তুললো! তার আগে তেনারা বিস্তর ডাকাডাকি করে প্রি ওয়েডিং, ওয়েডিং সেশন সারলো। তারপর দুটি ডিম, দুটি ছানা তাও হলো। এবার হয়েছে কি ছানারা একটু গায়ে পালক টালক গজানোর পর বাসা ছাড়তেই আরেক ঘুঘু বর এসে দুটো কাঠি ওই বাসায় গুঁজে তিনিও এক বউমা এনে তুললেন। আবার একই জিনিস। আমি নিশ্চিত নই যে এটা প্রথম ঘুঘু জোড়া কিনা। জানি না এবারে এটা তাদের দ্বিতীয় Clutch কিনা! কারণ কোনওভাবে সেটা বোঝা সম্ভব হয়নি আমার পক্ষে। এবার ব্যাপার হচ্ছে এটা সারা বছর চলেছে। সারা বসন্ত, গ্রীষ্ম, বর্ষা, শরৎ, হেমন্ত, দুর্গাপূজো, ঈদ, বড়দিন....সারা বছর একটি মাতাজি ঘুঘু আর তার দুই শিশু দেখছি পর্দার ওপরের বাসায় বসে সিসিটিভির মতন আমাদের দেখছে। পিতাজি ঘুঘু আশেপাশেই বসতেন ছাদের কার্নিশে বা ইলেকট্রিকের তারে। এটা বলাই বাহুল্য যে প্রতিবার একই ঘুঘু দম্পতি নয় কারণ সারাবছর তারা ডিম দিয়ে যাবেই বা কীভাবে! আমার মনে হয়েছে যে ঘুঘুদের অতটা বয়স হয়নি তারাও এই প্রজনন প্রক্রিয়ায় সামিল হয়েছে।







আর তাদের সন্তানের স্বাভাবিক ভাবেই জীবনকাল কিংবা প্রজননক্ষমতা কম হবে। কিন্তু ওই যে বললাম রেডিমেন্ড ফ্ল্যাটের একটা মায়া আছে। যারা পরের বছর বিয়ে করতো তারা এই বছরেই করে নিচ্ছে। বাচ্চাগুলো উড়তে পারে কিন্তু মুখ দেখে বোঝা যায় বাচ্চা। তীক্ষ্ণ ঠোঁট, ছোট মাথা তাদের, আরো কিছুদিন বাপ মায়ের হোটেলে থাকতো কিন্তু তাদের কাকু কাকিমা মনে আশা নিয়ে বারান্দার রেলিংএ এসে বসে আছে। ফ্ল্যাট খালি হলে তারা ঢুকবে। বেচারী ফ্লোজলিং পাখিগুলো বাসা খালি করে আমার ছাদে বাগানে গাছের তলায় বসে থাকতো দেখতাম।

এখন সে ফ্ল্যাট উঁচু হতে হতে একদিন টাল সামলাতে না পেরে ঝড়ো হাওয়ায় উল্টে পড়ে গেছে। সে সময় বাসায় ডিম ছিলোনা। একটু বড় সাইজের ঘুঘু শাবকদ্বয় ছিল। ছুটে এসে দেখি তারা কোনওমতে উড়ে চলে গেছে। খালি ভাঙা বাসা পড়ে আছে মেঝেতে। কিন্তু এরপর থেকে নানা ঘুঘুবাবু আসে কিন্তু বাসা আর বানায় না। মনে প্রেম যোলোআনা কিন্তু বাসা করার হ্যাঁপা কে পোহাবে! এতোদিনের অভ্যাস! তারপর বেশ কিছু মাস গ্যাপ দিয়ে আবার বসন্তে এক ঘুঘু মামণিকে নিয়ে এলেন। এবার আমার ঝুলন্ত টবে বসিয়ে দিলেন বউকে। আমি এতদিন চারপাশের অনেক মানুষকে কুড়ে ভাবতাম! সব ভুল ভেঙে গেছে আমার!



## About Author

### AINDRILA SARKAR DEB

Aindrila Sarkar Deb is an accomplished entrepreneur and the creative head of her own design agency. She is a passionate traveler and digital content creator. she has a keen interest in birdwatching and wildlife gardening.

All pictures are taken by Aindrila Sarkar Deb

# ARTIFICIAL NEST BOXES FOR URBAN BIRDS

## A BOON OR A BANE?

**BATUL PIPEWALA**

**B**ird conservation is fashionable these days in the form of artificial nest boxes, in different shapes, sizes, and colours available in the market.

### WHAT IS A NEST?

The nest provides a suitable location for parent birds to lay eggs and raise their offspring.

### WHERE TO BUILD THE NEST?

The selection of a suitable nest site is determined by a combination of five main factors.

1. Availability of food for parent and offspring
2. Risk of predation
3. Presence and behaviour of conspecifics
4. Availability of suitable nesting material
5. Presence of ambient climate for raising offspring

Birds select a safe nesting site to protect their eggs/chicks from predators like cats, snakes, rodents and other birds. They vary the height at which they build their nests in response to the kind of predators. Higher from the ground to protect from mammalian predators and lower in response to avian predators. The nests are also camouflaged to protect against predators. The nesting material also acts as a defence against parasites. Green leaves containing volatile secondary compounds can kill parasites and pathogens. The nests are also lined with feathers that prevent the growth of bacteria inside the nest besides keeping the nest warm.

Birds build their nests within the canopies to escape rain. Birds in the northern latitudes will add more feathers than those in the southern latitudes. Birds breeding further north build larger, less porous nests that retain heat better but also absorb more water and take longer to dry than nests from the south. Bird nests are located in sites that lose less heat in colder regions and avoid direct sunlight in the tropics.







One such artificial nest in use

Now let us examine the use of nest boxes in the city.

1. Artificial nest boxes are made of wood, hay, cement and earthen pots. Wooden boxes are prone to cracking decay and damage. Cement boxes are airtight.
2. The opening of the boxes if it is big, can attract predators, and if very small will make it difficult for the parent birds to feed the chicks.
3. The nest boxes are painted to prevent damage from rain which can repel the birds and may attract predators.
4. Old nest boxes if not cleaned will have an ectoparasite load due to feces and dead nestling carcass and this will result in low breeding success.
5. The nest boxes are more likely to be occupied by aggressive species like the common Myna.
6. When too many nest boxes are placed in areas with scarce resources there will be increased competition between the birds reducing reproductive success.

Thus, I believe that the conservation of birds cannot be dissociated from the conservation of plants. Arvind Mishra, who has done remarkable work on the conservation of Greater Adjutant Storks in Bhagalpur says that his main worry was whether the birds would accept artificial nests so he refused the offer from RSPB.org.uk as he thought that the birds would build their own nests with the available plants and awareness in the community to protect the birds was crucial.

However one does not deny the contribution of nest boxes for the conservation of endangered birds such as hornbills in scientifically designed projects. Random distribution of artificial bird nests in the city should be discouraged.

#### Acknowledgements-

Dr Kanad Baidya and Sujan Chatterjee for their valuable inputs.

#### References-

- 1) Negative effects of artificial nest boxes on birds: A review \_ Luchang Zhang et al 2023



#### About Author

#### **BATUL PIPEWALA.**

M.Sc. B.ed, Interested in birding and conservation related activities, member of BNHS, BWS. Collaborative science research as a member of Cube Kishore Bharati.





## BWS- SCHOOL OF BIRDS

**S**chool of birds is an educational project to introduce children to the magical world of nature that all life, including us humans, are a part of. In this dire hour for the environment, the project aims to plant the seeds of conservation as a way of life, birds being the couriers of this important message.

School of birds was conceptualised by BWS member, Titash Chakrabarti. He had executed the project in various parts of West Bengal as well as other states viz. Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh & Uttarakhand from March 2016- August 2023.

*“The School of Birds initiative is not just about observing nature; it’s a crucial step towards empowering our future stewards of the earth. By immersing young minds in the beauty and importance of birdlife, we sow the seeds of environmental responsibility, fostering a generation poised to act as guardians of our fragile planet”.* By Amitava Dutta.



Children associated with Happy Mommy Place watch birds through scope & take field notes at Rabindra Sarobar.



### Completed:

- 1) Multiple field walks with children of MC Kejriwal Vidyapeeth, Liluah.
- 2) A one-off field walk with children of South Point High School, Kolkata.
- 3) An introductory course in association with Happy Mommy Place – a support group for Mothers.
- 4) An introductory course with a group of Homeschooled children of Kolkata.
- 5) A one-off event on Earth Day 2024, in association with Early bird.

All the above projects, though fall under “completed” in the initial phase of execution, we are in communication with all the above institutions to further our activities during the upcoming autumn-winter seasons.



Group photo with children of MC Kejriwal Vidyapeeth, Liluah after completion of their bird walk at Santragachi Jheel.



Field excursion with a group of homeschooled children at Rabindra Sarobar.





## Ongoing:

- 1) Year-long program at Kalikapur Refugee Free Primary school, Kolkata.
- 2) Year-long program at Children's Welfare Association, a government higher secondary school in Sarsuna, Behala.

## In the pipeline:

There are two very interesting projects waiting in the pipeline;

- 1) Engagement with the Nature Club of Sushila Birla Girls' School, Kolkata.
- 2) An introductory one-off event with about 100 children associated with 50 Government secondary schools which fall under the North Kolkata Block.

The future of the project looks bright. The eagerness of institutions & organisations in coming forward to participate in School of Birds is a positive indication towards our co-operative goal as a species to stall the process of climate crisis and build a sustainable future.



Bird art collage on the topic of “Birds & their food” – Children’s Welfare Association, Sarsuna.



# PENTAX 65-EDA SIGHTING SCOPE - A REVIEW

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ARIJIT BANERJEE

**L**arge gear, even if qualitatively good, comes at a price, both in terms of money and weight. With airline baggage limitations becoming more and more restrictive, a frequent question asked about spotting scopes is about the utility of smaller scopes.

The smallest optics that theoretically fit in this genre are monoculars. They have their uses but are actually pocketable. They have some serious limitations too. Monoculars are a discussion for another day. In this instance, we shall restrict ourselves to the smaller scopes, the discussion revolving around the Pentax 65mm EDA scope (angled). The scope is also available as a straight scope (the model name changes to 65 mm ED).

Made in Japan, the build quality and fit and finish of the scope is very good. Metal alloy tube covered by a nice armour. At barely 1070 gms it is lightweight. It is 270mm long, 115 mm high and 85 mm wide. Imagine a 390mm f6.0 lens. The tripod collar is solid and rotates with click stops. The front element is a triplet (3 lenses) – one of which is ED glass. In the middle is a fused doublet. This lens group is what moves to achieve focus. Towards the eyepiece side are two prisms. A built-in sliding lens hood/ dew shield helps a lot. Like it's bigger cousins, the 80 and 100mm

scopes, this one also has a 1.25" astronomy mount. The minimum focusing distance is 5 metres. The 1.25 inch (31.7mm) mount opens up a huge variety of eyepieces to choose from. The Pentax XW series eyepieces however are great. But do you want to mount a 550 gm XW 8-24 Zoom eyepiece on this lightweight scope? There are many other options. Simple Plossl eyepieces and ones with more complex construction are available on the web, and they all can serve the purpose. There are very good eyepieces (and less expensive) in 1.25 inch mount available. Televue and Vixen are very well regarded brands. Bader Hyperion – might have an infinity focus issue. Ask around or get someone to pick up one from abroad.

