

FANTAIL NEWSLETTER

Volume 5 | Issue No. 2 | October - December 2025

 **birdwatchers'**
Society


FANTAIL
BIRDWATCHERS' SOCIETY NEWSLETTER
Volume 5 | Issue No. 2 | October-December 2025



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A Romance in Nature **Monsoons** **& Birds**

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PERSPECTIVE



Courtesy: Aindril Sarkar Deb

**Art is 'I'
Science is 'WE'
Conservation is 'US'**

“

It is Claude Bernard who said, "Art is 'I'; Science is 'We'." To which I have added, "Conservation is 'Us'." Art is an individual's work, while science is collective work; it is an incremental work. While conservation is done by all and for all living things. Conservation of nature cannot be done in isolation, and by one person only. It is societal responsibility and every individual should contribute.

Dr Asad Rahmani
(Bengal Birders' Meet 2025)

”

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.

Editorial Flock:

Click on this link to know about FANTAIL editorial team
<https://birdwatcherssociety.org/publications-newsletters/flock>

Theme:

Monsoon & Birds: A Romance in Nature

Front & Back Cover Design:

W3Webhelp

Front Cover Image:

Manoj Sahoo

Pheasant-tailed Jacana

Location: Manglajodi (Odisha)

Back Cover Image:

Trisha Biswas

Class VII, Sabalpur Adarsha Vidyapith (H.S)

North 24 parganas

Design, Layout & Graphics:

W3Webhelp

www.w3webhelp.com

Publisher:

Birdwatchers' Society

Address: DB 75, Salt Lake,

Kolkata 700064, INDIA

Printer:

Sadhana Udyog

76 B B Ganguly Street.

Kolkata 700012

Email:

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Website:

<https://birdwatcherssociety.org>

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EDITORIAL

Hello Readers,

Monsoon & Birds: A Romance in Nature

The scent of wet earth, the crescendo of cicadas, and the burst of green across parched landscapes – Monsoon in India is a transformation! And for birds, it is a season of song, movement, courtship, and spectacular displays. This issue of FANTAIL celebrates that timeless connection between rain and wings.



If people were seasons, she'd be monsoon. After every downpour, the garden laughed like her, wild and free.

Meeta Ahluwalia



We begin this issue with Dr Asad Rahmani's captivating feature, "Aaya Sawan Jhum Key", which beautifully sets the stage by exploring how birds anticipate and respond to the rhythms of the monsoon. Following this, is my lyrical reflections of the enchanting dance of the Lesser Florican in "Dancing With the Rain", while Dr Indrani Ghosh, in her signature style, delves into avian behaviour, highlighting the interplay of clouds, calls, and courtship. Soumyajit Talukdar then offers a glimpse into the mystical Chatak (Pied Cuckoo) and the impact of climate change on its arrival in India, long revered as a harbinger of rain.

Monsoon birding reveals itself across India's varied landscapes. Rajdeep Mitra provides a vivid perspective on how 'mega monsoons' shape the lives of seabirds, while Biplab Banerjee captures the photo drama unfolding at Bhigwan in Maharashtra – a true haven for monsoon birdwatchers.

This issue also includes a report on the annual event of the Birdwatchers' Society – the Bengal Birders' Meet (BBM) 2025. Apart from the event report this issue also covers the marquee milestone of the 'Special Cover release by India Post' at BBM2025, blending philately with conservation.

Heritage too finds a place here, a Bengali article written by Amitava Purkayastha on the 19th century Calcutta Babu's curious pastime – bulbul fights – a reminder that history and birds often share surprising intersections. In another contribution, our regular feature writer Biswa Ranjan Goswami adds depth, reminding us that monsoon is as much about rhythm in avian culture as in nature.

Equally inspiring is the voice of the young author Madhav Murthy. We are truly delighted to publish a book review of 'Understanding Urban Ecology' by the 16-year-old. Madhav underscores the growing role of youth in shaping conservation narratives.

Our community updates highlights – the continued growth of the School of Birds program, Heronry counts, Bird tourism & Bird guide training insights from Sikkim, and fresh sightings that keep our spirits alive with wonder.

Reflections from Titash Chakrabarti and Aindrila Sarkar contribute fresh perspectives, weaving together joy, curiosity, and grounded wisdom. Meanwhile, Hiya challenges inquisitive minds with her Crossword. Lastly gracing the back cover with colour and pride is a painting by Trisha Biswas, a student of Class VII, Sabalpur Adarsha Vidyapith (H.S), North 24 Parganas.

Like the rains, this issue is a mosaic – colourful, unpredictable, and life-giving. May it inspire you to step out, binoculars in hand, and find joy in the drizzle, for nature always has a song waiting.

Happy Birding!

Editorial Team

FANTAIL – Birdwatchers' Society Newsletter



Lesser Florican breeds during monsoon, Pic by Author

AAYA SAWAN JHUM KEY



DR ASAD RAHMANI

The 1969 film *Aaya Sawan Jhum Key*, starring Asha Parekh and Dharmendra, had a playful song by the same name celebrating the joy of monsoon showers. Watching the two actors dancing in the rain left a lasting impression—and, admittedly, some envy—on the audience, helping the film become a box-office hit. Years later, seeing a pair of Magpie Robins sitting openly in the rain reminded me of that song. Yet, unlike the staged scene on screen, this was nature's real performance.

Rain falls almost everywhere on Earth, except perhaps Antarctica, the Arctic, and Chile's Atacama Desert—where some weather stations have never recorded rainfall, while others noted occasional showers as recently as 2017. But India's monsoon is unique: nearly 75–80% of the annual rain fall arrives in just 2–3 months. Though rainfall varies across

regions and years, even the driest spot in India—the Shahgarh Bulge in Jaisalmer, with less than 50 mm annually—receives some rain.

India's rainfall pattern is shaped by the monsoon system, leading to highly seasonal and uneven rain distribution. The southwest monsoon, which begins in early June over Kerala and lasts till September, brings most of the rain. It moves north and east, soaking the Western Ghats, northeast India, and parts of the Himalayas. Then comes the northeast monsoon, from October to December, less intense but vital for Tamil Nadu and parts of Andhra Pradesh. Pre-monsoon showers also occur in January–February, brought by western disturbances over northwest India. Rainfall extremes are striking: Mawsynram in Meghalaya sees the world's highest annual rainfall, while western Rajasthan and Ladakh remain largely arid.

So how does this monsoon form? In summer (April–June), India’s landmass heats quickly, creating low-pressure zones, while the Indian Ocean stays cooler with higher pressure. Air flows from high to low pressure, bringing moisture-laden southwest winds from the Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal. Other factors contribute too, but let’s keep focus on birds and monsoon.

There is a deep link between rainfall and bird activities and movements. I remember, when I was living in Mumbai for almost three decades, every year there would be front-page news on the arrival of Pied-crested Cuckoo, now called Jacobin Cuckoo (*Clamator jacobinus*). Every sighting record would be followed by expert comments by the late Sunjoy Mongo – one of the finest birdwatchers of Mumbai – and other citizens. Pied Crested Cuckoo is called the harbinger of rains, as it moves from southern Africa to India by the first week of June, and then spreads out in rest of the country as the monsoon progresses. In north India, it is generally seen in the third week of June as the dark monsoon clouds gather. Sighting of this bird means rainfall is not many days away.



Pied -crested Cuckoo, Bharatpur 4 June 2018, Pic by Author

The Common Hawk–Cuckoo (*Hierococcyx varius*), or *papiha*, starts calling from spring but becomes especially vocal during monsoon. The British dubbed its persistent call “brain-fever,” while in Marathi, it’s heard as *paos ala* (“the rains are coming”). Its cousin, the Large Hawk–Cuckoo (*Hierococcyx sparveroides*), also known as *papeeha*, is found along the Himalayas and migrates south for winter. Its mournful call inspired the famous song *Bole re papihara* from the 1971 film Guddi.

Bird breeding in India often coincides with or just precedes the monsoon, though it depends on habitat. Riverine birds like the Indian Skimmer (*Rhynchops albicollis*), River Tern (*Sterna aurantia*), and pratincoles breed in summer, before rivers swell and cover their nesting islands. Ground-nesters like the Sarus Crane (*Antigone antigone*), Red Junglefowl (*Gallus gallus murghi*) and Peafowl (*Pavo cristatus*) also start early to avoid flooding but may continue into the rainy season on higher ground.



Dr Asad Rahmani standing near Swamp Prinia grassland, Borgali, 16 April 2018, Pic by Taksh Sangwan

Other species, like parakeets, hornbills, and barbets, time breeding with fruiting seasons, especially of figs (*Ficus*), which peak in summer to early monsoon. Shrub and bush nesters such as bulbuls, orioles, and munias prefer monsoon when dense foliage hides their nests.



Bristled Grassbird, Pic by Author

The above is a general rule in the Indian plains, not so valid for mountain birds. In the rain forests of the northeast and Andaman & Nicobar, many birds do not have a fixed breeding season and can breed throughout the year, as the tropical forest provides them nesting opportunities throughout the year. They are also generally resident, i.e., non-migratory, as they have no reason to migrate – nature provides them food and shelter yearlong. Here I must mention that even grainivorous and frugivorous birds provide a proteinaceous diet (insects, lizards, rodents, etc.) to the developing chicks, so it is best to breed when lots of insects and reptiles are active. Protein is required for growth and muscle development.

Wetland and grassland birds often breed during monsoon. Weaverbirds and munias nest on tall grasses and emergent plants, while resident ducks use the season to raise broods among lush wetlands. Koels, typically shy, become noisy and visible during this period—linked to breeding and their brood-parasitic habits. Birdsong during monsoon serves to claim territory and attract mates. Often, males sing to draw females and warn rivals, but sometimes pairs call together, like the unison calls of Sarus Cranes.

In Indian literature, the koel symbolizes love, longing, and monsoon renewal. Its melodious call, “koo-koo,” marks nature’s revival after dry months, making it a cultural icon. The koel’s name itself mimics its call, deepening its presence in poetry and folklore.

During monsoon, waterbirds like egrets, storks, and herons also breed. In Keoladeo National Park, Bharatpur, bird activity peaks twice: during monsoon (July–September) and again in winter (December–January) when migratory flocks arrive. Both seasons transform the park into a birder’s paradise.



Sarus Crane on nest, Pic by Author

Nikhil Devasar, besides being a good writer and blogger, is also a topmost birdwatcher of India. Recently he wrote, “The Indian Pitta, this radiant bird seems to wear the entire mood of the monsoon on its wings. With nine vivid hues shimmering across its plumage, it earns its name navrang. Each summer, it makes its way northward from the dense forests of peninsular India, following the arc of the rains. In Bhondsi, it arrives with the first sign of the monsoon, having journeyed up from the southern hills. Here, it weaves a discreet, ball-shaped nest from dry leaves and twigs – often hidden deep within tangled undergrowth or nestled quietly at the base of trees. Though radiant in appearance, it’s a bird of discretion – most often heard before it’s seen. Its distinctive two-note whistle rises from the shadows”.



Grey Francolin breeds before and during monsoon, Pic by Author



Ashy Prinia, Pic by Dr Raju Kasambe



Small Buttonquail displaying, Pic by Jaysukh Parekh

Perhaps the greatest impact of the monsoon is seen in the Thar desert where summer temperature can reach 52°C. I found that many birds such as the Purple Sunbird (*Nectarina asiatica*) leave the area in summer, but return as soon as the monsoon starts. For most of the year, we see Black-crowned Finch-Lark (*Eremopteris nigriceps*) in the Thar desert, but during monsoon Ashy-crowned Finch-Lark (*Eremopteris griseus*) also moves-in in large numbers to breed. So is the case with the enigmatic Greater Hoopoe Lark (*Alaemon alaudipes*) that is found in small numbers in the Thar Desert, but during monsoon, I have seen it interesting jumping display. Recently even Lesser Florican (*Sypheotides indicus*) was seen in the protected grasslands of Sudasari enclosure of the Desert National Park. During monsoon from late July onward, after gruelling summer heat, the Thar Desert transformed in to verdant green grassland – everything looks happy. Even the Crested Lark (*Galerida cristatus*) that looks sullen and down during the relentless heat regains its joie-de-vivre.

Though many forest parks close during monsoon, non-forested areas stay open. I recommend visiting Desert National Park, Tal Chhapar, Keoladeo, Velavadar, or southern wetlands and heronries to enjoy both rain and birdlife.

So why wait? Step out, feel the rain, watch the birds, and hum *Aaya Sawan Jhum Key*. But remember: matching the koel's melody won't be easy!



About Author **DR ASAD RAHMANI**

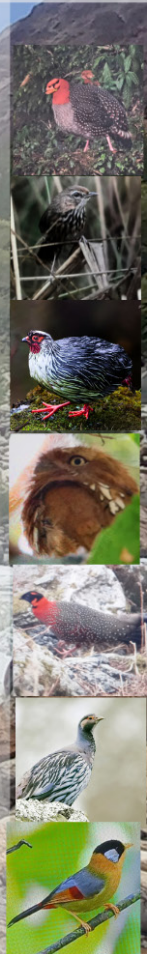
Dr Asad Rahmani is an ornithologist and conservationist who was also the former Director of Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS). He is currently the scientific adviser to The Corbett Foundation, and governing council member of Bombay Natural History Society. He has been member of several committees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

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Collar, N. and E. Garcia (2020). Lesser Florican (*Sypheotides indicus*), version 1.0. In *Birds of the World* (J. del Hoyo, A. Elliott, J. Sargatal, D. A. Christie, and E. de Juana, Editors). Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Ithaca, NY, USA.
<https://doi.org/10.2173/bow.lesflo2.01>

DANCING WITH THE RAIN: A LOVE STORY FROM THE GRASSLANDS

AMITAVA DUTTA



“S he hides. He dances. Somewhere in between, the monsoon writes a love story”.

As the blistering summer sun fades behind monsoon clouds, and the parched earth of Shonkaliya in Rajasthan breathes a sigh of relief, something magical stirs in the grasslands. The scent of wet soil mingles with the cool winds of July, heralding not just rain, but romance – one of the most spectacular romance is on display in the Indian wild: the mating display of the Lesser Florican (*Sypheotides indicus*) [Hindi – Kharmor; Bangla – Leekh].

This elusive bird, barely the size of a jungle-fowl, waits for this moment all year. The male Lesser Florican – black, white, and brave – erupts into a frenzy of aerial courtship dances across open farmlands and grassy plains. He leaps vertically into the air, wings fluttering like poetry, that can be heard 100–200 metres away, his body twisting mid-air before landing, only to repeat the move again... and again.

It's as if he's dancing with the rain, to tame his flame and stake a claim!



The aerial courtship performance, Pic By Author

The monsoon isn't just a season here – it's a stage, a setting, a cue. The first showers transform the cracked earth into a carpet of green, a perfect amphitheatre for the florican's skyward leaps. Each jump is a passionate proclamation, a signal to the watching females hidden in the moong crop-fields (*moong cultivation has replaced most of the grasslands*):

“ Saans leu to ghano yaad aave, saans rokhu to naam . ”

(*With every breath I take, I remember you; if I hold my breath, it is with your name.*)

... *Rajasthani Folk*

There's a kind of primal theatre in this moment, both ancient and fleeting. The female florican remains largely unseen, camouflaged and cautious, evaluating each performance with an invisible eye. And the male? He dances not once but dozens of times in a single hour, often from dawn to dusk. His display is tireless, vulnerable, beautiful – a mix of madness and devotion. It's not just about mating; it's about being heard, being noticed in the vastness of wind, rain, and whispering grassland. One can't help but feel the pulse of poetry in his effort.

This display of romance is a vanishing world. The Lesser Florican, an endemic species of the Indian subcontinent is now “critically endangered”. The species prefers undisturbed grasslands with mixed vegetation, especially fields of moong, urad, and jowar up to 100 – 150 cm tall. But such places are undergoing a complete change in their character. **Its dance, once common across the monsoon-drenched fields of Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan, grows rarer each year, muffled by vanishing grasslands, mechanised harvesting, barbed-wire fencing, pesticide-laden crops and free-ranging dogs.** It's a grim irony that the very farms whose green sprouting heralds his dance are now less hospitable to this nomadic species who visit this grassland for their customary ritual. During the non-breeding season, it migrates to central and southern India.

And yet, while the rains still fall right and the land lies open, the miracle continues. The dance rises with the mist, as thunder rumbles above and peacocks call from distant dunes. It's a brief season, perhaps a few weeks, but in that time, nature sings its most romantic song – of longing, of rhythm, of renewal.

A fragile hope leaps with every florican, with every bustard, in the wild. With active and concerted conservation efforts including creating protected areas – a conservation reserve as well as a captive breeding centre at Ajmer, hopefully, the efforts will pay off.

So the next time thunder rolls across the desert sky, know this: somewhere, in the golden heart of Rajasthan, a tiny bird is leaping toward the heavens, love in its heart and rain in its wings.

“ *In every drop of rain, there is a whisper of wings unseen and dreams still waiting to fly.* ”



With Mr Prabhu Ram Doon, Ranger (3rd from right) & other Forest Officials of Rajasthan Government along with the staff of Lesser Florican Conservation Breeding Centre led by Mr Mohib Uddin (2nd from right).

Acknowledgement:

I am deeply grateful to the following individuals -

(1) Dr Sujit Narwade (BNHS) and Mr Rushikesh Pawar (BNHS) for the time they spent explaining the threats and conservation efforts initiated in collaboration with the Forest department.

"We are trying to promote florican-friendly agricultural practices and work towards grassland restoration through invasive species removal to provide good habitats to the lesser floricans in parts of the florican range in Rajasthan", - Dr Sujit Narwade.

(2) Mr Mohib Uddin (WII), and his team for explaining the entire captive breeding process. A commendable effort.

(3) Mr Prabhu Ram Dhoon (Forest Ranger) for his generous support and for making this a truly once-in-a-lifetime experience. I also extend my heartfelt thanks to the officials of the Forest Department, Government of Rajasthan, for their invaluable guidance in helping me discover and learn about the wild beauty of the state.

