



*Pic Courtesy: Kallol Mukherjee*



# **ANNUAL REPORT OF BIRDWATCHERS' SOCIETY**

APRIL 01, 2022 – MARCH 31, 2023





**BISWAPRIYA RAHUT**  
President BWS

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

In an ideal world, all of us at Birdwatchers Society would be engaged in the pursuit of the angels in the sky, day in and day out. However, it is also an irrefutable fact that the growth of any organisation depends on its commercial robustness. Hence annual reports and balance sheets are equally essential to ensure a symbiotic flow between our dreams and our ability to achieve those dreams.

From its inception, the priority of the Birdwatchers' Society was set in stone - to bring all the birdwatchers of the state under one umbrella, one identity. The stark reality confronting us was simple: unless we get representation from all corners of the state, the bird data collected will never truly reflect itself in the bird mapping of our state.

We have worked tirelessly over the years and can proudly proclaim now that our concerted efforts have borne fruit. We have members now spread in every nook and corner of this beautiful state of West Bengal and beyond, enriching the bird knowledge base and, thereby, our scientific and behavioural datasets.

The BWS family is growing, as is the family of birdwatchers. We do birdwatching for our pleasure; we do it for joy. In the process, our members strive to enrich the ever-growing digital bird database by using apps like eBird, which benefits fellow birdwatchers, scientists, and researchers alike.

Like the previous years, the growth in our membership continues unabated, which has given us wings to expand and venture into hitherto uncharted and relatively unheralded birding zones of the state. The society has initiated pre-announced bird-walks around the city, which have received a positive response. Concomitantly, regular bird talks and



awareness programs receive considerable encore from members and the public.

While this may sound good, we also know we need to do more quickly at that. Due to known limitations, we have been unable to focus much on research activities. With extra aid from the corporates, we would like to focus more on such activities in the coming months. We need to reach out to more and more students of the current generation to make them aware of the need for Bird Conservation and conservation in general.

Unless this is done, all the good work will lead to nought, and we will be back to square one. We need to keep going and explore the avenues for doing it better. There's no stopping because time is running out and running out fast.

Here is to yet another great year of Birding! Safe Birding!!

**Biswapriya Rahut**

*“There is nothing in which the birds differ more from man than the way in which they can build and yet leave a landscape as it was before”*

*~ Robert Wilson Lynd*





## SUJAN CHATTERJEE

Secretary BWS



### SECRETARY'S MESSAGE

The Birdwatchers Society (BWS) was ingeniously established with a visionary goal: to forge an expansive tapestry of bird enthusiasts spanning the state's borders and potentially reaching even further afield. The current roster proudly boasts an impressive 230+ dedicated members, a testament to the unwavering momentum propelling us in the right direction.

Our trajectory now demands an even greater aspiration: to plant the seeds of our network in every district of West Bengal. We will organically extend our influence to the grassroots level by establishing nodal members in each district. This strategic expansion lays the groundwork for the pivotal empowerment of local groups, envisioned to be equipped with top-tier optical gear for collaborative surveys.

Yet our mission transcends mere equipment provision. We are resolute in our commitment to disseminating the art of birdwatching – unveiling the techniques, unravelling the intricacies of equipment selection, and illuminating the path through the maze of identification guides. Synergy with fellow NGOs is paramount; knowledge is shared, partnerships fostered, and collectively shoulder conservation-related responsibilities.

Dedication and truthfulness to our overarching mission must remain paramount – our ultimate goal is safeguarding avian treasures around us. Continuity of seminars and workshops will help us leverage the transformative potential of Citizen Science.

We must recognise our conservation priorities, pinpointing critical areas deserving our focus and intervention.

Preparing the next generation by engaging with the student community, planting the seeds of birdwatching, and thereby instilling a profound love for nature. Together, through unwavering passion and collective



endeavour, we will ensure the skies echo with the vibrant melodies of our feathered companions for generations to come.

