

# FANTAIL NEWSLETTER

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Birdwatchers'  
Society

FANTAIL  
BIRDWATCHERS' SOCIETY NEWSLETTER  
Volume 5 | Issue No. 4 | April-June 2026



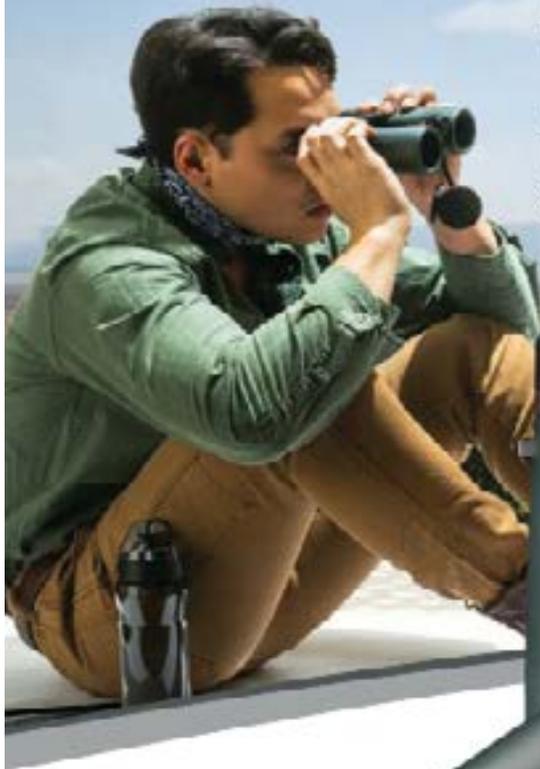
**CRUCIBLE OF LIFE:**  
India's Wetlands and their Birds

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

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

**01 Editorial**

**03 The Disappearing Beauties of the Watery World**

Dr Asad R Rahmani

**12 Cradles of Life: Gajoldoba and the Living Story of India's Wetlands**

Adhirup Ghosh

**17 Rare Winter Visitors: Red-Breasted Goose and Marbled Duck in India**

Asabul Islam

**21 Unveiling the Wonders of T S Chanakya Wetlands, Navi Mumbai, Maharashtra**

Soumyojit Talukder, Atish Manna

**25 Nararthali: A Less Explored Wetland of Dooars**

Ranadeep Sengupta

**29 Kamduni - Kharibari: A Quiet Wetland World Guiding Migratory Birds**

Near Kolkata

Priyanka Singh

**32 Unplanned & Unforgettable Wetland: My Nalsarovar Birding**

Debojyoti Chakraborty

**37 The Story of Dactyls**

Sandeep Chakraborty

**41 Flights of Fancy**

**Bird Painting** – Anurag Debsarkar

**Bird Illustration** – Gaurav Chandra

**Lonely Scarecrow** – Chandrima

**The Kites Keep Coming - Poem** – Shreejata Roy

একটি নদী চুরির গল্প – Kaustav Banerjee

**43 ভারতের জলাভূমি ও জলচরপাখি**

Biswa Ranjan Goswamy

**49 School of Birds Update**

Titash Chakrabarti & Anandarup Bhadra

**54 BWS Updates**

**Bird Camp, Agumbe - Dec 2025**

**Coastal Bird Camp - Feb 2026**

**BBM Reference in Madhyamik (Class-X) Board English Paper.**

**68 Fresh & Rare Sightings (Arrivals)**

Priyam Chattopadhyay

**Crossword**

Hiya Chatterjee

**Perspectives**

\* Fanny:

Aindrila Sarkar Deb

\* The Juvenile Birder:

Titash Chakrabarti

## PERSPECTIVE





“

For many of us, water simply flows from a faucet, and we think little about it beyond this point of contact. We have lost a sense of respect for the wild river, for the complex workings of a wetland, for the intricate web of life that water supports.

”

Sandra Postel



সয়লা  
বিশ্ব  
Bird Count  
শলখাতায় কিচিঁরমিচিঁর

17-19 April, 2026



# EDITORIAL

Dear Readers,

## ***Crucible of Life: India's Wetlands and their Birds***

With this issue, FANTAIL completes five years of its journey.

Five years of listening and reporting on dawn choruses, tracing migratory routes across maps, celebrating rare sightings, nurturing young voices, and reminding ourselves – issue after issue – that birds are not mere ornaments of the sky, but indicators of the earth's health.

It is fitting, therefore, that our five year milestone coincides with a theme as fundamental as **“Crucible of Life: India's Wetlands and their Birds”**.

A crucible is a vessel in which elements meet, transform, and emerge renewed. India's wetlands are precisely that – spaces where water, soil, light, nutrients, and life converge. From Himalayan high-altitude lakes to Gangetic floodplains, from oxbow lakes in the Doobars to urban salt pans in Navi Mumbai, from mangrove-fringed deltas to village ponds shimmering after the monsoon – wetlands sustain astonishing biodiversity while quietly sustaining us.

They filter water.

They buffer floods.

They store carbon.

They feed millions.

And they host wings from across continents.

This issue brings together diverse voices that explore these living laboratories from multiple perspectives. We are deeply pained to witness the vanishing splendour of ducks and geese and the urgent need to secure their habitats. We note with excitement the encouraging revelations from the **Annual Waterbird Census at Gajoldoba** – that across the open stretches of water, ducks were in good numbers suggesting that despite recent ecological stress it still provides a critical wintering habitat. We travel to **Narathali, an oxbow lake** tucked inside the forests of Buxa, where winter brings raptors, pochards, and quiet biodiversity. The arrival of **rare winter visitors** – the Red-breasted Goose and the Marbled Duck – whose unexpected arrival reminds us how migration stitches continents together through fragile flyways. We step into the ecotonal complexity of **T S Chanakya Wetlands**, where flamingos filter-feed against the backdrop of expanding urban skylines. We peep into the quiet wonders of the **Kharibari & Kamduni** wetlands, and read about splendors of the vast **wetlands of Nalsarovar**.

**Together, these narratives underscore a central truth: wetlands are not marginal lands – they are central to life itself.**

In our Bengali feature on India's wetlands and waterbirds, we are reminded of the sheer scale and diversity of these ecosystems across the subcontinent. Yet the statistics, impressive as they are, carry an uneasy undercurrent. Wetlands continue to shrink under pressure from urbanisation, pollution, agricultural

expansion, ill-planned “beautification”, and climate uncertainty. Migratory birds still arrive – but often to landscapes altered beyond recognition.

To speak of wetlands is to speak of responsibility.

Yet this issue is not only about science and statistics. In the **Story of Dactyls**, we explore evolutionary ingenuity – a reminder that adaptation is both poetry and precision. Our continuing section, **Flights of Fantasy**, gathers poems and illustrations from readers and members, transforming observation into art. These creative expressions affirm that conservation is sustained not only by data, but by emotion and imagination.

Our regular features ground us in community action. The section on **BWS Updates** chronicles our ongoing community activities. While the **BWS Winter Camp at Agumbe**, in the rainforests of the Western Ghats, connects us with one of India’s richest biodiversity hotspots, the **Coastal Birding Camp at Gobardhanpur** reconnects us with mudflats and tides – habitats that, like inland wetlands, demand vigilance and care.

In **Perspectives**, Titash’s **Juvenile Birder** and Aindrila’s **Fanny** capture the spirit of observation and empathy that must be cultivated early. Hiya’s **Crossword** reminds us that learning can be playful, even as the stakes remain serious.

