

FANTAIL NEWSLETTER

Volume 4 | Issue No. 4 | April - June 2025

Birdwatchers'
Society

FANTAIL
BIRDWATCHERS' SOCIETY NEWSLETTER
Volume 4 | Issue No. 4 | April-June 2025



WINGS OF
MAGINATION

Birds in Arts & Expressions

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PERSPECTIVE



Courtesy: Aindrila Sarkar Deb

“

No better way is there to learn to love Nature than to understand Art. It dignifies every flower of the field. And, the boy who sees the thing of beauty which a bird on the wing becomes when transferred to wood or canvas will probably not throw the customary stone.

Oscar Wilde ”

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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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Wings of Imagination: Birds in Arts and Expressions

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EDITORIAL

Hello Readers,



To draw a bird, one must become the wind that lifts its wings.

Pablo Picasso



As winter recedes and the crisp winds whisper through bare branches, we are delighted to present the latest issue of FANTAIL, themed “Wings of Imagination: Birds in Arts & Expressions”. This edition celebrates the timeless connection between birds and human creativity, a bond that has inspired artists, poets, and visionaries for centuries.

Birds, with their grace and freedom, have long been muses in the world of art. From classical paintings to evocative poetry, they have symbolized hope, transcendence, and the mysteries of nature. Our understanding of birds intertwines with artistic expression, bridging science, culture, and imagination. At the heart of FANTAIL is a community of passionate bird lovers and artists.

The Magic of Avian Inspiration

Throughout history, birds have represented the human spirit’s yearning for freedom. In ancient mythology, they were messengers of the gods, bridging the divine and mortal worlds. Artists have captured their essence in countless ways—a swan gliding over still waters, a peacock fanning its resplendent tail, an eagle soaring against a vast sky. Each image evokes wonder, contemplation, and reverence for nature.

This issue showcases contributions from renowned artists, illustrators, and writers, weaving together stunning visuals and compelling narratives. We explore diverse artistic interpretations of birds, from **Mughal Art & Its Celebration of Wildlife** by Arijit Banerjee to a tribute to **JP Irani**, the legendary painter and ornithologist. **Dr. Ahsan Qureshi**, **Sangeetha Kadur**, and **Niharika Rajput** share their artistic journeys, while **Dr Saurabh Kalia** and **Satyajit Datta** explore sculpture and origami in avian art. We also honour **Oiva Toikka’s** visionary glasswork and feature a stunning painting by **Kazi Nasir**.

Bengali Section: A Tapestry of Culture and Creativity

This issue's Bengali section features three compelling pieces. Aindrila Sarkar Deb presents a fascinating historical fiction, পাখির ডানায় রঙের গল্প: উস্তাদ মনসুরের চিত্রকলা (Bird Paintings of Ustad Mansur), Lina Chatterjee presents মন ও বুনন (Mind & Knitting), explores how knitting serves as an expressive medium for resilience and emotional well-being. Biswa Ranjan Goswami delves into ভারতীয় শিল্প ও সংস্কৃতিতে পাখি (Birds in Indian Art and Culture), offering an insightful exploration of birds' presence in traditional Indian heritage.

A Season of Growth: School of Birds and other activities

During the period of December 2024 – February 2025, our School of Birds initiative has made rapid strides. It is heartening to note that 1260 children have spent 3700 contact hours in our School of Birds programs. This winter we witnessed a significant acceleration in our activities, including Bird Camps, National Bird Day Outreach, Bird Walks, and Backyard Birding, culminating in GBBC 2025. We present a detailed roundup of these inspiring events in this issue. Finally, as a testament to dedication and creativity we present **Perspectives** by Aindrila and Titash, their pun & insights, including a meticulously crafted **Crossword by Hiya**. The inside back cover painting has been done by Dr Saptarshi Majumdar. Their efforts enrich this issue, engaging readers with both thought and delight.

Let Your Imagination Take Flight

As you turn these pages, may you find inspiration in the beauty, symbolism, and creativity that birds bring to our world. They remind us to dream, explore, and appreciate the wonders around us. We hope this issue fills you with the same sense of awe that birds instill in our hearts.

Until next time, let your imagination take flight!

Warm regards,

The Editorial Team at FANTAIL



MUGHAL ART AND ITS CELEBRATION OF WILDLIFE

ARIJIT BANERJEE

A

nimals and for that plants have travelled across cultures for centuries, and have been assimilated in different ways. The Peacock symbolises Hera, the Greek goddess while Baobab, *Adansonia digitata* is worshipped as 'Kalpvriksh' in Western India.



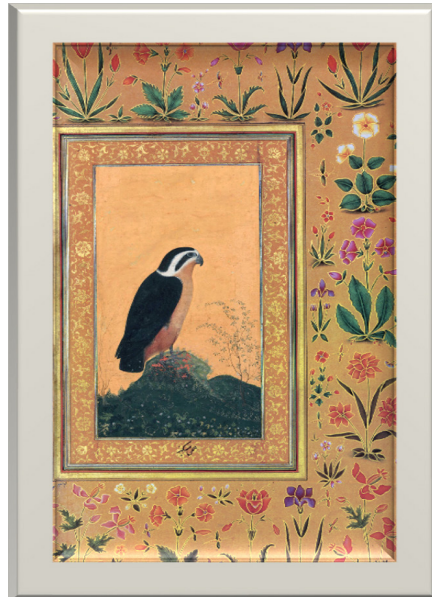
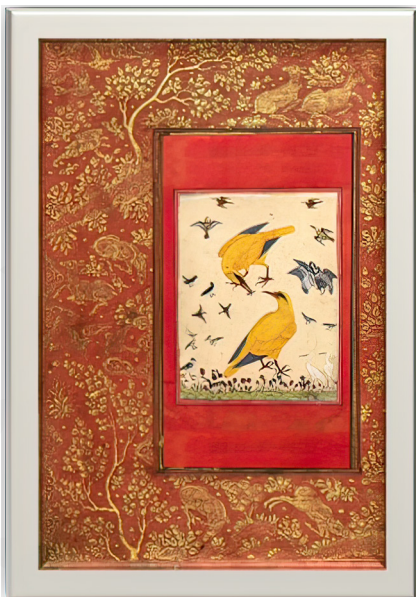
In Hinduism, floral and animal references are constant. The Lotus, for example emerges in various interpretations all through history. Monuments that survive, are the ones made of stone and depict floral art and animal iconography. So is it of Buddhism, a much more austere religion, and of Jainism. Perhaps in pre-Islamic times many palaces and buildings were of wood. Understandably, these never survived. The most noteworthy of surviving iconography recognisable to all is the Ashokan Lion Capital which also has the Lotus.

Early Indo-Islamic powers drew their cultural heritage from Persia and Arabia. Floral motifs, in all their finery were carved and drawn, and matched with calligraphy in Persian and Arabic. Many Indo-Islamic artworks incorporated pre-Islamic Indian symbols, such as elephants and peacocks, which held religious

or auspicious significance. Fusion styles emerged in architecture, with Hindu artisans contributing their skills to Islamic monuments, leading to syncretic designs featuring animals in a decorative capacity. In the later parts, depictions of birds, deer, and other animals in an illustrative style blending Persian and indigenous Rajput elements. Sultanate paintings showed rulers engaging in battle and hunts with cheetahs, elephants and falcons.

The late Henry Wilson, in his book, *Floral patterns of India*, takes the reader through the various stages of evolution of art in India. He connects how modern day textile and pattern preferences in the sub-continent are faithful to the time tested lineage in using flowers, plants and leaves in aesthetics

The Mughal Empire (1526–1857) marked a golden age of artistic refinement, where nature and wildlife played a central role in art and aesthetics. Mughal rulers, particularly Akbar, Jahangir, and Shah Jahan, were fascinated by the natural world and patronized artists to document and celebrate its beauty. Their painters created intricate miniatures that depicted animals, birds, and lush landscapes, blending artistic brilliance with scientific observation. Calligraphy, florals and animal/ human iconography came together to form exquisite depictions of social commentary and natural history.



Mughal miniature paintings, influenced by Persian, Indian, and Central Asian traditions, often featured scenes of royal hunts, exotic animals, and naturalistic studies of flora and fauna. Emperor Jahangir, known for his keen interest in natural history, personally supervised artists who created detailed illustrations of animals such as elephants, deer, lions, and birds. These paintings were not only decorative but also served as scientific records, reflecting the empire's appreciation of biodiversity.

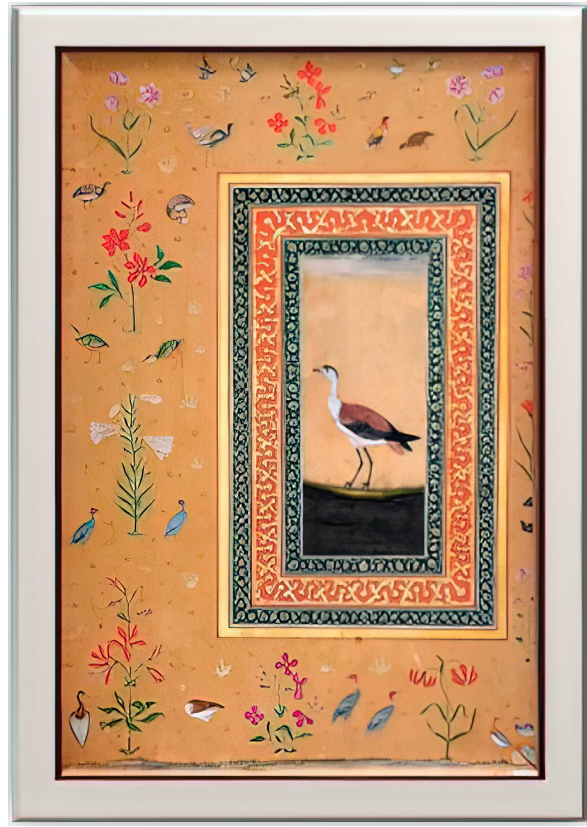
Wildlife also found expression in Mughal architecture and decorative arts. Intricate carvings of animals and floral motifs adorned palaces, mosques, and gardens, symbolizing power, harmony, and the beauty of nature. The Mughal gardens, inspired by Persian *charbagh* designs, often housed exotic animals and birds, further blending art with nature.

While many of the existing artwork, housed in museums and private collections world over are miniatures, the Mughals had a fine tradition in curating books. The *Kitabhkhana* was a library meant for hand painted, hand bound tomes meant for personal consumption and heirlooms to be passed on. Hence many of the drawings which exist as entire sheets are asymmetric to allow proper binding into a book. Babur, fascinated by the newly conquered land and its variety commissioned his memoirs *Waqi'at-i baburi* in Chagtay Turkish. This was translated into Persian by Zahir-ud-din Mohammed Babur and touched up exquisitely – the *Baburnamah*. Akbar however was volumes included *Hamzanama*, *Anwar-i -Suhayli*, *Tutinama*, and more. The tradition was continued by rulers who followed Babur, notably Jahangir and Shah Jehan.

It is said, brushes were made out of squirrel hair, at times single hair of a squirrel while the pigments were mineral and vegetable in origin. At times, gold and silver leaf were used as embellishments. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, has in its collection what is known as Kevorkian Album. 50 leaves of the finest Mughal art and calligraphy. 39 of the leaves date from 17th century and the rest from the early 19th century. These were probably bound together in India.

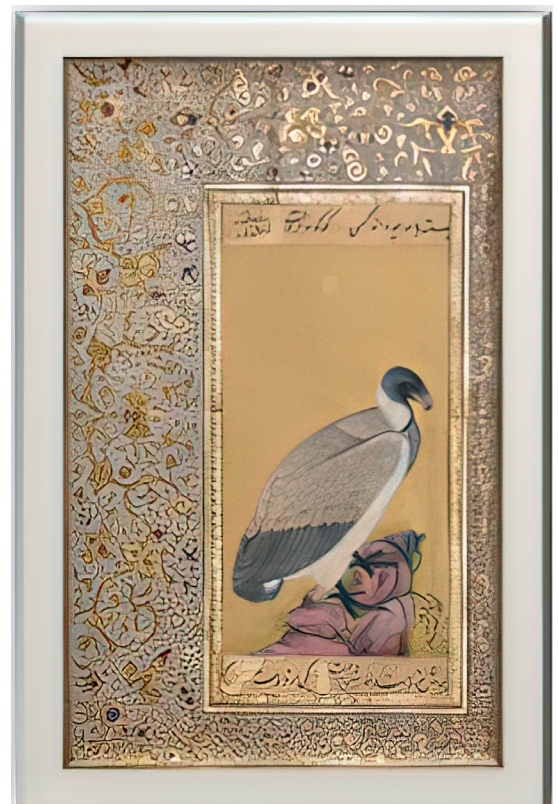
There is a school of thought that suggests that the final painting was not the work of one artist. The main subject was drawn and painted, and then handed over to others for decorations. Then it was given to experts who did the borders. The borders were called *Hashiya*. A set of line drawings, *Naqshanawis*. These borders often featured delicate vines, blooming flowers, and intertwining foliage, symbolizing the harmony between nature and art. Some borders contained repeating geometric designs, often painted in gold and contrasting colors. These added a regal elegance to the paintings. In some cases, Mughal





artists or court scribes added Persian or Arabic calligraphy in the borders, providing descriptions of the animal or poetic verses praising nature. A sophisticated technique involved using multiple layers of framing, where an inner painted border would depict small animals, birds, or hunting scenes, followed by an outer floral or goldleaf border. Once ready, the dimensions were perfected so that the drawings could be mounted.

So who were these artists who made up the royal atelier? Many names we shall never know. Some, however, are renowned. And there have been a few copy cats over the years.



One of the most celebrated artists of the Mughal era, Ustad Mansur was a master of animal and bird illustration. He served under Emperor Akbar but gained prominence during the reign of Jahangir, who had a deep interest in natural history. Mansur meticulously painted rare and exotic creatures brought to the Mughal court, such as the Dodo, Siberian Crane, Bengal Tiger, and Cheetah. His works, often labelled as “*Naqsh-e-Mansur*” (designed by Mansur), combined artistic beauty with scientific accuracy, making them valuable records of extinct and endangered species today. On examining Mansur’s Siberian Crane drawing in the Indian Museum, in the presence of E B Havell, (then Principal of the Government Art School, Calcutta), Abanindranath Tagore had famously remarked that ‘*My word! As if a live Crane was in front of me. What incredible detail in the wrinkled skin of the legs and the tiny feathers sticking to its sharp claws... why did I agonize so long about finding proper indigenous material to emulate!*’ But where

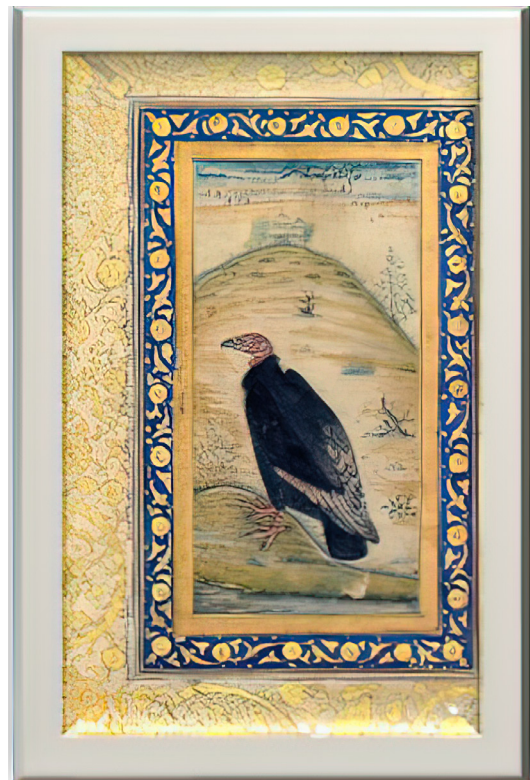
did Mansur see the Crane? There was no Bharatpur Ghana. There was however, a large lake next to Fatehpur Sikri however. How far is Sikri from Bharatpur?





Another notable painter in Jahangir's court, Abu-ul-Hasan—was known for his richly detailed compositions, including portraits of animals in their natural settings. His works often combined wildlife with human subjects, creating a narrative of royal grandeur and nature's splendour. Hasan was honoured with the title “*Nadir-ul-Zaman*” (Wonder of the Age) for his artistic brilliance.

Govardhan was a prominent artist who worked under Akbar, Jahangir, and Shah Jahan. Though primarily known for his portraits of nobles and ascetics, he also created stunning depictions of animals and hunting scenes. His style reflected a blend of Persian, Indian, and European influences, making his wildlife paintings particularly detailed and expressive.



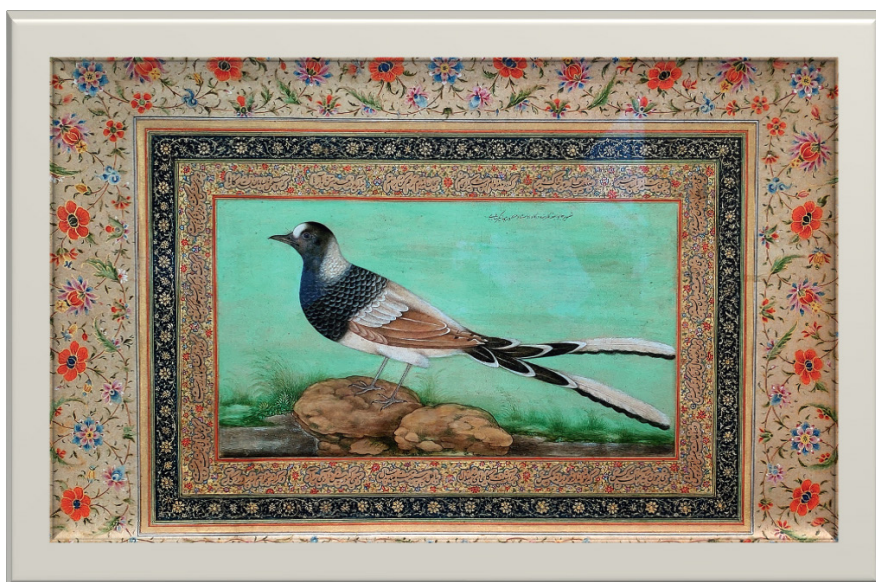
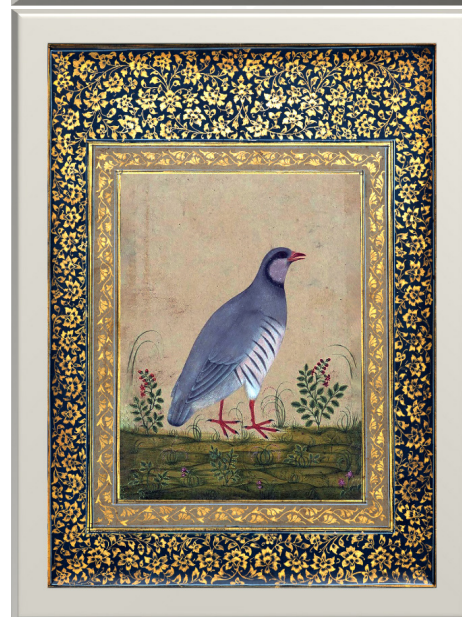
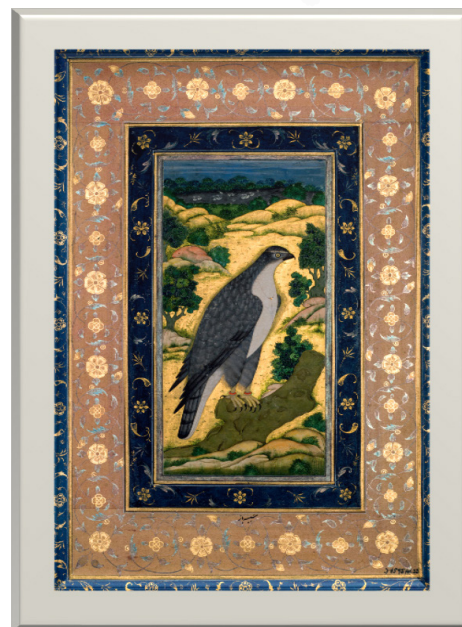
Manohar, trained in Akbar's imperial atelier, was skilled in illustrating animals, especially in dynamic hunting and battle scenes. His compositions often showed the Mughal emperors engaging with nature whether hunting deer, taming elephants, or admiring exotic birds. His mastery of shading and perspective gave his wildlife illustrations a unique sense of realism.

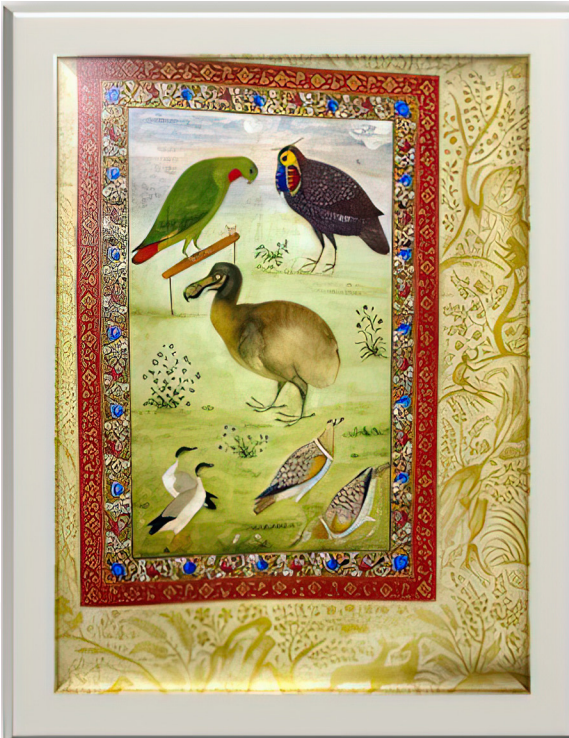
Basawan was one of the most innovative artists in Akbar's court and contributed significantly to Mughal naturalistic painting. Though he was primarily a portraitist, he infused life into his depictions of animals and birds, capturing their movements and expressions with extraordinary precision. His use of light and shadow brought a dramatic effect to wildlife compositions, making them stand out in the Mughal artistic tradition.

It is common and understandable to see commonly seen birds and animals in the Mughal portfolios. The Nilgai, or Chukhar or Black Francolin must have been observed on the royal grounds. And then there were menageries and aviaries where all sorts of animals and birds native and exotic were kept for amusement. The Royal falconers would have Northern Goshawks and Shaheen Falcons. Sometimes, the artist could observe the bird in habitat. Discussions with royal chroniclers would also provide inputs. The sub-continent had far more Lions and Tigers and Cheetahs than it has today and hunts and shikar were held regularly.