## **Sujan Chatterjee**

*One reason that birds matter - ought to matter - is that they are our last, best connection to a natural world that is otherwise receding. They're the most vivid and widespread representatives of the Earth as it was before people arrived on it.*

*- Jonathan Franzen*





**MAJ B S PARIHAR**  
Treasurer BWS

### **TREASURER'S REPORT**

**A**s BWS completes five years of existence, we look forward to greater heights of observation, achievements and accomplishments in the present decade and beyond. What started with a small group of keen birdwatchers, has now grown into a revolution, thanks to the active participation of all the members.

While we expand our horizons, we must also look at sustainability, to ensure our existence beyond our lifetimes. Financial Year 2022-23 has been a remarkable year for us. Let me first present the Financial Statements for the Financial Year 2022-23, in brief, followed by some insights into our fiscal outlook:

1. During the year, our income (INR) from various sources were as under:

a. Subscription received from Members	-	4,77,806.00
b. Donations received from Others	-	32,000.00
c. Interest from Bank	-	5,493.00
d. Interest from Fixed Deposits	-	8,318.00

**Total - 5,23,617.00**

2. During the same period, the expenditure was as under:

a. Accounting Charges	-	6,000.00
b. Audit Fees	-	3,000.00
c. Bank Charges	-	2.38
d. Depreciation	-	26,962.00
e. General Expenses	-	3,500.00
f. Legal & Professional Fees	-	41,075.00
g. Magazine, Poster, Banner Expenses	-	52,604.00
h. Majua Annual Camp 2022 Expenses	-	2,00,000.00
i. Printing & Stationery	-	12,000.00



j.	Travelling & Conveyance	-	2,075.00
k.	Web Portal Expenses	-	33,847.00
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	<b>Total</b>	<b>-</b>	<b><u>3,86,065.38</u></b>

3. Excess of *Income over Expenditure* of **Rs. 1,37,551.62** has been recorded in the books of accounts for the Financial Year 2022-23.

4. In the Balance Sheet for the year ending 31 Mar 2023, we have:

Assets (INR):

a.	Fixed Assets (Telescopes)	-	1,52,782.00
b.	Current Assets (Bank Bal+FD+Cash)	-	5,11,787.66
			-----
			<u>6,64,569.66</u>

Liabilities (INR):

a.	Reserves and Surplus	-	4,68,152.04
b.	Current Liabilities	-	58,866.00
c.	Excess (Inc over Exp for FY 2022-23)	-	1,37,551.62
			-----
			<u>6,64,569.66</u>

5. The Audited Financial Statements for the Year 2022-23 are placed before the AGM for a Vote on Account.

6. During the year, certain important statutory approvals were taken from the appropriate authorities, paving the way for all our future endeavours.

- a. Exemption under Sec 12A of the IT Act.
- b. Exemption under Sec 80G of the IT Act.
- c. Registration of CSR1 under the Ministry of Corporate Affairs.

With these exemptions/registrations, BWS is now competent to apply for Research/Scientific Grants, seek Donations and our income shall be exempt from Income Tax.

7. Our popular newsletter, Fantail, is now a fully independent, self-sustaining, publication. We have dedicated funds for Fantail, sponsored by our partner, Ricoh Pentax India Limited.

8. Two recent developments have helped us to cement our resources further in the current Financial Year. One is a strategic tie-up with Ricoh Pentax India Limited, who has pledged their support to BWS with a grant of Rs. 3,00,000.00 and full scale optical support. BWS members can now purchase Pentax range of binoculars and scopes at a very attractive price. We have also lent our name to an organisation which conducts heritage walks in various cities in

India. Immersive Walks will conduct paid walks for their clients with the active support of BWS. With this development, we hope to remunerate our members, who wish to volunteer and lead such walks.

9. We have also formed a BWS Research Group, comprising of young scientists, who are keen to take up Research Projects under the BWS Banner. You will soon be hearing from this Group. All these projects will be financed through appropriate grants to cover all research activities. We hope to involve our enthusiastic members in various research activities in the future.

“Success is doing what you want, when you want, with whom you want, as much as you want.” We hope, each one of you, as a Birdwatcher and BWS, as a Society, grow by leaps and bounds, in the years to come. Long live BWS.