Five years ago, *FANTAIL* began as a platform to document, share, and inspire. Today, it stands as a testament to collective commitment. Contributors from different regions, age groups, and disciplines have enriched its pages. What unites them is a simple but powerful belief: that understanding leads to caring, and caring leads to action.

As we step into our sixth year, we do so with renewed resolve. If wetlands are crucibles of life, then we must become their custodians. Protection cannot remain on paper alone. Monitoring must be systematic. Citizen science must be strengthened. Local communities must be partners. Young birders must be nurtured. And above all, the quiet voices of wetlands – the whistle of teal, the bugle of geese, the soft stir of jacanas – must not fade into memory.

To all our readers, writers, illustrators, volunteers, mentors, and members – thank you for keeping *FANTAIL* in flight for five remarkable years.

May we continue to watch more closely.

May we write more courageously.

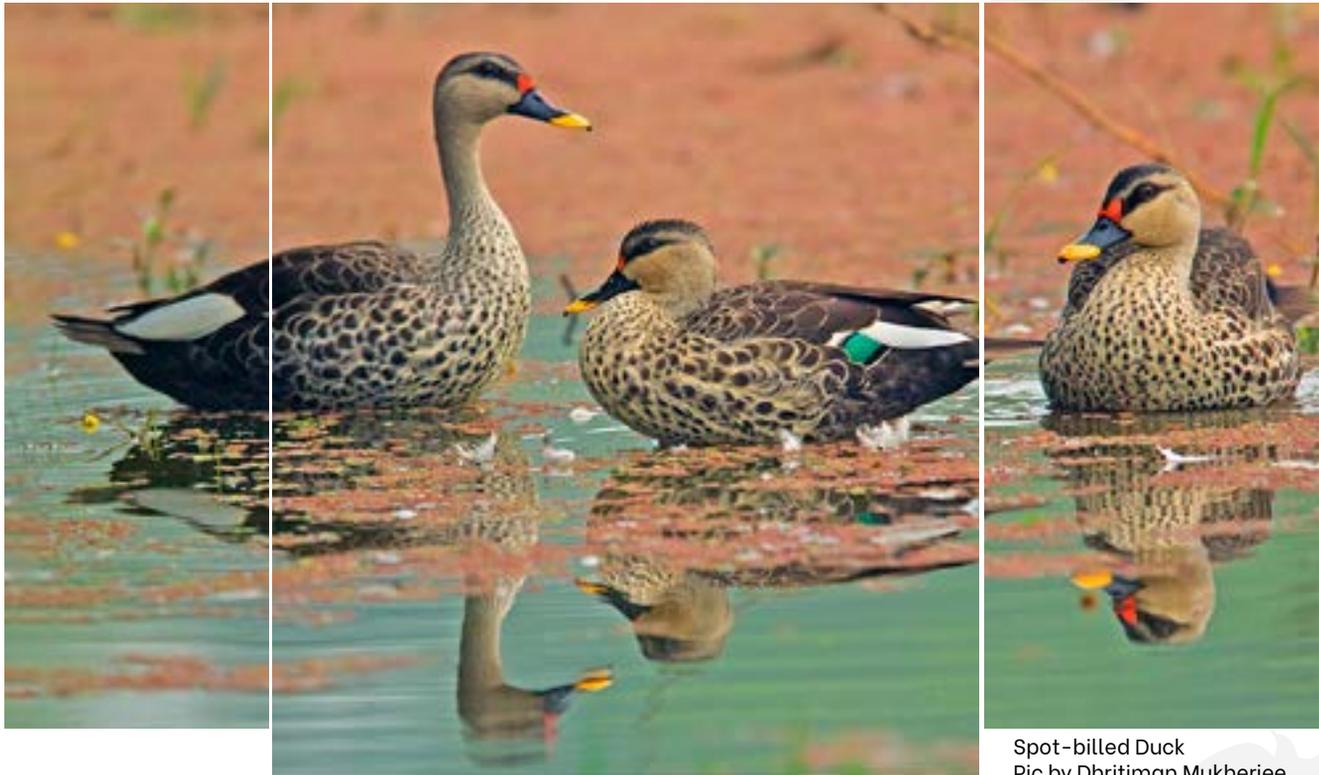
May we protect more decisively.

For when wetlands thrive, wings will return.

And where wings return, hope endures.

## Editorial Team

### FANTAIL



Spot-billed Duck  
Pic by Dhritiman Mukherjee

DR ASAD R RAHMANI

## THE DISAPPEARING BEAUTIES OF THE WATERY WORLD

**A**mong the many orders of fauna that share this planet with us, birds have always enjoyed a special place in the human imagination. And among birds, ducks, geese, and swans—those living jewels of lakes and marshes—hold an allure for the public. Their elegance on water, the soft blaze of their plumage, the romance of their long migrations, and the reflective calm of the wetlands they inhabit together weave a spell that few can resist. Yet beneath this tranquil surface lies an uncomfortable truth: many members of the family *Anatidae* are today edging towards extinction, largely because of human actions. Conservation measures do exist, but unless we secure their wetland homes and decisively curb trapping and shooting, such efforts will remain cosmetic. This article therefore focuses on what must be done—urgently and honestly—to safeguard these birds of the watery world.

India's tradition of nature conservation is ancient and deep-rooted, flowing through its literature, religious practices, cultural ethos, and, in modern times, its Constitution, policies, laws, and institutions. Just as sacred groves dot the subcontinent like green punctuation marks of reverence, countless temple tanks have long offered refuge to birds, where hunting is unthinkable. Across rural India, hundreds of wetlands

have been protected not by statutes but by custom, where villagers instinctively defended their avian visitors. Private wetlands, flooded agricultural fields, and seasonal inundations have similarly served as quiet sanctuaries. Some rulers of the past established protected areas, albeit often for shooting rather than conservation. Keoladeo National Park stands as the most celebrated example—once the Maharaja of Bharatpur’s private hunting reserve, now a world-renowned haven for waterfowl, transformed by time, science, and conscience.



Board installed on the wetland showing details about the Amrit Sarovar, 12 April 2023

The family *Anatidae* is taxonomically rich, comprising 41 genera, 147 species, and 238 taxa, including subspecies. Sixteen species are globally threatened under IUCN criteria, and of these, five species and three subspecies have vanished since 1600. Among the extinct, heartbreakingly, is the Pink-headed Duck, last seen in 1935—its pink-coloured head now surviving only in illustrations and fading memories. Anatids are medium to large waterbirds, with short legs and broad, flattened bills, ranging in size from a diminutive 30 cm to a majestic 180 cm. They occur everywhere except Antarctica, exploiting a wide spectrum of aquatic habitats, though most prefer to breed in freshwater lakes, ponds, and marshes where reeds whisper and



Comb Duck, Pic by Dhritiman Mukherjee

dragonflies/damselflies daintily shimmer in the sun. Forty-four species of ducks, geese, and swans occur in the Indian subcontinent; ten are vagrants, appearing only sporadically, and one is extinct.