While some of the drawings are evidently birds of fancy -dragons and phoenix like apparitions, some are evidently imported. The Turkey and even the Dodo features in Mughal paintings. So does the fighting Aseel breed of chicken.

One would wonder where are these paintings today. Many have been lost to time. Some would surely be private homes. Others in vaults or displayed in various museums. The Siberian Crane of Mansur is in the Indian Museum in Kolkata. The Dodo is in the Hermitage in St. Petersburg. The Tame Blackbuck painting is in





Sawai Man Singh-II Museum in Jaipur. The Nilgai by Mansur is in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Despite being fond of Rohu, Jehangir talks about a salt water fish from the Sindh estuary. Abul Fazl had compared the *Palwah* (Pallo in Sindhi) with the Hilsa of Bengal. The drawing is in ASI Collection in the Red Fort. The Chester Betty Library-Dublin, The Museum of Islamic Art-Doha, and many other museums own these drawings. City Palace Museum in Jaipur has a fine collection, especially of Birds.

Acknowledgements:

Nothing in this article is original but have been dealt in detail in various scholarly articles and richly illustrated volumes at various points of time. I have referred to 'Wonder of Nature - Ustad Mansur at the Mughal Court' by Asok Kumar

Das published by The Marg Foundation, Mumbai; 'The Emperors Album' - The Metropolitan Museum of Art 1987; 'Floral Patterns of India' - Henry Wilson (he gifted me a copy when we met last in 2015);. My personal discussions with Shri Valmik Thapar when he was doing up his two volume work on wildlife and medieval art (published as a limited edition set) were eye-opening as were my interactions with Shri Harshvardhanji of TWSI, Jaipur who happily shared his collection of reference books. I would like to thank them all.



About Author

Arijit Banerjee

Arijit is an Indian Forest Service Officer (Rajasthan Cadre). Though a botanist by education and a forester by training, birding as a hobby transcends his education and training.



JP IRANI: THE ARTIST WHO BROUGHT INDIA'S BIRDS TO LIFE

AMITAVA DUTTA
Dr KANAD BAIDYA

An issue on 'Wings of Imagination: Birds in Arts & Expressions' would be incomplete without honouring the pioneering bird illustrators of India—those unsung visionaries whose brushstrokes and meticulous details breathed life into avian beauty long before the digital age. While exploring this theme, I was fortunate to receive a valuable reference from Dr Asad Rahmani, who directed me to a name unfamiliar to many but deeply significant in the world of bird illustration—*Jamshed P Irani*.

“

Mr JP Irani is one of India's foremost bird illustrators and has contributed his illustrations in many books published by the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS).

He is also a good illustrator of human portraits and has painted classical paintings of Dr Salim Ali, Mr Humayun Abdulali, and Mr JC Daniel, all gratis, as his contribution to BNHS.

His paintings adorn Hornbill House, the headquarters of BNHS. I have the privilege of knowing him personally, and we regularly exchange notes.

ASAD RAHMANI

”

A quest of this nature demanded careful exploration, and I was privileged to be guided by my colleague in the editorial team, Dr Kanad Baidya – a true polymath whose expertise spans philately, bird records, and historical archives. His keen eye for detail and remarkable ability to unearth forgotten narratives

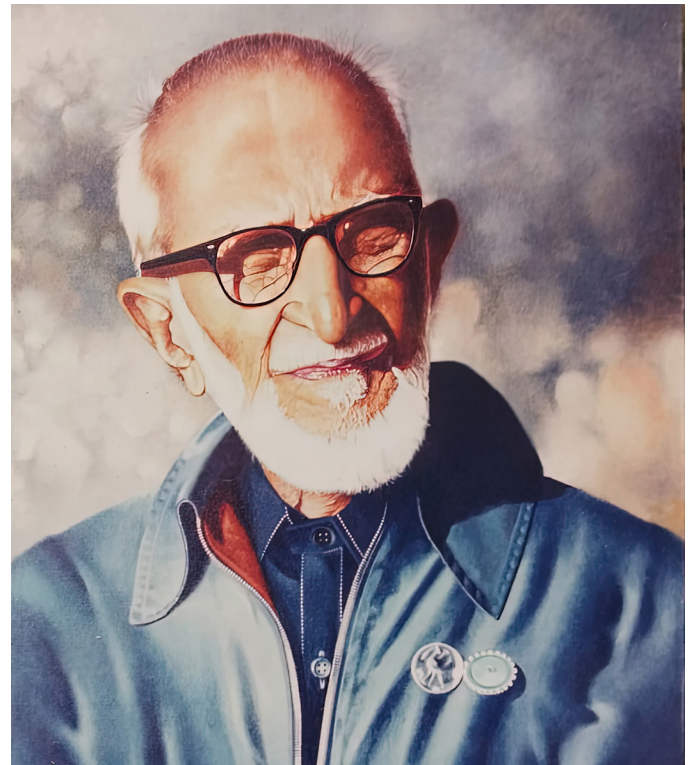
Header Photo: Plates designed by JP Irani for the 'Handbook of the Birds of India and Pakistan' (Salim Ali & S Dillon Ripley)

proved invaluable. In many ways, Dr Baidya reminds me of ‘Shidhu Jyatha’ from the Feluda series – a walking encyclopaedia with an uncanny ability to recall even the rarest of facts and weave them into compelling stories.

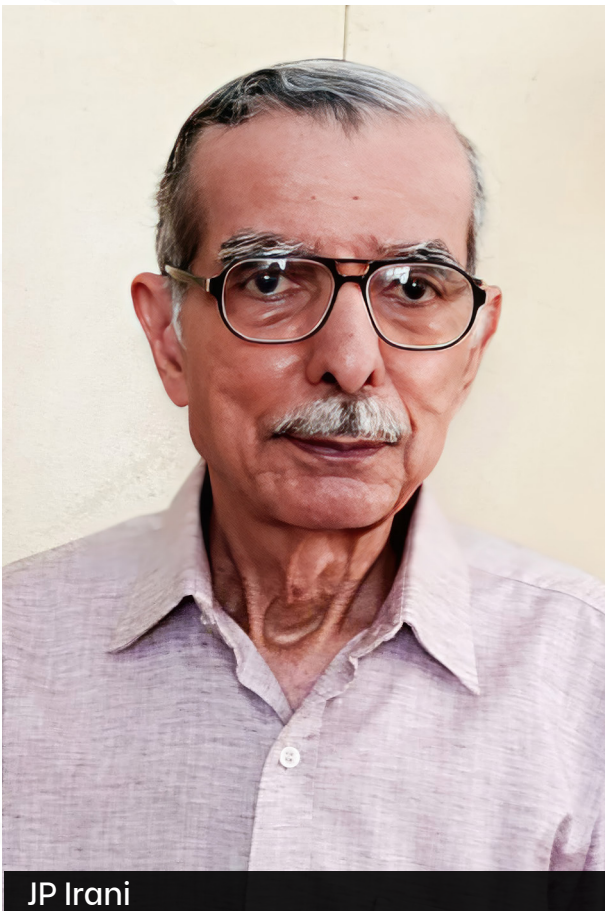
With Dr Rahmani’s reference and Dr Baidya’s insights, I reached out – somewhat hesitantly – to the octogenarian Mr J P Irani. True to the grace of a gentleman from a pre-internet era, Mr Irani responded with warmth and enthusiasm. His reply was prompt and courteous, embodying an old-world charm rarely seen today: “I will surely share a short write-up,” he assured me.

With that simple yet generous promise, Dr Baidya and I, embarked on an explorative voyage – tracing his exquisite illustrations, uncovering hidden archives, and piecing together the remarkable story of JP Irani, an artist whose work continues to enchant and inspire.

SO HERE IS MR JP IRANI IN HIS OWN WORDS ON HOW IT ALL STARTED.



Portrait of Dr Salim Ali by JP Irani Courtesy : JP Irani



JP Irani

HOW I MET DR SALIM ALI

For his monumental 10-volume work, “Handbook of the Birds of India and Pakistan”, Dr Salim Ali sought an Indian artist to paint bird plates. All other plates are by foreign artists. On the advice of his friend, he wrote to the late Prabhakar Barve, an eminent fine art artist. As Barve was not interested, he forwarded the letter to me. After an appointment in the evening, I got down at Pali Hill, Bandra.

This was probably 1962, it was rainy season, and with heavy gum shoes, an umbrella, and a few bird books to impress him, I was exhausted on reaching 33 Pali Hill at 7:30 pm as it was at the other end of Mumbai, from where I started. I had been given two bird skins to paint. He was satisfied with my creation. This began my routine of travelling every Sunday from Byculla, changing two local trains and a bus, rain or shine. After making pencil sketches for each plate under his guidance, I would take them home to paint.

I did nine plates and one map for the Handbook. I also made some plates for “Birds of Eastern Himalayas” and the “Book of Indian Birds”.

Dr Salim Ali lived with his sister and brother-in-law, who were very gracious. On every occasion, I would have lunch with them. Sometimes Dr Salim Ali would say, “Come, Irani, I will drop you at the station”, and give me a ride in his Sunbeam motorbike with a sidecar. I addressed him as Doctor. He had no private secretary and typed the whole day. Later, the government provided a secretary, Archana. Dr Ali was extraordinarily humble and easily approachable.

The King of Bhutan, Jigme-Dorji, was his friend and wanted Bhutan bird stamps designed. I designed 5 stamps. The Department of Posts, Govt. of India, contacted Mr. Dhirubhai Mehta, President of Indian Philately, for stamps on Indian birds. Mr. Dhirubhai contacted Dr Salim Ali. I designed 4 bird stamps. Later I designed 32 stamps for the Dept. of Posts, Govt. of India, including the Centenary Stamp for Bombay Natural History Society, which was released by Mrs Indira Gandhi, Prime Minister of India.



I am very fortunate to have worked for Dr Salim Ali for two years.

JAMSHED P IRANI



Whether you are a seasoned birder or a beginner, this article stands as a tribute to a masterful artist whose brush and pencil immortalised the beauty of birds, captivating generations before us.

JAMSHED P IRANI – BRINGING BIRDS TO LIFE

JP Irani is a distinguished illustrator and ornithologist associated with the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS). He collaborated closely with Dr Salim Ali, contributing significantly to ornithological studies and publications.

Born on September 6, 1938, he has been associated with the BNHS for over 50 years. A seasoned commercial artist, he dedicated 32 years of his career to Larsen & Toubro before retiring in 1996. His passion for ornithology and illustration led him to work extensively with BNHS, where his detailed illustrations enriched various publications, aiding in the documentation and study of India’s avian diversity. In recognition of his contributions to ornithology, Irani was honoured with the ‘Salim Ali-Loke Wan Tho’ Award.



In 1965 Dr Salim Ali on his own initiative established the Salim Ali – Lok Wan Tho Ornithological Research Fund at BNHS to support advanced research on birds. The fund was named in honour of both Dr Ali and his late friend, Loke Wan Tho a fellow bird enthusiast from Singapore

LOKE WAN THO



Irani's collaboration with Dr Salim Ali was instrumental in advancing ornithological research in India. His meticulous illustrations complemented Dr Ali's scientific observations, resulting in comprehensive studies invaluable to researchers and bird enthusiasts. Beyond his professional endeavours, Irani is known for his dedication to nature conservation and education. His legacy continues to inspire future generations in the fields of ornithology and natural history illustration.

BIRDS IN INDIAN PHILATELY

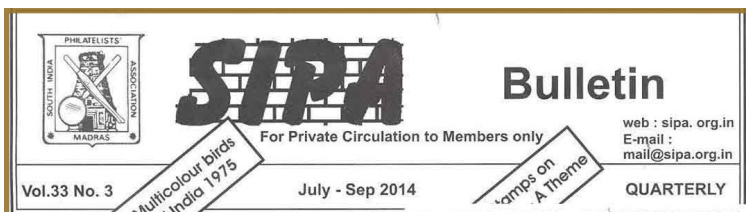
The India Stamp Journal published by South India Philately Association (SIPA) - Volume 33, No 3, July-Sep 2014 pages 35-37, carries an article by the renowned Mr Dhirubhai Mehta on Multi-colour Birds of India. This article chronicles the historical milestone of the release of the first set of bird stamps at the Hornbill House of BNHS in 1975.

Mr Mehta quotes, *"The stamps were formally presented to Dr Salim Ali and JP Irani (Designer) at the function in Bombay by Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma, Minister of Communications who specially came down to Bombay to be present at the function and participate in the ceremonies for the release. The set of four stamps are in the denomination of 25p Indian Pitta, 50p Black-headed Oriole, Rs 1.00/- Western Tragopan, and Rs 2.00/- Monal Pheasant. Two stamps are in vertical and two in horizontal."*



The First set of Indian Stamps on Birds – Designer: JP Irani
From Dr Kanad Baidya Collection

The entire article makes an interesting reading into the intricacies that went into the art of stamp design and the equally complex work of printing.



A Stamp is born...

MULTI COLOUR BIRDS FROM INDIA

DHIRUBHAI MEHTA

The beautiful multicoloured set of bird stamps, the second in the series for Birds, had a ceremonious send off in Bombay on April 28, 1975 at the Hornbill House. The Bombay Natural History Society who hosted the function for the release of the stamps were highly appreciative of the design, the colour scheme etc. and have since been well received.

The stamps were formally presented to Dr. Salim Ali and J. P. Irani (Designer) at the function in Bombay by

July - Sep 2014

Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma, Minister of communications, who specially came to Bombay to be present at the function and participate in the ceremonies for the release. Mr. Dajendra Singh, Senior Member (Postal Operations), P & T Board and other senior officers of the Post Office and leading philatelists were also present.

The set of four stamps is in the denominations of 25 p (Indian Pitta), 50 p (Black-headed Oriole), Rs. 1/- (Whistling Thrush) and Rs. 2/- (Monal Pheasant). Two stamps are in vertical format and two in horizontal. The selection of the colourful birds goes well in the set.

Indian Pitta (25 p) is a greyish-brown like passerine bird possessing a loud clear whistle, found throughout Peninsular India. Black-headed Oriole (50 p) is brilliant golden-yellow and black bird found almost throughout India, moving singly or in pairs they make a charming noise. Whistling Thrush (Rs. 1/-) is one of the most colourful of the four species of thrushes or horned pheasants inhabiting the Himalayan ranges. The cock has a highly iridescent metallic black plumage while the hen is a plain-looking mottled brown bird.

The story behind the multicolour bird stamps is fascinating and will make interesting reading. Behind the issue is the hard labour put in by the designer, the technical expertise, assistance and care in the selection of the birds appeared on the stamps provided by the experts, the careful work of the Design Sub-committee and the printing at the Security Press which has already made the bird set popular. The Nasik Security Press had the co-operation of Metal Printers Co., of Bombay who helped in colour scanning etc. which gave the true colour reproduction of the original designs.

India is endowed with a wide variety of birds known for their forms and colour the variety of their movements and swiftness of their songs. These birds are ever a source of beauty and joy and make the environment colourful, happy and gay. It was therefore decided by the P & T Department to issue a set of stamps on birds. After having installed the multicolour plant several multicolour stamps were planned and the bird set was one of them. In 1968, while the 1968 series was well appreciated by the collectors at home and abroad mainly due to the multicolour effect of the stamps which were produced on two colour photographs it is believed that the limitations of the Nasik Press did not do justice to the colourful birds of India. It was also felt that, the new series of bird stamps would be very popular and should receive a warm welcome from all quarters. The added aid of the designers were the Natural History people.

When the multicolour printing plant at the India Security Press was commissioned, it was felt that the vast and colourful flora and fauna of the country be depicted on

rough designs were submitted by the artist a choice for four designs was made.

A meeting was then arranged with the artist, the writer and Dr. Salim Ali to select a bird which was the bird stamp issued by different postal administrations were issued and discussed a great length. Mr. Irani himself also interested in bird stamps and has collected a large page variety of them which were very useful. As from prepared sketches, the layout and the design under the supervision of Dr. Salim Ali, by August 14, 1975, four submitted four designs and three of them were chosen. Of September 24 which were then considered at the Design Sub-committee, which met by the end of September 24 and selected the designs of the four birds, the Indian Pitta, Black-headed Oriole, Whistling Thrush and Monal Pheasant.



The Design Sub-committee members appreciated the designs. The designs were much better than the colour of the birds and there were hardly any adverse comments. The selected four birds, the colour scheme and the shape of the stamps were kept in view with the result that there were few difficulties and the stamps were issued.

During one of his private visits to Nasik, Mr. Irani visited the Security Press to study the conditions of the Press and discussed with Mr. Chitra, Dr. Manoj, Designers in the four points of the bird designs. Mr. Irani who was very much interested in the work for stamp, the period (month) were done by him under the general supervision of Dr. Salim Ali, as also the final other designs.

The Design Sub-committee wanted the right having chosen the four important four designs. The designs for the stamps were finalised. The final art work was produced by Mr. Irani on three of the four stamp sets.

July - Sep 2014

In the multicolour work for the bird stamps, it was a very difficult problem to get the various colours and therefore the assistance of the Metal Printers Company of Bombay was sought. They have colour scanning machine which was very useful. The metal Printers Co. wrote to me that they had given a complete guide for converting the art work into a colour transparency so that no details of the original work would be lost and the colour balance maintained. These transparencies were operated by them on their Colour Scanner, utilising their research in respect of neutral grey balance having the perfect gradation keeping in view the original transparency and also the fine details are not lost.

In all this preparation work, it is frequently essential to view the negatives for each colour separation together to ensure that the final stamps will be correctly produced. From the final negative, proof printing plates are prepared so that the quality of the production may be seen. The proofing is carried out on the same machine which later printed the stamps. The Security Press lacks a special proof machine.

At the end, it is more than satisfying for the writer to get a letter from Mr. Irani in which he writes "I am much thankful to you for the efforts put in by you to achieve this, and to make this India Bird Series' stamps a great success with advance press and other publicity. Your idea about autographing the first day covers was also great."

(Courtesy: Philatelic Journal of India, 1975)

Extracts from SIPA Bulletin (Vol.30; No.3) July - Sep 2014

From Dr Kanad Baidya Collection

Mr Mehta further goes on to add, and I quote, "At the end, it is more than satisfying for the writer to get a letter from Mr Irani in which he writes - I am much thankful to you for the efforts put in by you to achieve this end and to make this India Bird Series's stamps a great success with advance press and other publicity. Your idea about autographing the first-day covers was also great."

In 1983, the BNHS celebrated its centenary, marking 100 years of dedication to the study and conservation of India's natural heritage. To commemorate this significant milestone, the Indian Postal Department issued a special postage stamp on September 15, 1983. The stamp, designed by the esteemed bird artist JP Irani, prominently features the Great Indian Hornbill, which serves as the BNHS logo. The centenary celebrations were graced by the presence of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, who attended the BNHS Centenary function and released the commemorative stamp. This event underscored the organization's pivotal role in India's conservation efforts and highlighted its century-long commitment to

biodiversity research and environmental education. The 1983 centenary stamp not only celebrated the legacy of the BNHS but also showcased Irani's exceptional talent in capturing the essence of India's avian beauty.



From Dr Kanad Baidya Collection

In 1992, the Indian Postal Department unveiled a stunning set of four commemorative stamps titled Birds of Prey, masterfully designed by JP Irani. This exquisite series, released on December 30, 1992, showcased the raw power and grace of India's native raptors with intricate, lifelike artwork. The collection featured four denominations—Rs 2.00, Rs 6.00, Rs 8.00, and Rs 11.00 - each



From Dr Kanad Baidya Collection

capturing the striking majesty of the Osprey, Peregrine Falcon, Bearded Vulture, and Golden Eagle in breathtaking detail. Irani's precision and artistic brilliance brought these apex predators to life, making the stamps not just postal issues but miniature masterpieces cherished by philatelists and bird lovers alike.

For the Philatelists' the endangered species issue of 1994 was an interesting issue. The birds were: Andaman Teal (Rs 1.00), Oriental Stork (Rs 6.00), Black-necked Crane (Rs 8.00), and Pink-headed Duck (Rs 11.00). Designed JP Irani, these stamps pictured an endemic bird, two endangered migrants, and a bird being considered extinct respectively. The Pink-headed Duck was thus the first likely extinct bird to be commemorated on Indian postage stamps. The printing of these stamps was given to a private printer. Unfortunately, the ink used by the printer was water soluble and



From Dr Kanad Baidya Collection

defective. The poor quality led to the stamps being withdrawn after they had been introduced into service, but not before some stamps had been sold over the counter. Today specimens of these stamps sell for exorbitant sums of money on account of their rarity.

THE HANDBOOK OF THE BIRDS OF INDIA AND PAKISTAN

JP Irani's association with the BNHS spanned over five decades, during which he became a life member. His artistic contributions, especially in illustrating various BNHS publications, have left an indelible mark on Indian ornithology.

Irani was one of the contributing artists for Dr Salim Ali and S Dillon Ripley's monumental ten-volume series, "Handbook of the Birds of India and Pakistan", published between 1964 and 1974. This comprehensive work is renowned for its detailed descriptions and illustrations of the avifauna of the Indian subcontinent.

During the time Dr Salim Ali and S Dillon Ripley were compiling the "Handbook of the Birds of India and Pakistan", the field of bird illustration in India was still developing. While the handbook itself primarily relied on Western artists like Paul Barruel and John Henry Dick for its colour plates, Dr Salim Ali identified and mentored several Indian bird illustrators later during this period who contributed to other ornithological works over time. Pioneer among the Indian illustrators was JP Irani.



Plate 42 - Handbook of the Birds of India and Pakistan
(Salim Ali & S Dillon Ripley) Volume 3



Irani provided 9 plates consisting of bird illustrations for this handbook. Irani's contributions, along with those of the other artists, played a significant role in enhancing the visual appeal and scientific accuracy of the handbook. The meticulous artwork in these volumes has been instrumental in aiding ornithologists and bird enthusiasts in the identification and study of various bird species across the Indian subcontinent.

For those interested in viewing these illustrations, the "Handbook of the Birds of India and Pakistan" remains a valuable resource. Additionally, "The Illustrated Salim Ali: The Fall of a Sparrow" combines Dr Salim Ali's engaging narrative with original drawings from the handbook, including works by artists like JP Irani. This edition apart from the visual dimension to Dr Ali's story, showcases the rare drawings, authentic in every detail.

These publications continue to be cherished by ornithologists, researchers, and bird enthusiasts for their comprehensive coverage and detailed illustrations of the rich avian diversity in the region.

JP Irani is a versatile genius whose artistic brilliance and deep passion for nature left an enduring impact on Indian natural history. As an illustrator, painter, and commercial artist, his intricate line drawings and evocative paintings brought India's avian world to life, making complex ornithological details accessible to both scientists and bird enthusiasts. His work has seamlessly blended scientific precision with artistic elegance, ensuring that generations to come would appreciate both the aesthetic and ecological significance of India's rich avian diversity. Through his illustrations, paintings, and conservation efforts, JP Irani not only documented India's birds but also inspired countless individuals to admire, study, and protect them.