## Maj B. S. Parihar



## BIRD-WALKS through the year



## 2022-2023 UPDATES

**A**fter scores of zoom call filled 2020-21, we proudly reflect on the transformative year that followed, where we traded countless laptop and mobile screens for real-world connections. The past year was by far full of enthusiasm, positivity and camaraderie. The dauntless zeal was evident in the face-to-face interactions on and off the field. As a result, our flock grew stronger, and our shared passion for birds and nature united us in a powerful way. Together, we embarked on numerous meaningful and essential activities, all aligned with our Society's mission. From conservation initiatives to educational programs, we spread our wings and made a real impact in our community.

The spirit of togetherness and shared purpose continues to fuel our efforts, and we are excited about the possibilities that lie ahead. As we soar into the future, let us carry forward this sense of belonging and dedication, for it is through our collective endeavours that we will protect and celebrate the wonder of avian life.

*The key highlights of 2022-23 include –*

- ⊕ Bird-walks continued unrestrained and regularly throughout the year;
- ⊕ All local patches were visited through the monsoon months and into autumn;
- ⊕ From August visits started towards the coast of Bay of Bengal. The incoming migrants were recorded twice every month by members;
- ⊕ There was an uptrend in media coverage during the year;
- ⊕ Awareness for school children (teach the young) were conducted;
- ⊕ BARBET – BWS Rare Bird Alert Initiative - to document rare birds sighted within West Bengal.

This report covers the main activities of BWS through the year 2022-23 under the following sections –

1. Membership	7. Conservation
2. Bird Walks	8. Newsletter
3. Bird Talk / Seminar	9. Annual Birding Camp
4. Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC 2023)	10. BARBET – BWS Rare Bird Alert
5. Waterfowl Census	11. BWS in News / Media
6. Student Awareness Program	

## 1. Membership

Members are the lifeline of BWS. With unwavering dedication, they fuel the heartbeat of our Society, infusing it with life and purpose. From seasoned ornithologists to fledgling bird enthusiasts, their collective commitment drives us forward, transcending boundaries and unlocking new horizons in the world of birdwatching.

There has been a steady growth in membership during the year. At the end of the year, our membership count stood at 232 members.

The membership break-up as on March 31, 2023

- Total members - 232
- Student members - 24
- Life members - 7
- Ordinary members - 201

Beyond binoculars and field guides, our members are a community, a family bound by a shared love for birds and their habitat. They forge friendships, exchange knowledge, and nurture a sense of belonging that extends far beyond the confines of our meetings.

As we navigate the winds of change and welcome new horizons, we will always cherish the bond that unites us and remember that through their unwavering spirit, we can make a lasting difference in the world of avian conservation and citizen science.





## **2. Bird-walks & Monitoring**

Bird walks have been the bedrock of BWS's activity. To encourage people to learn about birds, all Bird-walks conducted by BWS are free and open to all. In the year 2022-23, BWS organised above 50 bird-walks. These Bird-walks serve dual purpose, they not only teach new birders about birdwatching, it also aids backyard Bird Monitoring. The following locations were visited through the year

<b>1) Gajoldoba Teesta Barrage</b>	<b>2) Diara Wetland</b>	<b>3) Saltlake Central Park (Banabitan)</b>
<b>4) Buxa Tiger Reserve</b>	<b>5) Bosipota Wetland</b>	<b>6) Rabindra Sarovar Lake (SafariPark)</b>
<b>7) Darjeeling Hills</b>	<b>8) Baruipur Marshes</b>	<b>9) Chintamani Kar Bird Sanctuary</b>
<b>10) Singalila National Park</b>	<b>11) Khoribari Wetlands</b>	<b>12) Fulbari Wetland</b>
<b>13) Mahananda Wildlife Sanctuary</b>	<b>14) Khisma Forest</b>	<b>15) Botanical Garden</b>
<b>16) Joka Wetlands</b>	<b>17) Jaguli Grassland</b>	<b>18) Singur (Land for Tata Project)</b>
<b>19) Dankuni Wetlands</b>	<b>20) Diara Wetlands</b>	<b>21) Nil-Nirjon Dam</b>
<b>22) Rajarhat Wetlands</b>	<b>23) Nalban – East Kolkata Wetlands</b>	<b>24) Durgapur Barrage</b>
<b>25) 3 trips were made to monitor winter migrants in Bakkhali between August and October</b>		

### **3. Bird Talks**

#### **Talking Birds with Oncologist**

On 21st January 2023, one of BWS's founding members, Kanad Baidya, along with member Mainak Das held a talk about birds at Tata Medical Centre in Newtown, Rajarhat. The hospital's doctor community and their families attended. On the following day (22nd January), all participants joined a bird walk by BWS in Newtown, Rajarhat.