A substantial proportion of waterbirds—and indeed many other plants and animals—can be conserved by protecting key sites, either through formal protected areas such as national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, community reserves, and conservation reserves, or by promoting sustainable land-use practices. Unlike certain island species—such as the flightless Auckland Teal of New Zealand or the Falkland Steamer Duck—Indian ducks are all capable of flight. Yet flight is both their strength and their vulnerability. Most Anatidae in India are migratory, some traversing continents, others moving within the subcontinent. Even “resident” species shift seasonally, tracking the pulse of monsoon rains. Ducks, therefore, cannot be conserved in isolation within a handful of protected areas; they require a garland of wetlands across the landscape.

India’s seven common resident ducks—the Spot-billed Duck, Lesser Whistling Duck, Fulvous Duck, Comb Duck or Nukta, Mallard, Andaman Teal and the Pygmy Cotton Goose—largely breed during the monsoon, when wetlands brim with life. The White-winged Wood Duck, now confined to scattered forested wetlands of northeast India, also breeds during or soon after the rains, provided food, shelter, and safe nesting sites persist.

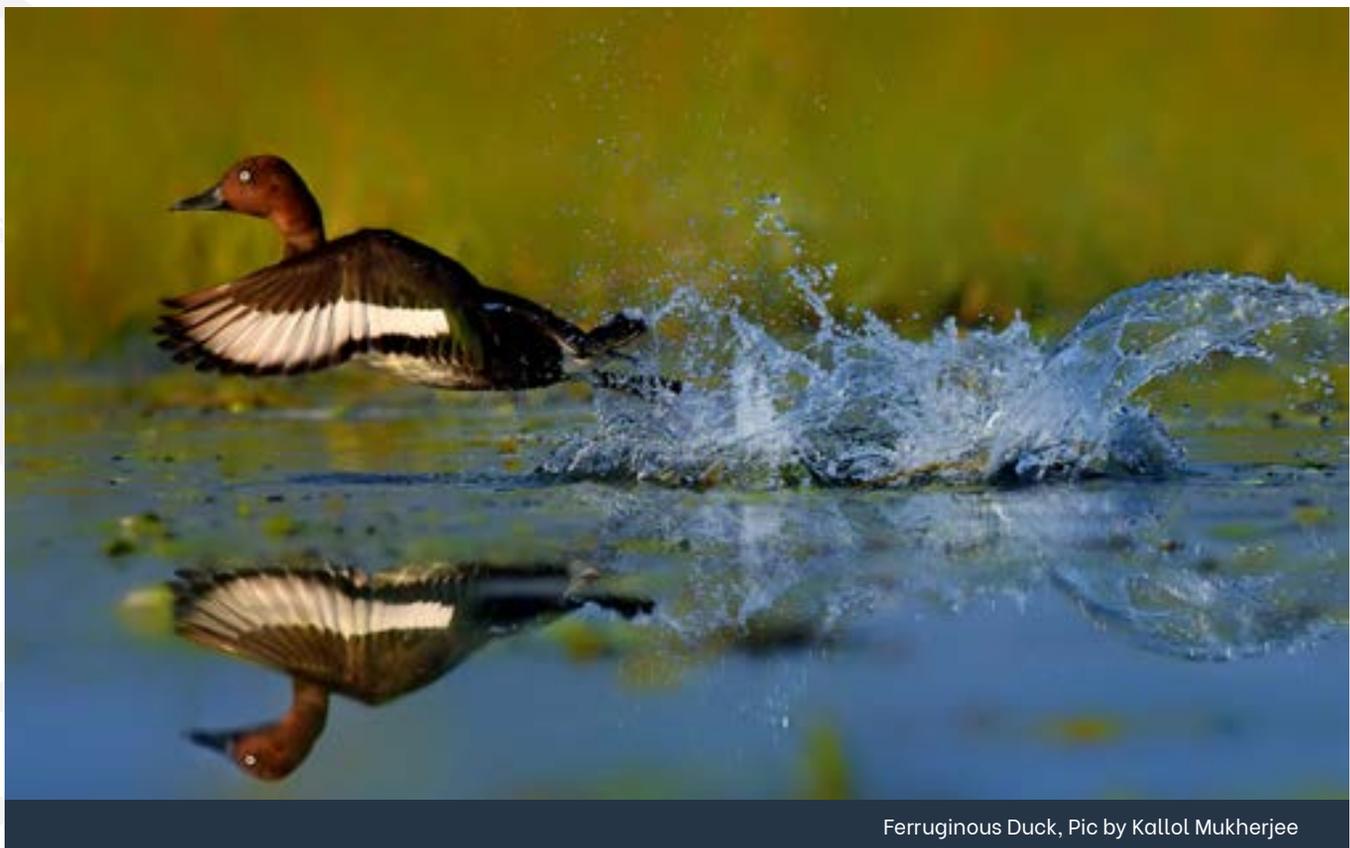


Falcated Duck, Pic by Dhritiman Mukherjee

## PROTECTED AREA NETWORK

A network of protected wetlands exists, but it is still far from adequate. Existing sites must be managed with sensitivity, ensuring they enhance breeding opportunities for resident ducks. At present, India has 98 Ramsar Sites and 556 Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBAs). These need long-term, ecologically informed protection if Anatidae and other waterbirds are to survive.

Mapping species distributions is a vital conservation tool. During migration, long-distance migrants must pause repeatedly to replenish fat and protein reserves. These stopover wetlands—where food is abundant and disturbance minimal—are lifelines. Some species depend on only a handful of such sites, owing to specialized feeding and habitat needs. The loss of even one staging area can therefore have catastrophic consequences, disturbing an entire migratory route.



Ferruginous Duck, Pic by Kallol Mukherjee

To halt declines and restore populations of threatened Anatidae, coherent conservation planning is essential. Under the Wetland Conservation Programme of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, 1,307 wetlands of national importance have been identified, including all 98 Ramsar Sites, many governed by the Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules. The National Wetland Decadal Change Atlas (2017) records over 231,195 wetlands of ecological, social, and conservation values.

The first comprehensive National Wetland Atlas of India, published in March 2011 by the Space Applications Centre (SAC) of ISRO under the National Wetland Inventory and Assessment (NWIA) project, mapped 201,503 wetlands larger than 2.25 ha at a scale of 1:50,000, and documented an additional 555,557 smaller wetlands as point features. In March 2024, SAC released a high-resolution assessment under Phase II of

the NWIA programme, in collaboration with 30 partner institutions. This analysis estimated India's total wetland area is 16.89 million hectares—5.12 per cent of the country's geographical area. This includes 2.49 million wetlands  $\geq 0.1$  ha and another 1.09 million smaller ones. These numbers are impressive on paper, yet wetlands continue to vanish silently from the ground.

The Asian Waterfowl Count (AWC) has identified hundreds of wetland sites across India, engaging a wide network of participants. AWC's greatest strength lies in its participatory nature, which has nurtured public interest in waterbirds. However, the data remain temporally and spatially patchy, limiting their value for conservation planning. India urgently needs a systematic, long-term monitoring programme for Anatidae and other waterbirds, alongside regular assessments of wetland health. Only then can we understand population trends and act before declines become irreversible. The AWC in India suffers from several weaknesses: haphazard coverage, repeated counting of the same sites, obsession with raw numbers, inadequate training and equipment, neglect of critical wetlands, administrative barriers in surveying protected areas, poor follow-up, delayed or unchecked data, and frequent misidentification. These gaps must be addressed if citizen science is to truly serve conservation.