References:

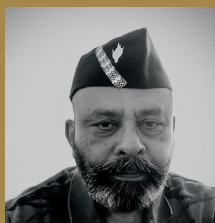
- i. Photographs of Stamps, First Day Cover and SIPA extract are from the personal collection of Dr Kanad Baidya
- ii. Photographs of the 1st edition of 'The Handbook of the Birds of India & Pakistan' are from the personal collection of Dr Kanad Baidya
- iii. A stamp montage and portrait of Dr Salim Ali have been provided by Mr JP Irani

About Author



Dr KANAD BAIDYA

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



AMITAVA DUTTA

Amitava is a seasoned leader with a passion for mentoring and nurturing young talent. A dedicated conservationist, birder, and adventure seeker, he actively engages in environmental advocacy, citizen science, and youth leadership development. He also leads the editorial team at the Birdwatchers' Society (BWS), shaping content that fosters awareness and appreciation for birds and biodiversity. His commitment to education and awareness initiatives, such as the School of Birds program, reflects his empathy for wildlife and inspiring the next generation.



A WILDLIFE ARTIST'S JOURNEY THROUGH THE WORLD OF BIRDS

Dr AHSAN QURESHI

I am Dr Ahsan Qureshi, a passionate wildlife artist. My heart and soul are devoted to the captivating world of birds. As an artist and naturalist, my journey has been shaped by an unshakable passion for avian life, drawing the attention of both art enthusiasts and conservationists alike. From an early age, I found myself mesmerized by the beauty of birds – their vivid colours, enchanting songs, and fascinating behaviours. This deep connection to nature became the foundation of my artistic expression.

Born in Pakistan, my love for birds took root in my childhood. Growing up in a land teeming with biodiversity, I was naturally drawn to the wildlife around me. I spent hours observing birds, captivated by their graceful movements and intricate plumage. Field trips became my classroom, where I honed my understanding of the diverse bird species inhabiting my surroundings. These early experiences planted the seeds for my future as a wildlife artist.

Although my formal education led me to the field of medicine, specializing in Otorhinolaryngology (ENT), my heart remained with nature. Over time, my passion for birds and conservation grew stronger, leading me to merge my scientific background with my artistic abilities. This unique fusion allowed me to develop a style that blends realism with a deeper understanding of the avian world.





Wildlife art is more than an aesthetic pursuit – it is a testament to my profound connection with nature. My fascination with birds goes beyond their physical beauty; I see them as intricate beings with unique behaviours, each species possessing its own story. Through my detailed and lifelike illustrations, I aim to bring birds into focus, not just as subjects of admiration but as vital components of our ecosystems. My art bridges scientific accuracy and emotional depth, offering viewers a chance to see birds as I do – not as distant creatures, but as living, breathing entities worthy of appreciation and protection.



Capturing birds in my artwork is no easy feat. Their dynamic nature – their constant movement, subtle postures, and iridescent feathers – demands patience and perseverance. I spend countless hours in the field, studying their behaviours, understanding their anatomy, and observing them from multiple angles to ensure my depictions are as authentic as possible. Some species are elusive, requiring me to rely on field notes, scientific references, and even past illustrations to bring them to life. The challenge only fuels my dedication, pushing me to refine my craft further.

Beyond the artistic challenges, the rapid environmental changes affecting bird populations add another layer of complexity to my work. Habitat destruction and climate change threaten many species, making them increasingly difficult to study or even find in the wild. Some of the birds I paint are already endangered or extinct, reinforcing

the urgency of my mission. Through my art, I strive to raise awareness about these pressing issues, using each piece as a call to action for conservation. My goal is not just to create beautiful images but to inspire a sense of responsibility toward protecting these magnificent creatures and their fragile habitats.

Blending my passion for art with my commitment to bird conservation has been both rewarding and challenging. While my work has helped highlight the beauty and vulnerability of birds, translating awareness into meaningful action remains a challenge. Art has the power to move people, but real-world change requires collective effort. This is why I collaborate with conservationists and environmental organizations, using my platform to amplify the message of preservation. I believe every brushstroke carries a purpose—to celebrate birds and advocate for their survival.

Despite the hurdles, my dedication remains unwavering. With each painting, I continue to honour birds and their ecological significance, reminding the world of their irreplaceable role in our environment.



My journey as a wildlife artist is more than a personal pursuit—it is a lifelong mission to ensure that these winged wonders are seen, appreciated, and protected for generations to come.



Winner of the First Prize in water-colours by Susan Kathleen Black Foundation, Wyoming, USA



Conferred the 'Centre Award' at Dubois Wyoming, USA



Note: All paintings and illustrations are by the author.

About Author

Dr AHSAN QURESHI



Dr Qureshi is a distinguished wildlife artist with a deep passion for avian subjects. A Signature Member of the Artists for Conservation Foundation, Canada (AFC), he actively contributes to the global conservation art movement. He is also a member of the World Pheasant Association, United Kingdom, reflecting his commitment to wildlife conservation. He has showcased his artwork in prestigious wildlife art exhibitions worldwide, including the USA, UK, Canada, and Pakistan. His talent has earned him notable recognition, including the First Prize in Watercolor at the Plein Air Art Workshop in Wyoming, USA, organized by the Susan Kathleen Black Foundation. Beyond exhibitions, Dr Qureshi's artistic contributions extend to books, posters, brochures, and various publications, where his intricate and evocative depictions of wildlife continue to inspire and educate.



WINGS OF INSPIRATION: MY JOURNEY INTO BIRD ILLUSTRATION

SANGEETHA KADUR

I vividly remember being introduced to the world of insects while growing up as my father was an entomologist. Thanks to being surrounded by wildlife enthusiasts from a young age, I regularly visited wildlife sanctuaries and national parks, wandered through the wilderness, listened to stories from the wild, perused through nature encyclopaedias, and watched nature documentaries – all of which became an integral part of my childhood. A deep fondness and appreciation for nature naturally took root. While in school, my knowledge about birds was limited, but I could still rattle off a few names of common birds around. I knew what we had in Bangalore were parakeets, not parrots. I was aware that the common raptors we saw in the city were kites, not eagles.

It was back in 2001, while I was in college that I joined the Birdwatcher's field club of Bangalore on one of their regular Sunday bird walks and since, I became a regular. Watching birds with an eclectic bunch of passionate nature lovers was an absolute delight. Learning cool new trivia on each birding outing and learning to observe bird behaviours, made the outings lot more exciting. Observing birds also meant looking at the trees they sit on, the flowers they take nectar from or even the fruits that they eat. There was always something new to observe and new to learn! Simply watching birds connected the dots to so many aspects of the natural world, and for that, I am ever so grateful.

Header Photo: Sunbird sequence – An inhabitant of the high-altitude forests in the Himalayas, the Fire-tailed Sunbirds (*Aethopyga ignicauda*) occasionally supplement their diet with insects. Depicted here is the sunbird making spectacular aerial sallies, behaving more like a flycatcher than a sunbird.



The Great Indian Bustard (*Ardeotis nigricaps*)

Once a common sight in India's grasslands, the Great Indian Bustard is now on the brink of survival and it calls for an urgent need for conservation.

One of the major stepping stones in my early career was a project centered around birds— not Indian birds, but the fascinating birds of the New World: hummingbirds! I had the incredible opportunity to work on a fine art coffee table book featuring these tiny, vibrant creatures. This project was in collaboration with Gorgas Science Foundation, Texas and Felis Creations, Bangalore. It was a whole lot of learning at every stage of the project. Each species of hummingbird was illustrated to showcase both the male and female, highlight an aspect of their behaviour, depict their preferred flowering plant, and provide a glimpse into their natural habitat. We were very fortunate to have two renowned experts – John P. O'Neill, one of the world's premiere hummingbird researchers and artists, and noted avian biologist John C. Arvin – review each artistic plate for accuracy. Being guided

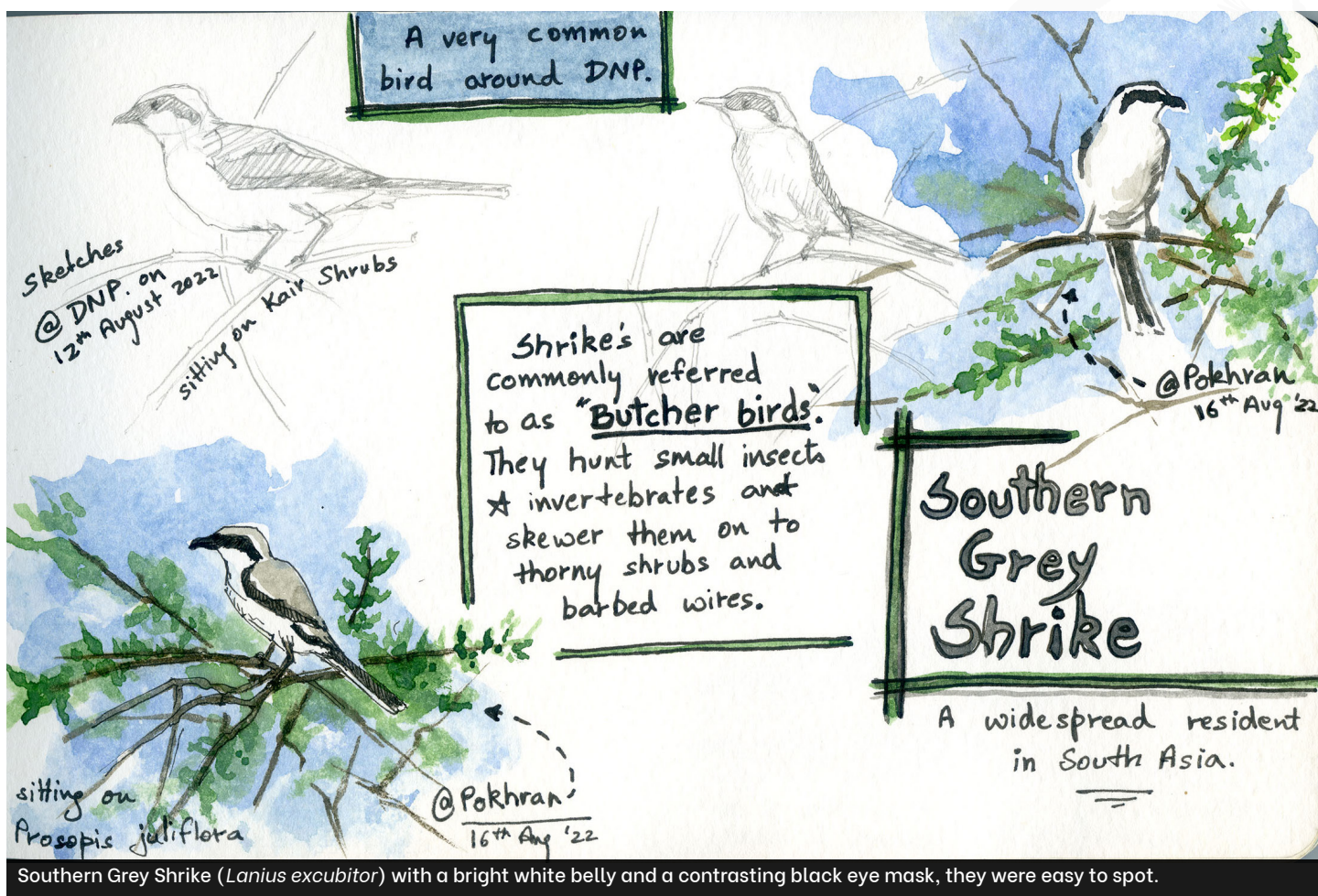


Hummingbird - The male and female Purple-crowned Fairy (*Heliothryx barroti*) caught in the act of nectar-thriving, as they steal nectar from the base of flowers, without contributing to the pollination of the flower.

by them, opened up my world to the meticulous art of illustrating birds. The book finally came to light in 2016 and we were three artists who illustrated for the book.

Every now and then, I dabble in some field sketching of birds. As challenging as it may seem, it adds to a more wholesome experience. This practice keeps me grounded to the true art of bird illustration. Field sketching of birds has helped me observe birds from different perspectives – ranging from the landscape/habitat at large, to the varied postures, angles, behaviours and movements. Sketching from direct encounters of birds in thier natural settings has opened my eyes to the myriad moods, lighting and compositions possible. The smallest of such field observations play a crucial role while working inside the closed walls of my studio.

Sketching this Southern Grey Shrike was a delight. I was at Desert National Park, Rajasthan, on an art journaling assignment for Roundglass Sustain. The scrubby, thorny landscape was teeming with these shrikes, and I couldn't resist journaling them into my pages. They would perch on thin twiggy branches of the Prosopis or the Kair shrubs, and with the slightest of breeze they would sway. Their balancing act seemed like a dance.



One of my most recent bird illustration projects has been for a book of short stories and essays, "The Living air– The pleasures of Birds and Birdwatching", written by Aasheesh Pittie and published by Indian Pitta books / Juggernaut. Simple line drawing of birds accompany some of the stories in the book. I thoroughly enjoyed reading Pittie's detailed, passionate, and descriptive accounts of Indian birds. His writing vividly brought each place to life, making it easy to picture his encounters. Many of his stories resonated with me,

bringing back memories of my own experiences in the field. I sketched small portraits of some of the birds for the book – an Iora singing from a babool branch, a Coppersmith Barbet peeping out of its tree hollow, the ‘eased’ neck of the Grey Heron, an Oriole calling out from a Mellingtonia tree or a Mottled Wood Owl perched on a peepul tree. It was a joyous sketching month!

Birds have always been my constant companions. Even while working in my studio, my ears remain attuned to the calls and twitters of birds outside my window. Wherever I go, my eyes instinctively scan for them. To be able to showcase these beautiful and fascinating creatures through art feels like a celebration of their existence. For two decades, it’s been my calling to shine a spotlight about our birds and the natural world through my art. We have an incredible planet earth, and we need to do all we can to live in harmony with it.



Mottled -Wood Owl (*Strix ocellata*) perched on the branches of a peepul tree during broad daylight!

A renowned bird illustrator, **Robert Bateman**, quotes

“ The world would be a better place if everybody was a birdwatcher ” I couldn’t agree more!



About Author

SANGEETHA KADUR

Her journey into wildlife and nature painting stems from a deep passion for both art and the natural world, driving her to capture its beauty and richness on paper and canvas. Through collaborations with wildlife organizations and citizen-science projects, she uses her art to build awareness and inspire respect for biodiversity. Notable projects include an internationally collaborated coffee-table book on hummingbirds and the curation of a grassroots-centric Nature Information Center, alongside illustrations for children’s books and nature publications. Believing in the power of art to spark wonder and admiration, she co-founded ‘Green Scraps’ to nurture future nature artists, hoping to instill a lasting appreciation for the illustrated and natural worlds.



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PAPERCHIRRUPS AND BEYOND: CRAFTING A PATH IN WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

NIHARIKA RAJPUT

My journey as a wildlife artist began in 2016 when I birthed my company, Paperchirrup, but this journey began with self-doubt. I asked myself, can art make a difference? Can it inspire young minds? Can it drive communities to act? My first glimpse of hope hit me during a workshop I conducted in Valparai. After the workshop, a student walked up to me and handed over a small piece of paper. On being asked what was in it, he said, Akka, this is my autograph. One day, I'll be a famous wildlife photographer. This was my validation to continue walking on my path.

Nature always sparked my curiosity; I was always in awe of nature's sophisticated mechanisms. My

father's military background provided opportunities to live in nature's abode. I would spend hours observing ladybirds, fireflies, and spiders. My first sighting of a White-throated Kingfisher left me flabbergasted and opened up a new window into the world of feathered creatures. I was mesmerised by the vibrant hues of the kingfisher. My love for birds and nature dwindled as I moved to a more urban setup in Delhi. This wasn't going to last very long. My passion for birds was rekindled on my trip to Himachal when I saw a flock of Red-billed Blue Magpies taking off from a tree. It took me back to my childhood memory of spotting the kingfisher. This came at a time when I was at the crossroads of choosing a career path. I finally decided to amalgamate my love for art and wildlife.

Header Photo: Kingfisher sculpture

Nine years later, I don't regret it one bit. I started collaborating with wildlife organisations, forest departments, schools, and art galleries to talk more about conservation through wildlife art and nature education. Over the years, I have worked with WWF, WTI, IISER Tirupati, Adobe Systems, Salesforce, the Forest Department of Andhra Pradesh, NCF Valparai, Galleryske, Ladakh Arts and Media Organisation, etc., to name a few. I conducted multiple hand-building workshops and outdoor sessions with students pan India.



Author - sculpting an Indian Roller

I was granted an artist residency by the Caetani Cultural Centre in British Columbia. This set me on a three-month-long project at Allan Brooks Nature Centre, Vernon, British Columbia.

The project was about hummingbirds found in the Okanagan Valley. I had the opportunity to collaborate with members of the Okanagan Naturalists Club, who had been banding these hummingbirds and tracking their migratory journey. In 2022, I was lucky enough to receive a grant from the National Geographic Society to work on a project based in Kodaikanal, Tamil Nadu. The project was about the Shola birds found in the Western Ghats and



Ruby-throated Hummingbird

their diminishing habitat. I collaborated with the Kodaikanal International School Centre for Environment and Humanity, and created a permanent motion sensor-triggered exhibit of 12 Shola birds, an animated movie, and conducted multiple workshops and birdwatching sessions in Kodaikanal.

My current project is based in Papua New Guinea, where I am creating a permanent exhibit featuring 14 Birds of Paradise seen in their breeding display postures. We are hoping to create a few educational resources for primary and middle school children in Papua and will conduct a wide range of workshops towards the end of this project.



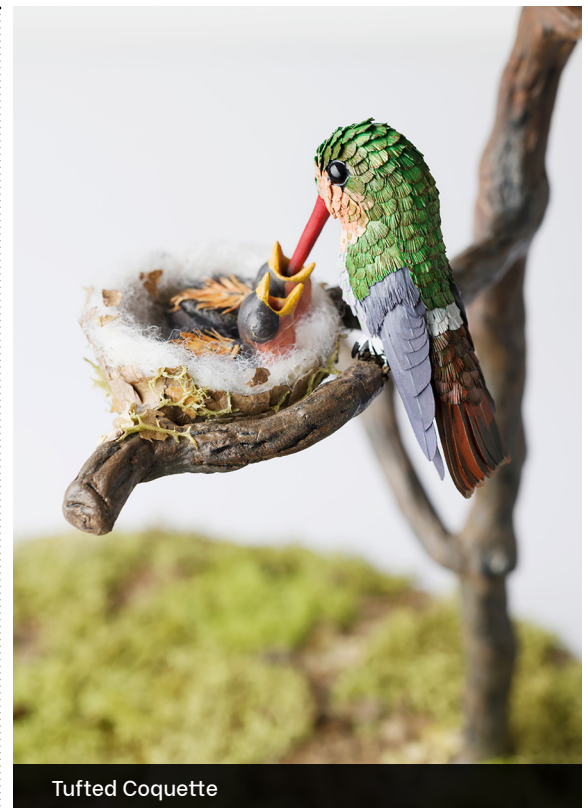


Nilgiri Flycatcher

Working with ornithologists, evolutionary biologists, and scientists has broadened my horizons and allowed me to learn much from their research. During my last project, I had the opportunity to visit the field station where all the Shola birds are banded, measured, and studied. Seeing the whole process up close was highly educational. While creating these sculptures, I made my own little discovery. One of the Shola birds (White-bellied Sholakili) had an extra notch in its orbital ring. It turns out that some of these Shola birds have that extra notch. What an exciting discovery!

As an informal nature educator, I promote divergent thinking through a variety of pedagogical approaches that help

disseminate information. This methodology mostly involves creative thinking, hands-on participation, and immersing oneself in every activity. The purpose of my work is not only to awaken a sense of curiosity but also to communicate the urgency of the situation. The very foundation of my work lies in the hope that these issues will be investigated and advocated for at a more cerebral level in terms of policy-making. With this hope, I continue my journey towards illuminating, inspiring, and awakening a generation of eco-warriors.



Tufted Coquette

I foster divergent thinking and promote experiential learning beyond the classroom through creative engagement. With children and adults, I engage, through workshops and outdoor sessions. Workshops mainly focus on learning through building and drawing, like a bird-building workshop or a nature journaling workshop. These concepts can then be enhanced by incorporating Edtech tools. These are creative coding tools for children to turn their observations into tangible animation clips which are highly educational and can be shared with friends and family. Outdoor sessions are led mainly by area experts who are aware of the birds' nesting sites and display sights and generally know the topography of the land. I engage with all age groups and love working with indigenous communities. I am currently travelling to the Galápagos Islands to work with local artisans in Puerto Ayora and Isabella islands to teach them how to build sculptures using wastepaper. The intention is to find localised solutions to global problems and tackle the life cycle of a product by offering creative solutions.



Hen Harrier



About Author

NIHARIKA RAJPUT

Niharika is a New Delhi-based wildlife artist and National Geographic Explorer, known for her meticulously crafted paper bird and animal sculptures. She founded Paper Chirrup (www.paperchirrup.com) in 2015, blending art and conservation to raise awareness about endangered species. Her work, featured in publications like Elle Decor and Aesthetica Magazine, reflects a deep connection with nature and remarkable attention to detail. She actively collaborates with conservation organizations, including NCF, WWF and the Wildlife Trust of India, to promote wildlife conservation.



www.paperchirrup.com

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MY ODESSEY: FROM BIRDING TO SCULPTURES

Dr SAURABH KALIA

I grew up in a middle-class family, but had the privilege of travelling all over India. Thanks to the Leave Travel Concession my parents received from the State Bank of India. My father, an avid traveller and photography enthusiast, often took us to historical places, zoos, and museums. Although we never went wildlife watching during my childhood, my brother and I were always interested in animals. We collected plastic figurines, frequently visited the Jaipur Zoo, and recorded and watched Nat Geo programs on TV in the 1980s and 90s.

My father's love for travel and photography significantly influenced my interests. My mother, my biggest supporter, would shower me with praise in front of everyone, which I later realized was crucial for nurturing a child's talents. I enjoyed drawing and copying from various books on animals and birds. I remember drawing a big poster of a Resplendent Quetzal in the 5th standard, which remained displayed in my room for a long time. In the 6th standard, I attended a



bird-watching fair in Jaipur through my school, which sparked my journey into identifying birds. This new found interest complemented my love for studies and art, with biology being my favourite subject. Although I wasn't particularly good at painting, I won prizes in various school competitions. During a family trip to Jaisalmer while in the 7th standard, I purchased "The Book of Indian Birds" by Dr Salim Ali, much to my parents' amazement. The unique beaks, colourful feathers, and varied shapes and sizes of birds fascinated me.