However, one should consider the XF series of eyepieces from Pentax. Lighter, simpler and cheaper. The XF series comes in 12mm (32.5X), 8.5mm (46X) and a 6.5-19.5 mm zoom (20-60X). The eye relief for the two fixed focal length XF eyepieces is 18mm while the XF 20x-60x zoom eyepiece eye relief ranges between 15mm at 20x and 11mm at 60x, resulting in less than desirable eye-relief for eyeglass wearers when using the zoom eyepiece. Personally, I would settle for a 12mm eyepiece and enjoy the view. 32.5X magnification is 4 times more than my 8X binoculars.

### Performance of various Pentax eyepieces on the 65mm EDA scope

Eyepiece	Magnification	Weight	Real Field of View	Field of View at 1000 meters	Exit Pupil	Eye Relief
XF 8.5	46X	150 gm	1.3°	22 mts	1.4 mm	18 mm
XF 12	32.5X	155 gms	1.85°	32 mt	2 mm	18 mm
XF ZOOM 6.5-19.5	20X-60X	240 gms	2.1° – 1.0°	37-17 mts	3.2 mm-1.1 mm	11mm-15mm
XW 7	55.5X	390 gms	1.25°	21 mts	1.2 mm	20 mm
XW 10	39X	390 gms	1.8°	31 mts	1.7 mm	20 mm
XW 14	28X	365 gms	2.5°	44 mts	2.4 mm	20 mm
XW 20	19.5	355 gms	3.5°	61 mts	3.3 mm	20 mm
XW ZOOM 8-24	16X-48X	550 gms	2.4° – 1.25°	40- 21 mts	4 mm-1.4 mm	18mm-22mm

**Do note there are some more eyepieces in the XW series available – aimed at astronomy use.**

In case of the bigger, heavier and more expensive XW eyepieces – magnifications on the 65mm scope are – XW7 (55.5X), XW10 (39X), XW 14 (28X), XW20 (19.5X), XW8-25 (16X-48X).



As for the use of the fixed focal eyepieces, some folks might find them a bit inconvenient. However, when I needed to change eyepieces, the “slide and twist” design allows me to change eyepieces quite quickly without sacrificing the extremely high quality of image provided by the XW series eyepieces. And anyways, my binoculars do not zoom. I can actually live with a fixed focal length eyepiece.

Convenience come at a price. Cost-wise, two Pentax XW eyepieces (E.g. the 28x and 58x magnification combo) will set you back about the same amount as the scope itself. Alternatively, one can elect to use just one XW eyepiece for all applications, in which case I suggest using either the 38x (XW10) or the 28x (XW14) eyepiece. I will gravitate towards the 28X (XW14) – the 65mm objective will have some resolution limitation vis a vis a 80mm/ 100mm scope.

One way forward would be to get the 65mm scope with a fixed eyepiece first. If you still feel the need, then get the XF zoom eyepiece later. The Pentax XF 20x-60x zoom and other XF eyepieces while less





# SNIP IT! SIZE IT!

SRIJAN ROY CHOUDHURY

ANNWOY ROY CHOUDHURY

**T**his is one of those surgery tutorials (of images) you should try at your own risk. Our beloved BWS or us, will not be responsible for the result. After reading the violent title and the stern legal disclaimer, if you are still interested in getting on with it, be our guest!

As you are all well aware, BWS has taken the initiative to create a not-so-dry database of birds and the obvious juice to that database is your beautiful and colourful photographs. Sadly, we don't have all the bandwidth and all the cloud space in the world, hence it is necessary to perform some surgery on your photos and then deliver them to us. This will ensure that our resources are optimised. So, you need to snip your photos and size them up which in photographers' language are cropping and resizing images.

So here is a small "guide" to introduce you to the world of cropping and resizing. After reading this, it would be a breeze to crop and resize the image to the desired ratio of 4:3 (1024x768).

Let's start by understanding the basics of cropping and resizing images. These two techniques serve different purposes and are essential for effective image editing:

## CROPPING IMAGES

*What is Cropping?*

- ✓ Cropping involves "cutting off" a portion of an image to achieve a new size or shape.
- ✓ You can remove unwanted or distracting elements by cropping.
- ✓ It's like trimming excess from the edges of a photo.
- ✓ **Visual Difference:** After cropping, your image will look different.

*Why Use Cropping?*

- ✓ **Refine composition:** Adjust the framing to emphasize the subject.
- ✓ **Remove distractions:** Crop out unwanted background or clutter.

**Example:**

A common scenario for all nature photographers, is in the image the bird becomes too small relative to the environment. The way out in this case is "cropping". This brings the viewers' attention instantly back to our feathery friends.



## RESIZING IMAGES

### *What is Resizing?*

- ✓ Resizing adjusts the dimensions and file size of an image.
- ✓ It doesn't alter the content; it maintains the entire image.
- ✓ Useful for making images compatible with different platforms (web, print, social media).
- ✓ **Visual Difference:** In most cases, resizing won't change how the image looks.

### *Why Use Resizing?*

- ✓ **Optimize for web:** Reduce file size for faster loading.
- ✓ **Fit specific dimensions:** Ensure images meet platform requirements.
- ✓ Example: Resize a high-resolution photo for a blog post or social media profile picture.

To make this article comprehensive, it is laid out in three parts, cropping, resizing and doing both together. If you are interested in simply cropping your images to the desired dimension and sending them to us, feel free to skip to the 3rd (though we may 'bear our teeth' at you for not paying attention to the sweat of our labour and appreciating those!).

For anything we do on a computer, we must have software, in this case, we need one too. The method as described below is more or less similar for all image editing software, from very basic to pro (like Photoshop, Lightroom etc). Still, for the sake of illustration, I have chosen a freeware named "FastStone Image Viewer", which is a very small lightweight program but packed with a lot of features including cropping and resizing images.

**Disclaimer: We are not associated with the developer/s in any way, so from here on, you are on your own.**

### **Before you begin:**

#### **Download and Install FastStone ImageViewer:**

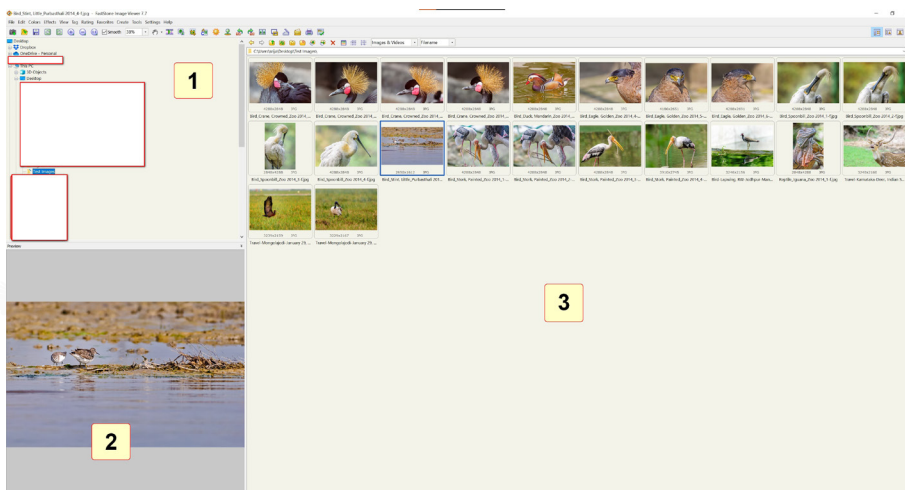
**Visit the official website and download the software.**

**<https://www.faststone.org/FSViewerDetail.htm>**

**Install it on your computer.**

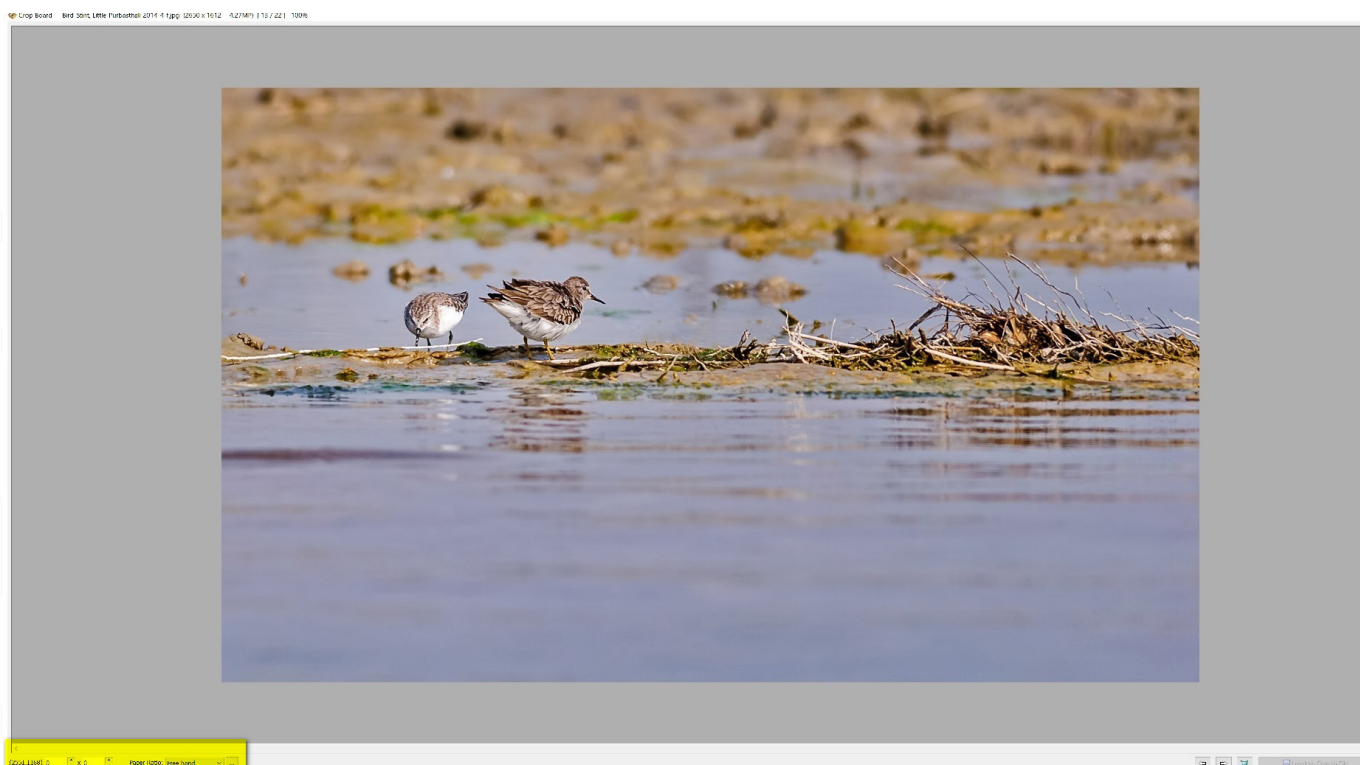
## PART 1: CROPPING IMAGES

- 1 Open FastStone Image Viewer:** Launch the FastStone Image Viewer on your computer



To the left, the window pane marked as “1” is where you need to locate your image. To the right, the window pane marked as “3” shows you all the image thumbnails available in the folder that you chose in “1”. Whichever image you click on in “3” will be displayed in a large size on window pane “2”.