#### **Bird Talk in the hills**

A bird talk was conducted at the college campus of 'Sanchaman Limboo Govt Degree College', Sikkim on 17th February 2023. Conducted by Bird





Count India, Birdwatchers' Society and Sikkim Birds, it was led by Dibyendu Ash (Member BWS) on behalf of BWS.

#### 4. Great Backyard Bird Count 2023

The Members of the society participated in the Annual Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) between February 18-22, 2022.

GBBC India is the Indian implementation of the global Great Backyard Bird Count, which runs for 4 days every February. Indian birders have participated in the GBBC since the event went worldwide in 2013. The 2022 edition of GBBC India engaged over **4,259** birders who uploaded over **53,750** checklists and recorded **1,072** species! The number of checklists submitted from West Bengal increased three folds in GBBC 2023.

## GBBC & CBC 2023





Date	GBBC Places & CBC Institutions	City / Town	District
17th February 2023 (Friday)	Sanchaman Limboo, Govt Degree College	Gyalshing	West
18th February 2023 (Saturday)	Sikkim Govt College	Namchi	South
19th February 2023 (Sunday)	Himalayan Zoological Park	Bulbuley, Gangtok	East
20th February 2023 (Monday)	Govt Sr Secondary School	Mangan	North

17th to 20th February 2023 GBBC and CBC was conducted across four districts in Sikkim. It was coordinated by Dibyendu Ash (Member BWS) and members of Sikkim Birds.



## 5. Waterfowl Census

Waterfowl (a.k.a Waterbirds) are a key part of wetland ecosystems. Their presence, numbers and trends at a site can tell us a lot about the health and quality of a wetland. Waterfowls have an important social function, providing food, recreation and tourism opportunities. The Waterfowl count is a global citizen science initiative perhaps the largest in the world.

The information so generated is used to identify wetlands of high importance for waterbirds, and take conservation measures such as designation as Ramsar Sites and Flyway Network Sites, or inclusion as priority wetlands within national programmes.

The census has three major objectives:

1. *Obtain information on an annual basis of waterbird populations at wetlands in the region during the non-breeding period of most species (January), as a basis for evaluation of sites and monitoring of populations.*
2. *Monitor on an annual basis the status and condition of wetlands.*
3. *Encourage greater interest in waterbirds and wetlands amongst people, and thereby promote the conservation of wetlands and waterbirds in the country and region.*



Birdwatchers' Society coordinates and conducts the waterfowl count in West Bengal during January – February each year. This waterfowl census, a major endeavour, was undertaken by 22 teams made up of BWS members. The teams visited 46 Wetland sites across the state and documented their observation on eBird.

## **6. Student Awareness Program**

Apart from the fact that children join the elders during the regular bird-walks, peer group initiatives often are more enjoyable, and therefore BWS is always keen to engage with schools students. 'Teach them Young' is an important mission of BWS. Young children exposed to nature tend to become better stewards of the environment. In addition field trips has important health benefits. If children learn to respect and care for the world they live in and the wildlife within it from a young age they will help to preserve it for the next generation. They will become advocates for protecting nature.

BWS encourages involvement of children in most of its activities. Such awareness programmes are conducted in the field, classrooms and through Quizzes too, which are a great way to attract children's attention.

- **Disappearing Dialogues – School**- Our Members Major B.S Parihar and Sujan Chatterjee act as resource persons for the students of 'Disappearing Dialogues Collectives' for bird-walks in East Kolkata Wetland (Nalban). During January 2023 a bird-walk was conducted. And later in February 2023, BWS participated in the school fair on environment at the Kheyadaha High School, South 24 Parganas (WB).