In the 11th standard, I applied for the entrance exams of the National Institute of Design (NID) Ahmedabad at my mother's insistence. After clearing the written exam, a professional artist suggested I try clay work after seeing my plasticine models. My skills improved with clay from the local potter, and I started creating more intricate clay models of humans and animals. Despite the challenges of working with clay, especially without an armature, I persevered, even attempting bird sculptures. Providing details for beaks and feathers was difficult as terracotta clay sticks to hands. Since I was self-taught, not every piece of sculpture turned out as I would've liked. Sun-dried clay models were prone to breaking easily when moved and developed cracks upon drying.

When I finished school, my father gifted me a Sony Handycam, which marked another turning point. The camera's powerful zoom allowed me to watch and film garden birds, rekindling my interest in bird-watching. Although my NID dream did not materialize, my passion for clay modelling continued through medical college and beyond. Birding became a stress reliever during my exam days. After returning to Jaipur, I invested in a spotting scope.

A family trip to the Greater Rann of Kutch in 2013 introduced me to the beauty of wild places. Despite being unable to identify many birds, the experience fuelled my passion for birding. My love for birds grew as I travelled more, including visits to Bhutan, Sri Lanka, and Greece. A trip to Uganda in 2016 was particularly transformative. The breathtaking beauty of the birds there, captured with my modest equipment, made me realize that birding was my true calling.



In 2017, my birding trips began in earnest, and my passion took off. Facebook helped a lot as I connected with bird enthusiasts across India, learning about different species and seeing excellent bird photography. Each great picture I took or saw online, inspired me to create. I made a clay sculpture of a Grey Hornbill that used to come to our house. I realized that I had to do something better to transform my art to the next level. The COVID-19 pandemic, while challenging, provided me with free time to



dive deeper into my creative pursuits. Experimenting with different types of clay and developing wire armatures, my models became more complex and lifelike. I began colouring my sculptures with acrylic paints and photographing them on artificial grass in my garden. Posting these photos on the Indian Birds group on Facebook, I received an overwhelming response, with likes and comments far surpassing those for my bird photographs. Colouring my sculptures was difficult due to the various colour patterns on bird feathers. I have left several sculptures uncoloured in fear of ruining them. My action shots of birds, capturing moments like take-off or landing and birds with food, were particularly appreciated. As my skills improved, I saw the progress from my old models to the new ones.

The encouragement and support from my family, including my wife and daughter, were crucial for me in developing my art. My travels to Africa exposed me to the vast influence of wildlife in African art forms. Inspired by African art, I aimed to create sculptures of India's wildlife and spread awareness about the diverse flora and fauna around us.

The adulation and encouragement from everyone have inspired me to create more detailed and challenging models.

My passion continues to this day, with aspirations to display my creations in an exhibition once I achieve excellence and develop a comprehensive body of work.

My journey from a curious child to a passionate birder and sculptor has been fulfilling. My career as a gastro-surgeon has given me

both highs and lows, but my art and birds always give me pleasure and relieve my stress. Through my art and birding, I continue to explore and celebrate the beauty of the natural world, inspiring others to appreciate the wonders around them.





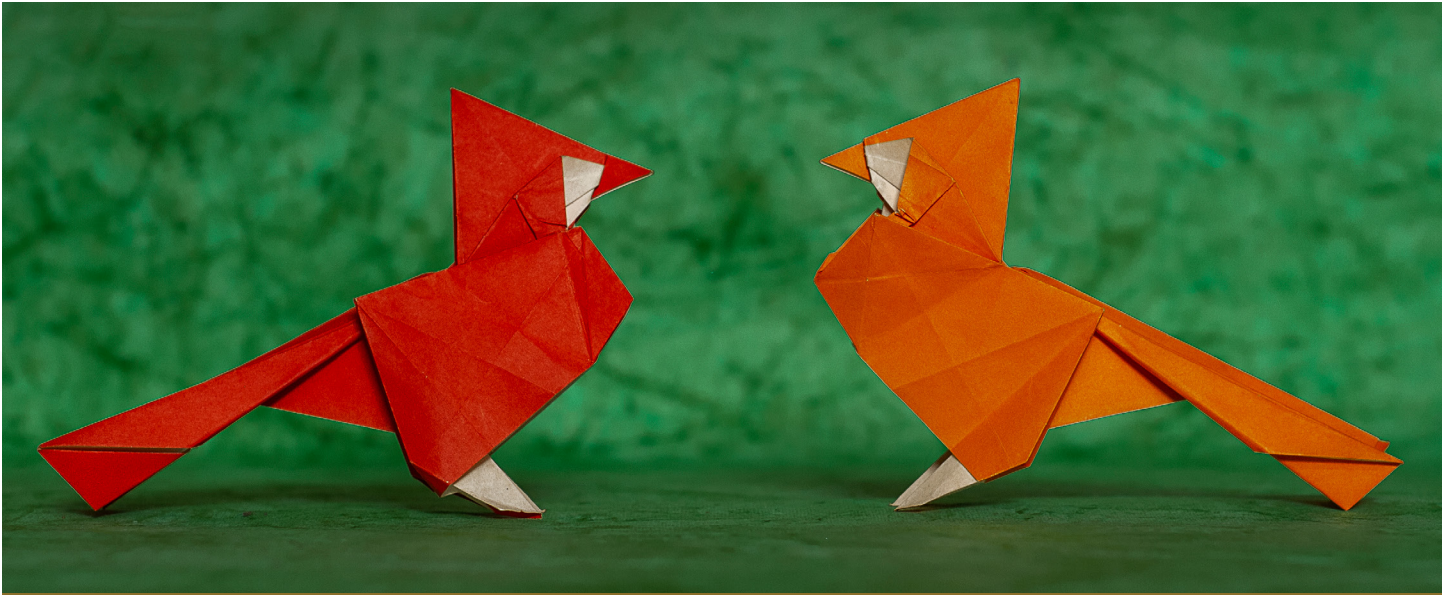
Dr Saurabh Kalia and his creations



About Author

Dr SAURABH KALIA

Dr Kalia, an accomplished Gastro-surgeon based in Jaipur, seamlessly blends science and art in his life. Beyond his medical expertise, he is a passionate birder, deeply connected to nature, and a skilled sculptor who brings creativity to life through his hands. His diverse pursuits reflect a unique harmony between precision, observation, and artistic expression.



CRANES AND BEYOND: EXPLORING ORIGAMI AVIAN DESIGNS

SATYAJIT DATTA

Origami is the art of paper folding. It originated from China and popularized in Japan. In Japanese, “ori” means folding and “gami” means paper. What is so great about folding paper? The kind of paper folding I am talking about here, is not the same as merely folding a piece of paper to fit in your pocket for portability, it’s about folding a square paper into birds, butterflies, flowers, animals and many more complex form’ without cutting it. Modern origami is more than just paper folding - it’s paper transforming, it’s paper magic, it’s an art.

The art of origami has evolved over time and you will find modern origami can range from the super complex with realistic models to the simple models that are easier to fold, but yet very recognizable. In complex origamis especially for insects, sometimes mathematics is applied to get the desired length of head, thorax, antennae, wings, abdomen and legs. These complex models



Ruby-throated Hummingbird

Header Photo: Cardenal

needs hours even days to prepare for pre-creasing, folding and shaping of different parts. Also this could not be achieved unless wet-folding technic got introduced by Akira Yoshizawa into Origami. Wet folding employs water to dampen the paper so that it can be manipulated more easily. This technic brings life to origami models.

However, choice of paper is an important factor for origami models. Complex model demands very thin as well as having strong fibres to withstand the strength of complex folding. Paper sizing allows increased rigidity and structure for thin paper. Sizing is a water-soluble adhesive, usually methyl cellulose or methyl acetate, which may be added during the manufacture of the paper or before folding the model. As the paper dries, the chemical bonds of the fibres of the paper tighten together which results in a crisper and stronger sheet.



Modern origami and related mathematics have been applied in many areas like – Self-assembled robot, Mirrors and solar panels in space, Car air bag, Heart stent etc. I have given few pictures of some of the models that I have folded myself. These are ranging from simple to complex birds modes having details like claws, feather and wings. All the models were made from various types of handmade papers.



About Author

SATYAJIT DATTA

Satyajit is an IT engineer working in an MNC with a deep passion for birdwatching and capturing their activities through photography. With deep appreciation for Origami and, as a bird lover, Satyajit often tries to fold realistic bird models in his spare time.



FEATHERS IN GLASS: THE PLAYFUL GENIUS OF OIVA TOIKKA

AMITAVA DUTTA

While exploring avian artists for this issue, I stumbled upon the extraordinary life and works of Oiva Toikka. What captivated me most were his breathtaking bird sculptures, brought to life through the delicate art of blown glass. Witnessing his creations—even in digital spaces—was a revelation. Despite my efforts to gather firsthand insights, most information hosts remained unresponsive. This article is therefore based on material sourced from the Internet, because this story needs to be shared.



Eastern Bluebird, part of the 'Birds by Toikka' collection

Glass-working has been around since ancient times, but the blowpipe, invented around 300 BCE by the Syrians, changed the craft completely. This tool allowed the Romans to try new shapes and forms, a

Header Photo : Glass birds by Toikka

method still used today. By the Renaissance, glassblowing had spread across Europe, leading to the beautiful art we see today. Traditional glass-making is tough, and demanding work.



OIVA TOIKKA (1931–2019)

was a Finnish master glass designer, best known for his ‘Birds by Toikka’ series—one of the most iconic glass art collections globally. Deeply rooted in Finnish design traditions, his work broke conventions with its vibrant colours, whimsical forms, and uninhibited creativity, making him a true pioneer in glass artistry.

Oiva Toikka (1931–2019) Source :glassbirds.com

OIVA TOIKKA AND HIS BIRDS

Born in 1931, during the emergence of modern Scandinavian art, Oiva Toikka dedicated his life to the principles of timeless creations. An influential leader Oiva established a reputation for objects noted for both their beauty and functionality, and his glass birds are no exception.

Oiva Toikka’s lifelong fascination with birds was more than an artistic inspiration—it was a defining force behind his revolutionary **Birds by Toikka** series. His creations were not mere replicas of real birds but imaginative expressions, infused with vibrant colours, fluid forms, and a whimsical charm that set them apart from traditional glasswork.

For over six decades, Toikka crafted over 500 species of birds that redefined Finnish glass artistry, blending nature, creativity, and masterful craftsmanship. Produced by the renowned Finnish glass manufacturer Iittala since 1972, each bird is individually mouth-blown, ensuring that no two pieces are alike. Instead of strict realism, Toikka captured the essence of birds—their movement, personalities, and striking plumage—through innovative glass techniques that played with texture, opacity, and light.

THE SIEPPO SERIES: A TESTAMENT TO TOIKKA'S INNOVATION

Among his most iconic creations is the Sieppo series (Finnish for “Flycatcher”), introduced in 1972. These glass birds exude personality and charm, with playful forms and dazzling color variations. Each of these creations have become iconic pieces. The Sieppo collection features two primary designs:

Footed with Wings –

Birds with pedestal-like bases and prominent wings.

Non-Footed without Wings –

Sleek, simplified forms without a base or wings.

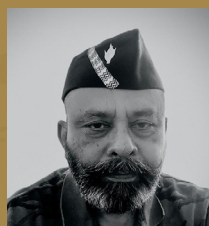
Each Sieppo is mouth-blown, ensuring subtle variations in shape, size, and colour. They were produced in a kaleidoscope of hues – red, amethyst, yellow, green, brown, and blue – each shade enhancing the bird’s distinct personality.

Toikka glass birds has become an international activity, with rarities being as eagerly tracked down and talked about as their real equivalents in the ornithological world. Originally crafted at the historic Nuutajärvi glassworks, production later moved to the Iittala glass factory, ensuring Toikka’s legacy continues to thrive. His birds remain a celebrated part of Scandinavian design heritage, a testament to his unparalleled vision and craftsmanship.



Sources:

1) iittala.com 2) mothersweden.com 3) glassbirds.com 4) finnishdesign.com



About Author

AMITAVA DUTTA

Amitava is a seasoned leader with a passion for mentoring and nurturing young talent. A dedicated conservationist, birder, and adventure seeker, he actively engages in environmental advocacy, citizen science, and youth leadership development. He also leads the editorial team at the Birdwatchers’ Society (BWS), shaping content that fosters awareness and appreciation for birds and biodiversity. His commitment to education and awareness initiatives, such as the School of Birds program, reflects his empathy for wildlife and inspiring the next generation.

Bird Art: Crested Serpent Eagle



Acrylic on canvas

Size: 13 x 18 inches

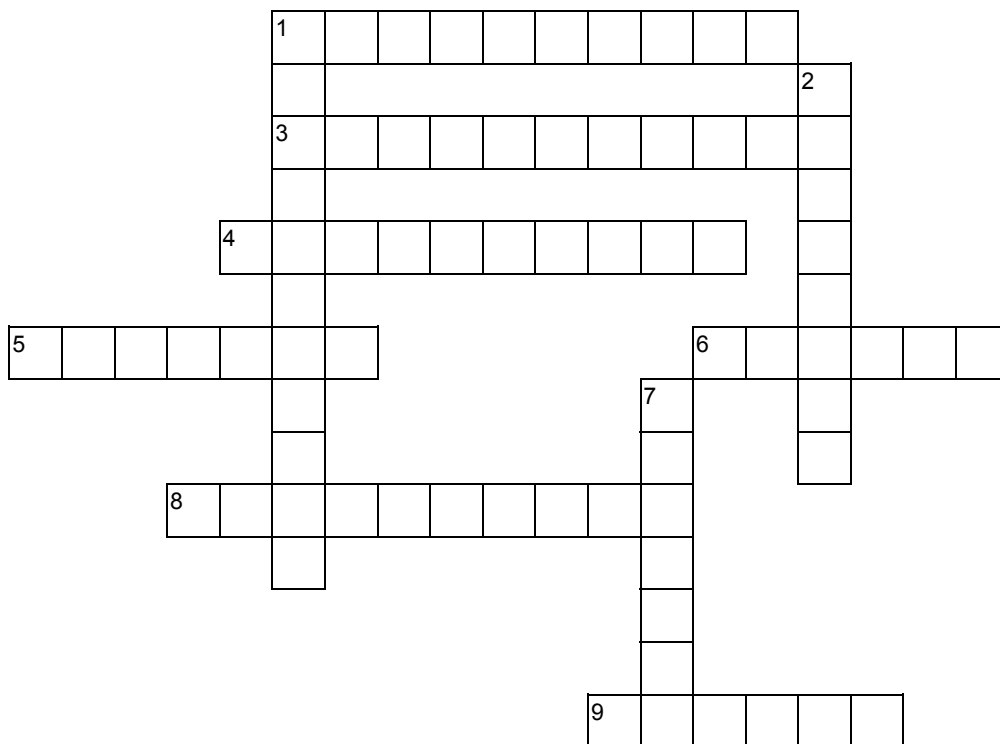
Kazi Nasir

A BVA graduate from the Government College of Art and Craft, Kolkata (1993), is renowned for his realistic nature and wildlife paintings. He has exhibited widely, including solo shows in Germany, and his works feature in global collections.

Inspired by nature's beauty, his recent art captures the harmony of birds, insects, and animals in their habitats. From vast mountain vistas to intricate forest details, his work celebrates life's splendour and urges conservation. Based in Delhi NCR, he continues exploring nature's vitality through a realistic style influenced by European and American traditions.

CROSSWORD

HIYA CHATTERJEE



Across

- 1 Birds are _____, which means they can maintain a near-constant body temperature.
- 3 This bird has nine colours and is also known as navrang in Hindi.
- 4 Emperor Jahangir closely observed and documented the mating behavior of this bird in his memoir.
- 5 This mythical bird is known to rise from its own ashes.
- 6 Other than Goddess Saraswati, the Hamsa or the swan is depicted as the vahana/vehicle of which Hindu God?
- 8 This 2011 Hollywood movie on birdwatching stars Jack Black and Owen Wilson.
- 9 A golden osprey adorns the flag of this African country.

Down

- 1 This British Judge who served in India commissioned paintings of Indian birds which are exhibited at the Ashmolean museum of Oxford.
- 2 The Amur falcon traverses the entire southern hemisphere and visits which North-eastern state of India?
- 7 The fused clavicle of birds, also known as the wishbone



মন ও বুনন

LINA CHATTERJEE

যে

কোনো শিল্পকলা মানুষের মনের যে কোনো আবেগ প্রকাশের মাধ্যম এবং ক্ষেত্র বিশেষে মানসিক স্থিতিস্থাপকতা উন্নত করতে সাহায্য করে আসছে প্রাচীন কাল থেকে। যখন ভাষার আবির্ভাব হয়নি তখন থেকেই গুহাচিত্রের নমুনা যেমন তাদের জীবনশৈলির নিদর্শন আমাদের কাছে উপস্থাপনা করেছে তেমনি প্রায় ৩৩০০-১৩০০ খ্রিস্টপূর্ব সিন্ধুসভ্যতার সময় প্রত্নতাত্ত্বিক নিদর্শনে সূঁচ এবং সুতোর ব্যবহার পাওয়া গেছে যা প্রাচীন সূচিকর্মের ইঙ্গিত দেয়। আবার প্রায় ১৫০০-৫০০ খ্রিস্টপূর্ব বৈদিক যুগের সময়ের পাঠ্যগুলিতে সূক্ষ বস্ত্র ও সূচিকর্মের উল্লেখ পাওয়া যায়। কালান্তরে কবি জসীমউদ্দিনের হাত ধরে আমরা নকশি কাঁথায় পুরো একটা জীবনের অপেক্ষা ও তার সমস্ত অনুভূতির বহিঃপ্রকাশ ফুটিয়ে তোলার অপরূপ সৃজনশীলতার উদাহরণ পাই শুধুমাত্র কাঁথায় সেলাই-এর মাধ্যমে। কবি সেখানে লিখেছিলেন

“

কেহ কেহ নাকি গভীর রাত্রে দেখেছে মাঠের পরে
মহা শূণ্যতে উড়িয়াছে কেবা নকশী-কাঁথাটি ধরে,

”

সেলাই-শিল্পীর বিভিন্ন সত্তা তথা সামাজিক প্রেক্ষাপটের অভিব্যক্তির খানিকটা নিদর্শন বলা যেতে পারে। বিশেষ করে রবীন্দ্রযুগের বিভিন্ন উপন্যাসে রুমালে বুনন ও তা নিবেদনের মাধ্যমে মনের বিভিন্ন ভাব প্রকাশের উল্লেখ এই তথ্যই পরিবেশন করে যে সেই যুগে সেলাই মানুষের জীবনের অনুভূতি প্রকাশের মাধ্যম হিসাবে ব্যবহৃত হতো।

এছাড়াও তথ্য বলে, মৌর্য, গুপ্ত এবং পরবর্তীতে মুঘল আমলে সূচিকর্ম রাজকীয় শিল্প হিসাবে প্রচলিত হয়। ভারতের বিভিন্ন অঞ্চলের বিভিন্ন ধরনের সূচিকর্ম রয়েছে এবং সেগুলি তাদের নিজস্ব নকশা পদ্ধতি এবং সাংস্কৃতিক গুরুত্ব বহন করে। সূচিকর্ম স্থানীয় ঐতিহ্য, উৎসব, এবং আচার অনুষ্ঠানের সাথে গভীরভাবে যুক্ত।



যেমন, মুঘলদের সামাজিক প্রেক্ষাপট দ্বারা প্রবর্তিত লখনউ, হায়দ্রাবাদের জরদৌসি সূচিকর্ম সাধারণত মখমল বা সিল্কের ওপর ধাতব তার, মুক্তা, নানারকম পাথর ইত্যাদি দিয়ে করা হতো। উজ্জ্বল ফুলের নকশার জন্য পরিচিত পাঞ্জাবের ফুলকারি সূচিকর্ম সামগ্রিকভাবে ঐতিহ্যবাহী বিয়ের সামগ্রীর অংশ। পারস্য নকশার দ্বারা প্রভাবিত লখনউ চিকনকারি মসলিন বা সুতির কাপড়ে সাদা সুতোর সূক্ষ্ম সূচিকর্মের নিদর্শন। এছাড়াও গুজরাটের কচ্ছ এবং কাথিয়াওয়ার মূলত কাঁচের ছোট ছোট টুকরো দিয়ে ও সুতো দিয়ে তৈরি সূচিকর্ম, স্থানীয় সংস্কৃতি এবং জীবনধারা দ্বারা অনুপ্রাণিত। কর্ণাটকের কাসুতি ও তামিলনাড়ুর টোডা সূচিকর্মও ঐতিহ্যবাহী শিল্প নিদর্শন। আমাদের পশ্চিমবাংলা ও ওড়িশার বহুল প্রচলিত একটি সূচিকর্ম কাঁথা, যেখানে বাংলার গ্রামীণ এলাকার প্রচলিত সহজ সেলাইয়ের মাধ্যমে প্রকৃতি, দৈনন্দিন জীবন এবং লোকগাঁথা ফুটিয়ে তোলা হয় মূলত পুরানো শাড়ির পুনর্ব্যবহার করে। যেকোনো সূচিকর্ম অনেক ক্ষেত্রেই কারিগরের জীবিকার উৎস্যও বটে। অতএব সূচিকর্ম মানুষের বেশিরভাগ আবেগ থেকে প্রয়োজন প্রায় সব স্তরেই জড়িত। যে কোনো সৃজনশীলতায় যেমন প্রয়োজন হয় মানসিক একাগ্রতা, সেলাইও তার ব্যতিক্রম নয়। মনের কল্পনা বা দৃষ্টি ছবিকে কেবল মাত্র সূঁচ ও সুতোর বুননে প্রকাশের চেষ্টায় মন ডুবে যায় সেখানে। যাতে থাকে হয়তো কিছু বেদনা থেকে নিজের মুক্তির চেষ্টা বা কোনো সময়ে আনন্দ বহিঃপ্রকাশের উদ্দেশ্য।