Ferruginous Duck, Pic by Dhritiman Mukherjee



Greylag Geese, Pic by Dhritiman Mukherjee



White-winged Duck,  
Pic by Dhritiman Mukherjee



Lesser Whistling Duck,  
Pic by Dhritiman Mukherjee

## **DISEASE SURVEILLANCE**

Climate change and emerging avian diseases add another layer of threat. Monitoring the distribution, movements, and concentrations of ducks and geese is essential to understanding disease dynamics, including avian influenza. India lies within the Central Asian Flyway, a vast migratory corridor linking breeding grounds in Central Asia with wintering areas in the south. International agencies such as FAO and WHO have emphasized the importance of wild bird disease surveillance, and the Central Asian Flyway Action Plan calls upon range states to adopt multidisciplinary approaches to disease monitoring, assessing risks to wildlife, poultry, and human health alike. Regular surveillance of wintering migratory birds is now indispensable for early detection of highly pathogenic avian influenza.

Regular monitoring and surveillance provide information on the health status of birds that may appear clinically free from the disease. Moreover, this should be a regular procedure in all disease affected and disease prone areas for some years to come. Monitoring and surveillance are also increasingly being recognized as a useful, often essential, prerequisite for early detection and diagnosis of any incidence of HPAI.



Young male Northern Shoveler, Pic by Dhritiman Mukherjee

## **STATUS OF WATERFOWL IN INDIA**

All wild birds in India are legally protected under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, and India is a signatory to major international conventions including CBD, Ramsar, CITES, and CMS. Yet laws and signatures alone do not save birds.

Despite decades of conservation effort, most Indian Anatidae are in decline. Based on half a century of field experience, I can say that the populations of many species may have dropped by 50–60 per cent. Even once-common ducks such as the Northern Pintail, Gadwall, Tufted Duck, and Northern Shoveler no longer appear in the vast numbers seen in the 1970s and 1980s. Perhaps the most poignant decline is that of the Pygmy Cotton Teal—once a familiar sight among lily-covered ponds, now absent from much of its former range. We do not know how many survive and why are they declining.

Baer's Pochard is now Critically Endangered, its numbers perilously low. It is a migratory species and uncommon in India, so we cannot do much to save it except stopping its hunting. The White-winged Duck, is a resident species, so it is our responsibility to protect it. Its small and shrinking population, merits dedicated conservation actions. Several others—the Red-breasted Goose, Lesser White-fronted Goose, Long-tailed Duck, Marbled Teal, Andaman Teal, and Common Pochard—are Vulnerable, while Ferruginous Duck and Falcated Duck hover in the Near Threatened category. I am sure, if we monitor the populations of the Comb Duck for some years, we may not get a rosy picture



## MAJOR THREATS

Two great threats overshadow Indian ducks and geese: habitat destruction and poaching. Wetlands are steadily erased by urban expansion, agricultural intensification, pollution, invasive species such as water hyacinth, and the misguided application of otherwise well-intentioned laws. For example, the Amrit Sarovar programme of 2022, launched to commemorate 75 years of Independence, stands as a tragic example. Intended to protect wetlands, it often resulted instead in their cementing and cosmetic “beautification,” as engineers and administrators overnight declared themselves wetland experts. The ecological scars are visible across districts—a catalogue of well-funded mistakes.

Poaching remains rampant. In Bihar, aerial nets stretching a kilometre across wetlands have emptied *jheels* of avian life. Kabar Taal, a Ramsar Site once darkened by hundreds of thousands of birds, now hosts only a few hundred, amid intensive fishing and trapping. In Kashmir, smaller wetlands have vanished, while larger ones—Hokarsar, Haigam, Shallabugh, Mirgund, and Wular—are gravely degraded. Even with a dedicated

Wetland Division of Jammu & Kashmir Wildlife Department, mismanagement persists: water withheld, marshes drained. While offices of managers are expanded, the wetlands wither. Gunshots echo around these sites as ducks flying out to forage are shot down, rarely to return. The shooting of three Tundra Swans out of the four that came after decades and the video of a hunting spree on Wular Lake by rich criminal hunters, represent a moral nadir, compounded by attempts to find a local resident as the culprit by the authorities who appeared to be hand and glove with influential criminal poachers.



Dog chasing water birds Pic by Parveen Shaikh



Plastic litter in Kukma Lake, Kutch, Pic by Jaysukh Parekh Suman



A natural lake destroyed under Amrit Sarovar Programme, near Lakhimpur Kheri, Pic by Dr Asad Rahmani



Boats ply where once hundreds of waterfowl used to swim, Pic by Dr Asad Rahmani

## WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE?

What, then, must be done? Wetlands lie within a rapidly changing landscape, making their protection complex—but not impossible. India urgently needs a Wetland Conservation Act on the lines of the Forest Conservation Act to halt further degradation. Existing laws and guidelines must be enforced, not merely celebrated on commemorative days. Alongside large wetlands, the countless small village ponds that provide ecosystem services and vital bird habitat deserve protection. Reservoirs must be studied and managed for biodiversity. Temple tanks should be identified and secured. A national programme to eradicate water hyacinth is long overdue.



Traps set for waterfowl in a Bihar wetland,  
Pic by Arvind Mishra



Rani Laxmi Bai Amrit Sarovar, near Mandhka Jodhanpur  
village, Gauriganj, UP, Pic by Dr Asad Rahmani

Many sound recommendations already exist—written by ecologists, echoed in government reports—but implementation remains elusive. That is the moot question which the Pygmy Cotton Goose wants from us!

### Is anyone listening?



Cotton Pygmy Goose, Pic by Supratim Deb



### About Author DR ASAD R RAHMANI

Dr Asad R 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.



Tundra Bean-Goose and Ruddy Shelduck

ADHIRUP GHOSH

## CRADLES OF LIFE: GAJOLDOBA AND THE LIVING STORY OF INDIA'S WETLANDS

**W**etlands are among the most dynamic and life-sustaining ecosystems on Earth where water meets land and life gathers in abundance. From floodplain marshes and oxbow lakes to estuarine mudflats and high-altitude wetlands, these habitats function as nature's kidneys, filtering pollutants, recharging groundwater, moderating floods and sustaining livelihoods for millions.

In India, wetlands are intricately woven into both ecological stability and human survival, supporting fisheries, agriculture and traditional cultures that have flourished along their banks for centuries. Yet their true vitality is most visibly reflected in the wings that rise from them. The diversity and abundance of waterbirds like ducks, waders, herons, raptors serve as living barometers of wetland health. Fluctuations in bird numbers often mirror shifts in water quality, food availability and habitat integrity making avian populations powerful indicators of ecological balance. To understand India's wetlands, one must look to its birds, as in their seasonal arrivals and departures, lies the story of resilience, fragility and the enduring pulse of life itself.

On the morning of January 10, 2026, our team arrived at Gajoldoba in North Bengal to participate in the Annual Waterbird Census- an exercise that is as much about counting birds as it is about reading the ecological pulse of a wetland. Spread along the Teesta Barrage, the landscape of Gajoldoba carries a quiet expectancy, yet subtle changes were impossible to ignore. In the aftermath of the Sikkim floods, the once-clear waters appeared markedly turbid, hinting at altered sediment flows and shifting habitat conditions. Perhaps most telling was the absence of some of Gajoldoba's celebrated winter visitors such as the Goldeneye and Smew. Once regular and reassuring presences, they have not been recorded since past year.