- **South Point School** - Members of the South Point School – Nature Club participated in a Bird-Walk by Birdwatchers' Society on 12 February 2023 at Rabindra Sarovar. About 40 students attended. Santanu Manna, Maj BS Parihar & Sudip Ghosh led the walk on behalf of BWS.



- **Sanchaman Limboo Govt Degree College** – Sikkim: On 17th February 2023 a bird-walk and seminar was conducted at the college seminar hall. Led by Dibyendu Ash of BWS, the Bird walk was conducted around the college campus. The interaction with students and their whole-hearted participation made the Campus Bird Walk a worthwhile event. Certificates were distributed to the participating students. This event was encouraged and supported by Principal Mr. Kishore Kumar Rai, Department Head of Tourism, Prof. Mrs. Dawa Doma Sherpa, Prof. Sangam Rai, Assistant Prof. Mr. Amit Rai and Mr. Nosang Muringla Limboo (Joint Secretary of SKM, Students' Wing).





## **7. Conservation**

Conservation of Bird habitats lies at the core of our mission at BWS - it's an unwavering commitment!

In the year under review, despite having limited funds at our disposal, we have harnessed the power of innovation and determination to drive our conservation initiatives with unparalleled zeal.

Our approach is two-fold. First and foremost, we are empowering citizen scientists, and passionate birdwatchers from all walks of life, to become the guardians of our avian friends. Through the remarkable eBird app, we train and encourage the general public to observe and record bird data, creating a vast treasure trove of seasonal information. We're talking about an army of enthusiastic eyes on the ground, making a real difference in preserving our wilderness areas and alerting us to any nefarious activities threatening our feathered companions.

The second prong of our strategy is to nurture and foster young, brilliant minds - those academically trained in the art of wildlife study. To these aspiring scientists, we proudly extend an invitation to use BWS as a platform for their research projects. We believe in fostering the next generation of wildlife conservation leaders, providing them with the perfect launchpad to make groundbreaking discoveries and push the boundaries of our understanding of avian ecology.

Together, we believe we can bring about positive and sustainable change for future generations.

## **8. BARBET - BWS RARE BIRD ALERT**

Purpose: "BARBET" - to Document rare birds sighted within West Bengal.

The need arose to document & archive rare birds/vagrants/escapees sighted in West Bengal for ready reference. While eBird, the citizen science initiative that maintains a global repository of all bird sightings, including the bird's range, exists, extracting the requisite data is often time-consuming and takes immense effort. On the other hand, there are several social media groups (Whatsapp, Telegram, Meta, X) where the general public shares such news. However, to receive the alert, one must be a member of the respective group. Moreover, this data is not readily available for analysis or studies in the longer run.

At BWS, we have started recording this data in Excel sheets collected from various public sources to keep a lookout and plan future activities. In the future, we intend to take a more scientific approach to the automatic collection, storage and dissemination of a rare bird sighting database which can aid in the study/analysis/graphic presentation of the trend of rare bird sightings in WB. We plan to drive the entire initiative



through our website and minimise data duplicity and other integrity issues.

## 9. Annual Birding Camp

The second annual BWS bird watching camp was organised over five days (December 17 to 21, 2022) near Majua under Darjeeling District of West Bengal. The camp was attended by a total of 26 enthusiastic members covering all age groups from college going students to retired seniors.



After the first annual camp that was organised in Purulia, the venue for the second camp was carefully chosen to offer a different kind of biosphere in which to observe birds and also to explore a relatively less known birding destination of West Bengal in early winter. Apart from the



above par hospitality organised by some of the members themselves,

both the locations offered excellent birding opportunities from the campus itself.

The evenings in the camp were spent in the cosy atmosphere of the large sitting area of Aranyabaas, discussing serious matters in a friendly and healthy atmosphere. While one evening was devoted exclusively to exchange of ideas among members about the society and its future path, another evening was devoted to a presentation by founder member Dr Kanad Baidya, on bird nests and their scientific studies.

Another evening was spent watching the delightful presentation by naturalists Mridulkanti Kar and Sourav Mandal on the flora and fauna of the area around their homestay Warbler's Nest. Sourav, who is a herpetologist and conducts herping tours in the area in monsoon, regaled the members with his stories and photographs of the rich natural history of the reptiles of the area.