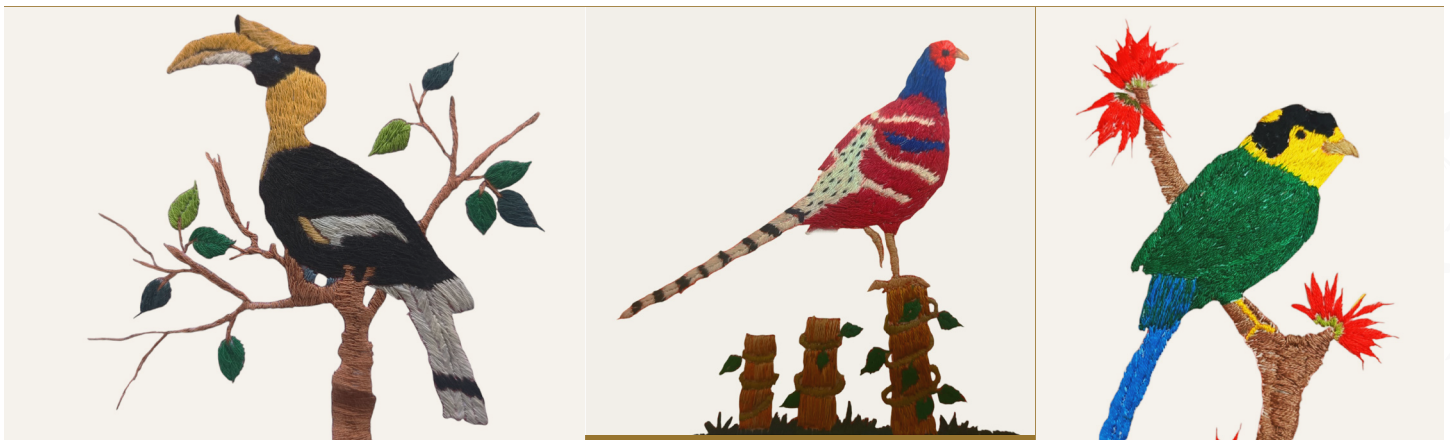


আমরা যারা প্রতিনিয়ত প্রকৃতি নিয়েই মেতে থাকি তাদের মনে হয় মনের সব আবেগ, অনুভূতি প্রকৃতি কেন্দ্রিকই হয়ে থাকে। আমার এই পাখির সেলাই আমাকে খুব সাহায্য করেছে বাবার মৃত্যুশোক ভুলে মনকে শান্ত করে নিজেকে আবার স্বাভাবিক জীবনে ফিরিয়ে আনতে। আমি চেয়েছিলাম এই হারাবার বেদনা ও সৃষ্টির আনন্দ-দুটো বিপরীতপন্থী আবেগ যেন মিলেমিশে এক হয়ে জীবনদর্শনের বাস্তব ও আদর্শকে আবার আমায় স্মরণ করাতে পারে। নিয়মিত প্রকৃতিচর্চা করুন বা না করুন, প্রকৃতির কথা সবাইকেই ভাবতে হবে নিজেদের জীবনধারণেরই জন্য। আমি আশাবাদী





আমাদের আশেপাশে কিছু শিল্পপ্রেমী মানুষ, যাঁরা হয়তো প্রকৃতিচর্চায় সেভাবে আগ্রহী নন, তাঁরাও শুধুমাত্র শিল্পকে ভালোবেসেই এই পাখিগুলি দেখে আশেপাশে খোঁজার চেষ্টা করবেন, তাদের জানার চেষ্টা করবেন, তাদের সাথে সহাবস্থানে বাসযোগ্য ভূমি গড়ে তোলার কথা ভাববেন, ঠিক আমার ছোটবেলার মুংলী আমাদের সবার মনকে জঙ্গল জানতে যেমন উৎসাহিত করেছিল।



About Author

LINA CHATTERJEE

Lina serves as the Program Manager for Pakhibitan and Avi-faunal Habitat Management & Monitoring. As a research affiliate of Nature Mates-Nature Club, Lina has spent over a decade bridging the gap between scientific understanding and wildlife conservation through her accessible and impactful literary works. A prolific writer, she has authored numerous journals and books. Additionally, she leverages art and creativity to inspire and ignite a passion for nature among students.



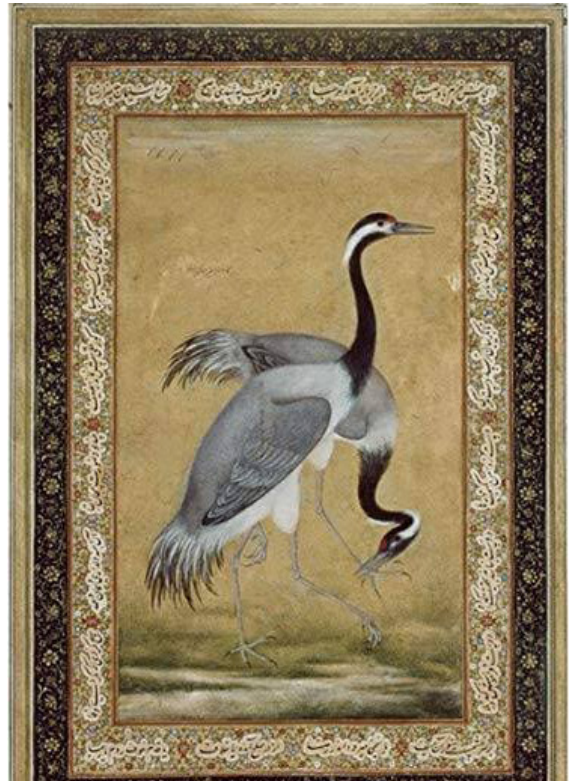
পাখির ডানায় রঙের গল্প: উস্তাদ মনসুরের চিত্রকলা

AINDRILA SARKAR DEB

১

৬১৬ খ্রিস্টাব্দের আশেপাশের সময় এক গ্রীষ্মের বিকেল, পটভূমিকা আধা।

সারাদিন কেমন বন্ধ গরম ছিল আজ, এখন বিকেলের দিকে হালকা উদাস উদাস হাওয়া বইছে দক্ষিণ দিক থেকে। মোঘল প্রাসাদের বিশাল অলিন্দ দিয়ে এক মনে হেঁটে চলেছেন উস্তাদ মনসুর, গর্বিত অথচ ধীর পদক্ষেপে। হাতে একখানি হালকা পাকানো কাগজ। প্রাসাদের এই অংশে রাজপরিবারের বিশেষ কাউকে এখন চোখে পড়লো না উস্তাদজীর, অথচ সম্রাট তো তাকে এখানেই দেখা করতে বলেছেন। কিছুদিন ধরেই যে ছবি আঁকার কাজটা করছিলেন তিনি, সেটা নিয়ে হয়তো নিশ্চিন্তে দুটো কথা আলোচনা করার জন্য। অনেকেই আরো আছেন চিত্রকর রাজসভায় - আবুল হাসান, ফাররুখ বেগ, গোবর্ধন, ইনায়েত, মনোহর, মুহাম্মদ নাদির ইত্যাদি। বিশাল তাঁদের প্রতিভা, যশ প্রতিপত্তি, কিন্তু সেলিম যখনই তাঁর বিশেষ কোনো প্রিয় পাখি বা পশু আঁকানোর কথা ভাবেন, যেন সবচেয়ে ভরসা করেন উস্তাদজীকেই। যে আঁকাতেই হাত দেন, একদম জীবন্ত যেন! আর হবেনাই বা কেন, সম্রাট সেলিম ওরফে জাহাঙ্গীর জানেন কিভাবে তাঁর প্রিয়তম শিল্পীর তুলি দিয়ে সেরাটা বার করে নিতে হয়। তিনি নিজেও পশু পাখি সম্বন্ধে খুব জ্ঞানী, নতুন কোনো জাতের পাখি বা জন্তু দেখলেই উনি সেটা সংগ্রহ করেন আর উস্তাদজীর তলব পরে সেটা আঁকার জন্য। নতুন কিছু দেখলেই সম্রাট সেটা লিখে রাখেন। গলা আর মাথার কিছুটা লাল



Demoiselle Crane

রঙের, পুরো সাদা শরীরের উঁচু সারস পাখিটি (এখনকার নাম: সারস ফ্রেন) কিভাবে খায়, কিভাবে জোড় বাঁধে, ভালোবাসে, ডিম পারে, সন্তান বড়ো করে, সবকিছু দেখে নিজে লিখে রেখেছিলেন সম্রাট। এমনি আরো কতকিছু... এই ব্যাপারে বাকিদের কথা একদমই শোনেন না। অন্যদের থেকে শোনা কথা আলাদা করে লেখেন আর নিজের দৃষ্টিভঙ্গী আলাদা করে। উস্তাদজী শুনেছেন সম্রাটের প্রপিতামহ সম্রাট বাবর এমন ছিলেন, পশু পাখি গাছপালার প্রতি বিশেষ অনুরক্ত। ভারী ভালো লাগে তাঁর। প্রাসাদের গায়ে, প্রতিটা কোণায় অস্ত্রের বনবন, হিংসা, দলাদলি, রক্তের গন্ধের মধ্যে যেন এক টুকরো প্রাণের স্পর্শ, যেন ভালোবাসার মানুষের বুকে মাথা রেখে নিশ্চিন্তে চুপ করে তার হৃদস্পন্দন শোনার মতন পবিত্র। এইটুকু না হলে শিল্পীমন বাঁচে কি করে, তুলি চলবে কি করে।

মনসুর মিঞা হাঁটতে হাঁটতে হঠাৎ থমকালেন, দাঁড়িয়ে পড়লেন একটা মোটা স্তম্ভের সামনে। বাঁ হাত ‘জেবের’ ভিতর থেকে বার করে হাতখানি রাখলেন স্তম্ভের গায়ে। আহা কত দিন! কত বছর পার হয়ে গেলো এই রাজসভায়! এই বিত্তশালী ঐশ্বর্যের প্রাচুর্যের মধ্যে, সেই আকবর বাদশার সময়ের কথা মনে পড়ে। দোদগুপ্রতাপ বাদশার পুত্র সুদর্শন তরুণ সেলিম, বাদশার প্রানের ‘শিইখু বাবা’। মুঘল শাহজাদা হয়েও যেন তিনি সবার চেয়ে একটু হলেও আলাদা। হিংসা হানাহানির চেয়ে জীবনের নরম গভীর গুণগুলি যেন তাঁর চরিত্রের বৈশিষ্ট্য। প্রবল পরাক্রান্ত পিতা বাদশাহ রাগ করবেন জেনেও আনারকলির প্রতি আবেগ লুকাতে পারেননি। সুন্দরী, সুরসিকা, বুদ্ধিমতী মেহের-উন-নিসার শাদীর পরেও মনে মনে পোষণ করেছেন তাঁর প্রতি প্রেম। মেহের-উন-নিসার খসম শের আফগানের মৃত্যুর পেছনে কার হাত আছে, সে জানতে আর কারুর বাকি নেই। মেহের-উন-নিসা এখন জাহাঙ্গীরের নুরজাহান। সম্রাট নুরজাহান বলতে অন্ধ। রাজপরিবারের কান্ডকারখানা তো আর কম নয়। কেউ স্বীকার করেনা, কিন্তু সবাই জানে এই কথা। মনসুর মিঞাও জানেন হয়তো অনেকের মতনই কিংবা একটু বেশি, কিন্তু তিনি চুপচাপ নিজের কাজ করে যান। সম্রাট জাহাঙ্গীর তাঁকে খুব সম্মান দেখান, গুণী শিল্পীর কদর করে তাঁর উপাধি দিয়েছেন ‘নাদির-আল-আসার’, মানে সর্বকালের সর্বশ্রেষ্ঠ। সেই জমকালো ঝকঝকে দিনটার কথা মনে পড়লো উস্তাদজীর, চোঁটের কোণায় এক চিলতে হাসি খেলে গেলো।

‘সেলাম আলাইকুম, বাদশা আমাকে স্মরণ করেছেন?’ সুসজ্জিত কক্ষের মধ্যে প্রবেশ করে বললেন উস্তাদ মনসুর।

‘আলাইকুম সেলাম, আইয়ে উস্তাদজী, তশরীফ রাখিয়ে’।

গাঢ় সবুজ মখমলি বলমলে পোশাক সম্রাটের গায়ে, সযত্ন লালিত সরু নিম্নগামী গোঁফের প্রান্ত, মায়াবী সুদূরপ্রসারী দৃষ্টি জানলার বাইরের দিকে রেখেছেন। জানলার বাইরে দুটি সাদা মাসাঙ্কালি পাথরের জালি জালি কারুকার্যের ফাঁকে ফাঁকে পা রেখে এগোচ্ছে, পিছোচ্ছে, খেলছে, এ ওর মাথায় চোঁটের চিরুনি বোলাচ্ছে, সম্রাট উপভোগ করছিলেন সেই দৃশ্য। উস্তাদজী বসলেন। সম্রাট ইশারায় সুন্দরী পরিচারিকাদের সরে যেতে বললেন। আসলে গোপন আলোচনা কিছু নয়, কিন্তু ওরা এই শিল্পকলার কদর বুঝবে না আর সম্রাট চাইছেন একদিন জাঁকজমক করে রাজসভায় সবার সামনে এই ছবি উন্মোচন করতে। এখনই সকলে দেখে ফেললে সেই ব্যাপারটা হবেনা।



Cheer Pheasant



Falcon

অনাবশ্যকভাবে গলাটা একটু নামিয়ে সম্রাট জিজ্ঞেস করলেন ‘উস্তাদজী ছবিটা এনেছেন?’

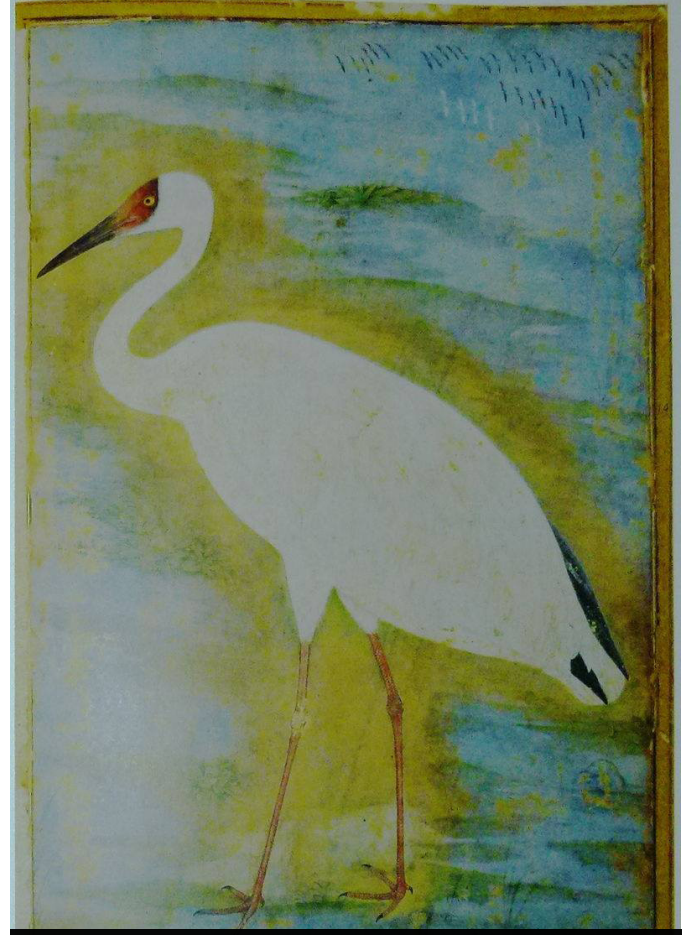
‘জি জাহাঁপনা’ উস্তাদজী পাকানো কাগজটা মেলে ধরলেন সামনে। পাতাজোড়া বিশাল সাইবেরিয়ান সারস (এখনকার নাম: গ্রেট হোয়াইট ক্রেন)। অপূর্ব সে চিত্র। সারসের প্রতিটি পালক, শরীরের প্রতিটি রেখা যেন প্রাণবন্ত। পায়ে নখের ফাঁকে আলগোছে আটকে আছে একটি পালক। এতো তুচ্ছ জিনিসও শিল্পী খেয়াল করে তাঁর তুলিতে ধরেছেন অবলীলায়।

উল্লসিত কণ্ঠে সম্রাট বলে উঠলেন ‘বাহ বাহ বহত খুব!’ নির্গিমেষ নয়নে খুঁটিয়ে দেখতে লাগলেন পালকের রং, ডানার বিস্তার, গলার দৈর্ঘ্য।

‘আপনি এ ছবি এখন রেখে যান, আমি একটু পাখিটার সাথে মিলিয়ে দেখবো’।



Dodo



Siberian or Great White Crane

উস্তাদজী জানতেন এমনটাই হবে। সম্রাট তাঁর শিল্পগুণকে বিশ্বাস করেন কিন্তু পাখির সামনে থেকে দেখে ছোটোখাটো শারীরিক বৈশিষ্ট্য মিলিয়ে দেখবেন। এই ব্যাপারে তিনি একজন খাঁটি পক্ষী বৈজ্ঞানিকের মতনই খুঁতখুঁতে। আজকাল সবাই সম্রাটের এই পশু পক্ষী প্রীতির কথা জেনে গেছে। দূরদেশ থেকে নজরানা আসে প্রায়ই। সম্রাট ওগুলি খুব খুঁটিয়ে পর্যবেক্ষণ করেন। সব কিছু লিপিবদ্ধ করেন, তারপর তার ছবি আঁকার দায়িত্ব পরে উস্তাদ মনসুরের ওপর। ডোডো পাখির বিখ্যাত ছবিটিও এইভাবেই আঁকা। পর্তুগিজ অধীনস্থ গোয়া থেকে সুরাট হয়ে এই পাখি এসে পৌঁছেছিল জাহাঙ্গীরের রাজসভায়।

উস্তাদজী উঠলেন - ‘আমাকে তবে এবার অনুমতি দিন’।

সম্রাট ততক্ষণে আবার জানলার বাইরে দেখছেন। বাইরে আলো কমে আসছে, মাসাঞ্চলি দুটি তখনও নিজেদের নিয়ে ব্যস্ত। সম্রাট সেদিকে চেয়ে তরল মায়াময় উদাস কণ্ঠে বললেন ‘উস্তাদজী, সব আসল পাখির পাশাপাশি আপনার মনের রং মিশিয়ে কাল্পনিক পাখির ছবি আঁকাগুলিও থামাবেন না।

আসল জীবনের পাশে একটা করে আসলের মতন জীবন থাকুক, যার গায়ে বাস্তবের কঠিন স্পর্শ লাগেনা, যার অতো নিখুঁত হবার তাড়া নেই। আপনার রঙে রেখায় আমার কাল্পনিক মনের বন্ধনমুক্তি হোক’। সম্রাটের কণ্ঠে কি যেন একটা আর্তি!

উস্তাদ মনসুরের বয়স হয়েছে অনেক। সম্রাটকে দেখছেন বহুদিন, তাঁর পিতার আমল থেকে। সেলিম থেকে জাহাঙ্গীর হবার পথটুকু সহজ তো ছিলোনা! উস্তাদজী হাসলেন মৃদু, সম্মতিসূচক একফালি হাসি। মাথা নিচু করে অভিবাদন জানিয়ে পিছু হটে বিদায় নিলেন ঘর থেকে।



Blue-throated Barbet

সাইবেরিয়ান সারস আগে ভারতে শীতকালে মাইগ্রেট করে আসতো, এখন আসা বন্ধ হয়েছে। এই ছবিটি ১৬১৬ থেকে ১৬২০ খ্রিস্টাব্দের মধ্যে আঁকা। অদ্ভুত ব্যাপার হলো এই সময়ের প্রায় ১৬০ বছর পর পশ্চিম সভ্যতার সামনে প্রথম আবিষ্কৃত হয় এই পাখি। ১৭৭৩ খ্রিস্টাব্দে প্রুশিয়ান জুলজিস্ট পিটার সাইমন পাল্লাস প্রথম এই সারসের নামকরণ করেন।

অবনীন্দ্রনাথ ঠাকুর দীর্ঘ সময় আতসকাঁচের মাধ্যমে এই সারসের ছবিটি পর্যবেক্ষণ করে এর অদ্ভুত ডিটেইলিং দেখে অনুপ্রাণিত হয়ে অয়েল ক্যানভাস ছেড়ে কাগজ ও গুয়াশ রঙে ছবি আঁকার সিদ্ধান্ত নেন।

কলকাতার ভারতীয় জাদুঘরে পেইন্টিং গ্যালারিতে এখনো সংগ্রহীত আছে এই ছবি।

সাথে ইন্টারনেট থেকে নেওয়া শিল্পীর আঁকা সম্রাট জাহাঙ্গীরের ছবি এবং উস্তাদ মনসুরের আঁকা কিছু ছবি দিলাম।

একজন পক্ষীপ্রেমী ও চিত্রশিল্পী হবার দরুন এই বিষয়টি আমাকে খুব আকর্ষণ করছিলো। লেখার তথ্যগুলি ঐতিহাসিক ভাবে সত্য, ওগুলিকে বিভিন্ন জায়গা থেকে সংগ্রহ করে গল্পের আকারে সাজিয়েছি কল্পনার আশ্রয় নিয়ে।

Image Source : Internet

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ustad_Mansur



About Author

AINDRILA SARKAR DEB

Aindrila 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.