- 2 Select Your Image:** Navigate to the folder containing your image using the window pane marked as “1”. Double-click the desired image shown in “3” to open it in the full-screen view.
- 3 Activate the Crop Tool:** Right-click anywhere on the image to bring up the context menu. Select Edit and then Crop Board. Or, you can simply press “X” on your keyboard to activate the crop tool (my method of choice).

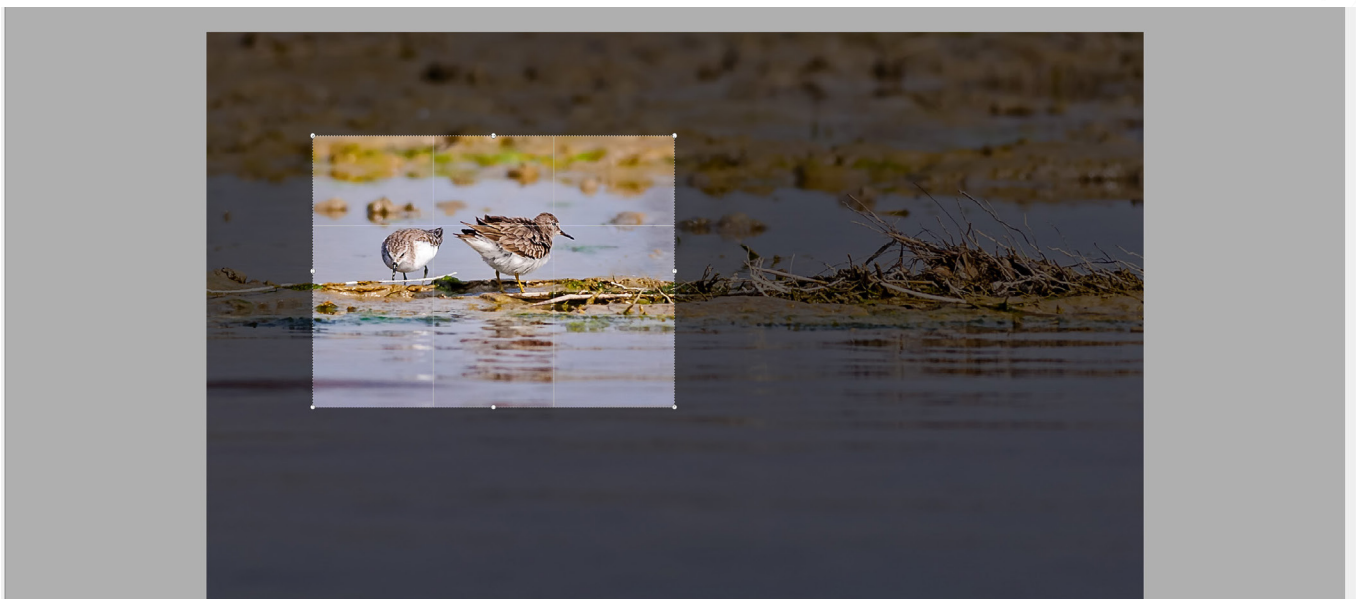




- 4 Adjust the Crop Area:** A cropping frame will appear on your image. At the bottom-left corner of the window look for the three fields as highlighted in the previous screengrab.

- 5** Click on the arrow beside “Paper Ratio” and choose “4:3” and then at the two fields above “<Pick Other Size>” type “1024” in the left box. This will automatically change the value in the right box to “768”. In case you are working with a vertical image, check the “Flip Ratio” box next to “Paper Ratio” box (refer to the screenshot below).

- 6** This should bring a crop box exactly of the desired ratio and dimension. For aesthetic or other requirements, you can either move the box around just by holding the cursor on it by pressing the right mouse button, or you can resize it using the small white circles on the perimeter of the box. Whatever you do, the ratio 4:3 will remain unchanged. For the BWS Photo project, if the subject is placed well within the box of 1024x768, please avoid enlarging the box. In case the subject is too big for the box, you need to refer to part 2 of this tutorial.



Apart from our regular Rare Bird Alert authored by Priyam Chattopadhyay

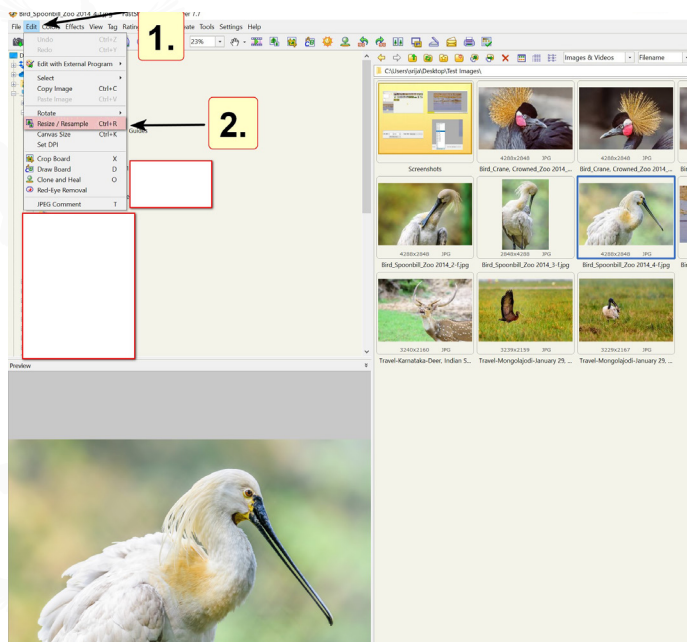
- 7 Apply the Crop:** Once satisfied with the crop area, click the **Crop button at the bottom right of the Crop Board**. This will remove the unwanted areas and display the cropped image. Press “Enter” from your keyboard, and you will be back to the first screen-grab (step 1).
- 8 Save Your Cropped Image:** Click on File > Save As to save your cropped image. Choose a location, file name, and format (use jpg/jpeg as format for BWS) for the new image.

## PART 2: RESIZING IMAGES

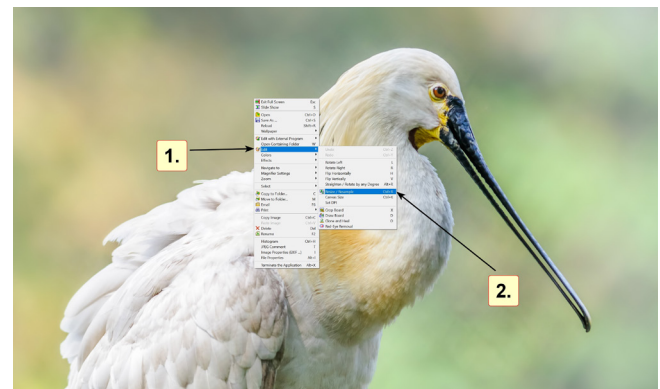
Resizing an image changes its dimensions without cropping.

Step-by-Step Instructions:

- 1 Open FastStone Image Viewer:** Launch the software as described in the previous section.
- Open Your Image and Open the Resize Tool:** Navigate and click to select the image you wish to resize. Then on the Menu bar, go to Resize/Resample.

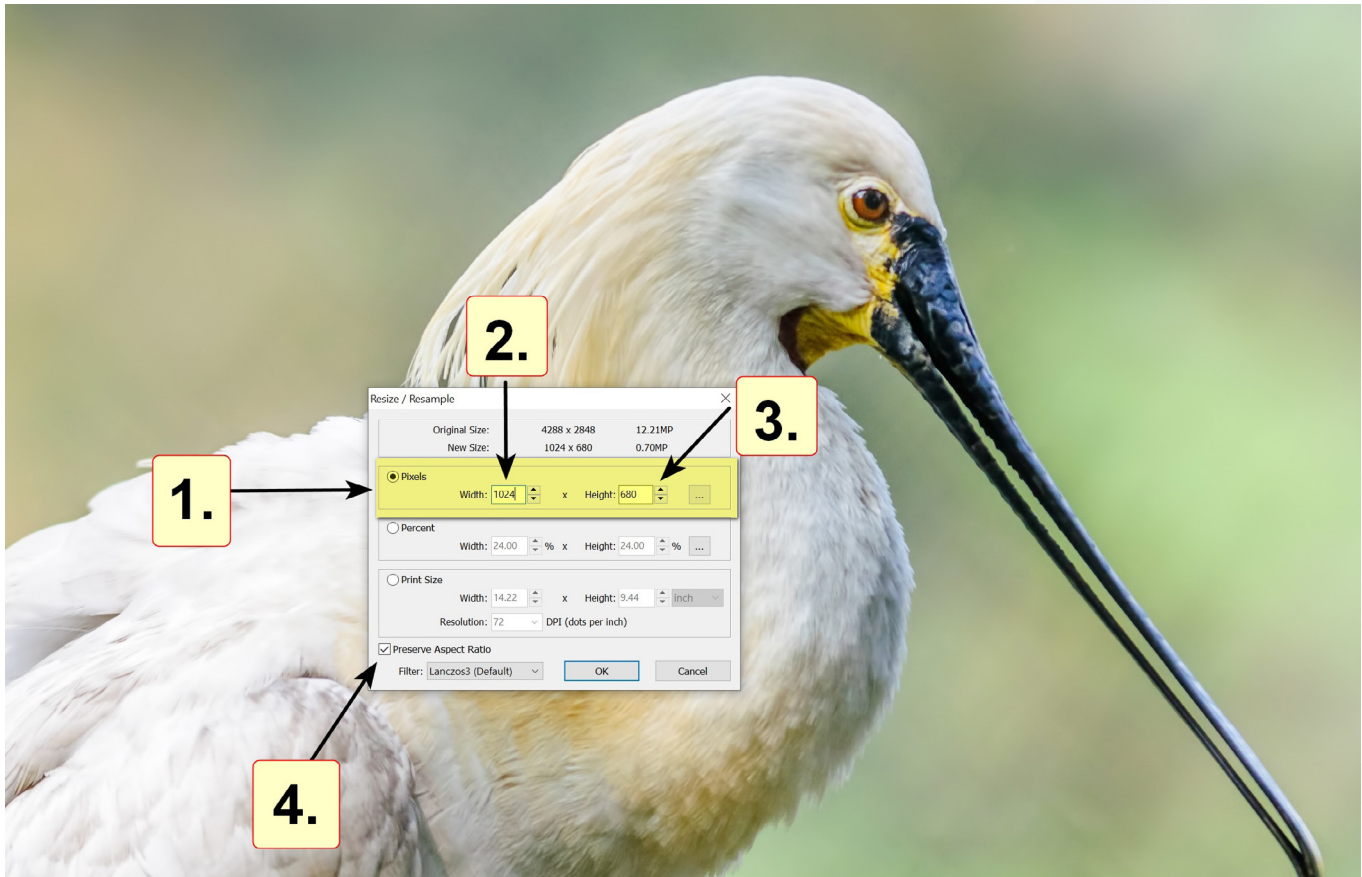


Alternatively, you can double-click on the image as in the previous section's step 2, Right-click on the image, select Edit, and then Resize/Resample.