Yet, wetlands often narrate stories of resilience alongside fragility. This year, the sighting of a pair of Tundra Bean Geese alongside Greater White-fronted Goose offered a glimmer of hope- a signal that the ecosystem may be on a slow path to recovery.

The census, however, unfolded with encouraging revelations.

Across the open stretches of water, ducks were in good numbers suggesting that despite recent ecological stress, Gajoldoba continues to provide critical wintering habitat. Red-crested Pochards, Common Pochards, Ferruginous Ducks, Tufted Ducks, Gadwalls dominated the shallow lake while the Ruddy Shelducks captured most of the upstream islands.



Equally notable was the strong assemblage of raptors commanding the skies above the marshes and adjoining grasslands. The surprise was a Merlin in flight which is a rare sight for Bengal. Rest were the usual suspects like Peregrine Falcon, Hen Harrier, Eastern Marsh Harrier, Common Kestrel and Greater Spotted Eagle.

Among the day's most phenomenal moments was the long-awaited sighting of a pair of Tundra Bean Geese in the upstream standing out subtly in the middle of a flock of Ruddy Shelducks. Their presence carried a quiet gravity, rare visitors choosing to pause within a congregation of more familiar winter guests. Such encounters are more than just additions to a checklist. They symbolize ecological possibility. Later in the second half of the day, a lone Greater White-fronted Goose revealed itself in a quieter stretch of wet marsh. Its presence also highlighted the importance of wetland marshes which offers both nourishment and

refuge. Such preference for shallow, undisturbed wetlands underscores the importance of preserving varied microhabitats within Gajoldoba.

Gajoldoba today stands as more than a seasonal refuge for migratory birds. It is a living intersection of water, wilderness and human responsibility. Wetlands like this quietly sustain far more than what meets the eye. They regulate regional hydrology, trap sediments, nurture fish populations, support agriculture, and buffer communities against climatic extremes. Their value lies not only in the species they host but in the ecological stability they extend to surrounding landscapes. Yet such systems are inherently sensitive, shaped by upstream events, land-use changes and the cumulative pressures of a rapidly transforming environment. Preserving Gajoldoba, therefore, is not merely an act of protecting birds or safeguarding a scenic habitat. It is an investment in ecological foresight. When wetlands endure, they continue to offer resilience like absorbing shocks, renewing biodiversity and ensuring that future generations inherit landscapes still capable of sustaining life in all its quiet complexity.



Mallard

Equally vital to the future of Gajoldoba is the involvement of the majhis or the local boatmen whose daily presence on these waters makes them silent observers of its changing rhythms. Their familiarity with bird movements, water levels and seasonal shifts form an invaluable layer of informal monitoring that complements scientific efforts. By thoughtfully integrating them into conservation initiatives and fostering livelihood opportunities through responsible nature tourism, the wetland can nurture both ecological and economic well-being. When local communities see tangible benefits flowing from a healthy ecosystem,

stewardship follows naturally, transforming preservation from an external mandate into a shared commitment.



Ruddy Shelduck & Greater White-fronted Goose



Northern Lapwing



Wetlands and human life are bound by an invisible thread- when one falters, the other inevitably feels the strain. Any threat to these fragile landscapes can trigger far-reaching ecological havoc, disrupting biodiversity, water security and climate balance alike. Therefore, protecting wetlands must command the same urgency and attention we reserve for forests and by safeguarding them we are ultimately securing our own future.



The Team: Adhirup Ghosh(author), Shreya Samanta, and Dipanjan Bhattacharya.

*All photographs by author.*



## About Author

### ADHIRUP GHOSH

A birdwatcher from Santiniketan, whose roots lent him a spontaneous inclination towards birds and nature since childhood. Birds- common and rare, excited and interested him. Over the years, he has deepened this early passion through extensive fieldwork, documentation, and participation in citizen-science initiatives. His keen eye for detail and love for natural history continue to shape his journeys as he explores and discovers India's diverse habitats.



Red-breasted Goose and  
Bar-headed Geese

ASABUL ISLAM

---

## RARE WINTER VISITORS: RED-BREASTED GOOSE AND MARBLED DUCK IN INDIA

**T**he Indian winter sky has always been a canvas for travellers. As the sun softens and the wetlands fill with shimmering reflections, thousands of migratory birds descend upon India each year from the cold realms of the Central Asia, Siberia and Europe, seeking refuge in the warmth of the subcontinent. But once in a while, among the familiar flocks, appear visitors so rare that they leave even seasoned birdwatchers awestruck.

In January 2022, one such remarkable event unfolded at the **Nalsarovar Bird Sanctuary, Gujarat** – the sighting of a Red-breasted Goose (*Branta ruficollis*) among a group of Bar-headed Geese (*Anser indicus*) in the tranquil wetlands. The same species was again reported in 2024, reaffirming that even the rarest of migratory patterns can repeat when conditions align. What made the moment unforgettable was the behaviour of the Bar-headed Geese – seemingly guarding and watching over their unusual guest, ever alert to any potential threats around.

During the same birding trip, we recorded another rarity – a **single Marbled Duck** (*Marmaronetta angustirostris*), another species that seldom visits Indian subcontinent. The coincidence of these two rare migrants in one season offered a glimpse into the extraordinary and unpredictable rhythm of avian migration.



Red-breasted Goose and Bar-headed Goose

## THE RED-BREASTED GOOSE: A JEWEL OF THE ARCTIC

The Red-breasted Goose is one of the most visually stunning of all waterfowl. With a bright **chestnut-red breast and cheeks**, bordered by clean white stripes and deep black wings, it is a bird that looks almost painted by hand. Its compact body and striking pattern make it instantly recognizable among geese.