প্রাচীন ভারতীয় শিল্প – সংস্কৃতিতে পাখি

বিশ্ব রঞ্জন গোস্বামী

প

শু - পাখি মানুষের জীবনের অবিচ্ছেদ্য অংশ। প্রস্তর যুগ থেকে মানুষ ও পশু-পাখির জীবন একে অপরের সাথে জড়িত ছিল। প্রাগৈতিহাসিক কালে আদিম মানুষ দৈনন্দিন জীবনের সাথে সম্পর্কিত নানা প্রাণী ও পাখিদের ছবি আঁকত। এগুলোর নিদর্শন অজন্তা, ভীমবেটকা, মির্জাপুর প্রভৃতি গুহার জায়গায় দেখা যায়। প্রাগৈতিহাসিক গুহায় যেখানে আদিম মানুষ আশ্রয়ও নিতো, সেখানে গুহাচিত্রে আদিম মানুষের শিল্প সৃষ্টির প্রচেষ্টা দেখা যায়। এই আশ্রয়স্থলে আমরা হাতি, গন্ডার, বাঘ, কুকুর ও নানা রকম পাখি যেমন মোরগ, ময়ূর, বক ইত্যাদির আঁকা ছবি দেখতে পাই। শিল্পের দৃষ্টিকোণ থেকে এগুলি চিত্রকল্পের এক আদিম রূপ বা পর্যায়। এই ছবিগুলোর বিষয়বস্তু হল মূলত শিকার ও তখনকার সময়ে দৈনন্দিন জীবনে প্রচলিত বিভিন্ন ঘটনার পর্যায়।

ভারতীয় শিল্পে সিন্ধু সভ্যতায় প্রথম প্রাণী ও পাখির চিত্র বিভিন্ন ভাবে চিত্রিত হয়েছে। এগুলো বিভিন্ন প্রেক্ষাপটে এবং প্রচুর সংখ্যায় দেখা যায়। সিন্ধু সভ্যতায় পশু-পাখির চিত্র শিল্পে ও পরবর্তী সময়ে ধাতব ও মূল্যবান পাথরের মূর্তি, মৃতশিল্পের উপর চিত্রকর্ম, সীল খোদাই, তাবিজ ও পুঁতিতে পাওয়া যায়। এইসব চিত্র কলায় প্রায় বিভিন্ন ধরনের পাখির যেমন ময়ূর, মোরগ, পায়রা, পেঁচা, হাঁস ইত্যাদির প্রাধান্য বেশি।



AjantaCaves-Duck Fresco

তাম্রযুগে (খ্রীষ্টপূর্ব ৪০০০-২৬০০ সাল) (চালকোলিথিক) এবং মেগালোথিক যুগে (খ্রীষ্টপূর্ব ২৫০০-২০০০) বিভিন্ন পশু-পাখি পোড়ামাটি, ধাতু, ও মৃতশিল্পের উপর চিত্রিত। মৌর্যযুগ অর্থাৎ খ্রীষ্টপূর্ব দ্বিতীয় শতাব্দী থেকে সাহিত্যের পাশাপাশি শিল্পেও প্রাণী ও পাখির ব্যবহার দেখা যায়। তখন সমসাময়িক সাহিত্যে মানে জাতক, ধ্রুপদী নাটক, কোটিল্য অর্থশাস্ত্র, বেদ, রামায়ন, মহাভারত পঞ্চত্রয়, হিতোপদেশ, বিভিন্ন পুরাণে পশু - পাখির প্রচুর উল্লেখ পাওয়া যায়। জাতক, পঞ্চতন্ত্র ও হিতোপদেশের মত গল্পে মানুষ এবং প্রাণীজগতের মধ্যে নৈতিক প্রভাবের সাথে চমৎকার মেল বন্ধন ছিল। বিভিন্ন ধর্মে অর্থাৎ হিন্দু, বৌদ্ধ, জৈন সকলেরই পশু-পাখির প্রতি নিজস্ব বিশ্বাস রয়েছে। তারা নানা দেবদেবীর বাহন বা প্রতীক হিসাবে পূজিত হতো। স্বাভাবিকভাবেই পশু-পাখির ভাস্কর্য উপস্থাপনায় ধর্মের প্রভাব দেখা যায়। জাতকের কাহিনী স্তূপে চিত্রিত করা হয়েছিল। বৌদ্ধধর্মালম্বী মানুষের বিশ্বাস বুদ্ধদেব বোধিসত্ত্বরূপে বহুবার জীবজগতে জন্মগ্রহণ করেছিলেন। তাই প্রাণী বা পাখিরা ধর্মের মাহাত্ম্য বর্ণনা করার জন্য এক বিশেষ জায়গা করে নেয়। প্রকৃতির পাশাপাশি মানুষের সমাজেও প্রাণীজগতের গুরুত্ব আছে। এমনকি তারা বিশ্বাস করে মৃত্যুর পরেও মানুষ জীবজগতে জন্মগ্রহণ করে। নানা কারণে, যেমন ভয়, কুসংস্কার, বিশেষ গুণাবলী ইত্যাদির জন্য মানুষ পশু-পাখিদের সম্মান করে। তাই তারা গল্পে, পৌরানিক কাহিনী, শিল্প, ও স্থাপত্যে বিশেষ ভূমিকা পালন করে। এটা ঘটনা শিল্পে প্রাণী ও পাখির চিত্রায়নের এক দার্শনিক, ধর্মীয়, সাংস্কৃতিক এবং আলংকারিক দিক রয়েছে।



Bird Art in Sanchi Stupa

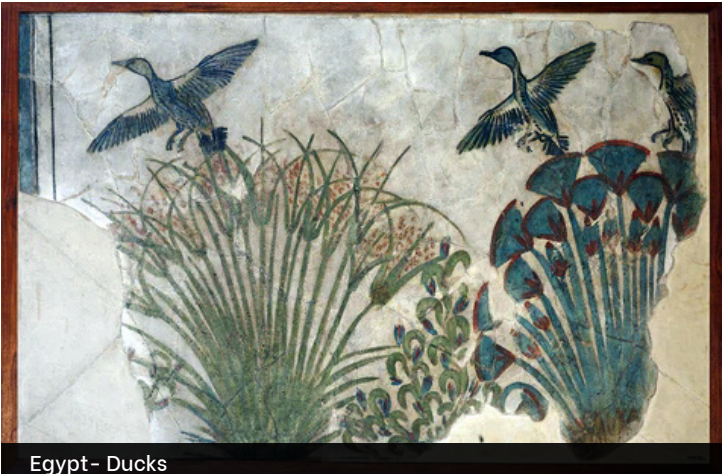


Bird Art on Pillars

বুদ্ধের সমসাময়িককাল বা তার আগে থেকেই মানুষের বাস্তুতন্ত্র সম্পর্কে ধারণা ছিল। আবহমান কাল থেকেই পাখিসহ জীবকুল পরস্পরের উপর নির্ভরশীলভাবে বাস করে আসছে। বৌদ্ধ ও জৈন ধর্মে পশুচিত্র প্রচুর সংখ্যায় শৈল্পিকভাবে দেখা যায়। বৌদ্ধ গুহাচিত্র ও ভাস্কর্য খচিত বিভিন্ন সব স্তপগুলি যেমন বেদসা, ভাজা, কার্লে, কানহেরি, নাসিক, অজন্তা, বাগ, বারহুত, গয়া ইত্যাদি প্রাণীজগতের চিত্রকলার জন্য বিখ্যাত। পরবর্তী সময়ে হিন্দু মন্দিরগুলিতে দেব-দেবীদের বাহন বা প্রতীক হিসাবে দ্বারে অথবা ভিতের উপর হাতি, ঘোড়া, নানা পাখিদের ব্যবহৃত হতে দেখা যায়।



Peacocks of the Great Stupa



Egypt- Ducks

চিত্রকলাগুলি কথা বলতে বা উড়তে না পারা প্রাণী এবং পাখিদের রহস্যময় ও পবিত্র করে তুলেছিল। এই কারনেই প্রাচীন ভারতীয় তথা বিশ্ব শিল্পকলায় (মিশর, রোম, গ্রীস, ফ্রান্স, ইটালি, অস্ট্রেলিয়া, মধ্য এশীয়) প্রাণী ও পাখি এক বিশেষ স্থান পেয়েছে। এগুলো জীবন, মৃত্যু, দেব-দেবী, ধর্ম, পৌরাণিক কাহিনী, কুসংস্কার এবং আরও অনেক কিছুর সাথে জড়িত। ভারতীয় শিল্পে পশু-পাখির ভূমিকা ত্যাগ, সুখ, সমৃদ্ধি, তাবিজ, পুঁতি, মুদ্রা, সীল, খেলনা এমনকি রাজনৈতিক প্রতীক চিত্রকলাগুলি কথা বলতে বা উড়তে না পারা প্রাণী এবং পাখিদের রহস্যময় ও পবিত্র করে তুলেছিল। এই কারনেই প্রাচীন ভারতীয় তথা বিশ্ব শিল্পকলায় (মিশর, রোম, গ্রীস, ফ্রান্স, ইটালি, অস্ট্রেলিয়া, মধ্য এশীয়) প্রাণী ও পাখি এক বিশেষ স্থান পেয়েছে।

এগুলো জীবন, মৃত্যু, দেব-দেবী, ধর্ম, পৌরাণিক কাহিনী, কুসংস্কার এবং আরও অনেক কিছুর সাথে জড়িত। ভারতীয় শিল্পে পশু-পাখির ভূমিকা ত্যাগ, সুখ, সমৃদ্ধি, তাবিজ, পুঁতি, মুদ্রা, সীল, খেলনা এমনকি রাজনৈতিক প্রতীক হিসাবে ব্যবহার হতে দেখা যেতো। প্রাচীন ভারতীয় শিল্পের প্রতিটি যুগে বহু পশু-পাখিকে বিভিন্ন উপায়ে এবং প্রেক্ষাপটে উপস্থাপন করা হয়েছে। এই শিল্পগুলি প্রায়শই সাজসজ্জা অর্থাৎ বেশিরভাগ অলংকার, পোশাক-আসাকের নকসা ইত্যাদি পাখি থেকে নেওয়া হয়েছিল। এগুলো সমাজে খুব জনপ্রিয় ছিল। ভারতীয় শিল্পকলায় বিভিন্ন যুগে প্রাণী ও বা পাখির ভূমিকা ভিন্ন হতে পারে, কিন্তু সমাজ ও সংস্কৃতিতে এদের গুরুত্ব ও মূল্যকে অবহেলা করা হয়নি। এই ঐতিহ্য এখনও অটুট এবং চিরকাল অব্যাহত থাকবে।



Egypt Cranes from the tomb of Ti, Saqqara



Owls of Tros-Freres Caves



Australia-extinct birds depicted on a rock

এখন প্রাচীন ভারতীয় শিলা চিত্রকলায় (Rock Painting) পাখির ব্যবহার বিশেষভাবে উল্লেখ করা যাক। শিলা চিত্রকলা বা Rock Painting হল ভেষজ, খনিজ ও গৌরিক মাটির রঙে খালি পাথরের উপরে, প্রাকৃতিকভাবে তৈরি গুহা বা অন্য কোন পাথরের গর্তের মধ্যে আঁকা চিত্রকর্ম। প্রস্তর যুগে সারা বিশ্বে আদিম মানুষ গুহা, শিলা, স্তম্ভকে আশ্রয় কেন্দ্র হিসাবে ব্যবহার করত। মানুষের নান্দনিক কার্যকলাপের সবচেয়ে পুরানো নজির হিসেবে এইসব চিত্রকর্মগুলিতে পশু-পাখি এবং প্রাগৈতিহাসিক মানুষের সাংস্কৃতিক, সামাজিক ও ব্যক্তিগত জীবনের নানা ঘটনার দৃশ্য চিত্রিত করা হয়েছে। এদের সঙ্গে ধর্ম, বিশ্বাস, মিথ, ম্যাজিক ইত্যাদি জড়িয়ে ছিল।



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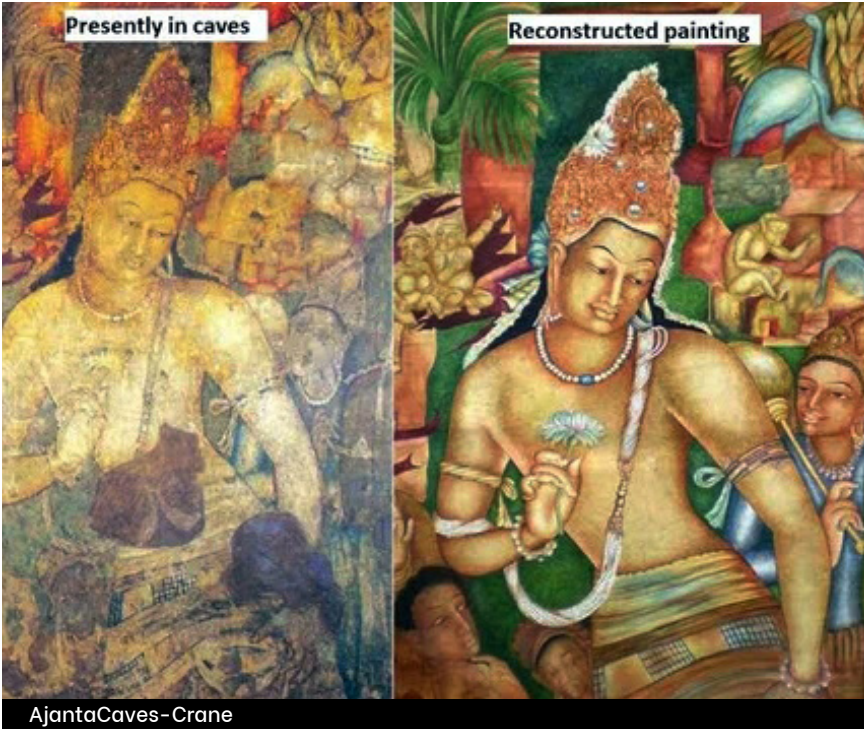
ভারতে নানা বৈচিত্র্যের পাখি রয়েছে। বরং সারা বিশ্বের জীবন্ত পাখির মোট দশ হাজার প্রজাতির মধ্যে ভারতে প্রায় তেরশো বা তার বেশি প্রজাতি রয়েছে যা একশো তেরোটি ফ্যামিলি বা বংশের ও ছাব্বিশটি বর্গের প্রতিনিধিত্ব করে। প্রাচীনকালে ভারতে পাখি কেবল বিনোদনের বিষয়ই ছিল না, বরং বৈজ্ঞানিক পর্যবেক্ষণের বিষয়ও ছিল (বৈদ্য, ১৯৫৮, জিন বিজয় ১৯৩৫)। যদিও ভারতীয় সংস্কৃতি ও সমাজের অন্যান্য দিকগুলিতেও পাখির একটা গুরুত্বপূর্ণ স্থান রয়েছে।

বিখ্যাত গবেষক হানউয়ার ও তার সহকর্মীরা (১৯৬৭) ভারতীয় শিলা চিত্রকলায় (Rock painting) যেসব পাখি পাওয়া গেছে এদের চারটি শ্রেণীতে ভাগ করেছেন - (১) গাছ-পালার উপর নির্ভর করে থাকা পাখি (Perching bird), (২) শিকারী পাখি (Birds of prey), (৩) জলাভূমির পাখি ও (৪) উড়তে পারে না এমন সব পাখি।

গাছপালার উপর নির্ভর করে থাকা পাখি, যারা সাধারণত খাদ্যশস্য, ফল-মূল ও পোকা-মাকড় খায় যেমন বাবুই, মুনিয়া, চডুই, শালিখ, আমাদের আশেপাশের আরও অন্যান্য পাখি। এখনও পর্যন্ত পাঁচমারি এলাকার বানিয়াবেরি গুহাতে পাওয়া গেছে গুপ্ত (১৯৬৭) দ্বারা রেকর্ড করা একটি চিত্র ছাড়া ভারতের আর কোনও শিলা চিত্রে এইসব পাখির খোঁজ মেলেনি। পাখিটি সম্ভবত দক্ষিণ ভারতের ব্ল্যাক বার্ড (*Turdus simillims*) গাছের

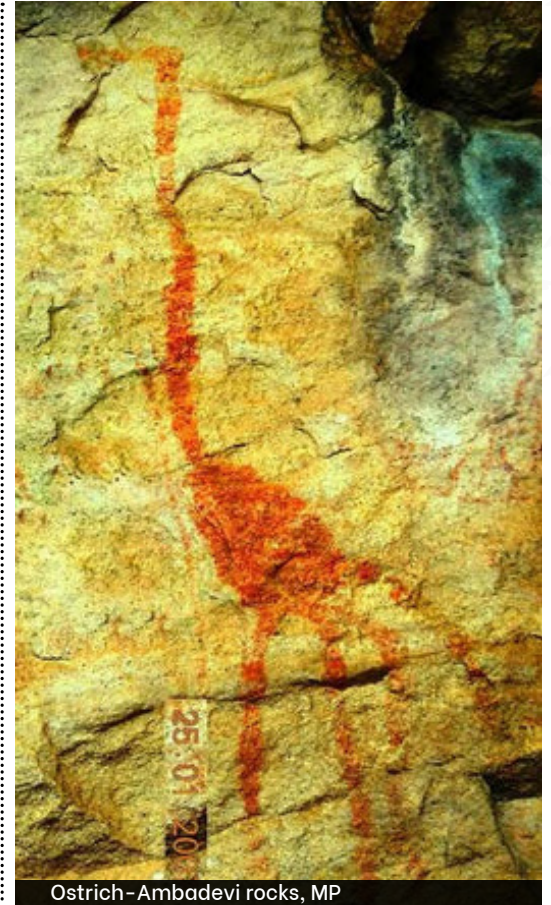
ডালে বসে থাকতে দেখানো হয়েছে। একই সাথে এই ফ্রেমের চিত্রে একজন মানুষের চারপাশে ছুটে চলা বানরের মূর্তি রয়েছে। মৌমাছিতে ভরা একটি মৌচাকও পাখিটির দখল করা একই ডালে চিত্রিত করা হয়েছে। যেহেতু এই পাখিগুলির অনেকেই মূলত ‘শস্য নির্ভর’, তাই এই ধরনের পাখিদের অনুপস্থিতি পরোক্ষভাবে এসব শিলালিপির প্রাচীনত্বের সাক্ষ্য দেয়। তাতে মনে হয় এটি এমন এক সময়কাল সম্পর্কিত যখন কোন চাষ-আবাদ করা খাদ্য শস্য ছিল না। মানুষ তখন মূলত শিকারী ছিল। ওয়াকঙ্কর (১৯৭৩) কাটরা-বিহার (রাজগড়) ও খারওয়াই (রাইসেন) দুটি শিলা চিত্রের কথা জানিয়েছেন যা ছিল কাক এবং চড়ুইর। শিকারী পাখি হিসাবে শুধুমাত্র শকুনের এক প্রজাতির (Red-headed Vulture - *Sarcogyps calvus*) গুহা চিত্র দেখতে পাই। ওয়াকঙ্কর (১৯৭৩) মধ্যপ্রদেশের রায়সেন জেলার পাঁচমারি গুহায় এরকম সাতটি শকুনের চিত্রের কথা জানিয়েছেন।

ভারতীয় শিলা চিত্রকলায় এখনও পর্যন্ত স্বীকৃত জলাভূমির পাখিরা হল বার-হেডেড গুজ (*Anser indicus*), মির্জাপুরের কান্দারকোট গুহায় পাওয়া যায় (গুপ্ত, ১৯৬৭)। গ্রেটার পেইন্টেড স্লাইপ (*Rostratula benghalensis*), কমন স্লাইপ (*Gallinago gallinago*), কমন স্যান্ডপাইপার (*Actitis hypoleucos*), হোয়াইট (ব্ল্যাক-হেডেড) আইবিস (*Threskiornis melanocephalus*) সবই মির্জাপুরের কাছে ভালাদারিয়া গুহা চিত্র থেকে রেকর্ড করা হয়েছে [ঘোষ (১৯৩২)]। লিটল করমোরান্ট (*Microcarbo niger*) পাঁচমারির মহাদেও গুহায় পাওয়া গেছে (এন. ডি. গর্ডন)। পোচার্ড (*Aythya ferina*), ইয়ালো-বিল্ড স্পুনবিল (*Platalea flavipes*) ভীমবেটকায় দেখা গেছে।



সারস ফ্রেন (*Antigone antigone*), কমন হুইসলিং টিল (*Dendrocygna javanica*), নর্দান শ্যাভেলর (*Spatula clypeata*) এই সবগুলি নড়িয়াউলি গুহায় প্লেট থেকে রেকর্ড করা [সাগর গুপ্ত (১৯৬৭)]। রক চিত্রকলায় গুহা চিত্রে সাধারণ ময়ূরের (*Pavo cristatus*) মির্জাপুর থেকে পনেরোটি, ভীমবেটকা থেকে দশটি, পাঁচমারি থেকে তিনটি, আদমগড় ও সাগর গুহা থেকে একটি করে মোট ত্রিশটি লিপিবদ্ধ করা হয়েছে [ঘোষ (১৯৩২), গুপ্ত (১৯৬৭)] ।

জঙ্গলের পাখি ধূসর বনমোরগ (*Gallus sonneratii* এবং লাল বনমোরগের (*Gallus gallus*) ছয়-সাতটি চিত্রকল্প ভীমবেটকা এবং একটি পাঁচমারি গুহায় সনাক্ত করা হয়েছে (গুপ্ত, ১৯৬৭)। আবার পাঁচমারি বাজার গুহায় সাধারণ উটপাখির (*Struthio camelus*) দুটি বিবর্ণ চিত্র পাওয়া গেছে (গুপ্ত, ১৯৬৭)। যদিও এই ছবিগুলি উটপাখির আকৃতির হলেও তা সঠিকভাবে শনাক্তকরণের জন্য আরও অনুসন্ধান দরকার।



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Panchmari-Fowl Art

Ostrich-Ambadevi rocks, MP



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উপরে উল্লিখিত রক চিত্রকলাগুলি বিশ্লেষণ করলে দেখা যায় পাথরের চিত্রকর্মে উড়তে পারে না এমন সব পাখিদের প্রাধান্য (৬৭.৫%), জলচর পাখিরা দ্বিতীয় (২৭%), শিকারী পাখিরা তৃতীয় (৩.৮%) স্থানে, যেখানে গাছ-পালার উপর নির্ভর করা পাখিরা পুরো চিত্রকল্পের মাত্র ১.৭%। দেখা গেছে ময়ূর সব পাখিদের মধ্যে সংখ্যার নিরিখে সবচেয়ে বেশি (৭৫%)

সমস্ত মিথোলিথিক স্তরে নানা বর্ণের ব্যবহার পাওয়া গেছে। চিত্রগুলিতে লাল, সাদা, কমলা ইত্যাদি রংয়ের প্রাধান্য দেখা যায়। শৈলী-অঙ্কনগুলি প্রাকৃতিক, আলংকারিক, জ্যামিতিক ইত্যাদি আকারে চিত্রিত অবস্থায় পাওয়া যায়। কখনও কখনও পাখির পুরো শরীর এক রকম রংয়ে চিত্রিত করা থাকে যা একটি সিলুয়েট তৈরি করে। এইগুলি হল হোয়াইট আইবিস, গ্রেটার পেইন্টেড স্লাইপ, কমন্স স্লাইপ, কমন্স স্যাডপাইপার (সবই মির্জাপুরের ভালাদারিয়া গুহায়) (ঘোষ, ১৯৬৭)। লিটল করমোরান্ট (পাঁচমারি), শ্যভেলর, কমন্স হুইসলিং টিল, (মহাদেও গুহা), পোচার্ড, ময়ূর (ভীমবেটকা গুহা) প্রাকৃতিক শৈলীতে চিত্রিত। আবার কখনও পাখির শরীর কেবলমাত্র আংশিক ভাবে রং করা অবস্থায় দেখা গেছে যেমন ভীমবেটকা গুহাচিত্রে ময়ূর ও পোচার্ডের বেলায় পাই। ভীমবেটকার লাখাজুয়া গুহায় ময়ূরের চিত্র কোন রং করা ছিল না। অনেক চিত্রে পাখিগুলিকে আলংকারিক সমান্তরাল রেখা গিয়ে আঁকা হয়েছে (মির্জাপুর গুহা)। বনমোরগের ছবিগুলি জ্যামিতিক শৈলির ভালো উদাহরণ। বিভিন্ন চিত্রে পাখিদের একক, জোড়ায় বা দলে আঁকা হয়েছে। তবে ময়ূরদের দলবদ্ধ ভাবে বেশি দেখান হয়েছে। এমনকি বিভিন্ন প্রজাতির পাখি একে অপরের পেছনে বা মুখোমুখি অবস্থানে পাওয়া গেছে।