- 3 Adjust Dimensions:** In the Resize/Resample window, you can change the image dimensions. Enter 1024 as the new width in pixels (marked as 1 and 2). Ensure the Preserve Aspect Ratio box (4) is checked to maintain the image's proportions. This will make sure that the box (marked as 3) is automatically assigned the proper value.





- 4 Apply and Save:** Click OK to resize the image. Save the resized image by clicking File > Save As, and choose your desired file location, name, and format (for BWS, please choose jpg/jpeg).

### PART 3: CROPPING AND RESIZING IMAGES TOGETHER

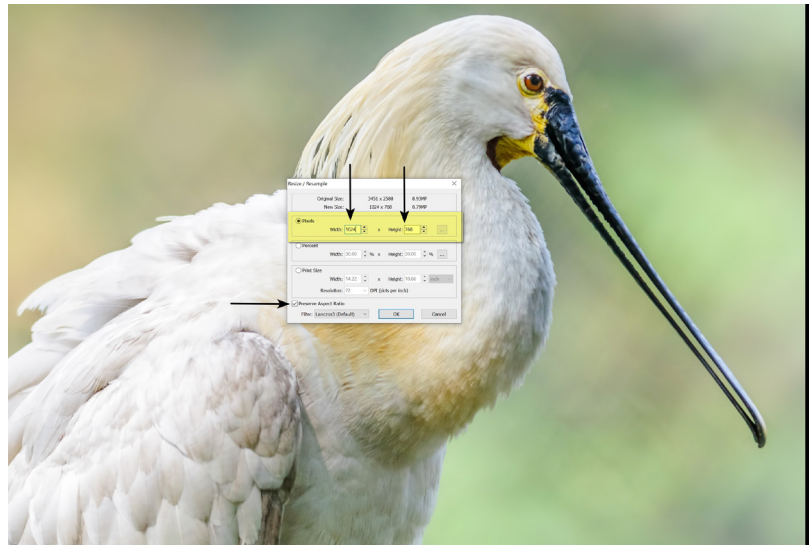
Sometimes, you may need to crop an image and then resize it for specific dimensions at the same time.

#### Step-by-Step Instructions:

- 1 Open FastStone Image Viewer:** Launch the software and open your image. Same as illustrated in section 1.
- 2 Crop Your Image:** Follow the cropping steps outlined in Section 1 to crop your image to the desired area. Do not close or save your image. As you can see in this case, the dimensions are way larger than the desired 1024x768, though the ratio is perfect, 4:3.



- 3 Resize the Cropped Image:** With the cropped image still open, follow the resizing steps from Section 2 to adjust the dimensions. Make sure the “Preserve Aspect Ratio” box is ticked.



- 4 Save the Final Image:** Save your cropped and resized image by clicking File > Save As, selecting the location, file name, and format.

#### In addition...

The following additional information is only relevant for BWS members who are interested to contribute to the BWS Photo Archive.

#### Please adhere to the following guidelines.

- ✓ Send up to 3 photos of one species only per email.
- ✓ Please crop and compose your pictures in landscape mode in 4:3 aspect ratio and with maximum dimension (WxH) 1024 pixels x 768 pixels in jpeg/jpg file format.
- ✓ EXIF data with GPS coordinates (where available) must be intact.
- ✓ Minimal post processing: Only basic exposure adjustment and sharpening with noise reduction. No colour related changes.
- ✓ File naming: Species name\_photographers name.
- ✓ Date and place of photograph in email.
- ✓ Mailing Address: bwsbirdsarchive@gmail.com
- ✓ Photo Credits will be mentioned whenever published.
- ✓ BWS reserves the right to choose and publish the photographs in any of its publication and/or social media.



**Important: Only BWS members to respond against the specific requests that is published from time-to-time. Only contribute photographs taken by the member.**

Thank you for being with us for this long. By following this tutorial, you should now be able to crop and resize images using FastStone Image Viewer effectively. This powerful freeware tool makes these processes straightforward, helping you create the perfect image for your needs. Happy editing!



**Pic- Arindam Roy**

### About Author



### **SRIJAN ROY CHOUDHURY AND ANNWOY ROY CHOUDHURY (Insta @roychnature, @roychtravel)**

**Srijan Roy Choudhury:** Photography for Srijan started as a hobby and soon evolved into a semi-professional pursuit. Three genres of photography are his calling - wildlife & nature, travel and still-life. He started bird-watching with his son 13 years back. Srijan also teaches Physics, which he has been doing for over two decades.

**Annwoy Roy Choudhury:** Annwoy is a BS-MS Physics student at IISER Mohali. He took to birding and photography at a very tender age under the tutelage of his father. He continues his birdwatching activities at IISER alongside his studies.

# কাঠচোকরা পাখির কথা

বিশ্ব রঞ্জন গোস্বামী



Rufous Woodpecker Pic- Dr Arindam Mukherjee

কা

ঠাচোকরা আমাদের পরিবেশের খুব পরিচিত পাখি। বর্তমানে সারা বিশ্বে কাঠচোকরা বা উডপেকার পাখির মোট একশ আশিটি প্রজাতি রয়েছে, তার মধ্যে বত্রিশটি প্রজাতি ভারতে বাস করে। এরা হল পিসিডি পরিবারভুক্ত। গ্রীক দেবতা পিকাসের নাম অনুসারে এই পরিবারের নামকরণ করা হয়েছে। অস্ট্রেলিয়া, মাদাগাস্কার, নিউজিল্যান্ড, নিউগিনি ও দুর্গম মেরু অঞ্চলগুলি ছাড়া বিশ্বের সর্বত্র এই অত্যাশ্চর্য পাখিগুলিকে দেখা যায়, তবে ভারতসহ দক্ষিণ-পূর্ব এশিয়া এবং দক্ষিণ আমেরিকার দেশগুলিতে এদেরকে বেশি সংখ্যায় দেখা যায়। এদের জীবন যাত্রার অনেকটাই গাছের উপর প্রত্যক্ষ ভাবে নির্ভরশীল।

## কাঠচোকরার বিভিন্ন প্রজাতি

কাঠচোকরাদের বিভিন্ন প্রজাতির আকার, রঙ, বাসস্থান ও পছন্দের ক্ষেত্র স্বতন্ত্র। সাধারণত উত্তর আমেরিকাতে দেখা যায় এমন উল্লেখযোগ্য কাঠচোকরাগুলি হল পাইলেটেড কাঠচোকরা (Pileated Woodpecker) যা প্রায় আঠারো ইঞ্চি লম্বা। এই মহাদেশে পাওয়া আরেকটি প্রজাতি ডাউনি কাঠচোকরা (Downy Woodpecker), এরা লম্বায় ছয় ইঞ্চি ও নাতিশীতোষ্ণ বনভূমি এবং বাগান পছন্দ করে। এই উত্তর আমেরিকাতেই পাওয়া যায় লোমশ প্রকৃতির আরেক ধরনের কাঠচোকরা যার দৈর্ঘ্য আট-দশ ইঞ্চি। উত্তর আমেরিকা থেকে কলম্বিয়া পর্যন্ত ছোট আট ইঞ্চি আকারের অ্যাকর্ন কাঠচোকরাদের (Acorn Woodpecker) বাস। এই এলাকায় এদেরকে পাথুরে কৃষিজমি ও বনভূমিতে বেশি দেখা যায়। প্রায় আঠারো ইঞ্চি লম্বা কালো কাঠচোকরা (Black Woodpecker) ইউরেশিয়াতে পাওয়া যায়। লিনিয়েটেড কাঠচোকরা (Lineated Woodpecker) উত্তর আমেরিকা ও দক্ষিণ ইউরেশিয়ার নাতিশীতোষ্ণ বনভূমির বাসিন্দা। উত্তর আমেরিকার পর্বতমালার দক্ষিণ ও উত্তরাঞ্চলে তিন-আঙ্গুলের সাবকটিক কাঠচোকরা (Subcortices Woodpecker) পাওয়া যায়। ভারত ও ফিলিপাইন দ্বীপপুঞ্জের বনভূমি জুড়ে ক্রিমসন-ব্যাকড কাঠচোকরা (Crimson-backed Woodpecker) ব্যাপকভাবে পাওয়া যায়। মার্কিন যুক্তরাষ্ট্রের দক্ষিণ-পূর্ব অংশে লাল মাথা কাঠচোকরাদের

(Red-headed woodpecker) এলাকা রয়েছে। খুবই বিরল ও বিলুপ্ত প্রায় আঠার ইঞ্চি লম্বা বিশিষ্ট আইভরি-বিলড কাঠচোকরা (Ivory-billed Woodpecker) মার্কিন যুক্তরাষ্ট্রে ও কিউবায় অল্প সংখ্যায় হলেও এখনও টিকে আছে।

এবার আসা যাক ইউরেশিয়ান রাইনেক (Eurasian Wryneck) পাখির প্রসঙ্গে, এরা কাঠচোকরা পরিবারের একটি বিশেষ প্রজাতি। এইগুলি সাধারণত জাপান, ইংল্যান্ড ও ইউরেশিয়াতে পাওয়া যায়, অবশ্য রেড ব্রেস্টেড রাইনেক (Red-breasted Wryneck) আফ্রিকাতেও বাস করে।

আমাদের পশ্চিমবাংলায় পাঁচ-ছয়টি প্রজাতির কাঠচোকরা বেশি দেখা যায়। তার মধ্যে সাধারণ কাঠচোকরার (Common Flameback Woodpecker) কথা প্রথমেই বলতে হয়। তাছাড়া আছে লাল কাঠচোকরা (Rufous Woodpecker), জরদ কাঠচোকরা (Fulvus-breasted Woodpecker), ছোট কাঠচোকরা (Pigmy Woodpecker), সোনালী কাঠচোকরা (Black-rumped Flameback / Lesser Goldenbacked Woodpecker) ও বঙ্কিম গ্রীবের (Wryneck) নাম উল্লেখযোগ্য। এইগুলি মূলত সমতলে দেখা যায়, তবু তার মধ্যে দু একটি পাহাড়ের বাসিন্দা হলেও কখনও কখনও সমতলে নেমে আসে।