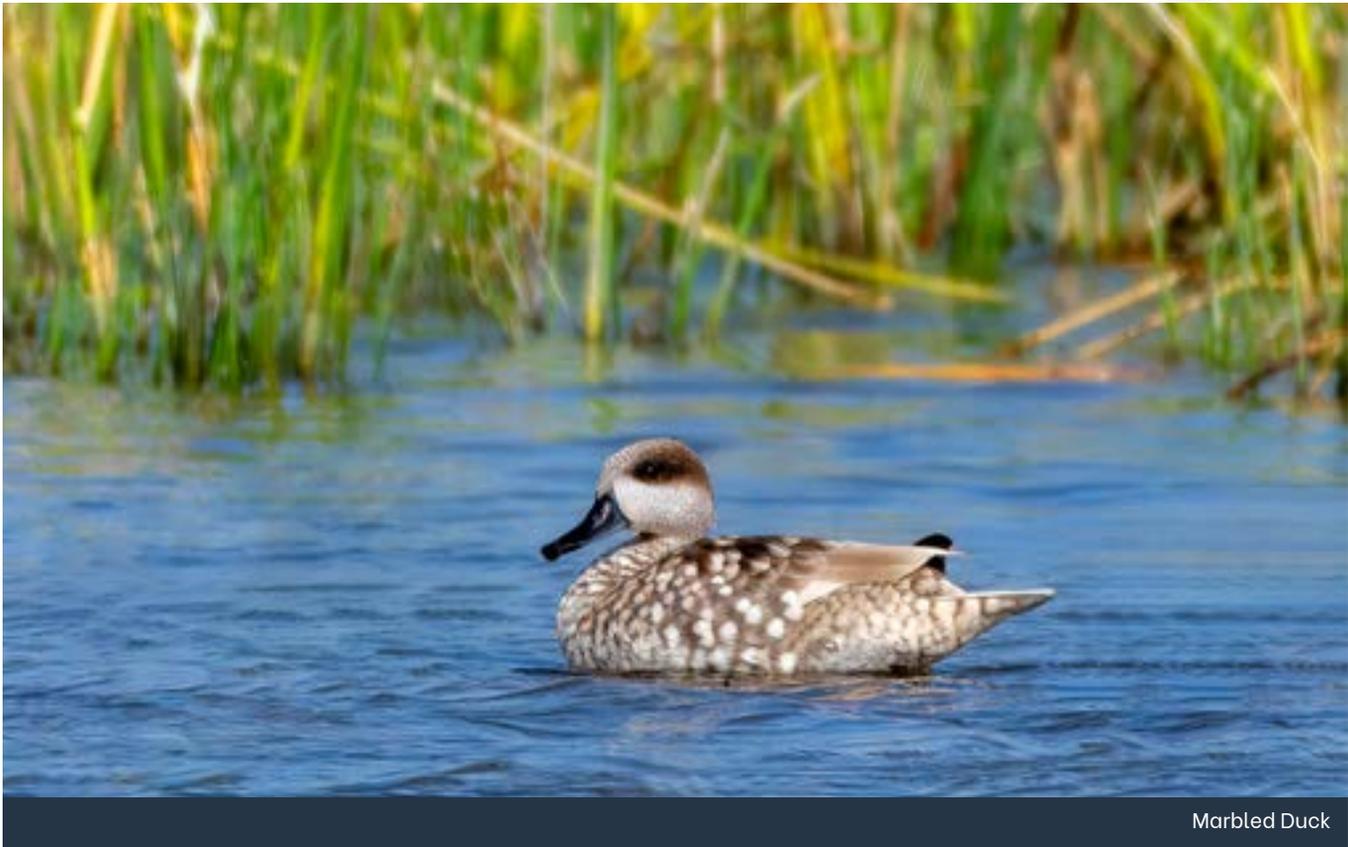
Native to the **Arctic tundra of Siberia**, the Red-breasted Goose breeds along the **Taymyr, Gyda, and Yamal peninsulas** in northern Russia. Unlike many geese that nest in open marshes, this species practices a rare survival strategy: it nests close to the eyries of large raptors such as Peregrine Falcons or Snowy Owls. These fierce neighbours deter predators like Arctic foxes from approaching, creating a kind of “protective alliance” between the geese and the birds of prey.

Come late autumn, when Arctic lakes begin to freeze, these geese embark on a long southward journey – typically toward the **Black Sea coasts of Bulgaria, Romania, and Ukraine**, and occasionally into Turkey and Azerbaijan. It is only when strong wind systems, disorientation, or shifts in climate patterns occur that a few individuals drift farther east, reaching Iran, Pakistan, and rarely, India.

In India, the Red-breasted Goose is an **exceptional winter visitor**, with only a handful of confirmed sightings

in recent decades. The wetlands of **Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, and Gujarat** have occasionally hosted lone individuals among flocks of Bar-headed or Greylag Geese.

Our 2022 observation of one such bird, guarded by Bar-headed Geese, stands as a valuable addition to this scarce record. The Bar-headed Goose – itself a marvel of endurance, capable of flying over the Himalayas at altitudes of **30,000 feet** – seems to have accepted this Arctic traveller into its flock. **Such mixed-species associations** are known in migratory birds, especially when a lone individual is separated from its usual companions. Joining a larger group enhances its safety, as more eyes and ears mean better protection from predators.



Marbled Duck

## THE MARBLED DUCK: A MASTER OF DISGUISE

During that same birding trip, the appearance of a **Marbled Duck** added another gem to the list of rare migratory visitors. Unlike the vividly coloured Red-breasted Goose, the Marbled Duck is a picture of subtle elegance. Its plumage patterned like marbled stone, perfectly adapted for camouflage among reeds and muddy waters.

This shy and elusive bird breeds in **Southern Europe, North Africa, and western and central Asia**. Its core breeding population is found around **Spain, Turkey, Iran, and Kazakhstan**, though small numbers extend eastward. In India, the Marbled Duck is only an **occasional winter visitor**, recorded in parts of Gujarat, Rajasthan, and northern Madhya Pradesh, often singly or in very small flocks. Like the Red-breasted Goose, it prefers **quiet freshwater lakes, lagoons, and marshes**, feeding mostly on aquatic plants, seeds, and small insects.

## WHY THESE BIRDS RARELY VISIT INDIA

For both the Red-breasted Goose and Marbled Duck India lies at the **eastern fringe of their migratory range**. Their regular wintering routes, primarily lead toward the Middle East and Europe.

However, several factors can cause these rare deviations:

- 1. Weather anomalies and wind drift:** Strong north-westerly winds can push birds off course during long migrations.
- 2. Loss of traditional wintering sites:** Habitat degradation in regions like the Black Sea or the Caspian basin may force individuals to explore new areas.
- 3. Climate change:** Altered temperature patterns can shift migration timings and routes.
- 4. Navigational errors:** Young or inexperienced birds sometimes stray far from their usual path, guided by instinct and luck.

Thus, every sighting in India tells a story of endurance, adaptation, and the mysterious forces that guide migration.

The meeting of these two rare migrants in Indian wetlands is more than a record; it is a **story of endurance and connection**. Each arrival reminds us how fragile and wondrous migration is – a timeless rhythm joining continents through the flight of wings.

If India's wetlands remain protected, such moments will return: brief flashes of beauty from far-off worlds, carried here on the wind.

*All photographs by author.*



### About Author ASABUL ISLAM

Asabul Islam, an assistant teacher from Murshidabad district in central Bengal, is deeply passionate about the study and observation of birds. Beyond his teaching profession, he devotes himself to exploring avian life and inspiring school children to appreciate the fascinating world of birds, nurturing curiosity and awareness about nature and bird conservation among the next generation.



Caspian Tern,  
Pic by Atish Manna

**SOUMYOJIT TALUKDER | ATISH MANNA**

## **UNVEILING THE WONDERS OF T S CHANAKYA WETLANDS, NAVI MUMBAI, MAHARASHTRA**

**G**etting a job at BNHS and moving to a new city was thrilling and emotional for me. As a zoology student, I consider it an honour to be accepted into such a prominent wildlife NGO. After moving to Mumbai, the first location I went birding was T S Chanakya Wetlands. This was a new experience and landscape for me and was especially exciting because this location gifted me with my dream bird—the Greater Flamingo and six of them together. This article is about experiences and observations from my visit to T S Chanakya.

Wetlands are highly productive ecosystems that serve as water filters, carbon sinks, flood buffers, and homes to diverse flora and fauna, especially birds. Wetlands are key stopover locations for migratory birds (specifically waders and waterfowl), providing feeding, breeding, and roosting grounds during their seasonal journey across continents. These habitats full of natural resources let migratory birds restore energy stores needed for long-distance migration, ensuring their survival and successful reproduction.



Sykes's Warbler, Pic by Atish Manna

Human activities such as urban development, land-use change, industrial development, and climate unpredictability are putting wetlands at risk, despite their importance to the ecosystem. Urban wetlands in India face significant problems, including habitat loss, pollution, and encroachment, resulting in negative impacts on biodiversity.