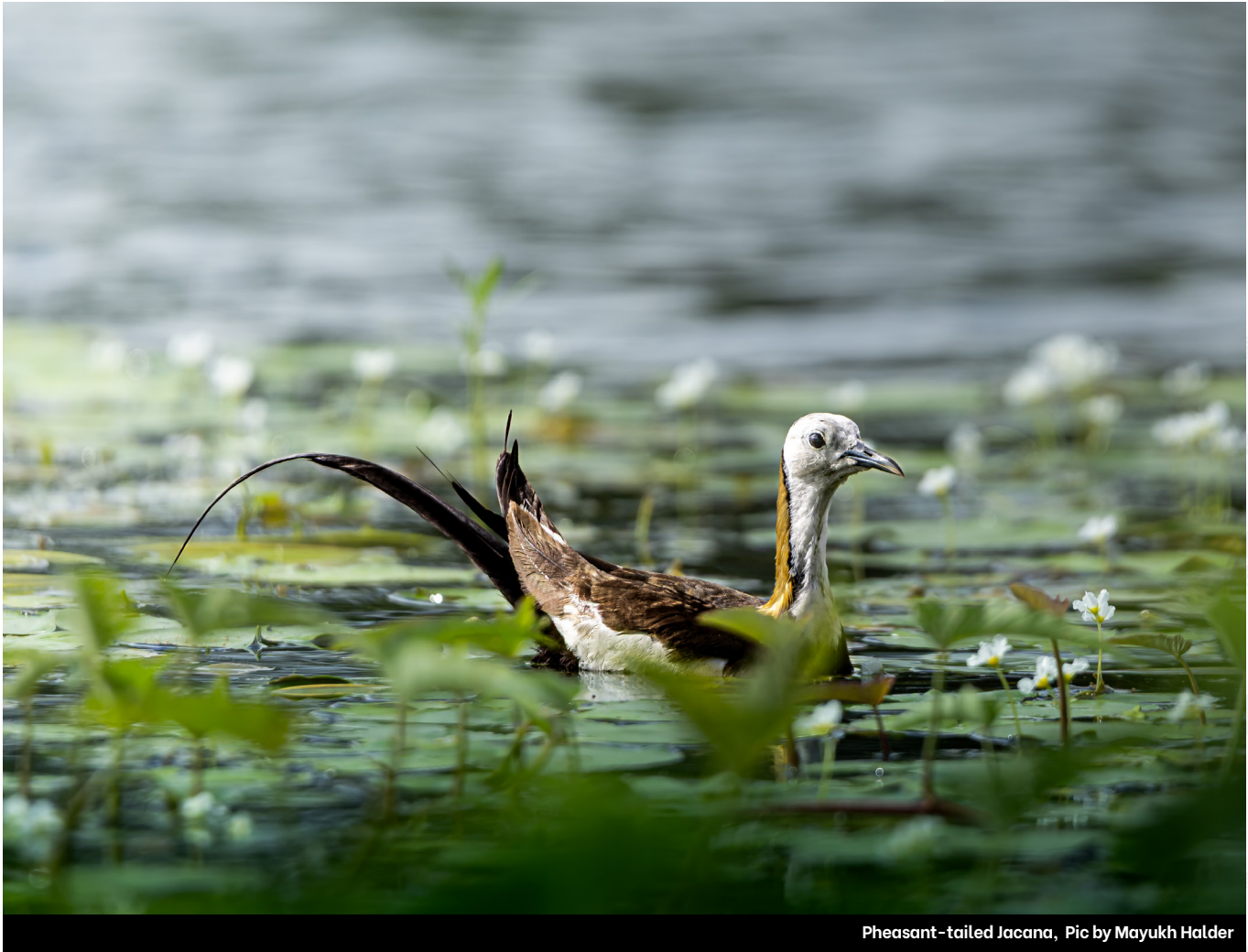
(4) A video of the Lesser Florican's display is captured in this video https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qrQQUXsf9_8



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.



Pheasant-tailed Jacana, Pic by Mayukh Halder

CLOUDS, CALLS, AND COURTSHIP: BIRDS AND THE INDIAN MONSOON

DR INDRANI GHOSH

Monsoon is the season of dark clouds against blue skies. Monsoon heralds a burst of life, invigorating petrichor, reminiscing of childhood days, presages the season for sowing, a longing for return to the arms of the lover, translates the poet's gravid thought into words. Monsoon is the season when the animal kingdom gets a fresh lease of life. Grasses, climbers, and shrubs compete to cover the earth. Trees dance and sway and spread along. Our flying friends are noisy and excited. Love is in the air for many of them. The onset of the Monsoon influences the courtship period. The rain brings a change in their features, behaviour and migration patterns. Dimorphism in the species is at its peak. Few put on a new avatar to woo its partner,

few become busy building dwellings for their partner and offsprings, and few complete their long-distance journey to be in time to witness Monsoon in India. Let's peek into how Monsoon influences the behaviour of a few of the avian species in the Indian sub-continent.

With the arrival of the Monsoon, the male Indian Peafowl (*Pavo cristatus*) are in their best display, shimmering in the treasuring trove and dancing to gain the attraction of the females for courtship. Peacocks' dance has been emulated by humans for ages.

Pied/Jacobin Cuckoo, the harbingers of Monsoon changes the ambience after arrival from Africa with its long series of ringing

whistling notes "piu-piu". Several poets have used this bird's call metaphorically in their prose, signifying the yearning of the parched land for the Monsoon or the forlorn partner waiting for her spouse's return.

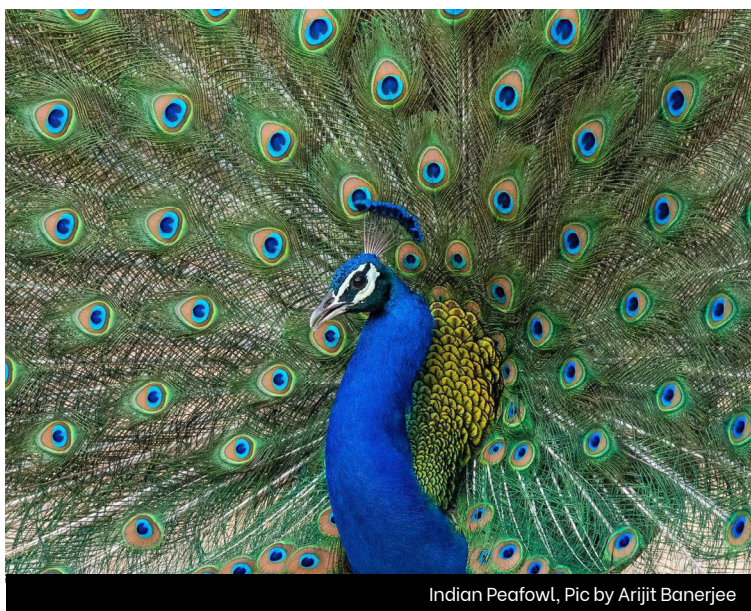
One can hear the resident bird, Asian Koel's (*Eudynamis scolopaceus*) active coo – hoo's during the breeding season. Similarly, the Common Hawk-cuckoo (*Hierococcyx varius*), or brain fever bird, produces loud, repetitive three-note calls during the Monsoon. This call becomes higher and louder, rising to a crescendo before ending abruptly.

For our close neighbour, the Purple Sunbird (*Cinnyris asiaticus*), the iridescent plumage of the male bird is not enough; the bird is seen to make a few coordinated hops and high-pitched calls to impress the female.

In the southern part of India, with the arrival of the Monsoon, one cannot miss the Pheasant-tailed Jacana (*Hydrophasianus chirurgus*) with its breeding plumage (a phenomenon not known in any other Jacana) along the wetlands (Pic: Page 18). During the Monsoon, the body appears chocolate brown with an elongated central black tail protruding from the central line of the body in a curvaceous manner. A white face with a golden

yellow nape and a white crown with a black patch that runs like stripes from the back of the crown along the sides of the golden nape. The wings are predominantly white. **Interestingly, females are polyandrous, larger in size and are brighter than the males, and known to woo the males with flight displays and distinct calls.** The females lay several clutches that are raised by different males¹. The polyandrous nature in these birds has evolved as a strategy for survival². Their calls appear like that of cat's meow during the breeding period.

The grasslands, especially near waterbodies, come alive with the trilling call of the Yellow-bellied Prinia (*Prinia flaviventris*). Otherwise



Indian Peafowl, Pic by Arijit Banerjee



Yellow-bellied Prinia, Pic by Suján Chatterjee

skulking, the Prinia becomes oblivious of their surroundings and unmindfully continues her calls³. The calls are short with rapid bursts of varied musical notes, in descending pitch, and usually introduced by a short chirp, e.g., chirp...didli-idli-u didli-idli-u didli-idli-u. The identical song phrase is repeated many times (up to 15-20), with short but irregular intervals, often of about 1-2 seconds⁴. The males develop breeding plumage. The colour of the bill and the gape turns black. The tail shortens and looks worn out (abraded). The flight feathers turn pale brown with heavily abraded outer fringes and tips.

The activities of the birds heighten after three to four showers of rain. The Indian Paradise Flycatchers (*Terpsiphone paradisi*) pair up and build a nest and lay eggs during this time. Both males and females contribute to building the nest together and raising the chicks^{5,6}.

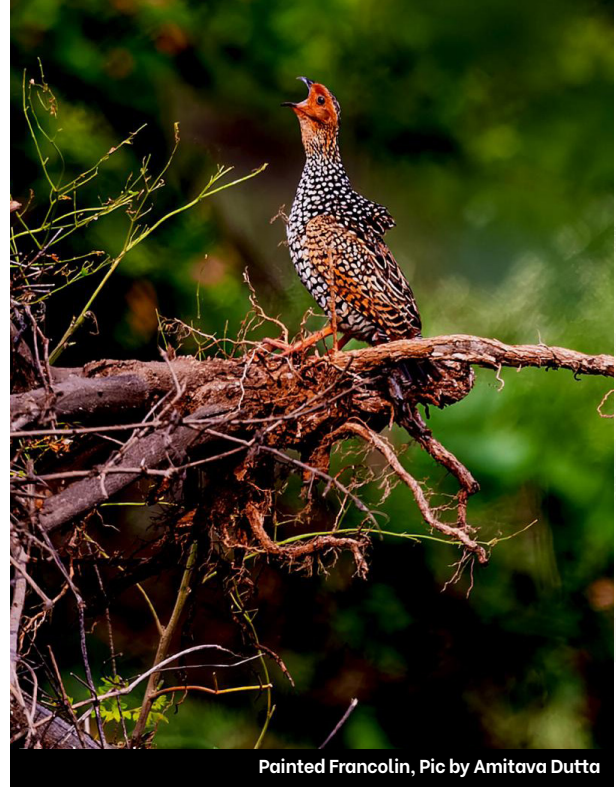
Painted Francolin (*Francolinus pictus*), an endemic bird to peninsular India, breeds in the Monsoon. A bird that is difficult to spot but rises early in the morning and begins the pursuit of a partner by perching on mounds, tree stumps or bushes. It uses its vocals – repeated, grating, and high-pitched “click–khak–khrukuk–khakakak” to announce its presence, readiness and willingness to mate.

Partial migration movements are noted in Indian Golden Orioles (*Oriolus kundoo*) from April onwards. For a few other endemic birds such as Blue-tailed Bee-eaters (*Merops philippinus*) and Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters (*Merops persicus*), Indian Golden Orioles, Black-Headed Cuckooshrikes (*Lalage melanoptera*) and Oriental Honey Buzzards (*Pernis ptilorhynchus*) migrate from southern to northern India.

A local migrant, the Lesser Florican (*Sypheotides indicus*), decides to move to its lekking site from its foraging site with the advent of the Monsoon. The Monsoon brings joy to these little bustards, and the males prepare to compete for the female attention. It is a sight to watch the males prancing around with their folded legs and leaping upwards, sometimes reaching a height of 2 to 3 m while fluttering their wings rapidly and croaking to mark their territories⁷.

The medium-sized Indian Pitta (*Pitta brachyura*) migrates to Northern India from Southern India during the Monsoon. The body colour (nine different shades) radiates against the undergrowth of dense forests. The calls, a distinctive two-note whistle, become more prominent during dawn and dusk.

One can witness the Black-tailed Godwits (*Limosa limosa*) making a pit stop along the coastal wetlands before flying off to their final destination⁸ in this season.



Painted Francolin, Pic by Amitava Dutta



Lesser Florican, Pic by Amitava Dutta

Amur Falcons (*Falco amurensis*) make a later arrival in the north-eastern part of India from far off Siberia before leaving for South Africa⁹. They make a pit stop while flying from China to Russia for re-fueling by devouring termites voraciously.

It is no coincidence that Monsoon springs romanticism in birds and animals. This is the time when nature is teeming with new life. Food is in abundance, especially protein-rich insects and worms. Foliage is high, giving necessary protection and privacy. Nature, too, has selectively chosen this period to reproduce and raise offspring and allow continuity of life.

For conservation and protection from intrusion, the national parks and notified wildlife areas remain closed to the general public. Bird watchers must also be sensitive during this season. The birds keep their nests in hiding to prevent intrusion. Too much proximity to the nests and disturbance sometimes leads to the birds deserting the nests, leaving their chicks behind.

*“Maybe love is like
a monsoon rain.
When it rains
really hard and heavy,
it seems like
it will never end
and we’ll swim in mud forever.
But then the wind shifts
and the earth grows dry and cracked.*

*Every gurgle and ooze
tiptoes away
and we’re left wishing
and waiting
for rain again.
Maybe love is like that.
Maybe the wind shifts
and love just tiptoes away.”*

Ann E. Burg – All the Broken Pieces

- 1 <https://birdsoftheworld.org/bow/species/phtjac1/cur/introduction>
- 2 <https://www.greenogreindia.org/pheasant-tailed-jacana-love/>
- 3 <https://birdcount.in/identifying-prinias/>
- 4 <https://birdsoftheworld.org/bow/species/yebpri1/cur/sounds>
- 5 <https://birdsoftheworld.org/bow/species/aspfly1/cur/introduction#sounds>
- 6 <https://www.innspub.net/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/IBES-V23-No3-p53-59.pdf>
- 7 <https://wildlifesos.org/lesser-florican-the-enigmatic-bird-of-indian-grasslands/>
- 8 <https://greenverz.com/black-tailed-godwit/>
- 9 <https://birdsoftheworld.org/bow/news/amur-falcons>



About Author

DR INDRANI GHOSH

Dr Indrani Ghosh, an avid nature lover is an environmental consultant. She has rekindled her interest in birding.

THE MYSTICAL CHATAK



PIED CUCKOO (JACOBIN CUCKOO)
Clamator jacobinus

Image source: Natural History Museum – London Science Photo

ARRIVAL OF THE CHATAK: A SIGNAL OF INDIA'S RAINY SEASON

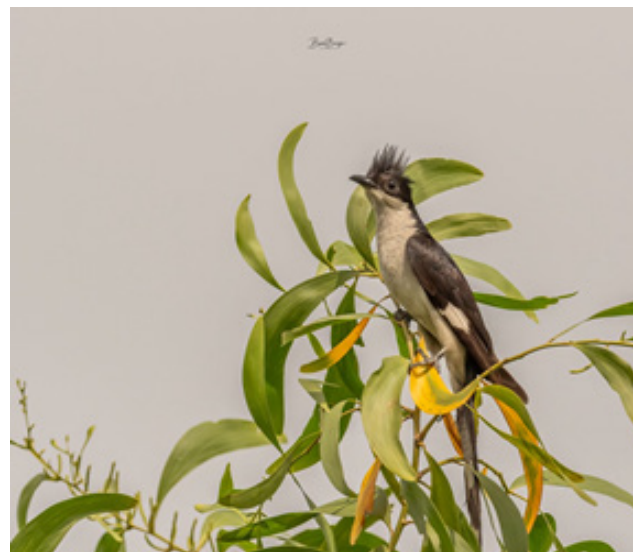


SOUMYAJIT TALUKDAR

The Chatak or Pied cuckoo, *Clamator jacobinus* (Boddart, 1783), is a migratory, brood-parasitic bird native to Africa and India. Although the southern Indian population (*C. j. jacobinus*) is most likely resident species (nominate), the north Indian population (*C. j. pica*) travels from Africa to India during the end of summer to Northern and Central India. From scientific literature to folklore, the bird's arrival marks the start of the monsoon season in India.

Though we understand the folklore connection between Jacobin Cuckoo and the arrival of Monsoon, these studies highlight the value of combining bioclimatic variables with species distribution data to support effective conservation planning. Citizen science records, integrated with Maxent modelling, enhance the accuracy of habitat suitability predictions. The findings support the traditional belief that the Jacobin Cuckoo arrives with the Indian monsoon, particularly in central and northern regions. However, projected climate changes by 2050 may reduce its suitable habitats. These insights emphasize the importance of data-driven approaches for understanding ecological needs and guiding conservation efforts. The study offers a scientific basis for policymakers to identify future habitats and formulate biodiversity preservation strategies for Jacobin Cuckoo.

According to appropriate scientific research, the best way to comprehend the relationship between the monsoon and the Jacobin Cuckoo is through the maximal entropy approach. The Maxent approach predicts habitat suitability by establishing a spatial correlation between presence records and the most important bioclimatic variables (Singh and Saran, 2020). The increasing revolution of citizen science programs (eBird and iNaturalist), which involves non-professionals in scientific chores such as species observation, produces opportunistic data for modelling and planning reasons. Citizen science-based scientific observations can be a sustainable solution to many modern research questions. Citizen science data on the Jacobin Cuckoo is obtained from the Global Biodiversity Information Facility to predict



Pied (Jacobin) Cuckoo, Pic by Biplab Banerjee

its habitat suitability using the maximum entropy approach. The distribution data is divided into two monthly sets: June to October and November to May, to critically analyse the likely climatic reasons for its migration and understand the influence of climatic variables on its suitability during the Indian monsoon season and Southern Africa rainy season.

Recent advancements in spatial modelling and mapping methods have also opened up new horizons for monitoring the migration of bird species, which have been altered due to the climate change (Singh et al, 2021). Therefore, the use of both citizen science and spatial modelling data to understand the migratory patterns of the Jacobin Cuckoo is a remarkable advancement in ornithological studies. The application of machine-based tools like Maxent, to compile and compare such data represents a significant methodological breakthrough. In the future, this approach will greatly enhance our ability to study avian migration patterns more efficiently and accurately using data-driven techniques.

The primary goal of these studies is to predict future habitat suitability scenarios for *Clamator jacobinus* using current distribution patterns. Priyanka Singh and Sameer being the pioneer and stalwarts for these types of research with their years of experience in studying the migratory pattern and habitat suitability of Jacobin Cuckoo in India.

Studies have found that the key environmental variables influencing the spatial distribution of *Clamator jacobinus* during the Indian summer monsoon season (June to October) include isothermality (16.8%), mean temperature of the warmest quarter (15.7%), annual precipitation, precipitation of the warmest quarter (13.6%), and precipitation of the wettest month (11.3%) (Singh and Saran, 2020).



Pied (Jacobin) Cuckoo, Pic by Shantanu Ghosh

According to the habitat suitability results for the Indian monsoon season, it is intriguingly consistent with the traditional belief that the Jacobin Cuckoo is a harbinger of the monsoon in India. The findings of this study also demonstrate that the species is not well-suited to other climatic seasons—such as the hot, dry, or cold periods. As seasonal conditions shift in Africa outside the monsoon period, the bird begins its migratory journey from Southern Africa to North and Central India via South India, crossing the Arabian Sea. This migration aligns with the arrival of the southwest monsoon winds, which typically bring the onset of the Indian monsoon from June to September.