## দৈহিক বৈশিষ্ট্য

নানা জাতের কাঠচোকরাদের দৈহিক বৈশিষ্ট্যও বিভিন্ন ধরনের হয়। মোটের উপর এদের দৈর্ঘ্য সাত সেমি থেকে শুরু করে পঞ্চাশ সেমি পর্যন্ত হয়। এদের গায়ের রঙও বিভিন্ন রকমের হয়। আমাদের রাজ্যের সবচেয়ে পরিচিত সাধারণ সোনালী-পিঠ কাঠচোকরা লম্বায় উনত্রিশ সেমি। পুরুষ পাখির মাথার উপরের দিকটা ও ঝুঁটি উজ্জল টুকটুকে লাল, ওই লালের উপর কয়েকটি কালো ছিট। মাথা ও ঘাড়ের দুই পাশ সাদা। ঘাড়, পিঠের শেষাংশ এবং লেজ কালো। পিঠের উপর দিকটা ও কাঁধ গাঢ় সোনালি-হলুদ। আবার কোন প্রজাতির শরীরে কালো ও জলপাই রঙের সাথে বাদামীর রঙের মিশেল। দক্ষিণ এশিয়ার সাধারণ কাঠচোকরাদের কালো শরীরে থাকে সাদা দাগ ও মাথায় লাল পালক সহ হলুদের আভা, আনেকের বস্ত্র প্রদেশে লাল ছোপ থাকে, এই রঙের সংমিশ্রণগুলি ছদ্মবেশের জন্য গুরুত্বপূর্ণ যাতে কিনা পরিবেশের সাথে এরা দিবি মিশে থাকতে পারে।

কাঠচোকরার দেহের গঠন, নখ, আঙ্গুল সবই গাছের উপর বসে থাকা বা গাছকে আঁকড়ে ধরার উপযোগী। কিছু প্রজাতি ছাড়া বেশির ভাগ কাঠচোকরার পা ছোট। দুটি পায়ের আঙ্গুল সামনের দিকে মুখ করে থাকে, বাকী দুটো পেছনের দিকে বাঁকানো। এই পায়ের আঙ্গুলের বিন্যাস তাদের গাছের ডাল বা কান্ড আঁকড়ে ধরতে ও গাছের উপর বা নীচ বরাবর বেয়ে উঠতে সাহায্য করে। অন্যান্য পাখির মত এরা গাছের ডালে আড়াআড়ি ভাবে বসে না, বরং এরা বসে নখের সাহায্যে ও লেজের উপর ভর করে লম্বালম্বিভাবে।

কাঠচোকরা পাখি কার্যকর গর্ত খোঁড়ার জন্য শক্তিশালী ও ধারাল চঞ্চু ব্যবহার করে। গবেষণায় জানা গেছে এরা একটি গাছে গর্ত খোঁড়ার জন্য দিনে দশ থেকে বারো হাজার বার তীব্রভাবে আঘাত করে। প্রতিটি আঘাত বা স্ট্রাইক বিয়াল্লিশ কিমি/ঘন্টা গতি বেগে গাছে আঘাত করে। এরা যা জোরে আঘাত করে তাতে যে কোন প্রাণীর মস্তিষ্কে রক্তক্ষরণ হয়ে মৃত্যু হতে পারে, কিন্তু কাঠচোকরার কিছুই হয় না! কেন? বাববার ড্রিলিং বা ছিদ্র করার কারণে মস্তিষ্কের ক্ষতি রোধ করতে কাঠচোকরার কিছু বিশেষ বৈশিষ্ট্য রয়েছে। তাই এদের মস্তিষ্কের কিছু অভিযোজন লক্ষ করা যায়। এদের মস্তিষ্কের গহ্বরটি সংকীর্ণ যা মাথার খুলির ভিতরে মস্তিষ্কের নড়াচড়া নিয়ন্ত্রণ করে ও তা সুরক্ষিত রাখে। তাছাড়া খুলির ভিতরে বায়ু পকেট থাকায় তা মস্তিষ্কের কোন ধরনের গুরুতর ক্ষতি প্রতিরোধ করে। মাথার খুলিতে নমনীয় হাড় রয়েছে যা এদের কপাল ও মাথার পিছনের দিকটাকে ঢেকে রাখে। আরেকটি বৈশিষ্ট্য হল হাইওয়েড হাড় যা কিনা খুলির পাশাপাশি মেরুদণ্ডকেও রক্ষা করে। এই হাড় মেরুদণ্ডের উভয় পাশ দিয়ে করোটির চারপাশ পর্যন্ত বিস্তৃত এবং ডান নাকের গহ্বরে শেষ হয়।

এদের জিভ লম্বা লিকলিকে ও আঠাযুক্ত। জিভের ডগা করাতের মত কাঁটাযুক্ত। আঠালো জিভ দিয়ে এরা পোকামাকড় শিকার করে। জিভের হাড় খুব বড়, খুলির চারপাশে মোড়ানো যা কিনা নিরাপত্তা বেল্ট হিসাবেও কাজ করে।



Brown-capped Pygmy Woodpecker  
Pic - Kushankur Bhattacharya



Grey Capped Pygmy Woodpecker  
Pic- Sandip Das

## জীবন ধারা

সাধারণত কাঠচোকরা একক জীবন যাপন করে, আবার কিছু প্রজাতি দলবদ্ধ ভাবে থাকতে পছন্দ করে। এদের আচরণের কথা বলতে গেলে প্রথমেই বলতে হয় চারদিক কাঁপানো তীক্ষ্ণ কণ্ঠস্বর যা দিয়ে সহজেই এরা নিজেদের উপস্থিতি জানান দেয়। তারা জোরে জোরে ও বারবার কাঠের উপর আঘাত করে, কিছুক্ষন বিরতি নেয় এবং আবার ড্রামিং শুরু করে। পুরুষ কাঠচোকরারা স্ত্রী কাঠচোকরার চেয়ে তুলনায় একটু বেশি আওয়াজ করে। যাহোক এদের সৃষ্ট বিভিন্ন শব্দের ধরন আলাদা ও তা বিভিন্ন বার্তা বহন করে। কিছু কল বা শব্দ বিপদ সংকেত নির্দেশ করে আবার কিছু খাদ্যের সন্ধান দিতে পারে।

কাঠচোকরারা বেশিরভাগ বনভূমি এলাকায় বাস করতে পছন্দ করে যেখানে পর্যাপ্ত গাছ আছে। এরা বেশিরভাগ সময় গাছের উপর থাকে, নীচে বা মাটিতে খুব কমই দেখা যায়। পোকা মাকড়ের খোঁজে গাছের কান্ড বা ডালে আঘাত করে। কিছু কাঠচোকরা যেমন অ্যাকর্ন (Akron Woodpecker), অ্যারাবিয়ান বা গ্রেট স্পটেড কাঠচোকরারা (Great-spotted Woodpecker) গাছের রসও খায়। তবে বেশিরভাগ কাঠচোকরা পিপড়ে, শুয়াপোকা, মাকড়সা, গিরগিটি এমনকি ছোট পাখির ডিম, ছোট ইঁদুর ইত্যাদিও খায়। দেখা গেছে এরা কখনও উড়ন্ত পোকা শিকার করতেও পারদর্শী। তবে কিছু কাঠচোকরা বাগানের ফল খেতেও পছন্দ করে। অ্যাকর্ন কাঠচোকরারা (Akron Woodpecker) শীতের জন্য গাছের কান্ডের গর্তে ফল বা বাদাম জাতীয় খাদ্য সঞ্চয় করে। দেখা গেছে কিছু কাঠচোকরা

পিঁপড়ের মত পোকামাকড়ের বাসায় সরাসরি আক্রমণ করে, তাছাড়া কিছু মাটির নীচ থাকা পোকা সংগ্রহ করতে পারে। যেহেতু অধিকাংশ কাঠচোকরা গাছের ক্ষতিকারক পোকামাকড় খেয়ে গাছের উপকার করে, তাই এরা পরিবেশগত ভারসাম্য বজায় রাখতে গুরুত্বপূর্ণ ভূমিকা নেয়।

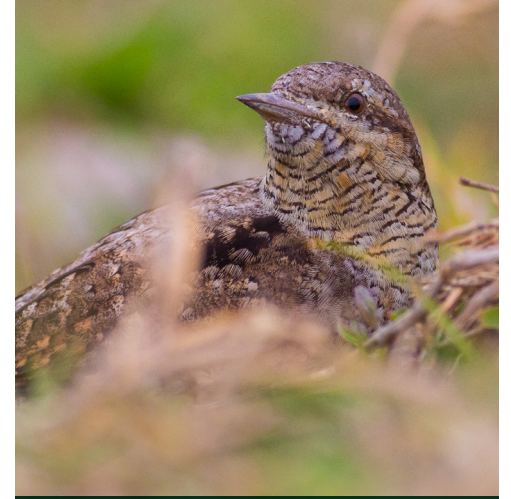
ইউরেশিয়ান রাইনেক (Eurasian Wryneck) কোন বিপদে পড়লে, তারা মাথা ১৮০ ডিগ্রী কোণে ঘুরিয়ে সাপের মত হিস্ হিস্ আওয়াজ করে শত্রুকে ভয় দেখায়। তাই এদেরকে ‘সাপ পাখি’ বলা হয়।

বেশিরভাগ কাঠচোকরা দেশান্তরী হয় না, তবে কিছু প্রজাতি, যেমন উত্তর আমেরিকার ইয়ালো বেলিড স্যাপসাকার ও ফ্লিকার উভয়েই পরিযায়ী।

## কাঠচোকরার প্রজনন

কাঠচোকরা সাধারণত একগামী, তবে শুধুমাত্র কয়েকটি প্রজাতি বহুগামীও হয়। সঙ্গিনীর মন পাওয়ার জন্য সুরেলা স্বরে ডাকার বদলে জোড়ে গাছে বা ধাতব জিনিসের উপর সশব্দে আওয়াজ করে। প্রজননকাল মার্চ থেকে আগস্ট। গাছের কাণ্ডে বা ডালের গায়ে তিন থেকে দশ মিটারের মধ্যে কাঠচোকরা দম্পতি বাসা তৈরি করে। এরা চঞ্চুকে কুড়ুলের মত ব্যবহার করে গাছে বারবার আঘাত করে অতি পরিপাটি সুগোল প্রায় সাত-আট ইঞ্চি ব্যাসের এক প্রবেশ দ্বার খোঁড়ে এক নিখুঁত বাসা বানায়। প্রথমে গর্তমুখ থেকে ভিতরে বেশ কয়েক সেন্টিমিটার সোজা গর্ত খোঁড়ে, তারপর কিছুটা নেমে নিচের দিকে ৫ সেমি ব্যাসের ডিম্বাকৃতি ডিম পাড়ার ঘর তৈরি করে। তার ভিতরে সাধারণত ৩টি চকচকে সাদা রঙের ডিম পাড়ে। বাচ্চা প্রতিপালন ও অন্যান্য কাজকর্ম দম্পতির উভয়েই মিলে করে।