T S Chanakya Wetlands basically one amongst these ecologically sensitive and important stopover sites for migratory birds, waders in particular. Interestingly, **I found this particular location is a combination of various habitats, basically creating a natural ecotone area.** So, what is an ecotone? An ecotone is a natural transition zone where two different ecosystems (like a forest and a grassland) meet and blend, creating a unique area with characteristics and species from both, often with higher biodiversity. Here, in particular, you can observe wetlands, grassland, forestland, and agricultural fields, as well as coastal stretches, converging within a single landscape. This remarkable mosaic of

habitats accounts for the high species diversity recorded in the area.

The number of waders and waterfowl are truly impressive, especially species like the Lesser Flamingo, Greater Flamingo, Slender-billed Gull, Great Knot, etc., which are sought after in those areas. Though I am still awaiting the Lesser Flamingo as I write this article. Some of the species that I encountered are the Caspian Tern, White-eared Bulbul, Brahminy Kite, Sykes's Warbler, Eurasian Curlew, Whiskered Tern, Gull-billed Tern, Northern Pintail, and many more. I have also found many commoners like the Siberian Stonechat, Laughing Dove, Spot-breasted Fantail, and others, especially a large flock of Black Kites; often 15-20 individuals can be seen at any time. One can also find some rare birds like the Eurasian Hobby, Eurasian Sparrowhawk, Common Crane etc., if lucky.

Coming to the experience of birding here, it has been a unique outing for a birder like me from South Bengal. The confluence of such diverse habitats, coupled with the sheer abundance of birdlife, is enough to mesmerise bird lovers like me. One piece of advice would be to carry a sighting scope if you really want to see some great birds, as binoculars aren't enough for this type of distance. The perfect time for visiting this place would be towards the end of January, specifically for flamingos, which arrive in large quantities. An obvious question for most readers: why do so many flamingos come to this place? The occurrence of suitable climatic conditions and food availability, like brine shrimp (*Artemia salina*), attracts flocks of migratory birds, specially flamingos.

Higher salinity in the lake often indicates the presence of red algae and brine shrimps, crucial food sources for flamingos. Consequently, increased food availability enhances the habitat's suitability for these iconic birds. Salt pans play a vital role in attracting flamboyances of flamingos across such parts of India, as they serve as natural feeding grounds for these filter-feeding species—much like Sambhar Lake, which draws flamingos in impressive numbers year after year.

T S Chanakya is a wonderful location for observing different waders, especially Curlew Sandpiper, Tibetan Sandplover, Black-winged Stilt, etc. and the filter-feeding flamingos.



White-eared Bulbul, Pic by Soumyojit Talukder

But like any great wildlife hotspot, it is also threatened by human interference mostly Urbanisation and Pollution. Land encroachment by developers is yet another hazard. However, thanks to the sustained efforts of numerous environmentalists and NGOs such as Bombay Natural History Society, these threats have been mitigated in the past. Nevertheless, there remains a pressing need to raise greater public awareness about these critical habitats across our country, which in turn will further strengthen and advance conservation goals. Environmental pollution has significantly impacted the distribution and behaviour of various migratory bird species, such as flamingos, curlews, and sandpipers, as proven by field surveys. Birds prefer less polluted areas for foraging, while significantly degraded habitats result in decreased activity, shorter feeding durations, and increased disturbance responses. Pollution-induced habitat deterioration poses a threat to both avian survival and the long-term ecological health of wetlands.

Protecting the T S Chanakya Wetlands requires sustained and coordinated conservation efforts from NGOs as well as local people. Stricter pollution control like the ban of plastic material, improved sewage and

industrial effluent management with harsher penalties, mangrove restoration coordinated by the Mangrove Foundation, and sustainable urban planning are essential to safeguard these habitats. Furthermore, long-term ecological monitoring and community participation, especially by young students and professionals, can strengthen conservation outcomes. As migratory birds act as indicators of ecosystem health everywhere around the world, ensuring the survival of these species will also secure the ecological resilience of urban wetlands in Navi Mumbai.

*Reference -*

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### About Author

## SOUMYOJIT TALUKDER

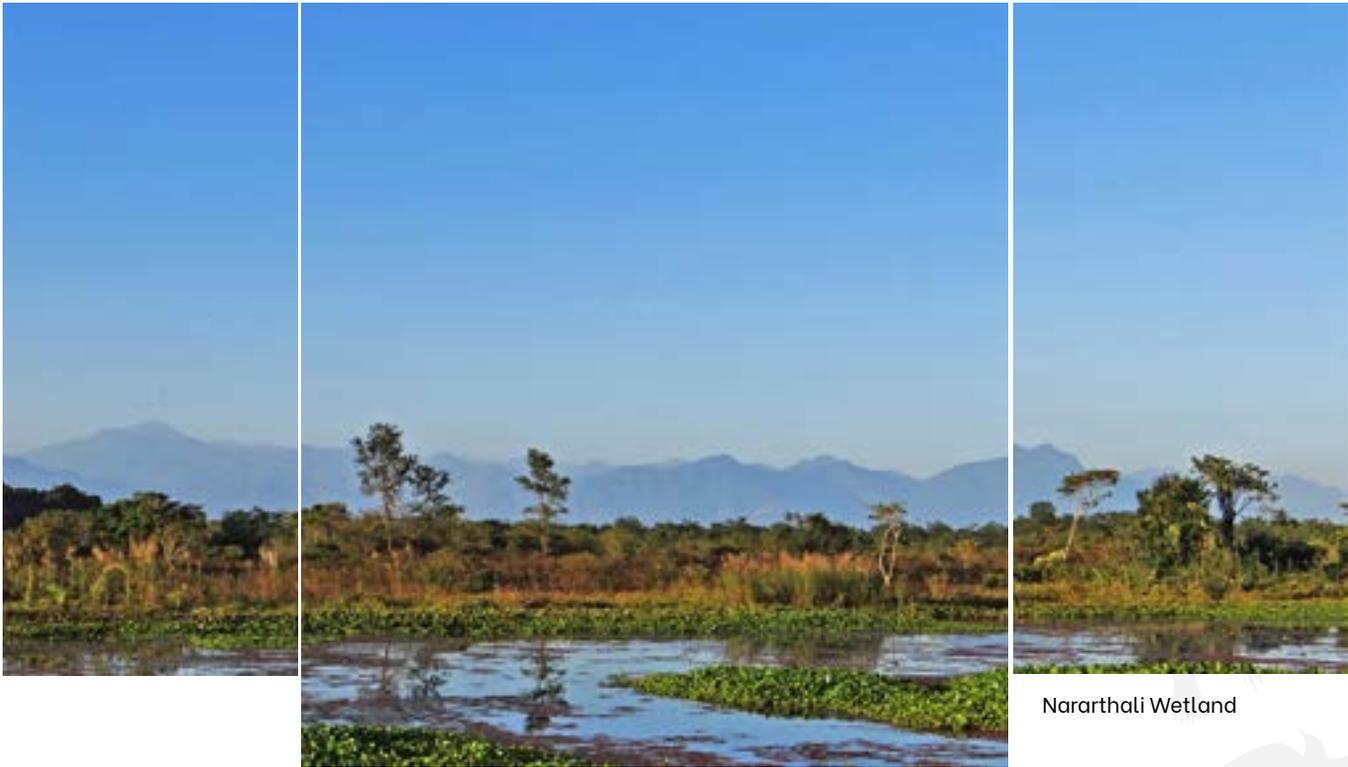
A postgraduate in Zoology, Soumyajit specialises in Biodiversity and Ecosystem Functioning and is currently associated with the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS). With a deep interest in birds and wildlife, he combines fieldwork and writing to share his ecological observations.