ভীমবেটকায় একটি গুহাচিত্রে জঙ্গলী মুরগিসহ দুটি পুরুষ মানুষ, এবং একটি বিছে দেখানো হয়েছে বড় আকারের ফুলের পিছনে। একই জায়গায় দুটি সারিতে বামদিকে অগ্রসর হওয়া ঘোড়সওয়ারের সাথে দুটি ছানাসহ মুরগি চিত্রিত আছে। জঙ্গলের পাখিকে দলটির নেতৃত্ব দেওয়ার জন্য আঁকা হয়েছে। ছানাগুলিকে বর্ম-পরিহিত সর্দারের উভয় পাশে মাথার কাছে চিত্রিত করা হয়েছে। অনেক সম্পর্কহীন জিনিসের এই চিত্র থেকে অশুভ লক্ষণের ধারণা করা যেতে পারে (ডর্ভোগন ফ্রান্স)। লাসকস্কের গুহায় পাওয়া প্যালিওলিথিক গুহাচিত্রে একটি পাখিকে সম্ভবত মানুষের আত্মার প্রতীক হিসাবে চিত্রিত করা হয়েছে। এই চিত্রটিতে এক আহত বাইসনকে পাখির মুখোশ পরে একজন মানুষকে আক্রমণ করতে দেখা যাচ্ছে। আত্মার প্রতীক রূপে পাখিকে প্রাচীন মিশর, গ্রীস ও প্রাচ্যের সংস্কৃতিতেও ব্যবহার করা হতো (করলট, ১৯৬২)।



Bhimbetka

পাথরের চিত্র, খোদাই করা ভাস্কর্যের মত শিল্পকর্ম উচ্চ প্যালিওলিথিক যুগের আগে প্রায় ত্রিশ হাজার বছর আগে আর রেকর্ড করা হয়নি। প্রত্নতাত্ত্বিক প্রমানের ভিত্তিতে বলা যেতে পারে যে ভারতে মধ্য-প্রস্তর যুগে প্রায় দশ হাজার বছর আগের পাথরের উপর চিত্রকর্ম। ভীমবেটকা গুহায় পাওয়া ময়ূরের চিত্রকে ভারতে পাখির প্রাচীনতম বলে ধরা হয়। মির্জাপুরের ভালাদারিয়া ও ভীমবেটকা গুহায় চিত্রিত জলচর পাখিগুলিও প্রাচীনতম চিত্রের নিদর্শন। অন্যান্য প্রাণী ও মানুষের সাথে আঁকা পাখিগুলি নিঃসন্দেহে পরবর্তী সৃষ্টি।

বেশিরভাগ গুহা চিত্রগুলি সংরক্ষণের অভাবে ভালো অবস্থায় নেই। পুরানো চিত্রগুলি খুব বিবর্ণ। আমরা মনে করতে পারি গুহাচিত্র শিল্পীরা পাখিদের ভালবাসতেন, তাদের সৌন্দর্য ও গতিবিধি পছন্দ করতেন। তাই তারা তাদের আশ্রয়স্থলের দেওয়ালে এই চিত্রগুলি আঁকতে আনন্দ অনুভব করতেন।

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Image source : Internet



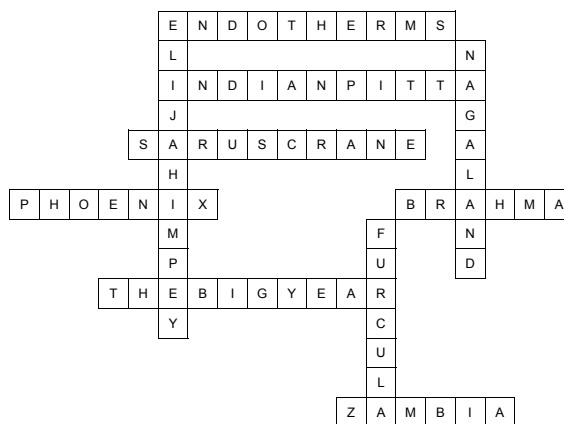
About Author

BISWA RANJAN GOSWAMI

Biswa Ranjan is a science writer and an active member of the Biodiversity Conservation Academy, Kolkata. Passionate about promoting scientific awareness and biodiversity conservation, he has contributed extensively to the field through his writings. He is a regular contributor to Fantail too. Based in Sonarpur, South 24 Parganas, he remains engaged in various initiatives aimed at fostering environmental consciousness.

CROSSWORD ANSWERS

Crossword Puzzle



Across

- 1 Birds are _____, which means they can maintain a near-constant body temperature.
- 3 This bird has nine colours and is also known as navrang in Hindi.
- 4 Emperor Jahangir closely observed and documented the mating behavior of this bird in his memoir.
- 5 This mythical bird is known to rise from its own ashes.
- 6 Other than Goddess Saraswati, the Hamsa or the swan is depicted as the vahana/vehicle of which Hindu God?
- 8 This 2011 Hollywood movie on birdwatching stars Jack Black and Owen Wilson.
- 9 A golden osprey adorns the flag of this African country.

Down

- 1 This British Judge who served in India commissioned paintings of Indian birds which are exhibited at the Ashmolean museum of Oxford.
- 2 The Amur falcon traverses the entire southern hemisphere and visits which North-eastern state of India?
- 7 The fused clavicle of birds, also known as the wishbone.



BWS - SCHOOL OF BIRDS
(DEC 2024 - FEB 2025)

**TITASH CHAKRABARTI &
ANANDARUP BHADRA**
ILLUSTRATIONS: SANTANU KAR

The focus of our flagship initiative “School of birds”, has been to introduce children to the intricacies of Nature through the looking glass of birds in their backyard. December 2024 to February 2025 has been a wonderful winter for bird watching with bright sunny skies and plenty of migrants. We have also formed new partnerships with multiple organizations & Institutions, to carry our vision to various districts of West Bengal (see the table below for further details).

Here is a snapshot of our field activities this winter.



The spotter



The birdwatcher



The caller



The pointer



The readers



The listeners

We extend our warm regards to Pushpal Roy for voluntary participation & passionate photography in multiple bird walks this winter.

FROM IMAGE TO IMAGINATION

Inspired by the backyard birds observed during the Nature walks, the children enriched us with a treasure trove of bird illustrations from various districts across the state.

We are really happy to highlight that the front cover and the back cover of FANTAIL (Volume 4; Issue 4) is a collage of creations by the children attending 'School of Birds'. Our artistic and illustrative activities have been spearheaded by Santanu Kar, who has also documented our sessions in his particular style. Here are two of his wonderful creations;



Children's photo collage



LEARNING ACTIVITIES - Smell the leaf Guess the fruit

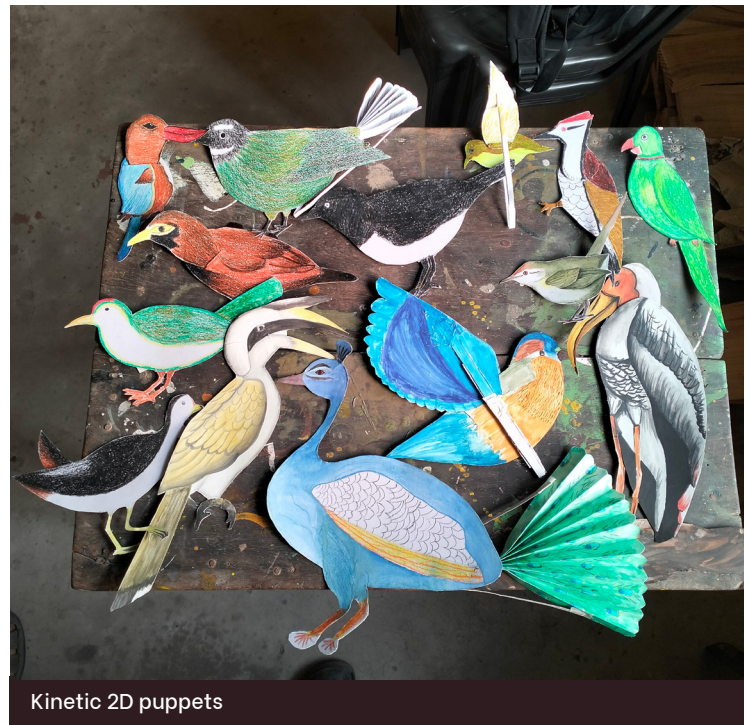


Mind Mapping

Apart from the above, we have also delved into creating various activities around bird props to facilitate children towards narrating nature tales. Here are some wonderful examples ;



Bird magnets



Kinetic 2D puppets

We are continuing to develop more creative and imaginative activities which encourage the participation of children. If anyone is interested in learning more about the activities, sharing their expertise in developing them further or collaborating fruitfully, do get in touch with us.

LOOKING BACK

From the period of April 2024 to February 2025, we have had active participation in collaboration with various organizations, for a total of 3712 children contact hours, as encapsulated below:

SL No	District	Collaborators	No. of Institutions	No. of Sessions and Details	Date	Number of children	Children contact hours
01	Kolkata	Rotary Club of Calcutta Jadavpur Nature Mates Tentultolar Gaan	11	19 sessions - interactions, workshops, exhibitions and nature walk	Dec 2024 - Feb 2025	297	1106
02	Howrah		1	2 nature walks	Dec 2024	40	100
03	Alipurduar	BAN Foundation	4	4 sessions - interactions and nature walk	Jan-Feb 2025	115	193
04	Bankura	WINGS	4	4 sessions - interactions and nature walk	Jan-Feb 2025	180	647
05	Birbhum	WINGS	5	5 sessions - interactions and nature walk	Jan 2025	236	656
06	Coochbehar	BAN Foundation	2	2 sessions - interactions and nature walk	Jan-Feb 2025	51	77
07	Durgapur	WINGS	1	1 interactive session	Jan 2025	40	80
08	North 24 Parganas	BAN Foundation	3	3 sessions - interactions and nature walk	Jan-Feb 2025	143	415
05	Paschim Bardhaman	WINGS	4	4 sessions - interactions and nature walk	Jan-Feb 2025	160	440
Total	9		35	44		1262	3712

We have received an overwhelmingly positive response from the participants, and have compiled a selected few which captures the children's overall experience.





The games we played were very fun and helpful for our educational purposes



It was enjoyable than a zoo because we don't get a chance to see birds free.

Overall, it was an incredible experience and I would be always willing to take part in such an program



freely. I felt happy to see the birds fly around



Such enthusiasm from the children will continue to propel us forward. Our efforts would be incomplete without the support of our partner organizations [BAN Foundation - Bonding with Animals & Nature](#) & [WINGS - Wildlife Information and Nature Guide Society](#), Airavat. We are also indebted to Debarbab Sen and Saikat Das for carrying the BWS-School of Birds initiative forward under their individual capacity, and the numerous volunteers who have joined our cause.

SOARING AHEAD

Hats off to the [Children's Welfare Association High School for Girls HS](#), for opening their gates to facilitate our long-term work at the premises for the 2nd academic year. During the last academic year, after a year-long curriculum with 50 children from class 8, we had selected 15 of them, who had expressed exceptional passion towards Birds & Nature, to form a Bird Club. The Bird Club is functioning smoothly, with the focus being on Nature walks &



Playing with puppets!!! (Members of Bird Club)

Nature storytelling through creative media, and inculcating an overall scientific approach. We have started our year-long curriculum with some fresh faces at the school this year, to select some more curious pairs of eyes & ears, and inquisitive & creative minds to join the Bird Club.

In the previous issue of FANTAIL, we had promised to share an overall report of our first 3-day workshop on our long-term project of 'Bridging Traditional Gaps through Storytelling' with the Kheria Sabar children of [Paschim Banga Kheria Sabar Kalyan Samity](#), Purulia. We would like to convey our heartfelt gratitude to our collaborators Keystone Foundation, for showcasing our work on their online platforms, including the report on their website.

Report link → <https://keystone-foundation.org/workshop-on-nature-storytelling-and-puppetry/>

Video Report → <https://youtu.be/yFv4zWhOpsM>

Workshop 2 is scheduled for the first week of March 2025, and we cannot wait to kick off. As we look ahead, we leave you with a trip down the memory lane and this beautiful expression by **John Denver**...



All the children and the flowers are my sisters and my brothers, their laughter and their loveliness can clear a cloudy day!



CELEBRATING NATIONAL BIRD DAY: BIRDWATCHERS' SOCIETY'S STATEWIDE EVENTS IN WEST BENGAL

DIPPROVO MAJUMDAR

On January 5, 2025, the Birdwatchers' Society (BWS) organized a series of engaging events across various parts of West Bengal to celebrate National Bird Day. These events aimed to spread awareness about bird conservation, encourage community participation, and foster a love for avian biodiversity.

Bird Awareness and Bird Walk in Gajoldoba, North Bengal

On January 4, 2025, ahead of National Bird Day, an awareness session and bird walk were held at Gajoldoba, Jalpaiguri. Hosted at Barapatiya TRN High School, the event drew enthusiastic participation from students, teachers, and local nature lovers. Experts spoke about the importance of preserving bird habitats, and attendees had the opportunity to observe a variety of local and migratory birds along the Teesta Barrage area.

Additionally, The West Bengal Forest School, Dowhill, collaborated with Birdwatchers' Society to organize a day-long birdwatching event involving students from Barapatia Pachiram Nahata High School. A total of 37 students from Classes VIII to X participated in the event at Gajoldoba. The students were thrilled to observe waterbirds with the aid of spotting scopes and binoculars. The Bengali version of a bird pocket guide was distributed among the participants. Five faculty members and two Range Officers from the Forest Department were present throughout the program, ensuring an informative and engaging experience. Refreshments and other logistics were provided by the West Bengal Forest School.



Nature Walk in Baruipur by School of Birds

On January 5, 2025, the School of Birds, in collaboration with Citizen Interest Group, organized a nature walk in Baruipur. Aimed at children and their parents, the event provided an immersive experience in birdwatching and ecological awareness. Participants were encouraged to observe and document the different bird species they encountered, reinforcing the significance of conservation efforts.

Bird Conservation Fair at Fulsara FP School, North 24 Parganas

The Birdwatchers' Society (BWS) and BAN joined forces to host a Bird Conservation Fair on January 5, 2025, at Fulsara FP School in North 24 Parganas. The fair featured interactive sessions, exhibitions, and discussions led by avian experts. Conservationists emphasized the threats faced by local bird species and how communities can contribute to their protection.

National Bird Day Celebrations at Ajoypur High School, Suri, Birbhum

On the occasion of National Bird Day (5th January), the Birdwatchers' Society and WINGS, in collaboration with Ajoypur High School, organized a special "School of Birds" program. Led by teacher Dinabandhu



On the occasion of National Bird Day (5th January), the Birdwatchers' Society and WINGS, in collaboration with Ajoypur High School, organized a special "School of Birds" program. Led by teacher Dinabandhu Biswas and our volunteer Priyanka Mondal, the program aimed to educate students about the importance of bird conservation and introduce them to the diverse avian life in their region.



On the occasion of National Bird Day on the 5th, we organized a Bird Conservation Fair, which included the School of Birds program. Alongside birdwatching, various other activities were conducted, including screenings on birds and conservation. There were also a few stalls where handmade souvenirs created by the participants were displayed for sale, with a major percentage of the proceeds going to individuals who were previously poachers but have now become protectors of birds.

Biswas and volunteer Priyanka Mondal, the program aimed to educate students about the importance of bird conservation and introduce them to the diverse avian life in their region.

A birdwatching session was conducted near the Tilpara Barrage and adjacent area, where students, supported by volunteers of WINGS, actively participated in identifying various bird species. The program fostered a love for nature and encouraged environmental awareness among the young minds, aligning perfectly with the spirit of National Bird Day.





2nd School of Bird's Programme – Khag Junior High school; Village – Khag ; Block and Thana – Sonamukhi ; Dist – Bankura



Bird Awareness & Bird Walk in Bishnupur

BWS School of Birds and Bishnupur Nature Club organized a Bird Awareness and Bird Walk program on January 5, 2025. The event saw participation from local birding enthusiasts, students, and nature lovers. Attendees learned about bird behavior, habitat conservation, and the ecological role of avian species.

Conclusion

The National Bird Day celebrations organized by the Birdwatchers' Society across West Bengal successfully engaged communities in bird conservation efforts. These events not only educated participants on the importance of avian species but also inspired a deeper appreciation for nature. Through such initiatives, BWS continues to foster awareness and advocacy for bird conservation in the region.



BWS ODISHA CAMP REPORT

25-29 DECEMBER, 2024

HIYA CHATTERJEE



The Group

The Birdwatchers' Society organized a birdwatching camp at Kila Dalijoda near Cuttack, Odisha from 25-29 December, 2024. 23 wildlife enthusiasts, some seasoned and some novices, joined us for the birding trip for 4 days at this heritage homestay owned by Mr Debjit Singh Deo and Mrs Namrata Singh Deo. With Kila Dalijoda as the base, the itinerary consisted of birding in Dalijoda forest and the surrounding grasslands, a day trip to Mangalajodi wetland,

and a trip to the Regional Plant Resource Centre. The trip covered numerous bird habitats such as wetlands, grasslands, parks, open scrubby forests and dense forests of the night and the highlights of the camp were the sighting of more than 175 species of birds, including few vulnerable and endangered species such as the Black-bellied Tern and the Pale-capped Pigeon. The campers shared their feedback about various aspects of the trip:



The joy of birding with local kids



A Personal Touch
Photo by: Neelam Mukherjee

For many, this was the first time that they were going on a trip in which the sole focus was birds. Nibedita Bhattacharya, an avid traveller and wildlife enthusiast wrote: ***“I must say that I was very eager to join them as it was my first camp with them. The main point of attraction was only birds and nothing else.”*** Syed Mashkur Kirmani, the youngest member of the camp, and the one of the most diligent birders of the lot, was however ***“a little nervous at first because this was my first camp as I thought whether I would be able to mix with the group or not as I thought there will be fewer known faces. I did not know about birds and their various subspecies when I reached the camp. But slowly, little by little I learned many things. All the BWS members of the camp had helped me a lot. I was so happy for being able to meet so knowledgeable people and learn from them.”*** Bipash and Hiya, amateur birders, shared their excitement on joining the trip ***“we were somewhat hesitant of going for a birdwatching camp with Birdwatchers’ Society because we were complete novices, but we also looked forward to it with bated breath. It would be an understatement to say that the trip met our expectations.”***

The hunting lodge of the former king of Garh Panchkot, the property and its environment met with the campers’ awe and delight. ***“When I first saw the place, it was love at first sight. It looked much more gorgeous than the pictures I had seen. And the natural surroundings led it to be a perfect camping site”***, writes Chaiti Banerjee, an experienced birder. For Batul Pipewala, a wildlife enthusiast, ***“It was a thrilling experience, the laterite walls of our bungalow, the paintings on its wall all relating a history.”*** One common denominator in the experience of everyone was the exceptionally good food, and all the campers agreed that the traditional cuisine, ***“from the then kings’ royal kitchen” led to an “incredible culinary and gastronomic experience.”*** Malobika Roy, a school teacher and wildlife enthusiast would ***“recommend this place to everyone who wants to enjoy the jungles and water bodies of Odisha.”***



Group Photo at Night



Spotted Owlet by Pampa Mistri

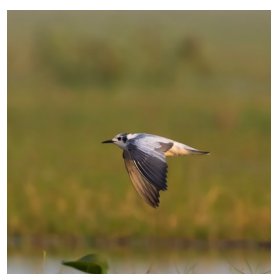


Birding Sessions

About the experience of birdwatching, the members had a lot to say. Many birders found the night time owling in the forests to be the most exciting of all, ***“Walking on a starry night looking for the elusive Brown Fish Owl, the Scops Owl and the Mottled Wood Owl, we moved quietly dodging water puddles, fearing snakes and other nocturnal animals lurking around”***, describes Batul. ***“Owling in the pitch of dark in the company of expert birders equipped with special tools and techniques, made it to a few of my best moments of 2024”*** adds Neelam Mukherjee. For many experienced birders, spotting the Black-bellied Tern at the sand flats of the Mahanadi embankment and the sighting of the Pale-capped Pigeon in the Regional Plant Resource Centre at Cuttack were memorable experiences. Syed remarks: ***“The best part about the camp for me was owling and the search for Pale-capped Pigeon and Black-bellied Tern as they were my first endangered lifers.”***



Indian Scops-Owl by Parth Pratim Chakrabarty



White-winged Tern by Sujan Chatterjee



Pale-capped Pigeon by B S Parihar



Fulvous Whistling Duck by Parth Pratim Chakrabarty

Despite a few snags, the trip left everyone satiated and yearning for more. Many felt that the trip led to lasting connections with their co-birders. Syed felt a little sad as the trip neared its end, and Neelam concluded: ***“A Flat tyre of the minibus on one of the birding days was the king of challenges but the undeterred focus and enthusiasm of birders was impressive! It brought us closer to this great group that we were happy to spend the last few days of 2024 with. Look forward to more such birding trips in 2025.”***

To view our eBird trip report,
please click.

<https://ebird.org/tripreport/309457>



Mottled Wood Owl by Parth Pratim Chakrabarty



Birding With Local Kids



Blue-tailed Bee-eater by Sangeeta Das



Purple Heron with catch by Nivedita Bhattacharya



Brahminy Kite with Telapia Catch by B S Parihar



BWS With Tiyaasha Adhya at Mangalajodi



Evening Session



Scrutiny of a Frog Photo



Wetland Birding



Birding While Stranded



Birding Equipments



A short adda session



Birding while stranded



Campfire

PERSPECTIVES

TITASH CHAKRABARTI



THE EXCITEMENT AND EXHAUSTION OF BWS BAKKHALI COASTAL CAMP

21-23 FEBRUARY 2025

DR ANIRBAN BHADURI & BATUL PIPEWALA



What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make.

Jane Goodall



The discovery of Nordmann's Greenshank (*Tringa guttifer*) in Lothian Island in February 2022, followed by further sightings at Meidinagar - Hijli beach in East Midnapore in 2023 - prompted by telemetry data - confirmed the region's importance as a wintering ground for this endangered species. A subsequent sighting at Lothian Island during the Coastal Bird Camp in 2024 strengthened this hypothesis. The second edition of the Coastal Camp, held during February 21 - 23, 2025 aimed to further explore these protected islands as safe havens for migratory shorebirds.