আবার কিছু কাঠচোকরা যারা দক্ষিণ আফ্রিকায় পাথুরে ও ঘাসযুক্ত পাহাড়ী এলাকার বাসিন্দা, তারা মোটেও গাছে বাসা বানায় না, বরং তারা মাটিতে গর্ত করে বাসা তৈরি করে। কিছু কাঠচোকরা বাঁশের বনেও বাসা বানায়। অন্যদিকে রাইনেক প্রজাতির নিজেরা বাসা বানাতে পারে না, তারা রেড-ব্রেস্টেড নাটহ্যাচ বা ধনেশের মতো পাখিদের বাসা দখল করে সেখানে ডিম পাড়ে।



Eurasian Wryneck Pic- Priyam Chattopadhyay

## বিভিন্ন লোকগাথায় কাঠচোকরা

নানা লোকগাথায় এই পাখিকে বহু ধরনের প্রতীক কল্পনা করা হয়েছে। এইসব কল্পনা খুবই বৈচিত্র্যময়। পাখিদের রাজ্যে এই আকর্ষণীয় গোষ্ঠীটি বেশ কয়েকটি সাংস্কৃতিক ঐতিহ্যের মধ্যে দেখা যায়। এই পাখিরা অনেক আদিবাসীদের কাছে দুর্ভাগ্যের প্রতীক হিসাবে বিবেচিত হয়। আবার কিছু সংস্কৃতিতে এরা সমৃদ্ধি এবং সৌভাগ্যের সাথে যুক্ত। অনেক ক্ষেত্রে এই পাখিটিকে অধ্যবসায় এবং সংকল্পের প্রতীক হিসাবে গণ্য করা হয়। মানুষের সভ্যতার ইতিহাসে এমন কোন সভ্যতা খুঁজে পাওয়া যাবে না যেখানে কাঠচোকরার উল্লেখ নেই।

রোমান লোকগাথায় পিকাস নামের এক কাঠচোকরা পবিত্র দেবতা হিসাবে পূজিত। প্রাচীনকালে ইতালীতে পিকাস কৃষির দেবতা হিসাবে ব্যাপকভাবে পূজিত হতো। রোমানরা তাঁকে গ্রীক কৃষি দেবতা ক্রোনাসের সমতুল্য মনে করতেন। আসলে এই পাখিটি উর্বরতার প্রতীকের সাথে জড়িত। নর্স পুরানে কাঠচোকরা বজ্রের দেবতা থরের সাথে সম্পর্কিত, অনেকের বিশ্বাস যদি কাঠচোকরার আঘাত করে তবে বাজ পড়ে। আরেকটি উপকথায় পাওয়া যায় যেখানে ম্যাজিসিয়ান সার্স পিকাস বা পিকো নামক এক প্রাচীন লাতিয়ামের একজন রাজাকে প্রলুদ্ধ করার চেষ্টা করেছিলেন, কিন্তু তিনি তা প্রত্যাখান করেছিলেন। তখন তিনি এতটাই রেগে গিয়েছিলেন যে সে পিকাসকে কাঠচোকরাতে পরিণত করেছিলেন।

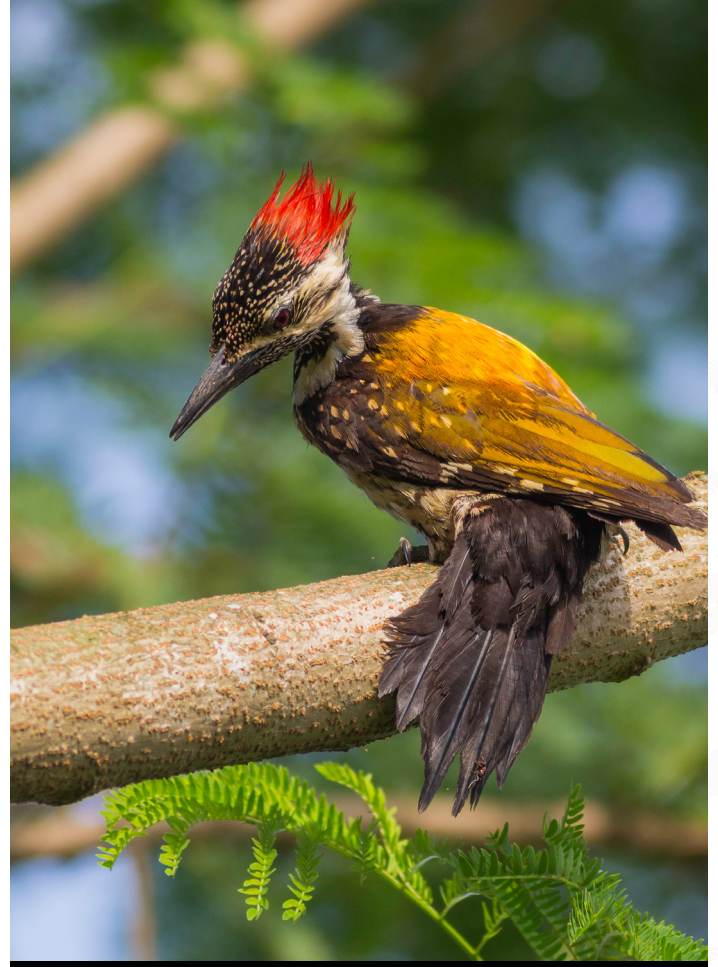
রোমের উপাখ্যানে কাঠচোকরা নিয়ে আর একটি মজার গল্প জানা যায়, গল্পটি এক বৃদ্ধ মহিলাকে নিয়ে। সেই বৃদ্ধা ছিলেন ঈশ্বরের প্রতি অতিশয় ভক্তিপরায়ণা, আবার সব বিষয়ে সে ছিল খুব অনুসন্ধিৎসু ও অন্য সবার ব্যাপারে নাক গলাতো। ঈশ্বর একদিন তাকে ডেকে পাঠালেন। সেই বৃদ্ধা উপস্থিত হলে ঈশ্বর একটি বস্তায় সব ধরনের পোকামাকড় রেখে বস্তাটি বন্ধ করে দিলেন ও তাকে বললেন সে যেন বস্তার দিকে না তাকিয়ে সোজা তার বাড়ীতে চলে যায়। সে তখন প্রভুর আদেশে রাজী হয় ও বস্তা নিয়ে গন্তব্যের দিকে যাত্রা শুরু করে। কিন্তু কিছুক্ষণ হাঁটার পরেই অধৈর্য হয়ে সেই বৃদ্ধা মহিলা একটি ঘাসের জমিতে বসে পড়ে ও বস্তাটি খুলে ফেলে। ঠিক তখনই পিঁপড়া সহ অন্যান্য পোকামাকড় বস্তা থেকে বেড়িয়ে পড়ে। সে সেগুলি সংগ্রহ করার ব্যর্থ চেষ্টা করে। তখন ঈশ্বর হঠাৎ করে সেখানে উপস্থিত হন ও তাকে জিজ্ঞাসা করেন যে সেই পোকামাকড়গুলি কোথায় যা আগে বস্তায় রাখা হয়েছিল। তারপর ঈশ্বর তাকে কাঠচোকরায় পরিণত করেন ও তাকে বলেন যে বস্তাটি পোকামাকড়গুলি দ্বারা পূর্ণ না হওয়া পর্যন্ত বৃদ্ধা কাঠচোকরা হয়েই বাকী জীবন কাটাবে, আবার যদি তা পূর্ণ করতে পারে তবেই সে আবার মানুষ হতে পারবে।



## জীববৈচিত্র্য ও কাঠচোকরা সংরক্ষণ

সফলভাবে বন জীববৈচিত্র্য বজায় রাখার জন্য কাঠচোকরার উপস্থিতি ও স্থায়িত্ব অপরিহার্য। এদের দৈনন্দিন জীবন যাত্রায় বনের এক বিশেষ গুরুত্বপূর্ণ ভূমিকা। এমন পাখির উপস্থিতি বন অঞ্চলের বাস্তুতন্ত্রের জন্য অপরিহার্য। আমরা প্রায়শই বনের মধ্যে মৃত গাছগুলির প্রতি কোন গুরুত্ব দিই না, তবে কাঠচোকরার জন্য সেগুলো খাদ্য ও আশ্রয়ের জায়গা। কাঠচোকরা বনের মধ্যে ক্ষয়প্রাপ্ত অনেক ছত্রাককে ছড়িয়ে দেয়। তাই তাদের সুরক্ষা নিশ্চিত করার জন্য প্রয়োজনীয় বিধিনিষেধমূলক ব্যবস্থা গ্রহণ করা উচিত। এই গোষ্ঠীর বিভিন্ন ক্রিয়াকলাপ যেমন প্রজনন, বিতরণ, হুমকির কারণ, তাৎপর্য ইত্যাদির উপর আরও গভীর সমীক্ষা ও গবেষণার প্রয়োজন।

পাখিদের মধ্যে কাঠচোকরা সংরক্ষণ একটি গুরুত্বপূর্ণ বিষয় তার প্রধান কারণ এরা গাছে গর্ত তৈরি করে যা অন্যান্য জীবের বেঁচে থাকার জন্যও গুরুত্বপূর্ণ। কাঠচোকরাদের নির্দিষ্ট বাসস্থানে প্রচুর সংখ্যায় বড় ও ক্ষয়প্রাপ্ত বা মৃত গাছের অবশ্যই প্রয়োজনীয়তা আছে। তাই বনাঞ্চলের উপর নির্ভরশীল হওয়ার কারণে কাঠচোকরা বিশেষভাবে সংবেদনশীল। বনায়ন একদিকে বনের অবক্ষয় যেমন রোধ করতে সক্ষম, অন্যদিকে প্রাকৃতিক বাসস্থানের গঠনকেও সুসংহত রাখতে পারে। বর্তমানে বেশ কয়েকটি বিশেষ প্রজাতির কাঠচোকরার সংখ্যা হ্রাসের মুখোমুখি হচ্ছে, যার মধ্যে এমন প্রজাতি আছে যা দারুণভাবে বিপন্ন বা বিলুপ্তির পথে। মানুষের নানা কার্যকলাপের কারণে আবাসস্থলের পরিবর্তনের বিষয়ে পাখির অত্যন্ত সংবেদনশীল। তাই পরিবেশের পরিবর্তনের সময়ে কাঠচোকরাদের আবাসস্থলের কাঠামোগত উপাদানগুলির কথা অবশ্যই খেয়াল রাখা উচিত।



Lesser Goldenback Woodpecker Pic- Priyam Chattopadhyay

তথ্যসূত্র-

১। <http://www.britanica.com>

২। <http://vedantu.com>

৩। <http://wikipedia.org>

৪। Science of birds. Woodpecker -Author Ivan Phillipsen <http://www.scienceofbirds.com>

৫। World Animal Foundation <http://www.worldanimalfoundation.org>

৬। চেনা - অচেনা পাখি, অজয় হোম।



## About Author

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# DAWN CHORUS DAY INDIA 2024

## Darkling, I listen

**W**hy does the older generation, also known as boomers in some parts of the world, love young birdwatchers? That's because millennial and Gen Z birdwatchers are the rare breed that wakes up early in the morning by choice even on weekends, demand binoculars instead of Playstations, and hang out at parks and forests instead of pubs and bars. To profit from this passion among the youth as well as the older sections of the society, the Birdwatchers' Society introduced Dawn Chorus India in 2022. Today, hundreds of birders throughout the nation wake up at ungodly hours to record birdsong at the crack of dawn. Let's delve a little more into the details.