To assess the impact of climate change, this study projected the bird's future suitability in 2050. The suitability prediction for 2050 indicates that *Clamator jacobinus* will not arrive in the districts of Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Andhra Pradesh, as well as Gujarat and northern India, whereas the southern part of Tamil Nadu is a suitable habitat for *Clamator jacobinus* in all climatic scenarios.

These studies highlight the value of combining bioclimatic variables with species distribution data to support effective conservation planning. Citizen science records, integrated with Maxent modelling, enhance the accuracy of habitat suitability predictions. The findings support the traditional belief that the Jacobin Cuckoo arrives with the Indian monsoon, particularly in central and northern regions. However, projected climate changes by 2050 may reduce its suitable habitats. These insights emphasize the importance of data-driven approaches for understanding ecological needs and guiding conservation efforts. The study offers a scientific basis for policymakers to identify future habitats and formulate biodiversity preservation strategies for *Clamator jacobinus*.

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About Author

SOUMYAJIT TALUKDAR

Currently pursuing a Masters in Zoology, I find myself most captivated by the world of birds. My love for bird watching is fueled by a broader interest in wildlife and its cultural significance. I'm dedicated to expanding my knowledge and sharing my observations and experiences through writing.



Brown Noddy (Pittie Island), Pic by Author

A WINDOW SEAT INTO THE WORLD OF SEABIRDS



RAJDEEP MITRA

“W hat are seabirds? Are they like shorebirds”?

The question came from an elderly woman sitting next to me on a flight from Kolkata to Dehradun after an eventful Bengal Birder’s Meet 2025. The flight had taken off, and I was starting to read a well-worn book on seabirds, and was ready to vanish into its pages, when she leaned over, curious. “No ma’am, not like shorebirds. Seabirds are birds that spend most of their lives at sea”, I replied, smiling. “They only come to land when it’s time to nest”. Her eyes widened. “Wow”, she said. “But... how do they survive in the middle of the ocean for so long? Do they just keep on flying”? “Yes! Some definitely do”, I said. “But many rest by landing on the water. A few even perch on the backs of sea turtles that surface to breathe. However, considering the amount of debris floating in our oceans right now, I am sure seabirds use them well, to rest”. She chuckled at that. “And where do they build their nests? Do they carry sticks and grass across the ocean”?

The conversation was getting fascinating. I slipped a bookmark into the book, closed it, and turned toward her fully. It's super rare for me to find someone curious about nature or even birds on a plane; more often, it's crying babies or passengers buried in movies. But not today.

"Well", I said, "there's a wide range of seabirds. Some nest on steep rocky cliffs, others dig burrows into grassy slopes. And a few, like the Sooty Tern that I had studied for months, simply lay their eggs on open, flat ground on remote islands, with no twigs, no leaves, just trust in numbers and isolation".

She was quiet for a moment. "How do they even know where they're going in that vast emptiness and when to come back for nesting"? That question, so simple, yet profound, has obsessed biologists for decades. And as I leaned back in my seat, clouds gathering outside the window, I knew this was going to be one of those rare, meaningful in-flight conversations.

The story of seabirds is unique in the animal kingdom. Since the dawn of life, seabirds have been one of those groups of animals that have truly made the entire ocean their home. Their story is not just about feathers and flight; it's also the story of winds, of invisible

highways that stretch across oceans. It's about the rhythm of the monsoon, the pulse of oceanic currents, and the instinct that draws these birds back to the same patch of land, year after year.

The open ocean appears chaotic to us. The closer you sail toward Antarctica, the more furious the sea becomes. In the Southern Hemisphere, there's hardly any landmass to slow down the atmospheric engine. Winds gather speed over these vast ocean-scapes, transforming the high latitudes into a world of relentless motion. These latitudes even have names that sound like mythic creatures: the Roaring Forties, the Furious Fifties, and the Screaming Sixties. Between 40° and 60° south, winds howl almost ceaselessly, and towering waves roll across the circumpolar oceans like moving mountains. Ships creak, albatrosses rise, and the sky constantly boils. More people have likely lost their lives in these Oceans than in wars. However, these wind belts are the reason seabirds like albatrosses and shearwaters thrive here, gliding effortlessly on updrafts for hours without a single flap of their wings. They are creatures sculpted by wind, at home in the fury of latitudes that would break most other forms of life.



Pittie Island (Lakshwadeep), Pic by Author

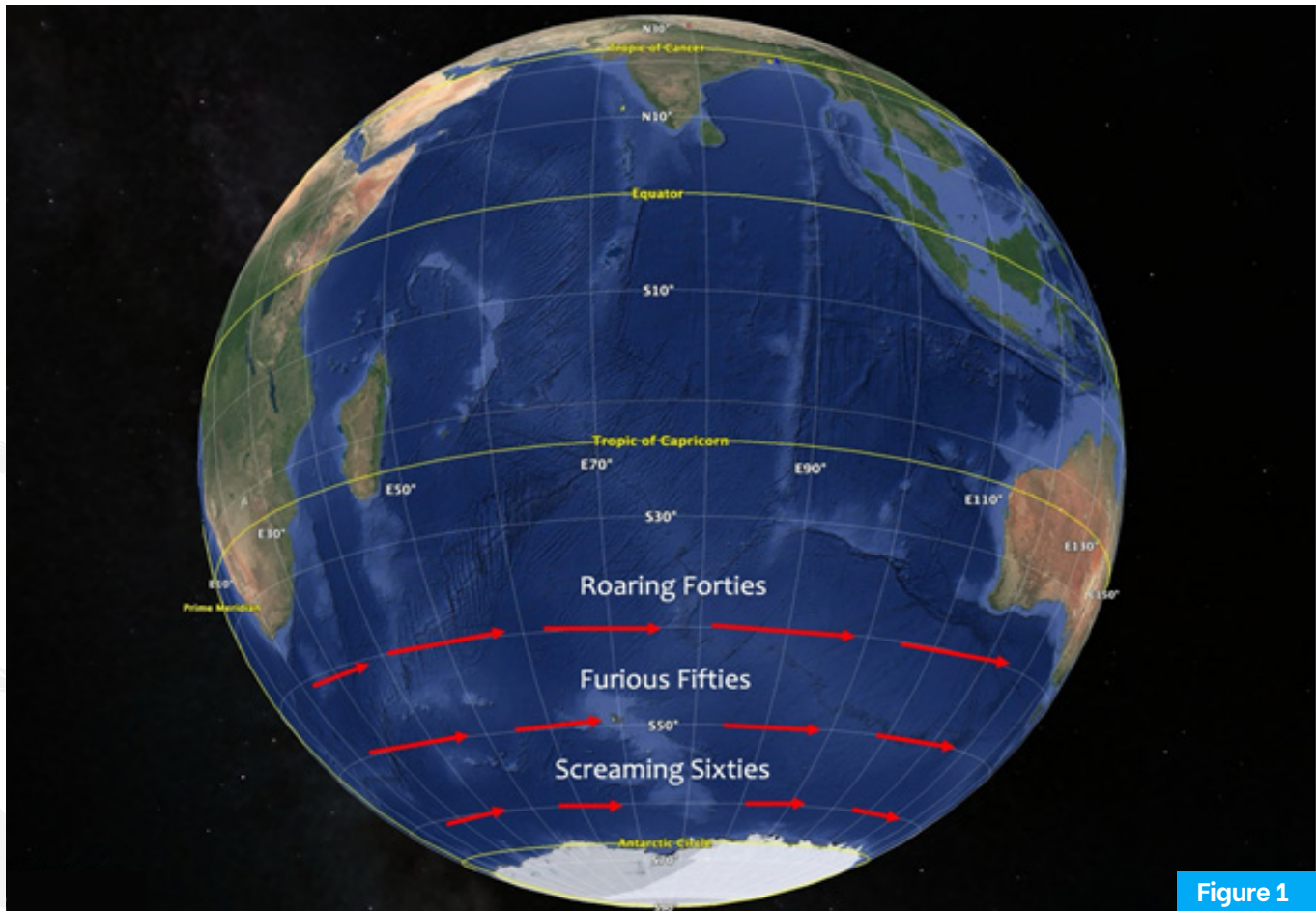


Figure 1

Figure 1:

The Roaring Forties, the Furious Fifties, and the Screaming Sixties, the Southern Hemisphere's most terrifying waters.

Around the globe, there are also massive air circulation cells like Hadley, Ferrel, and Polar cells, which drive prevailing wind patterns. Near the equator, the trade winds blow from east to west; further north and south, the westerlies reverse the direction, flowing west to east. These wind belts, constant and ancient, carve invisible lanes into the sky. Some seabirds like the Sooty Shearwater have evolved to follow these lanes with uncanny precision.

"They fly in loops", I told her, pulling out my notebook to draw a sketch of figure-eight. "One part of the year, they're in the northern Pacific or Atlantic; the other half, they're feeding in the southern oceans near Antarctica. The shearwaters ride global winds in a massive, looping circuit across hemispheres".

She peeked at the drawing. "Are they like migratory birds"?

"Yes, they are", I nodded. "A Sooty Shearwater may fly over 65,000 kilometres a year. That's more than one and a half times the circumference of Earth".

"Unbelievable! Don't they get tired"?

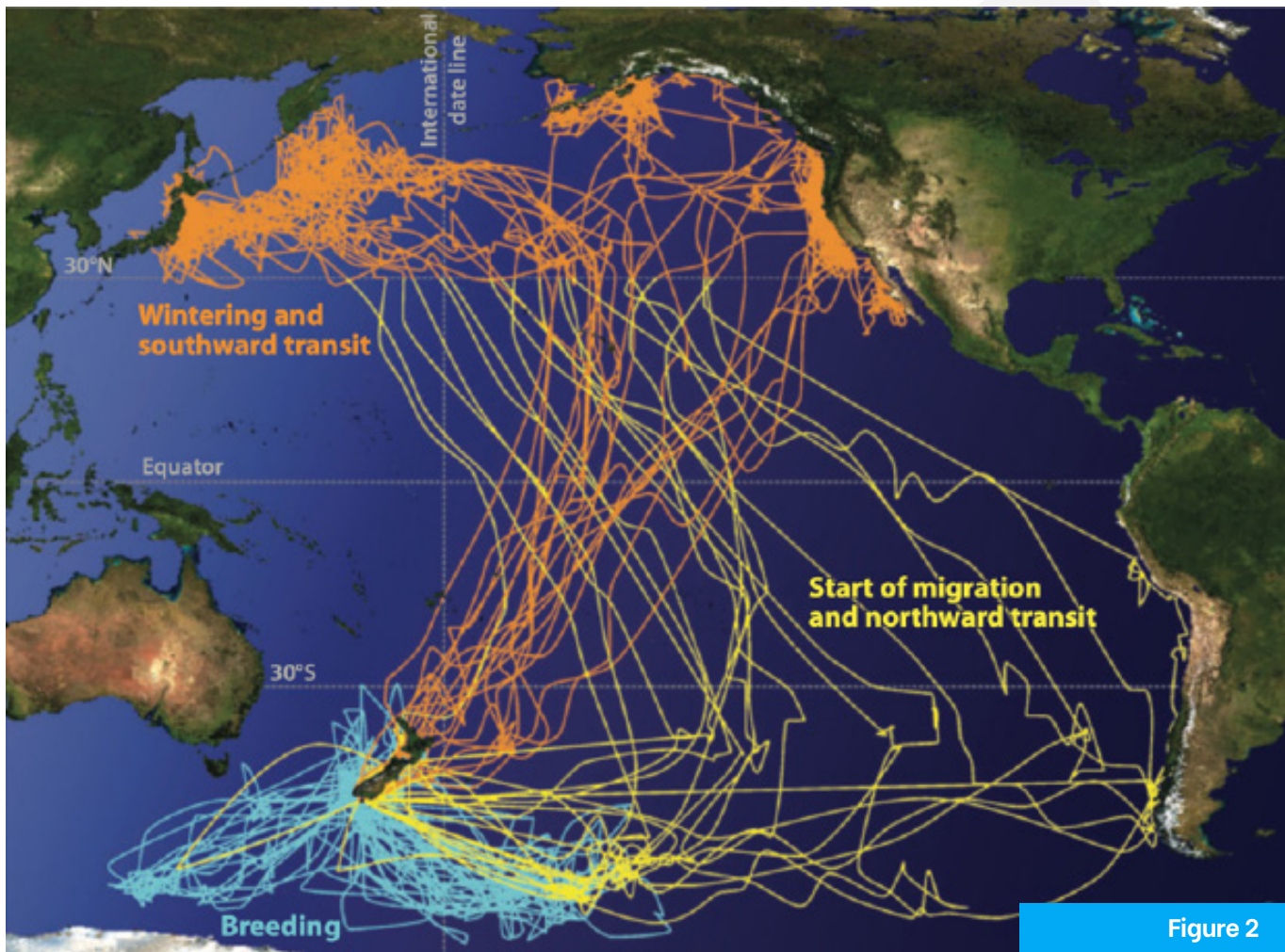


Figure 2:

Figure 2: Shearwater migrations originating from breeding colonies in New Zealand. (a) Interpolated geolocation tracks of 19 Sooty Shearwaters during breeding (light blue) and subsequent migration pathways (yellow, start of migration and northward transit; orange, wintering grounds and southward transit). (b) Representative figure-eight movement patterns of individual shearwaters traveling to one of three “winter” destinations in the North Pacific. Each panel also represents a breeding pair and their subsequent migration after the breeding season. Figure reproduced from Shaffer et al. (2006).

“Birds are remarkable. They rest in the air. They use something called dynamic soaring, cutting across wind gradients to gain lift without flapping much. They’ve become masters of reading the wind”.

The wind isn’t just about shaping the sky; it’s also a powerful force that churns the sea.

The ocean currents such as the Gulf Stream, the Agulhas Current, and the Humboldt Current, are driven primarily by wind, pushing the top layers of water over thousands of kilometres. These currents carry warmth, nutrients, and life.

In the Indian Ocean, something unique happens. Unlike the Atlantic or Pacific, where winds and currents stay largely consistent, the Indian Ocean reverses itself twice a year. The monsoon dominates everything. But this is not just a modern-day event; monsoon has ancient roots. Between 10 and 2 million years ago, during the late Miocene and Pliocene epochs, Earth experienced what geologists now call the ‘Megamonsoon’. Fuelled by the rising Himalayas and the expansion of the Tibetan Plateau, this colossal climatic engine supercharged the South Asian monsoon. Abundant rainfall cascaded across the subcontinent and eastern Africa, carving river valleys, fostering the growth of lush tropical forests, and shaping the early evolutionary environments of both humans and animals. The Indian Ocean, with its seasonal breath, became the heart of this planetary rhythm; a system so powerful that it left its imprint in the fossil record, in ancient lake beds, and even in the migration routes of early hominins.

“During summer”, I started again, “The Tibetan plateau and northern Indian plains heat up, warm air over the Indian subcontinent draws in moisture-loaded winds from the southwest. That’s the Southwest Monsoon. It pushes currents eastward. Then, in winter, the pattern flips and the winds come from the northeast, same as the currents”.

She curiously asked. “So the ocean breathes in and out”?

“Exactly. And seabirds concurrently time their movements around this breathing”.

In the Lakshadweep Islands, India’s only group of coral atolls, seabirds such as the Brown Noddy, Sooty Tern, and Great Crested Tern gather in large numbers to nest. I’ve spent months researching these birds in tiny islands like Pitti, watching them return with astonishing punctuality. As summer arrives and winds begin to shift, the islands turn into a frenzy of courtship, eggs, and hatchlings. And just as the monsoon starts, Pitti gets filled with a cacophony of terns and nesting activity peaks. As the rains continue, many of these birds take to the skies again, their young in tow or already fledged.



Figure 3: Nesting Colony of Sooty Tern and Brown Noddy at Pitti Island, Lakshadweep Archipelago, Pic by Author

"But where do they go"? she asked.

"That's what we're trying to find out", I said. "We tagged a few with satellite trackers. One flew over 1,500 kilometres in two weeks, hugging the coast of India. Another lingered in the Laccadive Sea, maybe waiting out storms. Their paths aren't random, they're shaped by wind direction, fish movement, and ocean productivity".

These birds are not just aimlessly drifting. They're responding to large-scale forces like the Indian Ocean Dipole, the monsoon onset, and upwelling zones that surge with nutrients when warm water is replaced by cold. The southwest monsoon stirs the western Indian Ocean into motion. The powerful winds drive surface currents and trigger coastal upwelling along western India and Somalia, and create dynamic food-webs where life flourishes.

"So..." she said after a brief pause, "winds, currents, everything's connected, and the birds feel it".

"They do not merely perceive it; they embody it. The health of oceans can be monitored by analysing seabird movements. If they are not breeding or travelling further to procure sustenance, it is frequently indicative of an alteration within the ocean's ecosystem".

The plane rattled slightly as we dipped into a patch of mild turbulence, probably a leftover ripple from the monsoon outflow. It was an oddly fitting moment.

"Even turbulence", I smiled, "is part of the story".

In a warming world, these finely tuned systems are beginning to fray. The monsoon is becoming more erratic. Trade winds in the Pacific are shifting. Ocean currents are slowing. And seabirds, those tireless gliders, are struggling to adapt. Some colonies are disappearing. Fish populations are collapsing in areas once rich with life. Plastic, too, now drifts in every ocean gyre, often mistaken for food.

"I never thought of birds as... climate indicators", she said quietly.

"Most people don't", I replied. "But they are. And they're also our best chance at understanding what's coming".

As the plane began its final descent into Dehradun, the cloud cover broke for a moment. Down below, the winding Ganga shimmered like a silver thread, fed by Himalayan rains that, too, are driven by the monsoon. I turned back to her. "You asked if seabirds were like shorebirds. They're not. They're more like spirits of the wind, riding the breath of the Earth itself".

She smiled. "Next time I see a bird at the beach, I'll wonder where it's been".

"Good", I said. "Because chances are, it's been farther than most people travel in a lifetime".