The camp ended on the morning of 21<sup>st</sup> December 2022.

## 10. Newsletter

During the year FANTAIL the official eNewsletter of the Birdwatchers' Society completed its second year of publication. In all four (quarterly) issues were released during the year. Readership of Fantail has been impressive. Please find herewith a brief snapshot of the readership –



The other significant milestone of FANTAIL has been achieving financial self-sufficiency during the year. The publishing costs have been funded through a partnership with merchant-partner advertisement.





Making available Print-versions on demand and Newsletter (RNI) registration are amongst the activities to be taken up in the next year.

## 11.BWS in News - Media

Birdwatchers' Society has been making news over 2022-23 year, and how!

# Students, walkers get birding tips at Lake

Our first Bird Walk for Public Education was held in Rabindra Sarobar on 4th Dec, 2022. Several children and their parents and teachers joined in too for the inaugural walk. The event



The group walks through Rabindra Sarobar on Sunday



was reported on **5th December, in the Times of India** accompanied by

## **Kolkata: Birders fume over 300 camera fee at Central Park**

a nice picture of the birding activity.

The other incident where BWS found mention was the sudden imposition of a steep fee for using cameras inside Banabitan, Central Park, Salt Lake where the Secretary and our member, Navin Agarwal, were in the news registering their concern that this would discourage birders and would eventually lead to reduced monitoring of bird activity within the park. That issue remains unresolved till date.

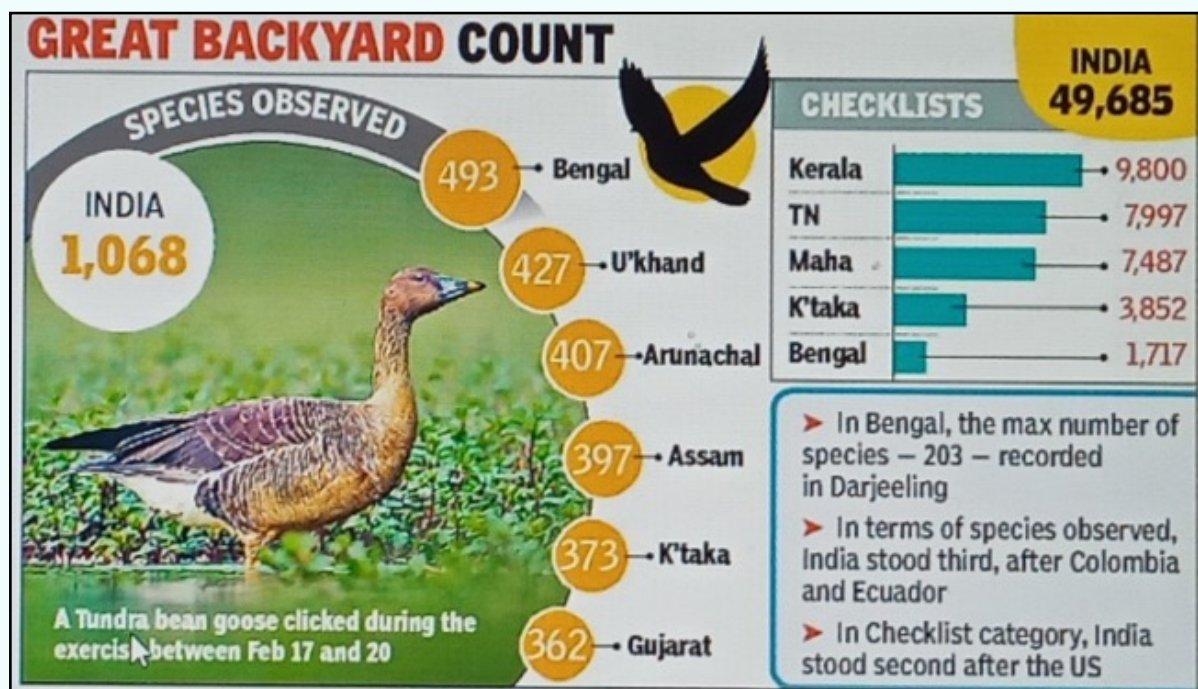
কালিহাঁস ফিরেছে তিস্তার  
কনকনে জলে, কমছে ভূতিহাঁস

The sighting of Greater Scaup in Gajoldoba during the Annual Waterfowl Census, in which BWS members actively participated across the state found mention in **TOI and Anandabazar Patrika on 17<sup>th</sup> January, 2023** along with a brief statement from our President.