Wader Flock Pic by Anirban Bhaduri

SETTING SAIL AND SPOTTING BIRDS

The team kicked off on a chartered bus at 4pm on Feb 21 for Bakkhali and settled into the base camp at Hotel Inodoy for the night. The entire trip was led by Soumya Kundu of M/s Zigzag India Tours (<https://www.facebook.com/zigzagindia>). Soumya incidentally is an active BWS member and an avid birder.

Next day early morning, as we set sail from Bakkhali on Feb 22, Brown-headed Gulls (*Chroicocephalus brunnicephalus*) promptly took to the air, circling our boat in anticipation of food scraps. Cameras clicked away enthusiastically - except for one. One hapless birder, in a moment of true absent-minded brilliance, had left her camera battery behind! Her expressions cycled through the five stages of grief in record time before she resigned herself to her fate. "All the better, you can now observe through the binoculars and scopes," said a kind voice, attempting some much-needed damage control.

Our first sightings included the usual suspects: Whimbrels (*Numenius phaeopus*), Curlews (*Numenius arquata*), Black-capped Kingfishers (*Halcyon pileate*), Little Stint (*Calidris minuta*), Kentish Plover (*Anarhynchus alexandrinus*), and both Tibetan Sand-Plover (*Anarhynchus atrifrons*) and Greater Sand-Plovers (*Anarhynchus leschenaultia*) - each identification accompanied by animated debates.

Approaching Jambudwip, we encountered a large flock of birds - Common Shelduck (*Tadorna tadorna*) - an exciting lifer for many. Scanning the skies, we looked for the unusual ones that could charge up the adventurous souls. A pair of Little Tern (*Sterna albifrons*) soon swooped down, feeding nearby and offering excellent photographic opportunities.

A Great Thick-knee (*Esacus recurvirostris*) soared overhead and settled onto a rock, presenting itself for close inspection. Questions



Brown-headed Gull Pic by Sangeeta Das



Curlew Sandpiper Pic by Joy Amed

flew as freely as the birds: What's the difference between a Beach Thick-knee and a Great Thick-knee? How does a Kentish Plover compare to a Tibetan Plover? How can one distinguish a Sanderling from a Red-necked Stint? The open classroom of the sea and sand provided the perfect setting for learning. For an inquisitive reader of this report, the answers could be looked up at different discussions and books whose links are given at the end.

Later in the day on Kargil Beach, we were treated to an astounding display as Small Pratincoles (*Glareola lactea*) and Oriental Pratincole (*Glareola maldivarum*) darted about like playful children, their movements mirroring the rhythmic rise and fall of the tide.

THE SEARCH FOR NORDMANN'S GREENSHANK



On Field

The next day, we embarked from Namkhana on a clean and comfortable boat, well-equipped to survey the Lothian Islands. After two hours, we neared an island and observed a mesmerizing aerial ballet – flocks of shorebirds forming intricate murmuration patterns before landing on the sea. Initial photographs revealed a mix of Common Redshank (*Tringa tetanus*), Great Knot (*Calidris tenuirostris*), and Red Knot (*Calidris canutus*).

Unlike the previous year, the tide timings were not in our favour. The BWS team reached the islands at low tide, exposing vast tidal flats and scattering the shorebirds across large areas. However, Lothian Island did not disappoint. Large numbers of waders were present – resting, feeding, and flying in mixed flocks. The presence of Great Knots, an endangered species, alongside Red Knots, Black-tailed Godwits (*Limosa limosa*), and Bar-tailed Godwits (*Limosa lapponica*) – both near-threatened species, was encouraging.

Spotting Nordmann's Greenshank amidst this sea of waders was challenging, but photographic analysis provided the breakthrough. Among a large flock of vulnerable Black-bellied Plovers (*Pluvialis squatarola*) in flight, at least two Nordmann's Greenshanks were identified, reinforcing Lothian Island's significance as a wintering ground for the species.



Eurasian Curlew Pic by Joy Amed

Further scrutiny of images confirmed the presence of Curlew Sandpipers (*Calidris ferruginea*), Spotted Redshanks (*Tringa erythropus*), and Red-necked Stint (*Calidris ruficollis*), adding to our growing list of identified species.

THE HIGHS AND LOWS OF BIRDING

Exhaustion soon set in, but our passion for birding remained undeterred. We ravenously devoured whatever snacks could be scrounged from our bags until we reached shore, where a well-deserved lunch awaited. Conversations buzzed with excitement while we discussed our incredible sightings and the ones that were missed.

As we made our way back, the diverse landscapes of the coast provided a picturesque backdrop, heightening the sense of adventure. The return bus ride on Feb 23, was filled with the chatter of joyous recounting, bird identification tips, shared photographs and dozing members who were sleep-deprived. A feeling of camaraderie united us, all driven by a shared love for avian life.

Each sighting, each photograph, and each moment spent in nature's embrace was a treasure, making us eager to return for more.



black-tailed Godwit Pic by Sayanta Basak



Great Knot Pic BY Sayanta Basak



Red-necked Stint Pic bY Sayanta Basak



Ruddy Turnstone Pic by Sudipta Ray

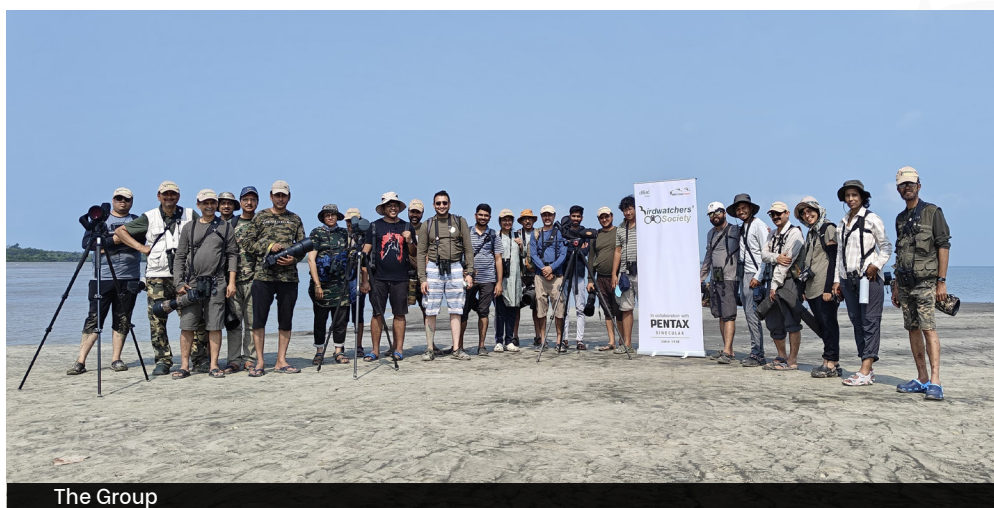


A TRIP TO REMEMBER

Lothian Island and Jambudwip Island in the Gangetic delta and facing the Bay of Bengal, along with Bakkhali-Frazerganj are along the East Asian – Australasian Flyway and serves as an important wintering ground for migratory shorebirds. This area deserves monitoring and more concerted study by the research community. BWS Coastal Camps have made a small but valuable contribution in this direction, empowering Citizen Science – a testament to the wonders of coastal birding and the tireless efforts of those dedicated to avian conservation.

Some **special** mention in this trip are some **Endangered species** that we have seen:

- Nordmann's (EN)
- Great Knot (EN)
- Red Knot (NT)
- Curlew Sandpiper (VU)
- Black-bellied Plover (VU)
- Red-necked Stint (NT)
- Great Thicket (NT)
- Black-tailed Godwit (NT)
- Bar-tailed Godwit (NT)
- Eurasian Curlew (NT)
- Ruddy Turnstone (NT)



The Group

Here is our eBird camp report where total bird lists can be seen:

<https://ebird.org/tripreport/335184>

Some links on different wader identification discussions:

<https://birdcount.in/waders-identification-1/>

<https://birdcount.in/waders-identification-2/>

<https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/wildlife/how-identify/identify-waders>

<https://www.wingsearch2020.com/identification-guide-to-small-winter-waders/>

<https://birdsoftheworld.org/bow/species>

One can have one or more books like these to read about:

1. Waders Of The Indian Subcontinent – Harkirat Singh Sangha
2. Shorebirds – Peter Hayman – John Merchant – Tony Prater
3. Bird ID Photo Guide – Waders, Issue 10, 2023

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This journey of discovery and wonder would not have been possible without the unwavering support and dedication of several individuals whose contributions were invaluable. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to:

- Ms Nisha Goswami, the esteemed DFO of 24 Parganas (South) Division, whose timely approval, guidance and encouragement were instrumental in the success of our expedition.
- Shri Biswanath Sengupta, the Forest Range Officer of Bhagabatpur Range, whose cooperation and assistance ensured smooth and fruitful trip.
- The diligent Forest Range Officer of Bakkhali Range Shri Tanmay Chatterjee, whose efforts in facilitating our activities were greatly appreciated.
- The Officer-in-charge of Frezarganj Coastal Police Station, whose commitment to our safety and well-being was deeply reassuring.

We owe a debt of gratitude to these dedicated individuals and their teams for their contributions to the success of our coastal birding camp. Their collective efforts have not only facilitated our research but have also ignited our passion for ornithological studies and conservation.



On Field

RECOLLECTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE TEAM :



This was a much awaited Coastal Bird Watching camp organised by BWS for around 25 Birders from different parts of West Bengal with varied skills and experience.

Initially there was a bit of anxiety due to the bad weather predictions, however there was less hindrance due to rains and it was a rather pleasant weather for birding.

The trip was amazing with many birds, some extremely rare and some being common keeping the birders busy and ensuring 100% enjoyment for all the birders who cherished together not just the birds but the trip, the food, the togetherness, experience sharing and the surprise peekaboo from the Golden Jackals in the Beach and their evening chorus at Kalisthan.

This trip would not have been possible without some member volunteers' tireless efforts and the kind permission from the Forest Department and local Police.



SWARUP SARKAR, KOLKATA



The BWS Coastal Camp 2025, organized by the Birdwatchers' Society, was a truly remarkable experience that left an indelible mark on all who attended, including me. As John Muir wisely said, "In every walk with nature one receives far more than he seeks," and for those present, this meet was no exception. It was more than just an opportunity to observe birds; it was a chance to immerse oneself in the serenity and splendour of nature in its purest form.

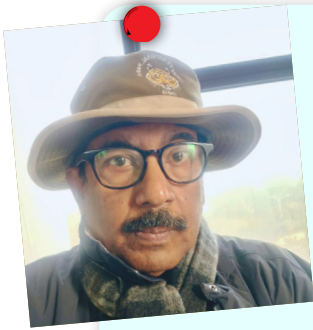
Participants were treated to an enriching blend of sightings, discussions, and moments of quiet reflection. The beauty of the birds, their songs, and their graceful flights filled the air with an almost magical quality, reminding everyone of the timeless truth found in Mary Oliver's words: "I go to the woods to lose my mind and find my soul." Whether it was the exhilarating sight of a rare species or the peaceful harmony of the landscape, each moment was a gift that deepened their appreciation for the natural world.

The meet also fostered a sense of camaraderie among like-minded individuals who shared a passion for birdwatching. The conversations, the shared knowledge, and the collective awe were all part of what made the event so special, leaving everyone with a renewed sense of wonder and gratitude. And for those fortunate enough to attend The BWS Coastal Camp 2025, it was a journey of discovery—one that will surely be cherished for years to come.

Also, special 'kudos' to Kanad, Soumya, and Sankha. Looking forward to the next edition!



AJOY KUMAR DAWN, ASANSOL



My heartiest thanks and gratitude to the organisers of this camp. Action packed, tight scheduled, still so perfectly planned and changes handled, taking care of even all small but important aspects. Personally my gain was immense; not just the elusive birds, some lifers, and beautiful landscape. It was more in knowing personally some of the well heard names, persons of huge birding knowledge, serious and dedicated, still keenly eager to challenge themselves and deepen knowledge further; but above all they are so humble, helpful, amiable and pleasant. Overall, the camp was an amazing experience and such things will go long way to escalate our state's contribution in global birding and ornithology.

PARTHA GHOSH, KOLKATA



Thanks to the organizers and all others for arranging such a wonderful trip This was my first trip with BWS and I enjoyed thoroughly although I couldn't stay for the entire period.

I would request the organizers to plan such a trip to Jhargram/Belpahari/ Kankrajhore, if possible

JOY AMED, JHARGRAM



My first coastal birding trip to Bakkhali with the Birdwatchers' Society was nothing short of magical! The endless mudflats, the salty breeze, and the sight of countless waders created an unforgettable experience. But the real highlight? Spotting the elusive Nordmann's Greenshank! what a rare and breathtaking sight! The joy of witnessing such a globally threatened species in its natural habitat was beyond words. Every moment, from scanning the shores to sharing excitement with fellow birders, made this trip an absolute thrill. The thrill of witnessing such a rarity in the wild was beyond words. This trip wasn't just about spotting birds; it was about feeling connected to nature in its purest form. Bakkhali Camp gifted me an experience of a lifetime, and I can't wait for my next coastal adventure!

SAYANTA BASAK, MALDA

GBBC 2025 WRAPS UP WITH A RECORD-BREAKING PERFORMANCE

SANTANU MANNA

The Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) 2025 event, held from 14th to 17th February like every year, concluded with tremendous success! West Bengal has once again claimed the top spot on the species table in India, recording an astonishing **563** species in just four days—surpassing last year’s impressive total of **543** species. Kudos to the incredible Bengal birders for this remarkable achievement!

TOP 10 STATES BY SPECIES

	SPECIES ▼	CHECKLISTS ▼
West Bengal	563	2401
Uttarakhand	456	2760
Maharashtra	421	8355
Assam	419	1345
Karnataka	388	4043
Gujarat	374	2440
Tamil Nadu	371	11,432
Arunachal Pradesh	353	427
Kerala	348	13,465
Himachal Pradesh	326	426

Darjeeling district led the charge with the highest number of species recorded (**259**), while South 24 Parganas submitted the most complete checklists—an incredible **755**! Truly a commendable effort.

TOP 10 DISTRICTS BY SPECIES COUNT

	SPECIES ▼	CHECKLISTS ▼
Darjeeling	259	133
Birbhum	227	137
South 24 Parganas	218	756
Kalimpong	192	98
Jalpaiguri	181	48
Purba Bardhaman	175	136
Purulia	165	26
North 24 Parganas	161	330
Malda	152	104
Bankura	148	32

Over 200 bird enthusiasts participated this year. However, the number of new birders was slightly lower, likely due to board examinations. The exact count of newcomers will be available after the final data analysis.

Star Performers of GBBC 2025:

Top birders (by species recorded): Baharuddin Sk, Saikat Das, Shuvendu Das, and Souvick Mukherjee.

TOP 10 eBIRDERS IN WESTBENGAL BY SPECIES		
	Complete Checklist	Species (Count)
Baharuddin Sk	31	345
Saikat Das	102	223
Shuvendu Das	116	209
Souvick Mukherjee	112	207
Subhra Pakhira	25	167
Dipprovo Majumdar	34	151
Santu Dutta	34	144
Sayanta Basak	34	135
Esanur Haque	5	135
Adhirup Ghosh	15	125

Checklist champions (100+ complete checklists submitted): Shuvendu Das, Souvick Mukherjee, Santanu Manna, Bharatendra Singh Parihar, and Saikat Das.

CENTURION CHECKLISTERS		
	Complete Checklist	Species (Count)
Shuvendu Das	116	209
Souvick Mukherjee	112	207
Santanu Manna	112	73
Bharatendra Singh Parihar	106	82
Saikat Das	102	223

Key Sightings that stole the show:

- **Ibisbill** (*Ibidorhyncha struthersii*) from North Bengal, spotted by Dipprovo Majumdar and Santu Dutta.
- **Common Starling** (*Sturnus vulgaris*) in Malda, recorded by Subhasish Sengupta.
- **Spotted Crane** (*Porzana porzana*) at Baruipur wetlands, observed by Sujit Kumar Mandal.

In total, Bengal birders submitted a staggering **2,397** complete checklists. The primary goal of GBBC remains to analyse these submissions to understand population trends and determine the country's most common bird species based on 15-minute complete checklists.

Here's hoping that next year brings even greater discoveries and participation. Let's soar higher together in 2026!

FRESH & RARE ARRIVALS

PRIYAM CHATTOPADHYAY

During the period spanning from December 2024 till beginning of March 2025, our community of birders remained active and enthusiastic. Their passion and dedication towards this beloved pastime was quite evident. It's time of migration and avian friends are reaching Indian sub-continent in numbers.

Here is the list of the avian guests that enthralled us. during the period.

2024-2025 Arrivals - Dec 8th, 2024 - Mar 8th, 2025

Sr No	BIRD SPECIES	LOCN - 1	LOCN - 2	SIGHTING DATES
01	Yellow-breasted Bunting	Birbhum	South 24 Parganas	**December 2024, February 2025
02	Great Parrotbill	Senchal Wildlife Sanctuary, Darjeeling		22 December 2024
03	Himalayan Rubythroat	Gayabari, Darjeeling	Tenyasi, Purulia	08 December 2024 15 February 2025
04	Eyebrowed Thrush	Diara, Hooghly		08 December 2024
05	Eurasian Woodcock	Mungpoo, Darjeeling	Mungpoo, Darjeeling	08 December 2024 16 February 2025
06	Little Bunting	Baruipur, South 24 Parganas	Bahadurpur, Birbhum	08 December 2024 21 December 2024
07	Greater White-fronted Goose	Bakreshwar, Birbhum	Bakreshwar, Birbhum	08 December 2024 14 January 2025
08	Black-browed Reed Warbler	Baruipur, South 24 Parganas	Newtown, North 24 Parganas	08 December 2024 15 February 2025
09	White-bellied Redstart	Simring Tea Estate, Darjeeling	Nurbang Tea Estate, Darjeeling	08 December 2024 27 February 2025
10	West Himalayan Bush Warbler	Baruipur, South 24 Parganas	Baruipur, South 24 Parganas	08 December 2024 15 February 2025
11	Great Knot	Jambudweep, South 24 Parganas	Lothian Island, South 24 Parganas	09 December 2024 23 February 2025
12	Brown-winged Kingfisher	Sundarban Tiger Reserve, South 24 Parganas		10 December 2024
13	Eared Grebe	Bakreshwar, Birbhum	Gajoldoba, Jalpaiguri	10 December 2024 02 March 2025
14	Rufous-necked Hornbill	Pankhasari, Kalimpong	Latpanchar, Darjeeling	12 December 2024 05 March 2025
15	Chestnut-eared Bunting	Bolpur, Birbhum	Baruipur, South 24 Parganas	12 December 2024 16 February 2025
16	Grey-necked Bunting	Tenyasi, Purulia	Tenyasi, Purulia	14 December 2024 14 February 2025
17	Common Shelduck	Kanaichatta, Purba Medinipur	Jambudweep, South 24 Parganas	14 December 2024 22 February 2025
18	Bristled Grassbird	Lohagarh, Birbhum	Baruipur, South 24 Parganas	19 December 2024 07 March 2025

Sr No	BIRD SPECIES	LOCN - 1	LOCN - 2	SIGHTING DATES
19	Great Bittern	Balurghat, Dakshin Dinajpur		20 December 2024
20	Chestnut-capped Babbler	Khajutti, Howrah	Bangalpur, Howrah	20 December 2024 02 March 2025
21	Red-thorated Pipit	Bahadurpur, Birbhum		21 December 2024
22	Baikal Bush Warbler	Subarnapur, North 24 Parganas	Baruipur, South 24 Parganas	23 December 2024 16 February 2025
23	Short-eared Owl	Ajodhya, Purulia	Bolpur, Birbhum	26 December 2024 01 March 2025
24	Indian Courser	Ajodhya, Purulia	Jhalda, Purulia	27 December 2024, 16 February 2025
25	Blue-fronted Robin	Lepchajagat, Darjeeling	Lepchajagat, Darjeeling	29 December 2024, 07 March 2025
26	Slender-billed Gull	Kargil Beach, South 24 Parganas	Kargil Beach, South 24 Parganas	30 December 2024, 04 February 2025
27	Brown-cheeked Rail	Bosipota, Hooghly	Purbasthali, Purba Bardhaman	01 January 2025, 04 February 2025
28	Common Grasshopper Warbler	Benapur, Bangnan, Howrah	Baruipur, South 24 Parganas	12 January 2025, 22 February 2025
29	Daurian Starling	Jagadishpur, Howrah		18 January 2025
30	Pied Avocet	Kamarganti, North 24 Parganas	Kamarganti, North 24 Parganas	18 January 2025, 04 March 2025
31	Black-necked Stork	Panchanandapur, Malda	Panchanandapur, Malda	19 January 2025, 02 March 2025
32	Smew	Panchanandapur, Malda		19 January 2025
33	Baikal Teal	Ballavpur, Birbhum	Gajoldoba, Jalpaiguri	26 January 2025, 27 February 2025
34	Lesser Whitethroat	Teesta Grassland, Jalpaiguri		03 February 2025
35	Bar-tailed Godwit	Bhagabatpur, South 24 Parganas	Lothian Island, South 24 Parganas	07 February 2025, 23 February 2025
36	Pallid Harrier	Bolpur, Birbhum		07 February 2025
37	Spotted Crake	Baruipur, South 24 Parganas	Baruipur, South 24 Parganas	14 February 2025, 08 March 2025
38	Red Knot	Lothian Island, South 24 Parganas		23 February 2025
39	Nordmann's Greenshank	Lothian Island, South 24 Parganas		23 February 2025
40	Chinese White-faced Drongo	Bolpur, Birbhum		08 March 2025

■ Species according to Highest Priority by State for West Bengal as per State of India's Birds Report, 2023

** Being a 'sensitive' species, exact dates or data not displayed. Thus, only month and year mentioned.



About Author

PRIYAM CHATTOPADHYAY

is a Kolkata-based IT professional and passionate birdwatcher. For the past eight years, he has been photographing birds, with a keen interest in diverse habitats and migration patterns.



As a beginner in bird photography, I was captivated by their beauty and movement. Beyond the celluloid, I wanted to recreate them on paper. I have been dabbling in charcoal/graphite and also drawing in Procreate for iPad over the last few years (basically, the Covid lockdown phase made me get back at it). I have also recently started painting again in both oil and watercolours. Trying to capture details helps me control my restless mind.

Dr Saptorshi Majumdar
Eye Specialist - Disha Eye Hospital

POILA BAISHAKH BIRD COUNT(PBBC)



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Birdwatchers' Society

DB 75, Salt Lake, Kolkata-700064,
INDIA

Email:

birdwatcherssocietywb@gmail.com

Website:

www.birdwatcherssociety.org