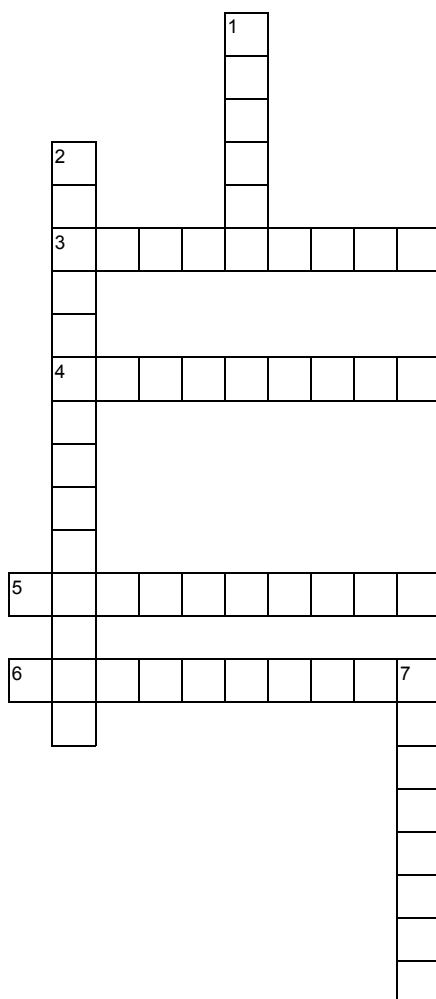
About Author **RAJDEEP MITRA**

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



CROSSWORD

Monsoon Melody



Across

- 3 An endemic species of the Western ghats, this bird is known for its beautiful song during the monsoon
- 4 Small, round bird with streaks, found in the Indian subcontinent, this one has monsoon in its name
- 5 The harbinger of monsoons in India, featuring in ancient Sanskrit literature
- 6 The male of this pretty common bird species develops bright yellow plumage during the monsoon to attract females

Down

- 1 The beautiful tail of this bird grows longer and resembles that of the pheasant (hint: write the last word of the name only)
- 2 These birds attract Birders' in flocks to Ajmer to see their magnificent dance and courtship ritual during monsoons
- 7 Previously found in huge numbers in Rajarhat, this small, radiant bird has now diminished due to habitat loss and pollution



KINGFISHER SPECIAL COVER (INDIA POST)

"CELEBRATING KINGFISHER SPLENDOUR IN WEST BENGAL" BENGAL BIRDERS' MEET 2025

DR KANAD BAIDYA & AMITAVA DUTTA



Honouring the White-throated Kingfisher – A Call for a 'Kingfisher Day'

One of the most cherished moments of the Bengal Birders' Meet 2025 unfolded with the ceremonial unveiling of a **Special Cover by India Post**, dedicated to the **White-throated Kingfisher** (*Halcyon smyrnensis*), the proud **State Bird of West Bengal**. The cover's vibrant illustration, lovingly created by Dr Kanad Baidya – a BWS member, brought the bird to life – its dazzling turquoise wings, warm chestnut plumage, and gleaming white throat radiating vitality and grace. The artwork seemed to leap off the page, echoing the very spirit of the meet – a heartfelt celebration of resilience, beauty, and the timeless wonder of avian life.



Special Cover - VIP Albums



Special Cover with Paradise Flycatcher stamp and Cancellation

Adding her signature finesse, **Tapasi Mukherjee**, a dedicated BWS member, enhanced the design with subtle, complementary elements that framed the kingfisher in perfect harmony. Behind the scenes, **Sagnik Chakraborty** of India Post – himself a proud BWS member – and **Shri Surya Bhushan Patil** of the Philately Branch, East Kolkata Division India Post, skilfully guided the process, ensuring every detail of this release reflected the birding community's passion and pride. This moment was the culmination of a year-long endeavour, envisioned and encouraged by **Shri Niraj Kumar (IPoS)** during his tenure as Chief Postmaster General, West Bengal Circle, when we first met him in 2024. At the **Bengal Birders' Meet 2025**, **Shri Pravat Banerjee**, Sr. Superintendent of Post Offices, South Kolkata Division, had the honour of releasing the cover – *the first special cover on the Kingfisher ever issued by India Post in the country*.

The choice of species was no coincidence. The monsoon months mark a vital breeding season for kingfishers in eastern India, when they court, nest, and rear their young amid lush greenery and teeming wetlands. In recent years, the White-throated Kingfisher has faced challenges from habitat loss, shrinking wetlands, and climate impacts – yet it continues to thrive in cities, villages, and countryside alike. The Birdwatchers' Society aptly recognised its undaunted spirit, using the release as a rallying call for greater conservation awareness, and even proposing the idea of designating a '**Kingfisher Day**' to celebrate and safeguard this beloved species.~

India Post – A Rich Postal Heritage in Bird Conservation

India Post has a long and proud tradition of using its philatelic platforms – stamps, first day covers, and special covers – to celebrate the country's rich birdlife. Special Covers – distinct from regular stamps – hold a unique place in this heritage. They are often released to commemorate significant events, anniversaries, or causes, bearing artwork and cachets that make them prized by collectors

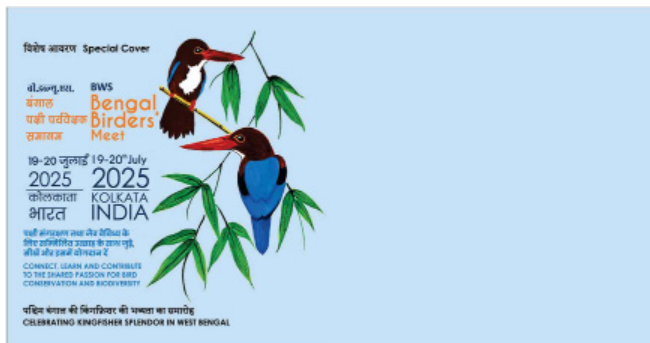
and conservationists alike. Notable bird-themed Special Covers in recent years have featured the Great Indian Bustard, the Amur Falcon migration in Nagaland, and the Indian Peafowl during wildlife awareness drives.

By spotlighting birds through these covers, India Post has helped to weave avian conservation into the fabric of public consciousness. Each release becomes a miniature ambassador, travelling across the country in postal circulation and preserved in philatelic albums worldwide.

A Symbol of Unity at BBM 2025

The unveiling ceremony, attended by senior postal officials, conservation leaders, and young birdwatchers, underscored the potential of partnerships between government institutions and citizen-led initiatives. The release marked a cultural moment uniting birders, naturalists, policymakers, and the general public.

As the White-throated Kingfisher's image now takes flight in the form of this Special Cover, it carries a message with it: our shared natural heritage is both fragile and resilient. The hope is that each cover will spark conversations, inspire photographs, and lead more people to the wetlands, riverbanks, and groves where this dazzling bird reigns.



In the rustle of wings and the ripple of water lies the eternal song – may we learn to hear it, and keep it alive for all tomorrows.



Dr Dipankar Ghose WWF

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.



MONSOON BIRDING AT BHIGWAN



BIPLAB BANERJEE

With the advent of monsoon, as Mother Nature turns green, our avian friends also start exhibiting new behavioural attributes. And keen birdwatchers and bird photographers try to make the most of such opportunities as we flock to different parts of the country to explore birding amidst a lush green surrounding. I was fortunate to explore one such popular destination called the Bhigwan region, which is 105 KM from Pune, Maharashtra, during August 2024.

Where is Bhigwan:

Bhigwan is a small town on the Pune-Solapur Highway nestled around Bhigwan Lake - quite a sought-after destination as it welcomes thousands of migratory birds every year and houses the Bhigwan Bird Sanctuary. Bhigwan is very well connected with easy air, train and road connectivity. The nearest airports to Bhigwan are Pune (105 kms) and Mumbai (258 kms).

Best time to visit:

There are two important seasons for exploring Bhigwan, one is around Monsoon time (July-August) when a variety of quails, cuckoos, sandgrouse, larks, babblers, buntings, and grass birds make their presence felt. Also equally important is the winter season to explore for migratory birds, which flock to Bhigwan Lake and places adjacent to it in huge numbers.

Why Bhigwan:

The monsoon rains bring a refreshing change to the parched landscapes of Bhigwan and its surrounding hamlets and with them, a burst of life and activity in the avian world. As the skies darken and the rains pour down, the region's birdlife is revitalised, offering a unique opportunity for photographers to capture stunning images of their subjects in a lush, vibrant backdrop.

Bhigwan, otherwise is a quiet fishing town nestled along the backwater of the River Bhima. This backwater, which is the reservoir of Ujani Dam, is popularly referred to as **Bhigwan Bird Sanctuary**. The human-made wetland and its surrounding mix of grasslands and farms are home to nearly 300 species of migratory and year-round birds. The greater flamingo, like many migratory birds, arrives here in time for winter. The Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) conducts a study on migratory avifauna through a formal bird-ringing programme annually.

In this article, I intend to share fascinating insights for photographers looking to capture the beauty of birds and their behaviour during the monsoon season at Bhigwan and its surrounding areas.

And then Birds everywhere:

Let me now walk you down memory lane. Along with two of my fellow birders, we landed at Pune airport. We drove straight to a place called Tamhini Ghat to photograph one of the most sought-after Kingfishers of India - Black-backed Dwarf Kingfisher (BBDK). July - August happens to be the peak nesting season for BBDK. Upon arriving at the location, we were made to wait at a hide, at a safe distance from one such nest near a water stream. We managed to photograph the parents as they kept bringing a variety of food for their chicks. Here, it's worth mentioning that the parents carefully select appropriate food for their chicks to optimise growth, considering the number of weeks since their birth. We observed this behaviour for the entire morning session as the dutiful parents kept bringing food in quick succession. And before entering the nest, they would invariably land on a nearby perch, scanning the surrounding habitat and, in the process, giving us those divine moments to photograph them. For me, this was an important milestone as I could photograph my 11th Kingfisher from India; still, one more elusive kingfisher remains to be photographed from India.



Black-backed Dwarf Kingfisher

Tamhini Ghat is a mountain passage located in the Sahyadri mountain range of Maharashtra. It is a scenic area known for its lush greenery, waterfalls, and views, especially during the monsoon season. The ghat connects the Konkan region with Pune and is a popular destination for nature lovers and adventure seekers. We had engaged the services of Shri Ramdas Yenpure, who guided us to witness the Black-backed Dwarf Kingfisher. Concluding our session at Tamhini, we drove to Bhigwan (160 Km). It took us about 5 hours and we reached during late in the evening. Our stay and local birding, at Bhigwan, was cared for by a seasoned guide, Shri Nitin Dole, who took charge of all aspects of logistics, stay and birding. The first day of birding was spent around Bhigwan and its adjacent villages. During the monsoon, Bhigwan comes alive with ample opportunities to photograph a variety of Quails. We were fortunate to start the day with a Rain



Rain Quail

Quail (*Coturnix coromandelica*) making its presence felt with the high-pitched call piercing the air- it was indeed very melodious. Oblivious to our presence, it allowed great photographic opportunities. We could also hear the call of the Rock Bush-Quail (*Perdica argoondah*) in the immediate vicinity, and soon after, we shifted our focus to this singing bird. We managed to photograph a singing pair together with a perfect green background.

Nitin, our guide, then decided to head towards a different hamlet to locate the elusive Barred Buttonquail (*Turnix suscitator*) – I was particularly keen to photograph this member of the quail family at the earliest possible opportunity, given past failed attempts to photograph this bird from the Nadia district of West Bengal. Soon, we were lucky to find this bird emerging from a bush in search of food as we reached the specific destination. Extremely shy and reluctant to stay in a stationary posture even for a few seconds, it kept moving very fast, thereby posing a challenge to the image quality, which remained sub-optimal. Nitin, having noticed my disappointment, decided to take us to an open grassland and made us wait there, expecting the birds to crisscross that area – and as luck would have it, that's precisely what happened after waiting for half an hour. We could only thank Nitin and our stars as we were blessed with the opportunity to photograph a male and female Barred Buttonquail in one frame as it started moving toward our vehicle (parked at a very comfortable distance).



Barred Buttonquail



Rock Bush-Quail

While returning from the morning session, we stopped for breakfast at a nearby roadside food outlet, where we had our first rendezvous with a popular Maharashtrian food delicacy called Misal Pav.

After breakfast, just as we were about to enter our homestay, Nitin spotted a Brown crane in a nearby habitat location. He asked us to be ready with our gears, knowing the crane would cross the road any moment. However, regular vehicle movement made the crane feel uncomfortable, as it was restrained from coming out in the open. Contemplating leaving that location, we once again noticed movements behind the bush where the bird was hiding and then! In a split second, it crossed the road. It went to a place where it could feel comfortable and paused for a few seconds, which enabled us to add one more critical lifer to our ever-growing lifer list.

We could also photograph the following bird species apart from those mentioned above during the morning session:

- Striated Heron (*Butorides striata*)
- Large Gray Babbler (*Argya malcolmi*)

Post lunch, our evening session started around 3 pm. The next area to explore was the nearby villages and rocky habitats, specifically looking for Francolins and Sandgrouses.

The first bird of our session was the Painted Sandgrouse (*Pterocles indicus*). We spotted the bird on the top of a hillock, sitting precariously close to the edge, while we were approaching the bird from behind. At this stage, I was unsure as to how we would be able to get any image, given the unusual location. While we waited, knowing well that the bird was extremely shy and reclusive, we noticed some movement. We were apprehensive that the bird would fly away upon noticing us. And to our utter surprise, it turned towards us, giving us a rare glimpse to photograph, before hurriedly moving down the cliff.



Painted Sandgrouse



Gray-bellied Cuckoo



Painted Francolin

We continued our productive session, as we photographed Painted Francolin (*Francolinus pictus*) in another nearby village – perched atop a grassy mound with a vibrant display of colours – it was simply breathtaking.

Other noticeable observations of the session were:

Gray Francolin (*Ortygornis pondicerianus*) and Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse (*Pterocles exustus*).



Gray Francolin



Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse

The monsoon is the best time to find some of these birds out in the open, displaying their breeding plumage while attracting female partners, while a green grassland provides an excellent background for photography.

Day 2 and Day 3

After a successful Day 1, we shifted our focus to other species of the area. The next day, we set out very early to reach the habitat of Indian Eagle-Owl / Rock Eagle-Owl (*Bubo bengalensis*). It was quite a long drive from Bhigwan – a rugged terrain that has now become a birding hotspot thanks to the presence of the Indian Eagle Owl. Following a brief search, we noticed a majestic Rock Eagle-Owl atop a boulder. With the car parked at a distance, I concentrated on taking a few record shots and then started to approach carefully. At the end, I felt pleased with the outcome from an image quality perspective.

We also photographed some of the other raptors in the adjacent villages, such as Red-necked Falcon, Short-toed Snake-Eagle, and Bonelli's Eagle. One unforgettable experience deserves a special mention – as we were entering the habitat zone of Red-necked Falcon, Nitin spotted the raptor with a kill. He immediately accelerated to reach the place in a jiffy, to witness the Red-necked Falcon devouring its ill-fated prey. This photograph found a special mention in eBird and was showcased as the “Bird of the Day”.



Bonelli's Eagle

Here is a detailed report of what I could photograph on second and third day.

Rock Eagle-Owl (*Bubo bengalensis*)
 Spotted Owlet (*Athene brama*)
 Red-necked Falcon (*Falco chicquera*)
 Short-toed Snake-Eagle (*Circaetus gallicus*)
 Bonelli's Eagle (*Aquila fasciata*)
 Indian Peafowl (*Pavo cristatus*)
 Gray-bellied Cuckoo (*Cacomantis passerinus*)
 Rose-ringed Parakeet (*Psittacula krameri*)
 Greater Coucal (*Centropus sinensis*)
 Small Minivet (*Pericrocotus cinnamomeus*)
 Indian Thick-knee (*Burhinus indicus*)
 Blue-cheeked Bee-eater (*Merops persicus*)
 Red-wattled Lapwing (*Vanellus indicus*)
 Yellow-wattled Lapwing (*Vanellus malabaricus*)
 Indian Courser (*Cursorius coromandelicus*)
 Yellow-eyed babbler (*Chrysomma sinense*)
 Ashy-crowned Sparrow-Lark (*Eremopterix griseus*)
 Indian Bushlark (*Plocealauda erythroptera*)
 Tawny Lark (*Galerida deva*)
 Long-tailed Shrike (*Lanius schach*)
 Great Grey shrike (*Lanius excubitor*)

We spent the evening session of Day 3 focused on the Indian Grey Wolf, which required a trip to the grassland of Saswad. This is an area protected by the State Wildlife Department. Therefore, an entry pass needed to be obtained prior to entering the protected area. Eventually, we were delighted to have photographed a male Indian Grey Wolf (*Canis lupus pallipes*) in its natural habitat, with a majestic posture. The piercing gaze conveyed a sense of confidence and dominance.

Day 4

We commenced our return journey on Day 4. En route, the plan was to visit locations like Shelar Farm, adjacent grasslands near the Tukai temple and another place called Haveli. I am sharing location-wise observations:

Our first destination was Shelar Farm, around 100 KM from Bhigwan. Shelar Farm has become a well-known spot for birdwatching and wildlife photography, especially during the monsoon months. The Shelar family maintains traditional millet farming practices, which create a habitat that supports a variety of bird



Red-necked Falcon



Rock Eagle-Owl



Crested Bunting

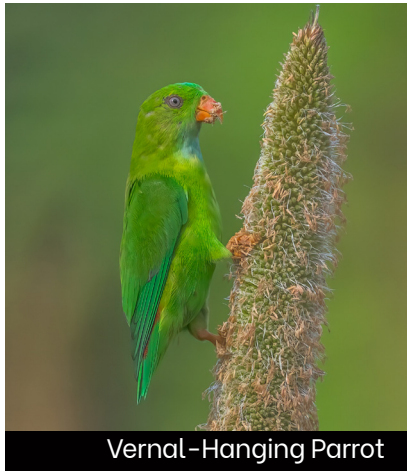
species. Here, we could observe and photograph the Vernal Hanging-Parrot (*Loriculus vernalis*) and the Crested Bunting (*Emberiza lathami*) amidst their natural habitat. In the adjacent grassland (Tukai temple), we got an excellent opportunity to photograph White-bellied Minivet (*Pericrocotus erythropygus*).

Our final destination, while returning, was Haveli, which overlooks Pune City. Here we photographed Striolated Bunting (*Emberiza striolata*), Crested Bunting and Dusky Crag-Martin (*Ptyonoprogne concolor*). Haveli, a quaint hillock turned lush green after the rains, becomes a haven for restless buntings and in turn a photographer's paradise.

We, however, missed Broad-tailed Grassbird (*Schoenicola platyurus*) despite a desperate search for this elusive beauty.



Blue Rock-Thrush



Vernal-Hanging Parrot



White-bellied Minivet

What we could do better:

In retrospect, we should have budgeted for an additional day to include the high-altitude grassland of Mahabaleshwar for the stunning Painted Bush-Quail (*Perdicula erythrorhyncha*).

Finale:

This marked the conclusion of my first monsoon bird photography adventure in the Western Ghats of India. I will forever cherish the memories of breathtaking bird encounters, stunning photographic opportunities, vibrant colours of the bird habitats, their fascinating behaviours, and captivating moments. These experiences will remain etched in my mind, leaving me with a treasure trove of unforgettable memories.

(All Pics by Author)



About Author

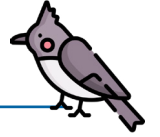
BIPLAB BANERJEE

After a 25+ year career in banking, Biplab is now enjoying a much-cherished sabbatical, fully immersed in his passion for birdwatching and bird photography. Armed with Nikon gear, he travels extensively across India and Southeast Asia, capturing the vibrant world of birds through his lens.