### Dawn Chorus Day India

A country with more than 1350 bird species, India is a birding hotspot with tremendous potential for monitoring and documenting bird activity and behaviour. Although Dawn Chorus Day is internationally observed on the first Sunday of May, Sudipto Roy, an avid birder and member of BWS, proposed the idea of observing Dawn Chorus India on the first Sunday of April, which is the ideal time for these feathered creatures to transform their plumage, and sing of Spring "in full-throated ease". In 2023, the event burgeoned into a state level activity and in 2024 it culminated into a nationwide event in which birders participated from across India and shared their recordings. A Whatsapp group was created by Kaustav to manage and co-ordinate with birders across India and share the guidelines to be followed while recording birdsongs and sharing their recordings in group. The heatmap created for this purpose showed that hundreds of birders were participating across the country at first light from Delhi in the North to Tamil Nadu in the South, from Rajasthan in the West to Mizoram in the East. Birders used different kinds of equipment from simple mobile phones to high-end recording devices, used different apps such as Parrot and

Merlin, and covered diverse areas such as forests, wetlands, urban areas and mountainous regions. People participated from their backyards as well as from reserve forests and wildlife sanctuaries, which magnified the scope of the event. In sum, the 2024 Dawn Chorus Day was immensely successful, as evident in the keen participation of the birders in the Zoom meeting held at 7.30 am to share the harmonious cacophony of nature during springtime recorded across the country. Since eBird is also now involved in observing Dawn Chorus Day, participants were requested to make 15 minute checklists on eBird and upload their media along with their list of birds observed.





Moreover, there are definite scientific consequences of observing Dawn Chorus Day each year: it helps monitor the avian health of a particular region by documenting the change in the intensity and diversity of the birdsong. As Priyam Chattopadhyay remarked during the Zoom meeting, the same place in Joka wetlands where they had recorded birdsong in the previous year had undergone noticeable decline in terms of bird activity due to clearing of lands for construction activity. Dawn chorus therefore can be a useful tool for monitoring the rise or decline of bird population in a specific region over a certain period of time.

### Popularity of Dawn Chorus Day

As Sudipto Roy astutely observes, the reason for the growing popularity of Dawn Chorus is that one does not need expensive equipment for documentation or to come up with a striking result. One could merely have a mobile phone and a sound recording app and wander into the wild to capture the harmonious melody at the break of light. This makes dawn chorus a far more democratic activity than bird photography, which requires skills as well as instruments not everyone can afford. This perhaps is a great way to initiate children into the wonderful hobby of birdwatching.

Dawn Chorus Day highlights the importance of avifauna and the ways they denote the impact of human activity in the age of the Anthropocene. This initiative is a reminder that next time we wake up to the call of birds, let us know better than to take them for granted.

For full species list and all checklists, please click the link

<https://ebird.org/tripreport/219355?view=checklists>

### Comments and feedback from birders

“

Birders from beyond West Bengal joined the Zoom meeting in numbers and shared their varied experiences. Shilpa Gadgil from Jalgaon, Maharashtra recorded birdsongs in her sound recorder and shared experiences about seeing birds and documenting them on ebird regularly. She appreciated the initiative which encouraged birders across the country. Mr Biren from Ahmedabad shared a video recording of birds and their songs from Gandhi Ashram. Ramu Alluri from Andhra Pradesh had a great experience recording birdsongs and finding out that grey-headed lapwings were still present.

The success of the Dawn Chorus Day was evident in the Zoom Meeting. Many birders were excited to hear sounds which were purportedly uncommon in that area, such as Mr Dev Baul hearing a little egret at Rabindra Sarobar and Ms Pipewala feeling delighted to have heard what Merlin identified as a yellow-browed warbler near her home in Christopher Road, Kolkata. The excitement among the birders was quite apparent in the Zoom meeting.”

**Kaustav Banerjee (Coordinator of Whatsapp Group Dawn Chorus India):**





# POILA BAISHAKH BIRD COUNT (PBBC) 2024

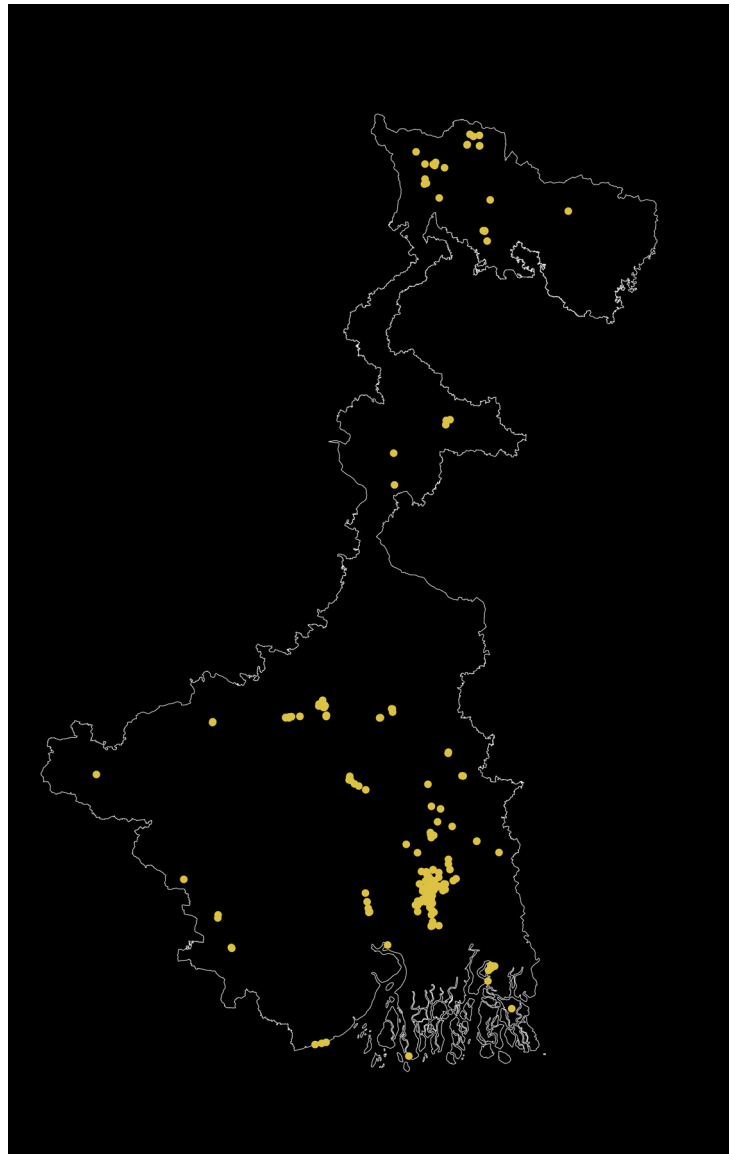
Report by: Pampa Mistri

**P**oila Boishakh, being the first day of the Bengali Calendar, is a big day in Bengal. Similarly, the Poila Boishakh Bird Count (PBBC) is literally a BIG DAY in the BIRDING calendar of West Bengal (WB). For the 'bong birders', this day seems to be emerging as a statewide competition to see who can spot, identify and record (on eBird) the greatest number of bird species on this day. In 2023, the year in which PBBC was launched

([https://birdwatcherssociety.org/featured\\_item/fantail-vol2\\_issue4/](https://birdwatcherssociety.org/featured_item/fantail-vol2_issue4/)) we had 127 birders who documented 387 species from 19 districts in 2 days.

In 2024 the event was set for April 13-14 in collaboration with eBird India and Bird Count India. Both days at least 85 birdwatchers from West Bengal came together -103 birdwatchers were on field on Day 2 alone! 357 species were documented in 339 checklists from 19 districts! This year we missed out on counts from Coochbehar, Murshidabad and Uttar (North) Dinajpur districts of WB.

Birds and their population numbers are essential for indicating the overall health of ecosystems. The changing climate has affected bird migration due to alterations in bird habitats. Counting or monitoring is central to ecological studies and conservation research in ornithology. Monitoring helps to establish a baseline for natural variability in species abundance and distribution. This eventually becomes an essential tool for identifying changes that indicate a population abnormality trend. This can act as an early warning system to initiate conservation measures to help prevent further deviations and ultimately help support biodiversity.





April in WB is a crucial time in the avian calendar as it marks spring's onset. But with the changing climate, April now marks a shortened spring and the beginning of summer. The Poila Boishak Bird Count (PBBC) across the state at this pivotal juncture is an essential bio-indicator of breeding birds and migrants. Over time, these snapshots during summer can indicate the impacts of climate change on migration and breeding phenology. It may be a good idea to publicise this event at the highest level and institute a recognition of the effort.