The third Public Bird Walk, in Newtown, Rajarhat on 19<sup>th</sup> January, 2023 too made news while voicing concern about the progressive whittling of habitat in the area.

BWS was again in the news over the Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) held between 17<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> February, 2023, when West Bengal reported the highest species record for India at 493 species. This record was published on 27<sup>th</sup>, February when the data collected by Cornell Lab of Ornithology was published.

*With 493 species, Bengal tops  
India list in global birding event*



Beyond the press, couple of rare birds sighted in Kolkata found mention in Indian Birds during the year 2022-23 -

**Priyam Chattopadhyay (Member BWS):** Publication of sighting in **Indian BIRDS Vol.18 No 6 (Publ . 2 June 2023)**

**Lanceolated Warbler Baraipur Marshes, South24 Parganas, West Bengal. February 2022**

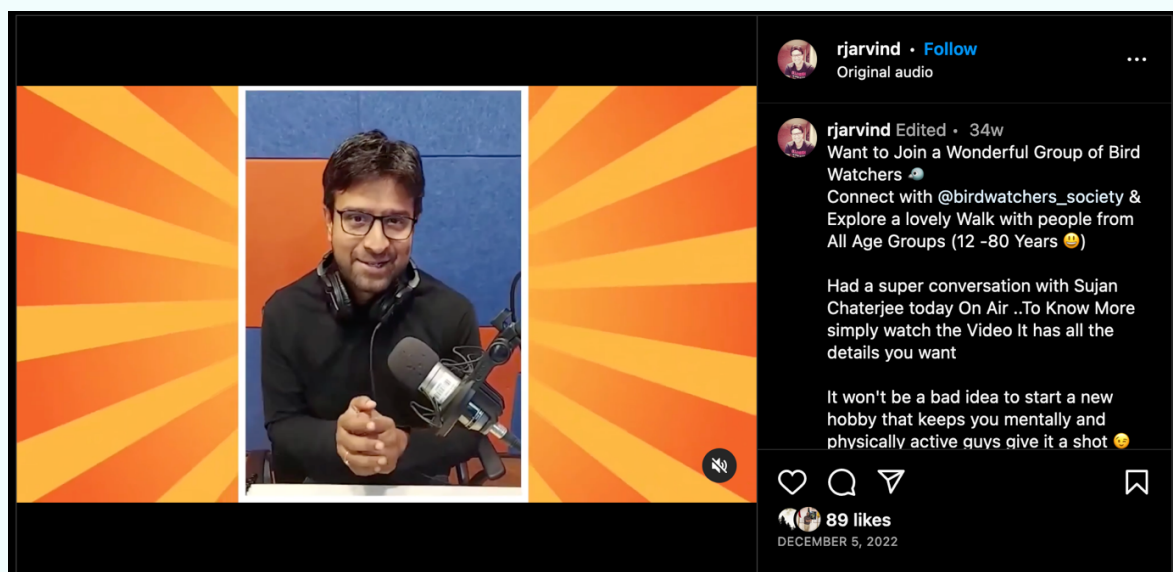


**Sandip Das (Founder – Member BWS):** Publication of sightings of Wedge-tailed Shearwater from West Bengal in **Indian BIRDS Vol.18 No. 2 (Publ.30 July 2022)**



Wedge-tailed Shearwater - Recovered on 26.5.2021

**BWS Secretary Sujan Chatterjee was on air** in a chit-chat with RJ Arvind of 94.3 Radio One on Dec05, 2022



To manage this activity better a dedicated team under the leadership of Dr Anirban Bhaduri & Dr Kanad Baidya along with other members have come together to regularly scans news media posts for any coverage about BWS and create an archive.

\*\*\*END - OF - REPORT\*\*\*