Source : AP Photo/Anupam Nath

বাবু কলকাতার বিনোদনঃ বুলবুলির লড়াই



অমিতাভ পুরকায়স্থ

“

জগদানন্দ বিলান জ্ঞান/
গিলান পুঁথি ঘর-জোড়া।
কাঁঠাল গুলান কিলিয়ে পাকান,
গাধা পিটি করেন ঘোড়া।

”

শা

স্তিনিকিতনের প্রথম যুগের বিজ্ঞান শিক্ষক জগদানন্দ রায় সম্পর্কে এই মজার ছড়াটির রচয়িতা রবীন্দ্রনাথ অগ্রজ দ্বিজেন্দ্রনাথ ঠাকুরে। ছাত্রবৎসল এই মাস্টারমশাই প্রসঙ্গে নিজের স্মৃতিকথায় রবীন্দ্রনাথ ঠাকুর লিখছেন—“গল্পচ্ছলে সরস করে বিজ্ঞানের কথা বলার আশ্চর্য ক্ষমতা ছিল জগদানন্দবাবুর”।

‘বার্ড ওয়াচার’-দের আড্ডায় হঠাৎ শান্তিনিকেতনের এই পুরনো মাস্টারমশাইয়ের প্রসঙ্গ তোলায় আশ্চর্য লাগছে? আসলে বাংলার পাখিদের সঙ্গে ছোটদের পরিচয় করিয়ে দেওয়ার জন্য বই লেখার দায়িত্ব এই মানুষটি নিজের কাঁধে তুলে নিয়েছিলেন সেই ১৯২৪ সালে। সেই অর্থে এই বছর, অর্থাৎ ২০২৫ সালে নন্দলাল বসুর ছবিতে সাজানো জগদানন্দ রায়ের লেখা ‘বাংলার পাখি’ বইটির শতবর্ষ পূর্ণ হল।

একশো বছর আগে এমন সুন্দর প্রাজ্জ্বল ভাষায় দরদ দিয়ে ছোট ছোট 'প্রকৃতি পড়ুয়াদের' পাঠ দেওয়ার ধরণটি মন ছুঁয়ে যায়। যেমন ধরুন বুলবুলির সঙ্গে পরিচয় করাতে উনি লিখেছেন— "তোমরা কত রকমের বুলবুল পাখী দেখিয়াছ জানি না। আমরা কিন্তু আমাদের বাগানে কালো বুলবুল এবং সিপাহী বুলবুল এই দুই রকম দেখিয়াছি। কালো বুলবুলদের ঝুঁটি ও ডানা কালো। লেজও কালো; কেবল তাহার শেষের কয়েকটা পালকের আগা সাদা। লেজের তলাটা আবার সুন্দর লাল। কিন্তু ঝুঁটি ও মাথা যত কালো, শরীরটা তত ঘন কালো নয়। বাগানে খোঁজ করিলে তোমরা বুলবুলদের জোড়া জোড়া বেড়াইতে দেখিবে। পাকা ফল এবং ফুলের কুঁড়ি ইহাদের প্রিয় খাদ্য। পাকা তেলাকুচা ইহারা বড় ভালবাসে। আমরা একবার একটি বুলবুল পুষিয়াছিলাম। ফলের মধ্যে সে পাকা তেলাকুচা পাইলে আর কিছুই খাইতে চাহিত না। ফড়িং ও অন্য পোকা আনিয়া দিলেও সে খাইত।"

নিজেরা বাগানে ঘুরে ঘুরে পাখি দেখা, তাদের ব্যবহার পর্যবেক্ষণ করে—এই অভ্যাস থেকেই থেকেই তো প্রকৃতিকে দেখার চোখ তৈরি হয়। তবেই না তৈরি হন একজন ন্যাচারেলিস্ট!

বুলবুলির বিভিন্ন জাতি, তাদের বাসা, ডিম পাড়া, সাধারণ ব্যবহার, ইত্যাদি নিয়ে নানা কথা জানানোর পর জগদানন্দ বাবু এই ছোট লেখাটির প্রায় শেষে লিখছেন— "যাহা হউক, বুলবুলদের গলার স্বর মিষ্ট। এই জন্য লোকে এই পাখীদের ধরিয়া খাঁচায় রাখে। আগে আমাদের দেশের রাজা-বাদশাহরা বাঘের লড়াই ও হাতীর লড়াই দেখিতেন। কিছু দিন আগেও আমাদের দেশে বুলবুলের লড়াই হইত। লোকে সখ করিয়া বুলবুল পুষিত। তার পরে দুইটা বুলবুলকে ছাড়িয়া দিলেই, তাহারা পরস্পরকে আক্রমণ করিয়া ঠোকাঠুকরি শুরু করিত। লোকে নাকি ইহা দেখিয়া খুব আমোদ পাইত।"

সাধারণ একটি অনুচ্ছেদে আছে ইতিহাসের কথা। কিন্তু মাথায় দুম করে আঘাত করে শেষ বাক্যটি— "লোকে নাকি ইহা দেখিয়া খুব আমোদ পাইত।" বিশেষ করে "নাকি" শব্দটি। খুব কম বলে অনেক কিছু বলে দেওয়ার এই দক্ষতাই জগদানন্দ বাবুদের আলাদা করে। উনিশ শতকের 'বাবু কালচার' নামের অদ্ভুত সামাজিক অবস্থার প্রতি এক তীর্থক মন্তব্য এই বাক্যটি। সাধারণ মানুষের চরম আর্থিক দুর্দশার পাশাপাশি কিছু মানুষের হাতে অপরিমেয় অর্থ এসে গেলে এমন অনেক উপসর্গ দেখা যায় সমাজের শরীরে। উনিশ শতকের বাবুদের বুলবুলির লড়াইয়ের শখ অনেকটা সেই রকম।

বিনোদন হিসাবে পাখির লড়াই আয়োজনের ইতিহাস বেশ পুরনো। দুনিয়ার আরও নানা প্রান্তে এই ধরনের লড়াই আয়োজিত হতো এবং এখনও হয় ঐতিহ্যের নামে। এই সব আয়োজন থেকে উনিশ শতকের কলকাতার বুলবুলির লড়াই আলাদা হয়ে গেলে সেই খেলায় অকল্পনীয় পরিমাণ টাকা ও বাবুদের সম্মানের প্রশ্ন জড়িয়ে যাওয়ায়।

সাধারণত বেলা এগারোটো থেকে চারটে পর্যন্ত খেলা হত। এ উপলক্ষে সারা কলকাতায় ধুম পড়ে যেত। হাজারে হাজারে বাবুরা আসতেন এ খেলা দেখতে। যুযুধান বুলবুলিরা দাঁড়িয়ে থাকত মুখোমুখি। মাঝখানে ছড়িয়ে দেওয়া হত খাবার। তারপর সেই খাবার নিয়ে সংগ্রাম বেঁধে উঠত পাখিদের। এ দলের বুলবুলিরা যদি হেরে গিয়ে উড়ে পালিয়ে আসত, তখন ওপক্ষ থেকে সোল্লাস চিৎকার উঠত— 'ধো মারা'। খুব সম্ভবত, ঘুড়ি কাটলে যে 'ভো মারা' আওয়াজ ওঠে, তার উৎসও বুলবুলির লড়াইয়ের এই জয়গোল্লাস। জয়-পরাজয় নির্ধারণের জন্য একজন মান্য ব্যক্তিকে রেফারী করা হত। সেকালের ভাষায় একে বলা হত 'সালিসী'। যাঁরা পাখিদের শিক্ষা দিতেন, তাঁদের নাম ছিল 'খলিফা'। আর যাঁরা উৎকৃষ্ট দর্শক তাঁরা হতেন 'সোয়াকীন'। ফার্সি শব্দের ছড়াছড়ি দেখে এই খেলার নবাবি আমলের শিকড় সম্পর্কে খানিকটা আন্দাজ করা যায়।

পুরনো কলকাতার ইতিহাসে কয়েকটি বুলবুলির লড়াই জনমনে তোলপাড় ফেলে দেওয়ার নিরিখে প্রায় প্রবাদের পর্যায়ে পৌঁছে গিয়েছিল। যেমন আঠারোশ' চৌত্রিশে হরনাথ মল্লিকের সঙ্গে আশুতোষ দেব, মানে, ছাত্তু বাবুর পাখিদের লড়াই। প্রথমে হরনাথ মল্লিকের পাখিরা ভালো লড়াই দিলেও শেষ রক্ষা করতে পারেনি। দু' প্রহর দু' ঘণ্টার পর মল্লিক বাবুর পাখিরা সম্পূর্ণ পরাজিত হয়। তারপর সভা ভেঙে যায়। জিত হয় ছাত্তু বাবুর। আজ যেখানে মিনার্ভা থিয়েটার, সেখানে বিশাল মাঠ ছিল উনিশ



Jagadananda Roy, Pic from wikipedia



Raja Baidyanath Roy, Pic from Internet

শতকের মাঝামাঝি সময়ে। এদিন সালিসী ছিলেন রাজা সুখময়ের তৃতীয় পুত্র বৈদ্যনাথ রায়। ইনি পশুপাখি নিয়ে খুব উৎসাহী ছিলেন। দমদমে নিজের প্রাসাদ লাগোয়া বড়ো এক চিড়িয়াখানা তৈরি করেছিলেন। সেই থেকেই জায়গাটার নাম চিড়িয়ারমোড়। জীবজন্তু নিয়ে এই আগ্রহকে আরো কয়েক ধাপ এগিয়ে নিয়ে তিনি জুওলজিক্যাল সোসাইটি অফ লন্ডনের সভ্য পদ গ্রহণ করেছিলেন। সোসাইটি থেকে রাজা বৈদ্যনাথ ও তার পুত্র কুমার রাজকৃষ্ণকে সাম্মানিক সদস্য পদ দেওয়ার চিঠিতে এই চিড়িয়াখানার উল্লেখ ছিল। প্রকৃতি ও জীবজন্তু নিয়ে বনেদি কলকাতার উৎসাহের অন্ত ছিল না। তবে আঠারোশ' তিপান্নতে যে বুলবুলি লড়াই হয়েছিল, তার বোধহয় কোন তুলনা নেই। এ প্রতিযোগিতা হয়েছিল সিমুলিয়ার বাবু দয়ালচাঁদ মিত্রের সঙ্গে জোড়াসাঁকো নিবাসী রাজা রাজেন্দ্রনারায়ণ রায়ের।

বেলা দশটা থেকে আরম্ভ হয়েছিল খেলা। আড়াইটের ভেতর তা শেষ হয়ে যায়। সেদিন মোট সাঁইত্রিশ জোড়া পাখির খেলা হয়েছিল। এর ভেতর সাতাশবারই জেতেন সিমুলিয়ার দয়ালচাঁদ মিত্র। আর রাজা জেতেন মোট দশবার। তিন বছর ধরে নাওয়া-খাওয়া ছেড়ে নানান জায়গা থেকে ভালো ভালো পাখি জোগাড় করে দক্ষ 'খলিফা' রেখেও জিততে পারলেন না রাজা। সেদিন সালিশীর দায়িত্বে ছিলেন হরিনারায়ণ গোস্বামী। রাজেন্দ্রনারায়ণ সেদিন সালিশীর শেষ বিচার আর শুনতে চাননি। মন খারাপ করে রাজা অকালে মাঠ ত্যাগ করে যান।

আজকের আইপিএল দলের মালিকরা দল হারার পর হয়তো সেকালের বাবুদের মনের অবস্থা খানিকটা বুঝতে পারবেন। পাখিদের তো আবার গালাগালি করেও মনের ঝাল মেটানো যায় না! সেকালের এই বুলবুলির লড়াই নিয়ে জনসাধারণের পাগলামিও ছিল আজকের আইপিএল নিয়ে উন্মাদনার পর্যায়ে। কলকাতার পুরো বাবু সমাজ উন্মদের মতো এই খেলা দেখতে এসেছিলেন পুত্র-পৌত্র-দৌহিত্র-অমাত্যবর্গকে সঙ্গে করে। এই লড়াইকে নিয়ে ছড়াকার ছড়া বেঁধেছিলেন—

একে একে রাজাজীর ভালো পাখী সব।

বাবুর পক্ষীর কাছে হলো পরাভব ॥

অপর পক্ষীর কথা কি কহিব আর।

সমর করিল যেন অমর কুমার ॥

হায় হায় কি লিখিব দেখে হয় দয়া।

সম্রমী না হতে হইল বিজয়া ॥

নিজস্ব সব দোষ-গুণ নিয়েই উনিশ শতকের সূর্য একসময় কলকাতার গঙ্গার ওপারে অন্ত গেল। না ইতিহাস, না সমাজ কেউ আর তাঁদের মনে রাখল না। রয়ে গেল কিছু প্রবাদ-ছড়া-কাহিনী। তবে ভুলে গেলে হয় আর কী! মাঝে মধ্যেই বাবুদের উত্তরসূরীরা দু-একজন উঁকি মারেন এখানে সেখানে। বাবুদের নিয়ে চর্চার অনভ্যাসে আমরাও তাঁদের চিনতে পারি না।

তথ্যসূত্রঃ

রায়চৌধুরী সুধাকান্ত, দ্বিজেন্দ্রনাথ ঠাকুর স্মৃতিকথা, জিজ্ঞাসা, কলিকাতা, ১৩৬৭

ঠাকুর রথীন্দ্রনাথ, পিতৃ-স্মৃতি, জিজ্ঞাসা, কলিকাতা, ১৩৬৭

রায়, জগদানন্দ, বাংলার পাখী, বি.এন.মাথুর, ইণ্ডিয়ান প্রেস পাবলিকেশন প্রাঃ লিঃ, এলাহাবাদ, তৃতীয় সংস্করণ, ১৩৩১

মুখোপাধ্যায়, বৈদ্যনাথ, বাবু গৌরবের কলকাতা, বর্ণালী, কলকাতা ১৯৫৭

কুমার জ্ঞানেন্দ্রনাথ সঙ্কলিত, বংশ-পরিচয়(চতুর্দশ খণ্ড), জ্ঞানেন্দ্রনাথ কুমার, কলকাতা, ১৩৪১



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Amitave Purkaystha is a story-teller, city historian, journalist and birder. He is more popularly known for the walking tours he conducts in the city of Kolkata.



Antiphonal or unison call of Sarus Crane, Pic by Dhritiman Mukherjee

বর্ষা শুধু প্রকৃতি নয়, পাখিদের জীবনেও নতুন ছন্দ নিয়ে আসে



বিশ্ব রঞ্জন গোস্বামী

ব

র্ষা এলে প্রকৃতি সাজে নতুন সাজে। তৃষিত হৃদয়ে, পুষ্প-বৃক্ষে, পত্র-পল্লবে নতুন প্রাণের সঞ্চারণ করে। নৃপুৰ পায়ে বুঝুর বুঝুর তালে বারে পড়া অঝোর ধারার বৃষ্টিতে ভিজতে থাকে উন্মুখ – অধীর প্রকৃতি। বৃষ্টির ধারায় উপছে পড়ে বাংলার ডোবা-নালা-মাঠ-ঘাট-পুকুর-খাল-বিল। ঝরঝর বারিধারায় শুধু মানুষের মনকে নয়, পাখিদের জীবনেও আনন্দ-বেদনা ও বিরহকাতরতায় সিক্ত করে তুলে বর্ষা। গাছের ডালে, পাতার ফাঁকে চুপচাপ বসে থাকে পাখিরা। জনশূন্য মাঠ-ঘাট, জনশূন্য পথ-প্রান্তর। পুলকে পাখির কলতানে মুখরিত হয়ে উঠে প্রকৃতির প্রান্তর।

পৃথিবীর সব পাখির প্রেম-বিরহ যেন আটকে আছে রূপসি বাংলার কবি জীবনানন্দ দাশের কবিতার পরতে পরতে। ‘পাখিরা’ কবিতায় জীবনানন্দ লিখে গেছেন,



তারপর চ’লে যায় কোন এক খেতে;

তাহার প্রিয়ের সাথে আকাশের পথে যেতে-যেতে;

সে কি কথা কয়?