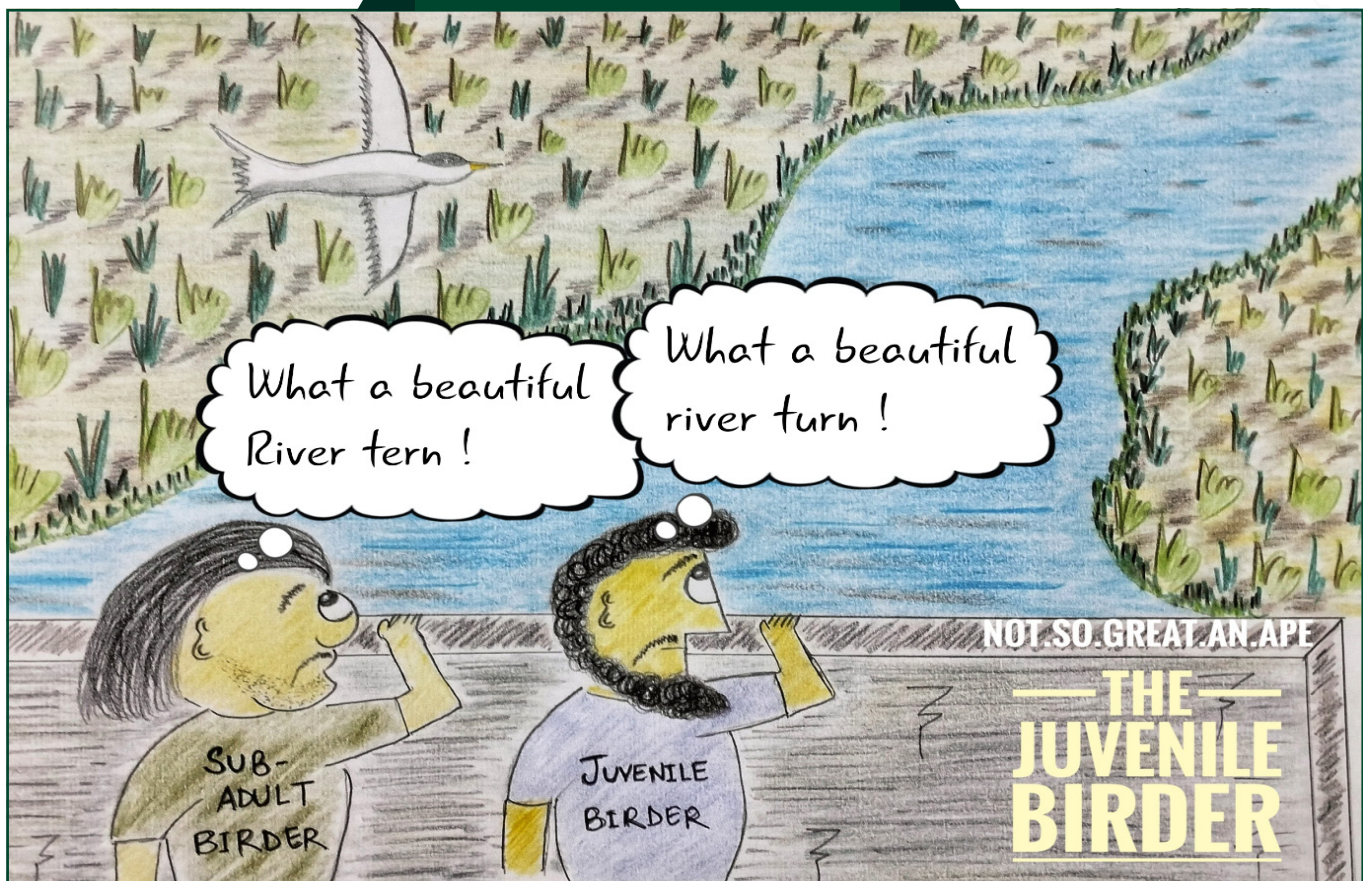
Among the species reported were the following which were classed as High Priority in the SoIB 2023 report: Little Ringed Plover, Kentish Plover, Spotted Redshank, Little Stint, Rufous-necked Hornbill, Bristled Grassbird, Blue-capped Rock-Thrush, Thick-billed Flowerpecker, Olive-backed Pipit, Pied Avocet.

For complete list of species, please click the following trip report :

<https://ebird.org/tripreport/221347>

Among the participants, Saikot Das, Bahrudin Sk. and Anish Bera were the top contributors.

## PERSPECTIVES



Cartoon Courtesy : Titash Chakrabarti



# BWS ACTIVITIES

## Draw a Bird Day (8th April 2024)

BWS in collaboration with BAN (Bonding with Animals & Nature) our associate celebrated the 'Draw – A – Bird Day' through a drawing competition for school children of BAN's Nature Study group.

The theme of the competition was "Native birds found around us." The event concluded with the distribution of prizes.



Chandpara, North 24 PGS

## The wetlands 'Jolabhumi Utsav' 2023-24 (9th April 2024)

Disappearing Dialogues (DD), in collaboration with the Birdwatchers' Society, organized an inspiring walk in the East Kolkata Wetlands on April 9, 2024.

DD is a vibrant platform that connects communities, institutions, social groups, and generations through interactive artworks, research, documentation, and collective community activities. Each year, DD spearheads nature and bird awareness events, with BWS as a steadfast partner.

This year, BWS representatives joined the walk with local schoolchildren, guiding them in spotting aquatic birds and sharing valuable birdwatching tips. The event not only fostered a deeper appreciation for nature but also strengthened community bonds.

**Birdwatchers Society**  
experts guiding the students to observe aquatic and land birds



Dibyendu  
Ash



Maj Bharatendra  
Singh Parihar



Amitava  
Dutta





# Birdwatching & Nature Workshop

## Vishwa Bharati, Shantiniketan (17th April 2024)

**SATAVISHA BAG**

**W**e must observe our surroundings to learn about anything from scratch. The environment is continuously undergoing several changes and is full of mysteries. Curiosity is the key that makes children one of the hopes of society.

I spent some time with PathaBhaban–Vishwa Bharati, Shantiniketan students, in a nature workshop organised by the Birdwatcher's Society, led by Saikat Das. It was an exhilarating session. Indeed, a day well spent.

Our ecosystem faces severe challenges from climate change, including droughts, floods, forest fires, and biodiversity loss. The gradual disappearance of diverse bird species is incredibly disheartening. However, children's recognition of birds' importance is a positive and hopeful sign.

From the start, the children were actively involved in the workshop. They were introduced to the birds of the Patha Bhaban Campus and gradually familiarised with different birds based on their habitat, structure, feeding behaviour and call. One of the vital keys to identifying any bird is to recognise them by their call and songs. The children were drawn to the sounds of different birds and were able to identify them. It is very fascinating how many birds are named after their type of vocalisation, i.e., they have onomatopoeic naming. For instance, the Indian cuckoo is named "Bou-kotha-kou" in Bengali, which resembles its call. We know that introducing children to various bird species in their native language can greatly enhance their learning and cognitive abilities. Thus the entire workshop was a truly engaging and interactive experience for them.

Between the sessions, the children were provided stamp pads and flashcards of several birds to use correctly to draw birds. This developed an understanding of the different shapes, sizes, and colours of birds. Short quizzes on the characteristics and flight patterns of different migratory birds were also conducted in the workshop. The children were amazed to learn how these birds cover a long distance in pursuit of resources and shelter using different navigational aids and also by undergoing several

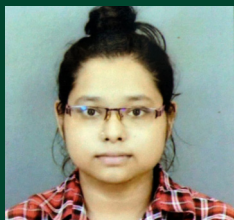


physiological changes to use their energy efficiently.

Children also learned about different species of Parakeets, including the Rose-ringed Parakeet, and how their remarkable voice-mimicking abilities made them the victims of the pet trade in many Indian households. Thus, the children were given fundamental information about the Wildlife (Protection) Act of 1972 and its importance in safeguarding these birds in their natural habitat.

The nature workshop aimed to make children “Birding Buddies” and instil an understanding of the environment and the interdependence of all ecosystem components.

Regardless of age, starting such lessons early in people’s academic careers will positively contribute to the cause, no matter how small the step.



### About Author

#### Satavisha Bag

Satavisha is an environment enthusiast and she works as an educator and has been engaging with wildlife, especially birds since 2018.

## Earth Day Bird Walk (21st April, 2024)

Birthdays are to be celebrated, but what about Earth days? We should organize on Earth days as responsible citizens to serve as a reminder of the ongoing environmental crisis; but when we are with children, it’s always a celebration of life, art and Earth.

Early Birds organised many of us around the country to celebrate Earth Day on 21 April 2024.

A Bird Walk in Kolkata was led by ‘BWS – School of Birds’. After the bird watching the children sat down to a session of games and creativity. The participating children and their parents had a great time at Rabindra Sarobar on this auspicious day.





## BWS Pocket Guide – Birds of Sikkim & North Bengal

**B**irdwatchers' Society published a Pocket Guide booklet covering birds of Sikkim & North Bengal, includes English – Nepali names for birds. It was published in collaboration with Early Birds.

This is the second pocket guide introduced by BWS. The first one being English – Bangla pocket guide for Birds of West Bengal.

These guides are indispensable companions for birding enthusiasts, providing swift references and valuable insights on the go. Compact and laminated, they are built to endure the rigors of frequent use.

These versatile guides prove their worth in a wide array of events and activities, making them an essential tool for every birder.



## NORTH BENGAL SCHOOL PROGRAM Avijan Saha

A student-level capacity-building program on “Importance of Birds and Elephants” was held on 9th May 2024 at “Galaxy English medium school” at the Indo-Nepal Mechi border area under Kilaram jote of Chhoto Maniram Gram panchayet of Nakslabari block under Panighatta Range. The program was organized by Airavat and supported by the Birdwatchers' Society.

This was the first student-level capacity-building program in this area, which is just 1 km away from Nepal and dominated by Nepali, Adibasi and Dhema communities. Amongst three schools in this area (2 Primary and 1 English medium), Galaxy school is the first English medium school in this remote area where students had no exposure to any nature-based educational activity. 42 children attended apart from 6 teachers. Classes 4, 5, and 6 boasted the highest participation. They certainly enjoyed our sessions.

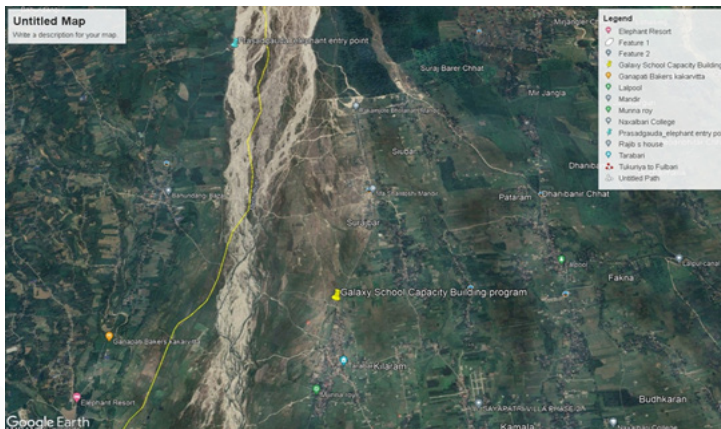
The program's main objective was to introduce the children to the importance and role of birds in our ecosystem and environment. This was achieved through a variety of engaging activities, including the use of photographs and books, and the introduction of primary attributes like real feathers of birds, their colours, and reflection of light. Two outdoor games, 'Nature Invasion' and 'Habitat Importance', were played in the natural environment outside the school premises, providing the children with practical experiences and a deeper understanding of the subject matter.

As part of our commitment to inclusivity, we provided our dossiers and books in multiple languages, including English, Nepali, Hindi, and Adibasi. This ensured that all students, regardless of their language background, could fully participate and benefit from the program.

**PARTICIPANTS – DR ANJAN DAS , SHRI AMIT RAUTH, SHRI AVIJAN SAHA**

**ORGANISED BY – AIRAVAT**

**SUPPORTED BY – BIRDWATCHERS' SOCIETY (SCHOOL OF BIRDS).**





eBird  
India

Birdwatchers'  
Society

BIRD COUNT INDIA

# Bengal Birders' Meet

22nd July

Monday 2024

10am - 7pm

Venue :

Eastern Zonal Cultural Centre

Purbashree (Main Auditorium)

<https://maps.app.goo.gl/m96VG3EE99bAxNKv9>

**REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED.**

For registration and program highlights -

Click - <https://forms.gle/E82E1puRRqC4D81D9>



Illustrator - Titash Chakrabarti

in collaboration with

**PENTAX**

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Since 1938

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