তাদের প্রথম ডিম জন্মিবার এসেছে সময়।



এ যেন প্রকৃতির বিরল প্রেমের প্রতীক পাখিরই প্রণয়কাব্য।

পাখিরা বৃষ্টির বার্তা নিয়ে আসে

পাখিরা কেবল বর্ষায় নয়, বরং তার আগেই সক্রিয় হয়ে উঠে। বৃষ্টির কথা বলে এমন পাখির গান প্রথম বৃষ্টির ফোঁটা পড়ার আগেই পাখিরা প্রায়শই বুঝতে পারে যে বর্ষা আসছে। বর্ষাকালে বাংলায় আসা অসংখ্য প্রজাতির পাখির মধ্যে চাতক, যা ‘জ্যাকোবিয়ান কাকু’ নামেও পরিচিত, প্রজাটিকে বৃষ্টির আগমনী পাখি হিসেবে বিবেচনা করা হয়। পাখি পর্যবেক্ষকদের মধ্যে এবং লোককাহিনীতে এটি বর্ষার সূচনাকারী পাখি হিসেবে সুপরিচিত। এটিকে গ্রীষ্মের শেষের দিকে হঠাৎ করেই এরা দেখা যায় এবং বর্ষার শুরুতে এদের এখানে উড়তে দেখা যায়। সম্ভবত তারাও আরব সাগর পার হয়ে আফ্রিকা থেকে আসা মৌসুমি বাতাসে ‘পিউ-পিউ’ শিস দিয়ে গান করে উড়ে বেড়ায়। পৌরাণিক কাহিনীতে বলা হয় ‘চাতক’ পাখির দেখা নিশ্চিত করে যে বৃষ্টি খুব বেশি পিছিয়ে নেই। কালিদাস তাঁর ‘মেঘদূত’ কবিতায় এই পাখিটিকে গভীর আকাজক্ষার রূপক হিসাবে ব্যবহার করেছেন। ভালো কিছু জন্য চাতক পাখির মতো অপেক্ষা করে অনেকেই। আমরা সাধারণত অনেক প্রতীক্ষিত সব কিছুর ক্ষেত্রেই এই চাতক পাখির সঙ্গে নিজেদের তুলনা করে থাকি। এই চাতক নিয়ে গল্প, গান, কবিতাও কম নেই। বলা হয়ে থাকে, চাতক পাখি বৃষ্টির জন্য দিনের পর দিন হাঁ করে অপেক্ষায় থাকে।

শতাব্দী ধরে প্রকৃতি থেকে বর্ষার ভবিষ্যদ্বাণী এখনও গুরুত্বপূর্ণ, গ্রামের মানুষদের টিভি বা অ্যাপ থেকে আবহাওয়ার পূর্বাভাসের প্রয়োজন ছিল না। তারা জানতেন কখন বৃষ্টি আসছে - পাখিদের নীচে উড়ে যাওয়া, ব্যাঙের জোরে ডাকা, অথবা গাছে ফুল ফোটা দেখে। এটি বহু প্রজন্ম ধরে বাবা-মা থেকে শিশুদের মুখে মুখে চলে এসেছে। এখন বিজ্ঞানীরা বুঝতে পারছেন যে এই লক্ষণগুলি আসলে আবহাওয়ার পূর্বাভাস দিতে সাহায্য করতে পারে। ভারতের অনেক জায়গায় মানুষ পাখিদের কাছ থেকে এই সংকেতগুলি পড়তে শিখেছে। তাদের ডাক, গতিবিধি এবং এমনকি তাদের উড়ার ধরণও বর্ষার আগমনের ইঙ্গিত দিতে পারে।

লোসার কোকিল (কিছু এলাকায় ‘রেইন বার্ড’ নামে পরিচিত) তামিলনাড়ু এবং উত্তর-পূর্ব ভারতে পাওয়া যায়, এই পাখিটি বর্ষা আসার ঠিক আগে জোরে ডাকতে শুরু করে। স্থানীয়রা বলে, “যদি কোকিল গান গায়, বৃষ্টি বেশি দূরে নয়।”

বসন্ত বৌরী বা বারবেট (নীল-গলা এবং নীল-কানযুক্ত প্রজাতির মতো) এই পাখিগুলি যখন অস্বাভাবিক কিচিরমিচির শব্দ করতে শুরু করে এবং মাটির কাছে উড়ে যায়, তখন স্থানীয়রা এটিকে আর মাত্র কয়েক দিন পরেই বৃষ্টির লক্ষণ হিসাবে দেখে।

ফিঙ্গে এবং ময়না: কর্ণাটক এবং ওড়িশার কৃষকরা বিশ্বাস করেন যে যখন এই পাখিরা প্রচুর সংখ্যায় একত্রিত হয় এবং একসাথে ডাকে, তখন এটি একটি লক্ষণ যে মেঘ তৈরি হচ্ছে এবং শীঘ্রই বৃষ্টিপাত হবে।

তামিলনাড়ুর কৃষকরা বলেন বাবুই বা তাঁতি (Weaver bird) পাখিরা যদি জলাশয়ের উপরে কূপের মতো মাটি থেকে উঁচুতে বাসা বাঁধে তবে ভারী বর্ষা আশা করা যায়। আর যদি মাটির কাছাকাছি বাসা? এর অর্থ সম্ভবত দুর্বল বর্ষা। তামিলনাড়ুর কৃষকরা লক্ষ্য করেছেন যখন ল্যাপউইং রাতে ডিম পাড়ে, বিশেষ করে নদীর তীরের কাছে, তখন তা ভারী বৃষ্টিপাতের ইঙ্গিত দেয়।

আসলে বায়ুচাপ, তাপমাত্রা এবং আর্দ্রতার পরিবর্তনের প্রতি সংবেদনশীল পাখিরা প্রায়শই আমরা কোনও পরিবর্তন লক্ষ্য করার আগেই প্রতিক্রিয়া দেখায়। পাখি এবং আবহাওয়ার মধ্যে এই গভীর সম্পর্ক কুসংস্কার নয় - এটি প্রজন্মের পর প্রজন্ম ধরে ঘনিষ্ঠ পর্যবেক্ষণের উপর ভিত্তি করে তৈরি।

অপূর্ব সৌন্দর্য! পাখি: প্রকৃতির অত্যাশ্চর্য বর্ষাকালের বাসিন্দারা

বর্ষা ঋতুতে, অনেক পাখি এই পরিবেশে আনন্দ করতে বেরিয়ে আসে। সতেজ বৃষ্টিপাতের বর্ষা বিভিন্ন প্রজাতির পাখিকে উড়ে যেতে এবং ঋতুর আনন্দ উপভোগ করতে আহ্বান করে। আসুন মৌসুমি পাখির জগতে ডুব দেই এবং বছরের এই বিশেষ সময়টিতে যে বৈচিত্র্যময় পাখির জীবন উপভোগ করা যায় তার খোঁজ করি।

আমাদের দেশে বর্ষাকাল হল প্রাণবন্ত জীবনের সময়, বিশেষ করে পাখিদের জন্য। বৃষ্টিপাতের সাথে সাথে প্রকৃতি পরিবর্তিত হয় এবং পাখিরা প্রজনন কার্যকলাপ, পূর্বরাগের পালা এবং প্রেম-পরিণয়ের মাধ্যমে সাড়া দেয়। এই সময়কালে প্রচুর পরিমাণে খাদ্য এবং জল থাকে, যা এই সময়কে পাখিদের বাসা বাঁধতে এবং বাচ্চাদের লালন-পালনের জন্য আদর্শ করে তোলে। বর্ষাকালে পাখিদের জীবনযাত্রা বেশ মনোরম হয়ে ওঠে। বৃষ্টির রিমঝিম শব্দে তাদের গান আরও মধুর হয়, আর ভিজে মাটি ও গাছের ডালে তাদের আনাগোনা বেড়ে যায়।

বিশ্বব্যাপী পাখির প্রজাতির মধ্যে সবচেয়ে আকর্ষণীয় বিষয়গুলির মধ্যে একটি হল তাদের সঙ্গমের রীতিনীতির বিস্তৃত বৈচিত্র্য এবং প্রকৃতি। সম্রাট পেঙ্গুইনের (Emperor Penguin) ডাক থেকে শুরু করে বার্ড অফ প্যারাডাইস পাখিদের অদ্ভুত নৃত্য পর্যন্ত, পাখিরা সঙ্গীকে আকর্ষণ করার এবং ধরে রাখার কিছু সত্যিই অদ্ভুত উপায় তৈরি করেছে। ময়ূরেরও (Indian Peafowl) সঙ্গমের মরশুম বর্ষাকালেই শুরু হয়।

বর্ষাকাল সারস (Sarus Crane) পাখির প্রজনন মরশুম। সারস দম্পতি সারা জীবন পরস্পর দাম্পত্য সম্পর্কে আবদ্ধ থাকে। 'রোমান্টিক' হিসাবে সারস পাখিদের খ্যাতি আছে লোকবিশ্বাসে। এরা উচ্চস্বরে শিঙার মতো আওয়াজ করে ডাকে। যুগলে নানা অঙ্গভঙ্গী করে মোহনীয় ভঙ্গীতে 'নেচে' নানাভাবে সঙ্গীর মন জয় করার চেষ্টা করে। ভারতে সারসরা বৈবাহিক স্থায়িত্বের প্রতীক এবং গুজরাটে কোথাও কোথাও নববিবাহিত দম্পতিদের একত্রে জোড়া সারস দেখতে যাওয়ার প্রথা চালু আছে।

পাখির গান

পাখিরা সাধারণত প্রজননজনিত কারণে সুমিষ্ট সুরে গান গায়। বর্ষায় পাখির গান মূলত পুরুষ পাখির কণ্ঠেই শোনা যায়। স্ত্রী পাখিরা গান গাইতে পারলেও তা তেমন সুরেলা বা মিষ্টি নয়। পুরুষ পাখির গান তার সঙ্গী স্ত্রী পাখিকে আকৃষ্ট করার জন্য দরকারী। সাধারণত পুরুষ পাখি সঙ্গীকে আকৃষ্ট করার জন্য গান গাওয়া বসন্ত ও বর্ষা কাল বা পূর্বরাগের সময় থেকে শুরু করে ও তার গানের পুনরাবৃত্তি করবে যতক্ষণ না সে তার স্ত্রীর সাথে জুটি বাঁধে। পাখিদের মধ্যে সবচেয়ে সুপরিচিত প্রেমের আচরণগুলির মধ্যে একটি হল গান করা। পুরুষ পাখিরা প্রায়শই সম্ভাব্য সঙ্গীকে সুন্দর সুর এবং কণ্ঠস্বর দিয়ে আকৃষ্ট করে। এই গানগুলো স্ত্রীদের আকৃষ্ট করা, অঞ্চল প্রতিষ্ঠা করা এবং প্রতিদ্বন্দ্বী পুরুষদের বিরুদ্ধে রক্ষা করা সহ একাধিক উদ্দেশ্যে কাজ করে।

পাখিদের নাচ:

বর্ষাঋতুতে পাখিদের মনোমুগ্ধকর নাচ, সঙ্গমের ক্ষেত্রে একটি গুরুত্বপূর্ণ ভূমিকা পালন করে। এই আচার-অনুষ্ঠানে প্রায়শই মন্ত্রমুগ্ধ নাচের মতো গতিবিধি জড়িত থাকে যা সঙ্গীদের আকৃষ্ট করার এক মোহিনী রূপ। এই নৃত্য-সদৃশ গতিবিধির উদাহরণ হল বার্ডস অফ প্যারাডাইস, সারস, ময়ূর ইত্যাদি। পুরুষ পাখিরা নারীদের দৃষ্টি আকর্ষণ করার জন্য মন্ত্রমুগ্ধকর উপায়ে শারীরিক দক্ষতা প্রদর্শন করে। এই বিস্তৃত নৃত্যটি সত্যিই দেখার মতো।

বরবেশ বা ব্রিডিং প্লুমেজ:

'বরবেশ' কথাটি সাহিত্যিক বনফুলের দেওয়া। প্রজনন কাল আসলেই এদের শরীরের পালকে চলে আসে অপূর্ব সুন্দর বাহার। সাধারণত পাখির সৌন্দর্য পুরুষদের একচেটিয়া প্রাধান্য। স্ত্রী পাখিদের দৃষ্টি আকর্ষণ করার জন্য পুরুষ পাখিরা প্রায়ই তাদের বাহারী পালক প্রদর্শন করে। নতুন পোশাকের প্রতি পাখিদের আকর্ষণ মানুষের চেয়ে বেশি। এমন কোনো পাখি নেই যে, পুরোনো পালক গায়ে দিয়ে বছর পার করে। পুরোনো পালক ফেলে বছরে অন্তত একবার এদের নতুন পালক চাই-ই চাই। অনেক পাখিই বছরে দু-তিনবার পোশাক বদলায়। বর্ষা এলে কিছু পাখির সাজসজ্জা নাটকীয়ভাবে বদলায়। পালকের আড়ম্বর, বৈচিত্র্য, বর্ণ আর কারুকার্যে পাখিদের মনসুন্ কালেকশনটি অনেক ডিজাইনারেরই ঈর্ষার বস্তু। বর্ষাই এ অঞ্চলের অধিকাংশ পাখির প্রজননকাল। পূর্বরাগের সময় এলে অনেক পাখিই জমকালো পোশাকে সাজতে চায়।

পুরুষ পাখির সাজসজ্জা কোনো কোনো ক্ষেত্রে রীতিমতো বাড়াবাড়ির পর্যায়ে পড়ে। পুরুষের সাজ-পোশাক ও সংগীত-সাধনা আকর্ষণীয় হলেই-না স্ত্রী-পাখির দেহে হরমোন প্রবাহিত হবে। আর, পর্যাপ্ত হরমোন হলে তবে পেটে ডিম আসবে। তাই প্রকৃতি আজও পুরুষ পাখির সাজ-পোশাকের বাড়াবাড়িতে রাশ টেনে ধরেনি।

যে পাখিটির বর্ষার সাজসজ্জা সবচেয়ে আউটল্যান্ডিশ বলে বিশ্বখ্যাত তার নাম ময়ূর। বর্ষাকালে পুরুষ ময়ূরের পেখম গজায়। পাখির চেয়েও বড় হয় তার পেখম। পেখমের আকারের ওপরই নির্ভর করে ময়ূরের প্রজনন-সাফল্য। যার পেখম যত বড়, তার দিকে তত বেশি স্ত্রী-ময়ূর আকৃষ্ট হয়। তবে, পেখম বড় হওয়াই যথেষ্ট নয়, বারবার সেটা মেলে ধরতে হয়। খুঁটিয়ে খুঁটিয়ে পেখম পরখ করে স্ত্রী-ময়ূরেরা।

গ্রামে-গঞ্জে আজও যে পাখিদের মনসুন কালেকশন সবার চোখে পড়ে, তার পারিবারিক নাম বক। যার বর্ষার পোশাকে সবচেয়ে বেশি চমক তার নাম গো-বক (Cattle Egret)।

বর্ষা শুরু হলে গো-বকের সাদা পালক ঝরে গিয়ে সেখানে কমলা পালক গজায়। দেখতে দেখতে কোমল কমলা পালকে এর শরীর ছেয়ে যায়। গাঁয়ের বাঁশ-ঝাড়ে গো-বকের দল বেঁধে বাসা করে। প্রজনন শেষে কমলা টিউনিক ফেলে এরা সাদা পালকের অ্যাপ্রন পরে সাদামাটা জীবনে ফিরে যায়।

অমন মন-মাতানো কমলা লাইন না থাকলেও অন্য বকদের মনসুন কালেকশনও কম চমকপ্রদ নয়। ছোট কোর্চে-বকের (Little Egret) মাথায় বাঁকানো একটি ঝুঁটি হয়। মাঝারী কোর্চে-বক (Medium Egret) ও বড় বা ধর-বকের (Great Egret) কোমরে ময়ূরের মতোই পেখম হয়। তাই এই পেখমের জন্য এদের ইংরেজি নাম 'ইগরেট'। সাদা পালকের সরু সরু পেখমগুলো প্রয়োজনে এরা ময়ূরের মতোই মেলে ধরে।

বর্ষায় পাখিরা ভিজতে ভালোবাসে: পাখিরা বৃষ্টি ভালোবাসে, বৃষ্টি পাখিদের ভালোবাসে

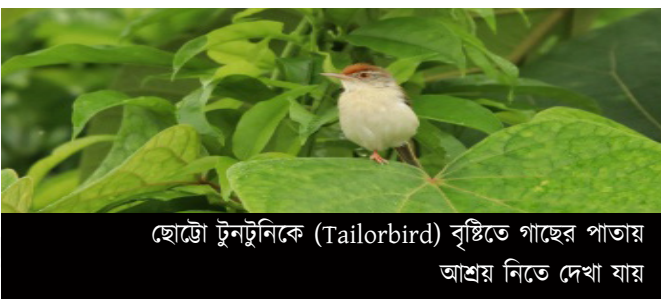
অনেক পাখিই বৃষ্টির ফোঁটায় ভিজে আনন্দ করে, কেউ কেউ আবার পালক ঝেড়ে জল ঝরিয়ে নেয়।



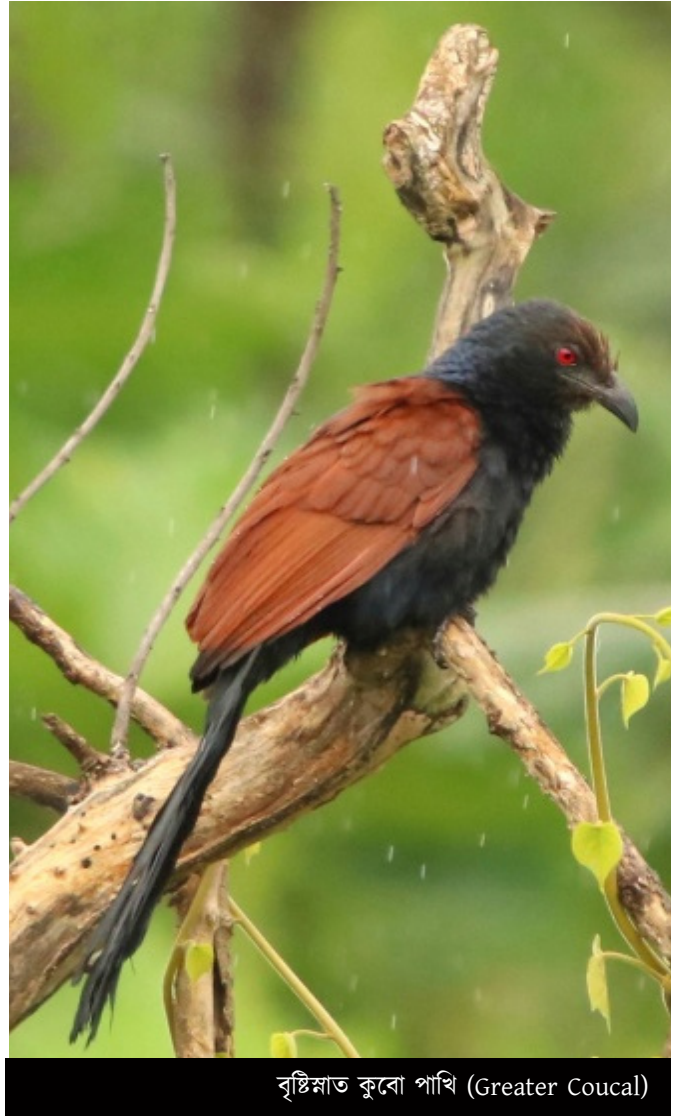
ধূসর ফুটকি (Ashy Prinia) বৃষ্টির ফোঁটা শরীরে মেখে নেয়



বৃষ্টিম্নাত বেনেবউ (Black-hooded Oriole)



ছোট্টো টুনটুনিকে (Tailorbird) বৃষ্টিতে গাছের পাতায় আশ্রয় নিতে দেখা যায়



বৃষ্টিম্নাত কুবো পাখি (Greater Coucal)

বৃষ্টির সাথে পাখিদের প্রেম সেই আদি অনন্ত কাল থেকেই। তাই বৃষ্টির দিন বর্ষায় যেন পাখিদের প্রেম-বিরহ-ভালবাসার ঋতু। বর্ষা মানেই জলনূপুরের গান, বর্ষা মানেই জলে ভেজা পৃথিবী, বর্ষা মানে বৃষ্টিশ্রাত এক রমনীয় আমাদের বাংলা।

ছবিসূত্র – উইকিপিডিয়া



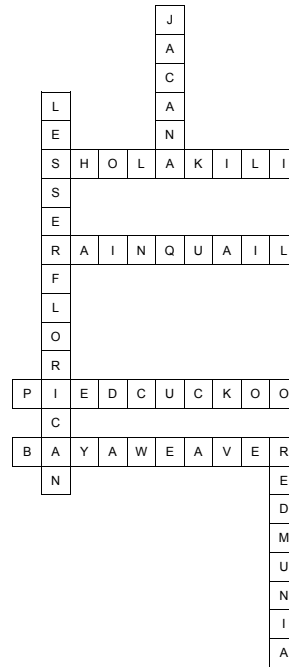
About Author

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

Monsoon Melody

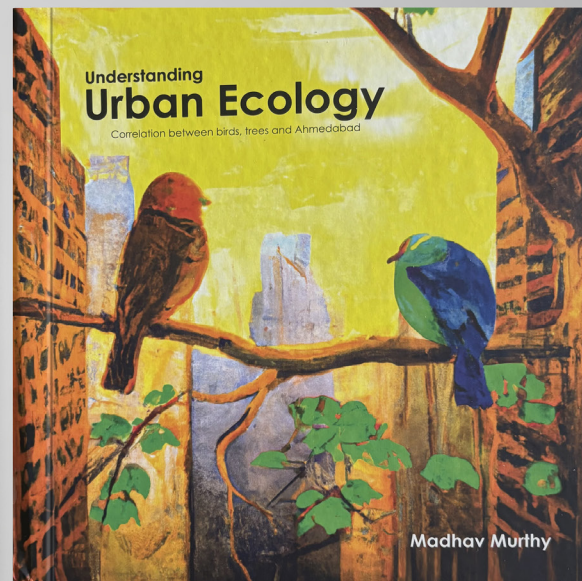
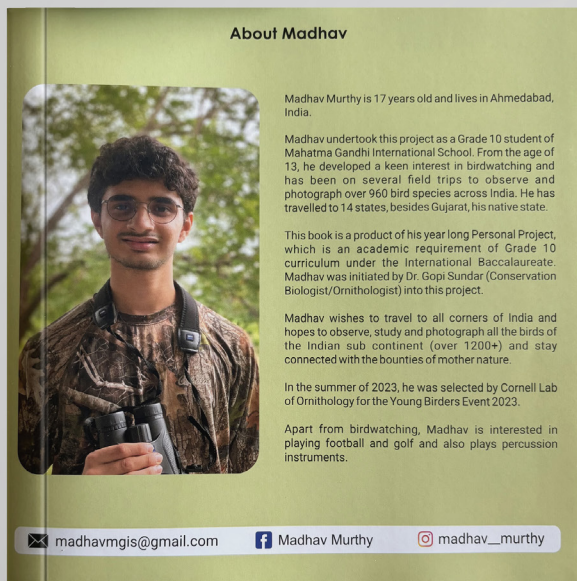


Across

- 3 An endemic species of the Western ghats, this bird is known for its beautiful song during the monsoon
- 4 Small, round bird with streaks, found in the Indian subcontinent, this one has monsoon in its name
- 5 The harbinger of monsoons in India, featuring in ancient Sanskrit literature
- 6 The male of this pretty common bird species develops bright yellow plumage during the monsoon to attract females

Down

- 1 The beautiful tail of this bird grows longer and resembles that of the pheasant (hint: write the last word of the name only)
- 2 These birds attract Birders' in flocks to Ajmer to see their magnificent dance and courtship ritual during monsoons
- 7 Previously found in huge numbers in Rajarhat, this small, radiant bird has now diminished due to habitat loss and pollution



BOOK REVIEW – UNDERSTANDING URBAN ECOLOGY – BY MADHAV MURTHY



REVIEWED BY AMITAVA DUTTA

In our rapidly urbanizing world, society is increasingly losing sight of the need for harmony with the natural environment. Achieving balance with nature – in communities, landscapes, biodiversity conservation, habitat connectivity, land use, and green spaces – presents a significant challenge for fast-growing urban cities.

Against this backdrop, Madhav Murthy, a school student in Ahmedabad, has made an inspiring contribution. Drawing from his birdwatching experiences, he has authored a book on urban ecology that thoughtfully documents the intricate

relationships between birds, their habitats, and the city itself.

The inquisitive and budding birder, Madhav, with 1060+ Indian bird species ticked, was intrigued by the presence of birds in and around the concrete congregation of Ahmedabad. And thus turned his bird-watching hobby into a project as part of his assignment at school. The intense study of human co-existence with flora and fauna eventually culminated in presenting his documented observations in his book '*Understanding Urban Ecology*'.

This book offers a rewarding experience for bird enthusiasts of all ages. It stands out as an exemplary guide for making field notes, capturing the nuances of bird behaviour across diverse urban settings. For parents passionate about nature and birdwatching, it provides both inspiration and a practical framework to nurture a spirit of observation and documentation in their children. Amidst the bustle of city life, young readers can discover invaluable lessons, fostering a deeper appreciation and proactive engagement with the natural world. Guided and mentored by Dr Gopi Sundar from NCF, Madhav embarked on birding visits in residential areas of Ahmedabad such as Bima Nagar Road, Shantivan Society (Navrangpura), Saraswatinagar (Azad Society), Krishna Society (Panchvati), as well as several parks including Law Garden, Sukhipura Garden, and the Riverfront Flower Park. His exploration extended to notable water bodies like Chandola, Chandlodia, Kankaria, and Gota lakes. **In recognition of his work, he was selected by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology to participate in the Young Birders Event in 2023.**

The foreword for the book has been written by Dr Gopi Sundar, Bikram Grewal, Asheesh Pittte, Dr Ashwin Viswanathan, V Santharam amongst others.

I highly recommend birders to get a hand on this book.

Write to madhavgis@gmail.com for more details.



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.



SCHOOL OF BIRDS ROUNDUP (JUNE TO AUGUST 2025)



ANANDARUP BHADRA & TITASH CHAKRABARTI

School of Birds is the flagship initiative of Birdwatchers' Society, designed for school-level children with the vision of nurturing empathy towards wildlife and conservation as a way of life. At the heart of these initiatives lie the pillars of our teaching method – **Nature Observation, Creative Expression, Scientific Approach, Reflection & Sharing**. With tremendous support from all our partners encouragement and inspiration from our participants and their institutions, we are continuing on the same path this year. Our work between April to July 2025 has been mostly restricted indoors due to the blazing summer and the dreary monsoons. But we have embraced art-integrated workshops, with children experimenting with **stop-motion animation** as a tool for storytelling. At the same time, we moved from awareness to action – engaging students in **upcycling projects, clean-up drives, and tree-planting activities**, allowing them to directly contribute to the wellbeing of nature.

Stop Motion Chronicles

The children of our Citizen Interest Group jumped whole-heartedly into the process of imagining a character and then bringing its story to life. With the help of the facilitators, they came up with a short clip on how a bird was tormented by plastic in its food.



Creative Minds at Work!



The Picassos and Da Vincis!



Tech Team Backing the Artists!



Giving It Life!



Bird in Flight!

Awareness to Action

Just before the stop motion workshop, on **World Environment Day**, we had a wonderful outdoor session with children from **New Light Charitable Trust**. Here, our partner **Trees of Kolkata** introduced **seed ball** preparation for seed dispersal and **sapling plantation**. And after our nature walk, we **cleaned up** the littered waste from a small portion of Rabindra Sarobar as a way to give back to nature.



Seed balls



Clean Up Drive

To continue along the thread from the World Environment Day and the successful Stop Motion Workshop, at our next session we found a way to combine the two ideas. At **Kalikapur RFP School**, children of Class V did a **waste audit** where they segregated the dry waste from the bins at the school and discussed how they could reduce each type of waste collected. Then they **upcycled** some of the dry waste to **create characters** which were used for stop motion animation. This was a lot of fun for the kids and they came up with several interesting characters while a storyline also developed organically with the help of our team.



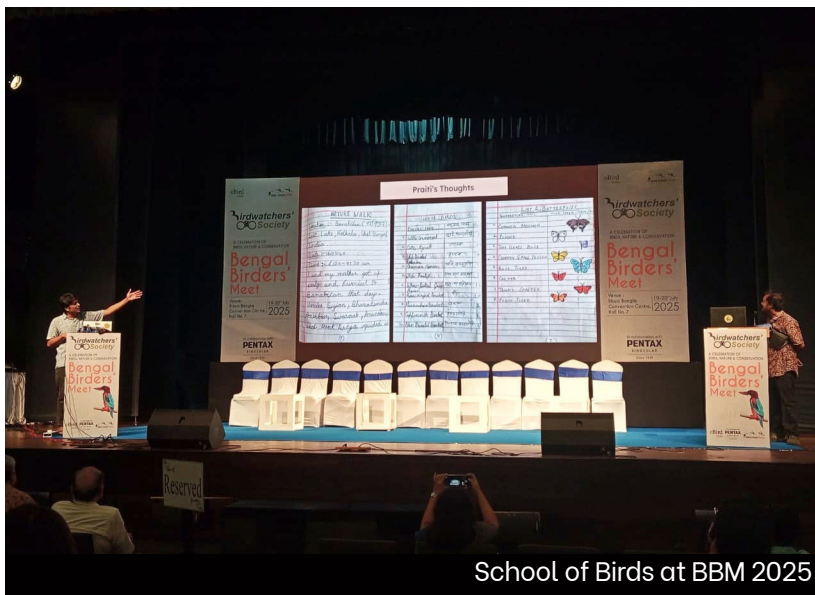
Find the Owl



Turtle in Trash

We were now ready to introduce our **Bird Club at CWA Sarsuna to Stop Motion using Upcycled Waste**. The Bird Club created several characters with great enthusiasm. They also brought to life the story of a turtle swimming in a sea of floating garbage and finally getting trapped in one

Bengal Birders' Meet 2025



School of Birds at BBM 2025

19th & 20th July, was an exciting weekend for us thanks to the Bengal Birders' Meet 2025. This gave us a chance to present the work we had done, especially over the last year under the umbrella of Birdwatchers' Society. We had a wonderful time sharing our labour of love with an audience packed hall from diverse backgrounds united by a shared enthusiasm for birds and nature.

This was the first chance we got to share the journey of School of Birds face to face with students, researchers, forest officials, nature enthusiasts. It was a beautiful gathering of like minds and we

are deeply grateful for all the appreciation we received, and mindful that a new horizon has opened up for our future work because of the love and encouragement bestowed on us.

But the highlight of the day for us was when we saw Abhigyan and Anurag in the audience, two budding birders and regulars at School of Birds workshops. Their active participation and incisive questions during the sessions were a reminder of why we do what we do.

Summing Up

We thank all the volunteers and the BWS team for making this work possible. Our partners, and host institutions are also invaluable in our efforts. We are glad to have partnered with **Photography Club of India** for the first time during this period. In the months ahead, we will continue with our Long Term Programs at CWA Sarsuna and Kalikapur RFP School. We will also be starting field sessions as soon as the monsoons end. Currently we are exploring a new direction, educator training, with new partners Priyam Memorial Trust and Disappearing Dialogues, as well as our familiar partners. Hopefully we will be able to update you on the progress on that front in the next issue of Fantail.





BENGAL BIRDERS' MEET 2025: A REPORT

DR KANAD BAIDYA & AMITAVA DUTTA



Every sighting, every record, every conversation matters. BBM is not just an event; it's a movement.

– Birdwatchers' Society, BBM 2025



A Vibrant Confluence of Conservation, Citizen Science & Community

Organized by
The Birdwatchers'
Society

Venue:
Biswa Bangla Convention Centre,
Kolkata

Dates:
19th – 20th July
2025

The second edition of Bengal Birders' Meet (BBM 2025) concluded with resounding success, reaffirming the Birdwatchers' Society's pivotal role in fostering a community rooted in avian conservation, citizen science, and public engagement. Held over two meticulously curated days, BBM 2025 welcomed over 350 participants, including ornithologists, conservationists, forest officials, ecologists, nature educators, photographers, students, and citizen birders – creating a vibrant huddle of passion and purpose.

This year's confluence was more than an event – it was a celebration of shared passion, purpose, and perspectives. Notably, 50% of the participants were students, affirming the commitment to engaging and empowering the next generation of conservationists.

Thematic Focus and Highlights

This meet was envisioned as a confluence of science, storytelling, and stewardship. The sessions were thematically diverse, covering ecological research, conservation case studies, and innovations in bird monitoring. With large contingent of students, the program reinforced BWS's commitment to intergenerational knowledge transfer and inclusive conservation education.

A landmark moment of the event was the release of a Special Cover by India Post, showcasing the **White-throated Kingfisher** (*Halcyon smyrnensis*) – **West Bengal's State Bird**. This symbolic act underscored the richness of West Bengal's avifauna and became the catalyst for a historic declaration.

BWS formally proposed the **3rd Sunday of July as 'Kingfisher Day'**, initiating the Kingfisher Census Week to document and conserve these dazzling indicators of freshwater ecosystem health.

With all 12 Indian kingfisher species recorded in the state, the move was both timely and ecologically significant.

“

Kingfisher Day will stand as a testament to our commitment to preserving freshwater biodiversity and celebrating one of nature's most charismatic bird families,
said Dr Kanad Baidya (Asst Secretary), during his evocative session on the “Splendour of Kingfishers of West Bengal”.

”

INAUGURAL AND SCIENTIFIC SESSIONS

Day 1 commenced with a Presidential Welcome Address by Mr Biswapriya Rahut.

The keynote presentation by **Dr Asad Rahmani**, former Director of BNHS, on “Emerging Threats to Indian Birds”, set a rigorous academic tone for the meet, delving into threats like climate anomalies, habitat fragmentation, and anthropogenic pressures.

Subsequent sessions explored diverse themes:

Hornbill Conservation in Changing Landscapes – **Dr Aparajita Datta**
(accompanied by the launch of the Hornbill Conservation Action Plan)

Transboundary Bird Conservation in Southeast Asia – **Dr Yong Ding Li**

Sundarbans as a Flyway Landscape – **Mr Jones Justin, IFS**

Field-based Monitoring in the Ganga – Fulhar Basin – **Mr Jiju Jaesper, IFS**

Proposed Scientific study on Central Asian Flyway – **Mr Milan Mandal, IFS**

Pakhi Dekha: A Lifelong Affair with Bird – **Smt Chaiti Banerjee**

“

Conservation is not about protecting forests alone. It is about protecting the ecological fabric that sustains us – from birds to wetlands to local communities.

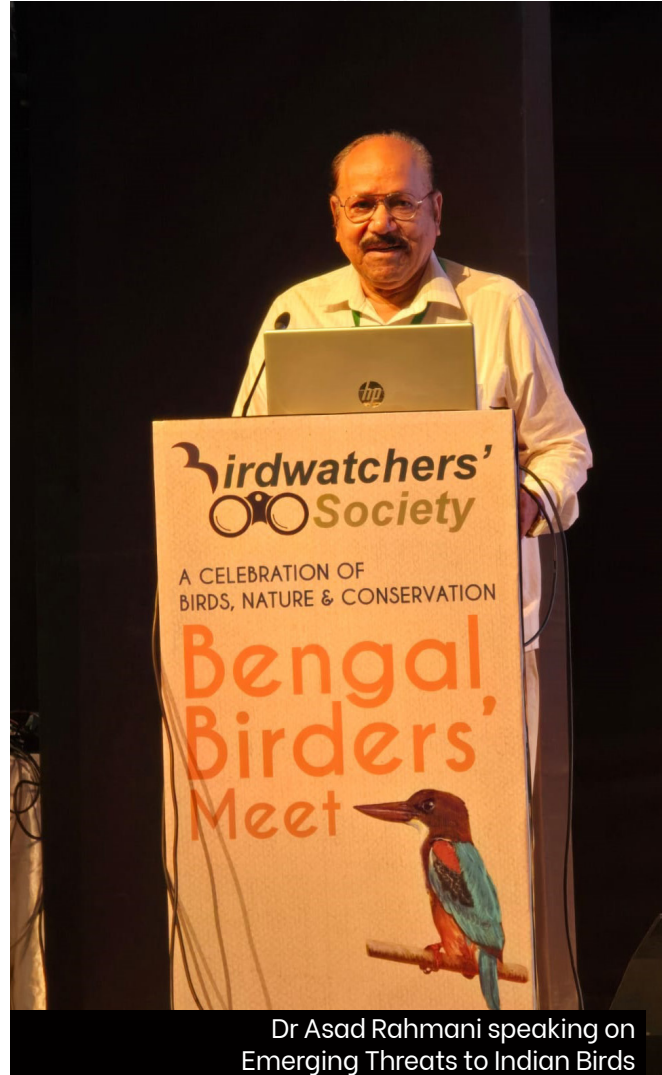
– Dr Asad Rahmani

”

The first day concluded with a compelling presentation on the West Bengal Bird Atlas (WBBA) by Maj B.S. Parihar and Dr Ashwin V, which introduced the audience to the prototype of this ambitious, grid-based avian mapping initiative leveraging eBird as a platform for standardized data aggregation.



Biswapriya Rahut - Welcome address



Dr Asad Rahmani speaking on Emerging Threats to Indian Birds



The Bengal Birders' Meet is a celebration of our shared love for birds and nature, and a powerful reminder that conservation is not just the work of a few – it is a collective responsibility of the society.

– Mr Biswapriya Rahut, President, Birdwatchers' Society



Day 2: Deepening Dialogue and Community Perspectives

The second day opened with “Pakshi Pitti”, a session on seabird nesting dynamics in the Indian Ocean by Rajdeep Mitra, followed by explorations into “Elevational migration in the Himalayas” presented by Tarun Menon; and “Community – based hornbill conservation in North Bengal” a joint presentation by Karishma Pradhan & Shilpita Mandal.

One of the most engaging sessions was “School of Birds: Class Without Walls”, where educators Mr Titash Chakrabarti and Mr Anandarup Bhadra outlined BWS’s ecological literacy program for schoolchildren.

A fitting climax to the meet was the Panel Discussion on the Future of Bird and Habitat Conservation in West Bengal, moderated by Dr Ashwin Vishanathan. The panel included noted experts such as:

- Dr Asad Rahmani
- Dr Aparajita Datta
- Mr Debal Ray, IFS (PCCF, HOFF)
- Dr Dipankar Ghose (WWF-India)
- Dr Kaushik Deuti (ZSI)

The discussion brought critical challenges to the fore – wetland encroachment, policy inertia, and climate-linked shifts in bird behaviour – and briefly touched upon the pathways forward.

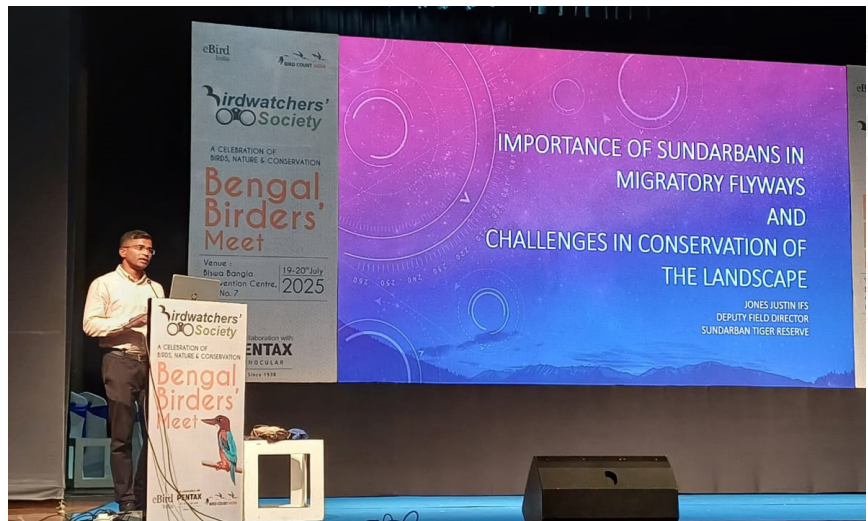


Concluding Reflections

In the backdrop of ecological uncertainty, BBM 2025 emerged as platform for renewed action – a gathering that did more than share information; it sparked renewed commitments, sowed seeds of collaboration, and celebrated the enduring wonder of birds. As the Birdwatchers’ Society looks ahead, its vision remains clear: to make citizen-led conservation the cornerstone of biodiversity preservation in West Bengal and beyond.

“Every sighting, every record, every conversation matters. BBM is not just an event; it’s a movement”, echoed the sentiment throughout the hall.

The Vote of Thanks, delivered by Mr Sujan Chatterjee, Secretary of BWS, acknowledged not only the speakers and participants but also the unsung heroes – the volunteers, sponsors, publishers, administrators, caterers and partner institutions – whose collective efforts made BBM 2025 a landmark event.



“

We sincerely salute our sponsors for their steadfast commitment to conservation. Their support reflects a rare depth of conviction. Sponsors are the very bedrock of our survival; without them, our efforts would not take flight.

– Mr Sujan Chatterjee, Secretary, Birdwatchers' Society

”

VOICES THAT MATTER

Feedback from those who attended

Anirban Saha
17h • 🌐

Bengal Birders Meet 2025.

I am just back from 1.5 days Bengal Birders Meet, and I must say I am so pleasantly happy and content. The organising team did a fantastic job in putting this together.

The sessions were rushed but if one just concentrates and listens, it is great value addition. The content that the **Birdwatchers' Society** presented is premium quality, and I look forward to the next years event.

Thank you **Souranil** for dragging me out of my home for this. :D

BWS seems to be making changes on the ground and every stakeholder in this part of the country should come together in their support. Our ecosystem is already sufficiently fragmented. This is the time to come, unite, support, even if it is event-based, and even if we do not fully align with key members of different organisations. This is something incredible that is taking shape and I would want everybody to be a part of this and make this bigger.

I write this with a very happy heart. God bless the team!

Hello, this is Sayak Kr. Sasmal from Jadavpur University.

It was a truly amazing experience to be a part of 'Bengal Birders' Meet 2025' by BWS. The sessions were full of insights, many unknown informations (Specially starting by the all species of 'kingfishers' to the rest) and beautiful interpretation about the scientific research to conservation awareness.

I am very happy and grateful to be the part of this programme and really appreciated to arrange this meet to bring the people from all the various branches and field backgrounds.

As a suggestion for the future events, to engage more participants into this programme Poster competition, Creative writing competition or Quiz competition related to birds, biodiversity and environment will be the great ones to add especially for all the students!

Thank you once again for the whole team of BWS!

Hello, it's Sarbani Banerjee from Maulana Abul Kalam Azad University of Technology, WB (MAKAUT, WB). It was a truly amazing experience attending the Bengal Birders' Meet 2025! The sessions were thoughtfully curated, and engaging with many birders added great value, genuinely appreciate the excellent planning and content. I'd love to join again and please share the participation link for the next event here. 🌟

Hello it's Supratim From Jadavpur University, it's a very amazing experience with this 2 days event. I learned a lot from Guests and their works in various fields & like realising life should be interesting by watching birds and connecting to nature!

Thanks to BW Society, organisers & sponsors for organising this amazing event. Hope to join next year again 🌟

Hello, I am Ganesh Gupta .
I'm a Commerce student with a strong interest in birds and nature.

It was a great experience attending Bengal Birders' Meet 2025. Even as someone from a non-science background, I found the sessions engaging, informative, and very inspiring.

Thanks to the organizers for such a wonderful event!



Today, I had the unique opportunity to attend the Bengal Birders' Meet at the Biswa Bangla Convention Hall in Newtown, Kolkata, along with two of my friends who are medical doctors. I was truly overwhelmed and inspired by the experience. It was heartening to see people from diverse professions come together, unite by a shared passion for bird conservation, awareness and protection of various bird species.

I strongly encourage all interested individuals to step forward and actively participate in such meaningful conferences. These gatherings play a vital role in promoting environmental awareness and ensuring a

Indrajit Dasgupta

It was excellent, well organized event. Every aspect of the meet was of a very high quality. The quality of the presentations were highly informative and well structured. I learnt a lot from this event.

Kudos to the organizers.

7:01PM

Dr. Ayan K. Chakraborty

The program was very well organized. It was very much educative and informative. The sessions were interesting. Congratulations as well as thanks to the entire team of organizers for such a nice event.

9:34 PM

Hello, Priyanka this side from Asutosh College.

It was a wonderful experience being a part of Bengal Birders' Meet 2025. The sessions were insightful, well-curated, and covered a wide spectrum of topics from scientific research to conservation awareness. I especially appreciated the efforts taken to bring together people from diverse academic and field backgrounds.

The arrangements, hospitality, and flow of the event were smooth and professional. Kudos to the entire organizing team for managing everything so thoughtfully!

As a suggestion for future editions, it would be lovely to include poster presentations or a photography competition specifically for students. This would give young participants a platform to showcase their work, express their creativity, and engage more actively with the community.

Thank you once again for such an enriching and inspiring event. Looking forward to the next one! 🌟

~Bipash Saha

Had a wonderful experience in these two days. Learnt a lot from the learned personalities about their works. Excellent event organized by the BWS.

9:23 PM

Batul P

A wonderful program with distinguished speakers and very well organized. Congratulations to Team BWS

6:42 PM

Souvik Roychoudhury

This group has various kinds of people. Some are doing so much on birding regularly while some like me who want to but due to work commitments can do so little. I cannot put into words how refreshing and rejuvenating these 2 days were. So many new things learned and the hunger to learn more is charged up now. Thanks to all who made it happen.

12:02 PM

Sudipto Roy

Overall feedback: Excellent. Pioneering effort. We can be proud of it and showcase it to the rest of the country.

Suggestion: 1. Please keep 10/15 minutes for Q&A after each individual presentation. 2. Please choose a non-monsoon weekend for people like us who ride a motorcycle from very far to attend. 3. Please consider an online version too.

Once again congratulations. I cannot imagine any relatively small NGO spending so much money from its own pocket to pull off such an event in Calcutta.

Edited 7:32 PM

PENTAX BINOCULARS AT BENGAL BIRDERS' MEET 2025

Thank You, Pentax Binoculars!

We extend our heartfelt thanks to Pentax Binoculars for their active participation at the Bengal Birders' Meet 2025. It was truly heartening to see a steady stream of BBM 2025 participants visiting the Pentax stall throughout the day, engaging with the latest optics and innovations. Over the years, the BWS-Pentax partnership has matured into a strong, closely bonded relationship, built on shared passion and mutual benefits. We deeply value this collaboration and look forward to many more bird-filled journeys together.

“

It was an absolute privilege for PENTAX to be a part of the Bengal Birders Meet 2025, a remarkable convergence of distinguished naturalists, environmental conservation leaders, and passionate birding enthusiasts. This grand gathering not only celebrated the beauty of nature but also reinforced the shared responsibility we hold towards its preservation. Engaging with our esteemed Pentax binocular users and exchanging insights was both inspiring and deeply rewarding. Events like these reaffirm our commitment to supporting the community of nature explorers and conservation advocates across India.

J. Vaghela, Country Manager – India
RICOH Imaging Co. Limited

”



PENTAX Optics stall at Bengal Birders' Meet 2025



Dr Asad Rahmani with a PENTAX Binocular. Doing the honour is Mr Sujan Chatterjee - Secretary, Birdwatchers' Society

BWS UPDATE



HERONRY COUNT

AVIJAN SAHA

Introduction

This year, the annual heronry count was organised in the Naksalbari and Khoribari block areas on 13 July 2025 and 10 Aug 2025. Four organisations, including Airavat, Optopic, BWS and the Siliguri Photographers' Association (SPA), jointly conducted this program in the Naksalbari region. We have been monitoring large heronry colonies in this region for the past four years, this being the fifth year.

Method

We divided the participants into two groups, with both groups starting their counts simultaneously. The late afternoon period was selected for counting, as herons typically return from their foraging zones during this time. We also conducted a secondary count after dark to confirm population estimates.

The main counting session ran from 15:30 to 18:30 hrs. Before this, we surveyed two major foraging zones in the Naksalbari block—Mehi and Panitanki—using a fixed-point count method for two hours (13:00–15:00 hrs). Here, too, two separate teams were deployed to avoid double-counting.

Results

This fifth heronry count covered seven individual nesting trees in and around Naksalbari Bazar, as well as the Mechi riverbed, where herons, storks, and egrets were actively foraging.

Counted figures:

- Black-headed Ibis (*Threskiornis melanocephalus*) – 370 individuals, including 85+ breeding pairs (nests distributed across 7 trees)
- Red-naped Ibis (*Pseudibis papillosa*) – 17 individuals (Mechi and Naksalbari)
- Lesser Adjutant Stork (*Leptoptilos javanicus*) – 3 individuals (Mechi)
- Asian Openbill (*Anastomus oscitans*) – 2 individuals (Mechi)
- Cattle Egret (*Bubulcus ibis*) – 70+ individuals in 5 trees (Naksalbari)
- Little Egret (*Egretta garzetta*) – 41 individuals, including 7 nests (Naksalbari)
- Intermediate Egret (*Ardea intermedia*) – 32 individuals, including 6 nests (Naksalbari)
- Indian Pond Heron (*Ardeola grayii*) – 23 individuals, including 4 nests (Naksalbari)
- Little Cormorant (*Microcarbo niger*) – 14 individuals, including 2 nests (Naksalbari)



Outcome

This year, the colonial distribution extended across seven trees, compared to five trees last year. The Black-headed Ibis was the dominant species, over the Red-naped Ibis in this locality. These regular seasonal counts help us monitor population dynamics, nesting patterns and sites, foraging zones, and movement trends.

Notably, the Black-headed Ibis was also recorded in the Fulbari wetland this year. Airavat documented around seven individuals there and tracked them up to Phansidewa.

Team Members

Led by Avijan Saha, members were drawn from – Airavat, BWS, SPA, Optopic including other individuals. The team list:

- | | |
|--------------------|---------------------|
| ● Avijan Saha | ● Dipprovo Majumdar |
| ● Shekhar Pal | ● Debapratim Saha |
| ● Santu Dutta | ● Pran Gobinda Nag |
| ● Mousumi Datta | ● Bimal Debnath |
| ● Biswapriya Rahut | ● Sisir Debnath |



EVOLUTION AND EVALUATION - BIRDWATCHING TOURISM IN SIKKIM



DR PETER LOBO, CHEWANG R BONPO, DIBYENDU ASH

“We dedicate this article to the adventure cell staff, young mountaineer and nature enthusiast – Mr. Asal Rai, who lost his life during the Nun Kun expedition in Ladakh on 15th of July 2025.

The training days started every morning at 5 AM following the assembly under his supervision. Later, we, mentors carried forward the day with field activities and theory classes” .

The birds of Sikkim and their habitat have thrilled the nature enthusiasts for centuries since the first scientific documentation era of Sir Joseph Dalton Hooker in the nineteenth century, who was a biogeographer, botanist and a traveller. If we start talking about Sir JD Hooker, his account of writing covers the natural history as well as places he had

visited. In the 20th century multiple visits by different European naturalists enriched the data bank of flora and fauna of the Chogyal ruled state of Sikkim. We must mention the names of Salim Ali and Biswamoy Biswas – who further investigated via field studies and avian observations with minute details. In the beginning of 21st century, the availability of optical instruments like – binoculars and cameras made birdwatching popular for the general visitors to the state. Most of the earlier explorations or documentation whatever happened in the state was pioneered by people from other states of India or abroad. There was very little or no active involvement of the local birdwatchers in field ornithology.

Understanding The Needs:

Though culturally progressive, the lack of awareness about the value of its natural and cultural assets had kept the state's stakeholders in the background. After Sikkim's merger with India and its subsequent parliamentary representation, many developmental initiatives were introduced to benefit the state. The Bird Guide Training Program of IHCAE is one such noteworthy project, funded by the World Bank, designed to create employment opportunities for the sons and daughters of Sikkim.

The landlocked state has eleven IBAs, within it one UNESCO heritage national park and six wildlife sanctuaries are squeezed in. The birdwatchers arrive here twice each year, during the summer and autumn months, when the bird activity is at its peak. Accordingly, another step was planned at the beneficiary level to engage the trained and qualified guides to host domestic and foreign tourists.



At the constituency level, Sikkim has 32 parts. The program was mapped in such a way so that it had balanced representation from all corners of Sikkim. To boost the local economy, the creation of these led to employment opportunities both within the state and at the national level.

Succession Process:

The 2024 IHCAE – Bird Guide Training Course had two parts. The 15 days of basic course, that took place in September 2024 and the later advance course was conducted in the month of January 2025. From the 25 individuals enrolled under this scheme for the basic guide training program, only 18 students progressed further to the advance course. Those who graduated were honoured with the Bird Guide License and Completion certificate. In continuation of this scheme it is planned to carry on this Bird Guide Training Course for the next four years.





Qualitative Assessments:

The license is valid for two years and each guides own a log book to record the data through eBird checklists from the individual trips that they would carry. On the third year of the license renewal, individuals would appear for the refresher aptitude test and produce the log book.

IHCAE Basic & Advance Bird Guide Training Program

- Basic Course: 2nd September 2024 to 16th September 2024
- Advance Course: 28th December 2024 to 11th January 2025

Places Visited - IHCAE (Chamchey-SK), Pakyong Forest Block (SK), Zuluk-Pangolakha WLS (SK), Latpanchar-Mahananda WLS (WB), Rongtong (WB), Gajoldoba (WB), Singhik (SK), Lachung (SK), Yumthang (SK)

Dr Peter Lobo, Mr Chewang R Bonpo and Mr Dibyendu Ash were the instructors of both the basic and advance course. During the training program, participants covered different Important Bird Areas (IBAs), that a generic bird guide, must-

have knowledge about, such as the landscapes of Sikkim & Darjeeling-Kalimpong Himalayas.

This advance course covered all the bird habitats ranging from 150 meters to 4000 meters in elevation. The main objective of this training was to see the birds and observe bird behaviours in their natural habitat including the logistics handling during actual guiding event.



Acknowledgements:

We are thankful to Government of Sikkim and its administrative setup Mr Neeraj Pradhan (Principal Chief Engineer, DoT&CAV), Mr Kazi Sherpa (Joint Director, Adventure Cell, DoT&CAV), Mr Manoj Kumar Chettri (Deputy Director, Adventure Cell, DoT&CAV), Mrs Pema D Bhutia (Assistant Director, Adventure Cell, DoT&CAV), Ms Shanti Rai (Senior Instructor - IHCAE Chamchey, Adventure Cell, DoT&CAV), and finally Mr Asal Rai (Mountaineer & Instructor - IHCAE, Chamchey, DoT&CAV).

Late Mountaineer Asal Rai was a great human being and a passionate teacher. Mr Rai lost his life during Nun Kun expedition in Ladakh on 15th of July '25, a very passionate mountaineer who loved his job of mountaineering more than anything. There are no words to express how saddened we are at the loss of an IHCAE team mentor!

IHCAE:

Indian Himalayan Center for Adventure & Eco-tourism

FRESH & RARE ARRIVALS

PRIYAM CHATTOPADHYAY

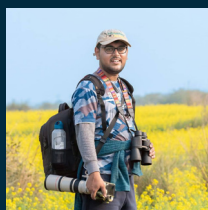
Between June and September (till 6th) 2025, as the monsoon graces India, our community of birders remained vibrant and keen-eyed. Sightings of species listed as 'Highest Priority' for West Bengal in the State of India's Birds Report, 2023, are always a cause for celebration.

Below is a compilation of our remarkable stop-over guests who captivated us this during this period.

2025-2026 Arrivals - June-July-Aug-Sept (Jun 7th - Sept 6th)

| Sr No | BIRD SPECIES | LOCN - 1 | LOCN - 2 | SIGHTING DATES |
|-------|-------------------------|--|--|----------------------------|
| 01 | Rufous-necked Hornbill | Latpanchar, Darjeeling | Jhandi, Kalimpong | 08 June 2025; 08 Aug 2025 |
| 02 | Oriental Pied Hornbill | Gorumara National Park, Jalpaiguri | Raiganj, Uttar Dinajpur | 09 June 2025; 16 Aug 2025 |
| 03 | Ruddy Kingfisher | Sundarban Tiger Reserve, South 24 Parganas | Sundarban Tiger Reserve, South 24 Parganas | 10 June 2025; 02 Aug 2025 |
| 04 | Jungle Prinia | Kankrajhore, Jhargram | Paschim Narayanpur, Birbhum | 15 June 2025; 06 July 2025 |
| 05 | Mangrove Pitta | Sundarban Tiger Reserve, South 24 Parganas | Sundarban Tiger Reserve, South 24 Parganas | 22 June 2025; 18 Aug 2025 |
| 06 | Osprey | Sundarban Tiger Reserve, South 24 Parganas | Sundarban Tiger Reserve, South 24 Parganas | 22 June 2025; 16 Aug 2025 |
| 07 | Chestnut-capped Babbler | Amta, Howrah | Sundarban Tiger Reserve, South 24 Parganas | 23 June 2025; 16 Aug 2025 |
| 08 | Brown Parrotbill | Senchal Wildlife Sanctuary, Darjeeling | Senchal Wildlife Sanctuary, Darjeeling | 26 June 2025; 17 Aug 2025 |
| 09 | Great Parrotbill | Senchal Wildlife Sanctuary, Darjeeling | Senchal Wildlife Sanctuary, Darjeeling | 30 June 2025; 17 Aug 2025 |
| 10 | Buffy Fish Owl | Sundarban Tiger Reserve, South 24 Parganas | Sundarban Tiger Reserve, South 24 Parganas | 01 July 2025; 09 Aug 2025 |
| 11 | Fulvous Parrotbill | Senchal Wildlife Sanctuary, Darjeeling | Senchal Wildlife Sanctuary, Darjeeling | 02 July 2025; 17 Aug 2025 |
| 12 | Brown-winged Kingfisher | Sundarban Tiger Reserve, South 24 Parganas | Sundarban Tiger Reserve, South 24 Parganas | 07 July 2025; 27 July 2025 |
| 13 | Chestnut-winged Cuckoo | Sundarban Tiger Reserve, South 24 Parganas | Newtown, North 24 Parganas | 16 July 2025; 29 Aug 2025 |

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



About Author

PRIYAM CHATTOPADHYAY

Priyam is a Kolkata-based IT professional with a keen interest in birdwatching and avian photography. For the past decade, Priyam has been studying bird habitats and migration patterns across varied landscapes.

PERSPECTIVES

CLOUDS GIVE WAY TO A PATCH OF BLUE



Courtesy : TITASH CHAKRABARTI



Credit: Trisha Biswas, Class VII, Sabalpur Adarsha Vidyapith (H.S), North 24 Pgs.

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