### About Photographer

## ATISH MANNA

Atish is currently associated with the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) and is building a career in wildlife research, conservation, and environmental protection. A motivated conservation professional with a strong commitment to continuous learning, he is keen to work in dynamic research environments where scientific knowledge can be meaningfully applied to biodiversity conservation and wider societal benefit.



Nararthali Wetland

**RANADEEP SENGUPTA**

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## **NARARTHALI: A LESS EXPLORED WETLAND OF DOOARS**

**N**ararthali wetlands is hidden in the Nararthali beat of Buxa Tiger Reserve (east) located near Paschim (west) Nararthali village. It is actually an oxbow lake that originates from the Raidak river. Although the locals frequent the surroundings to collect woods and dry leaves, outsiders need permission to enter the forest.

During my posting as a government official in Alipurduar, I had the privilege of obtaining permission to visit Nararthali. Between 2011 and 2015, I would travel there two or three times each winter, often accompanied by officials from the forest department. The wetland very conveniently located, was just an hour's drive from my residence.

The oxbow lake is a shallow waterbody surrounded by grasslands and some evergreen trees. Water hyacinth covered a large area but there was also plenty of space for the migratory waterbirds. The grasslands provided shelter to Prinias, Zitting Cisticolas and omnipresent Siberian Stonechats. The forest area has a good population of peafowls as well as elephants.



Indian Peafowl

Many raptors including Shaheen Falcon and the vulnerable Greater Spotted Eagle visit the wetland during winter. I had seen nests of Lesser Adjutants in the trees near the bank.

Among the waterbirds, Falcated Duck, Mallard, Ferruginous and Red-crested Pochards are worth mentioning. The forest department has constructed a watchtower and undertakes the cleaning of the waterbody as and when required. The villagers contribute to conservation efforts by refraining from indiscriminate tree felling. Altogether, Nararthali offers an excellent habitat for both resident and migratory species. The remarkable biodiversity of this wetland left a lasting impression on us. In fact, during the morning session of **Bengal Bird Day 2014**, I, along with Dr Arup Banerjee, one of the founder members of BWS, chose to spend our time at Nararthali and were rewarded with sightings of over 40 bird species.



Black-throated Thrush



Gadwal, Ferruginous Pochard, Falcated Duck



Falcated Duck

List of birds we had seen at Nararthali arranged by standard taxonomic classification (following the general order of Anseriformes to Passeriformes)

**Order: Anseriformes (Ducks, Geese, and Swans)**

**Family: Anatidae**

1. Lesser Whistling-Duck
2. Cotton Pygmy-Goose
3. Gadwall
4. Falcated Duck (Near-threatened)
5. Mallard
6. Indian Spot-billed Duck
7. Northern Pintail
8. Green-winged Teal
9. Red-crested Pochard
10. Ferruginous Pochard (Near-threatened)

**Order: Galliformes (Gamebirds)**

**Family: Phasianidae**

11. Indian Peafowl

**Order: Podicipediformes (Grebes)**

**Family: Podicipedidae**

12. Little Grebe

**Order: Columbiformes (Pigeons and Doves)**

**Family: Columbidae**

13. Oriental Turtle-Dove
14. Ashy-headed Green-Pigeon (Near-threatened)
15. Yellow-footed Green-Pigeon

**Order: Gruiformes (Rails, Cranes, and Allies)**

**Family: Rallidae**

16. Gray-headed Swamphen
17. Eurasian Moorhen
18. Eurasian Coot

**Order: Charadriiformes (Waders, Gulls, and Auks)**

**Family: Jacanidae**

19. Bronze-winged Jacana

**Family: Charadriidae**

20. Northern Lapwing (Near-threatened)
21. Gray-headed Lapwing

**Family: Scolopacidae**

22. Wood Sandpiper

**Order: Ciconiiformes (Storks)**

**Family: Ciconiidae**

23. Asian Openbill
24. Lesser Adjutant (Vulnerable)

**Order: Suliformes (Cormorants and Allies)**

**Family: Phalacrocoracidae**

25. Little Cormorant

**Order: Pelecaniformes (Pelicans, Herons, and Ibises)**

**Family: Ardeidae**

26. Indian Pond-Heron
27. Medium Egret
28. Grey Heron
29. Purple Heron

**Order: Accipitriformes (Hawks, Eagles, and Vultures)**

**Family: Pandionidae**

29. Osprey

**Family: Falconidae**

30. a) Peregrine Falcon
- b) Shaheen Falcon

**Family: Accipitridae**

30. Crested Serpent-Eagle
31. Black Eagle
32. Greater Spotted Eagle (Vulnerable)
33. Common Buzzard



In 2013 and 2014, Bengal Bird Day was observed like a big bird day event organised by Kshounish Sankar Ray, Late Sumit Sen (Bengal Birds), and Sujan Chatterjee (Secretary - BWS)

**Order: Bucerotiformes (Hornbills)**

**Family: Bucerotidae**

34. Oriental Pied-Hornbill

**Order: Coraciiformes (Kingfishers, Bee-eaters, and Rollers)**

**Family: Alcedinidae**

35. Common Kingfisher

36. Pied Kingfisher

37. White-throated Kingfisher

**Family: Meropidae**

38. Asian Green Bee-eater

**Family: Coraciidae**

39. Indochinese Roller

40. Dollarbird

**Order: Passeriformes (Perching Birds)**

**Family: Campephagidae**

41. Black-winged Cuckooshrike

**Family: Laniidae (Shrikes)**

42. Brown Shrike

43. Gray-backed Shrike

44. Long-tailed Shrike

**Family: Turdidae**

45. Dark-throated Thrush

**Family: Phylloscopidae**

46. Yellow-browed Warbler

**Family: Monarchidae**

47. Black-naped Monarch

**Family: Muscicapidae (Old World Flycatchers and Chats)**

48. Little Pied Flycatcher

49. Taiga Flycatcher

50. Ultramarine Flycatcher

51. Siberian Stonechat

**Family: Sturnidae (Starlings)**

52. Spot-winged Starling

**Family: Motacillidae (Wagtails and Pipits)**

53. Olive-backed Pipit

**Family: Nectariniidae (Sunbirds and spiderhunters)**

54. Crimson Sunbird



Lesser Adjutant



Indian Spot-billed Duck

All photographs by author.



**About Author**

**RANADEEP SENGUPTA**

I am an ophthalmologist by profession who loves every component of nature, - birds, butterflies, insects and even inanimate components like mountains and rivers. My other interests include reading, photography, trekking and rock climbing.



Pied Avocet at Kharibari

PRIYANKA SINGH

## KAMDUNI-KHARIBARI: A QUIET WETLAND WORLD GUIDING MIGRATORY BIRDS NEAR KOLKATA

**J**ust beyond the restless outer edge of North Kolkata lies Kamduni-Kharibari – a landscape shaped by glistening ponds, narrow canals, and paddy fields that breathe with the rhythm of water. To a casual visitor, it appears like any other rural pocket of Bengal. But at dawn, the village reveals its secret identity: a quiet refuge for birds, especially the migratory travellers who descend every winter after journeys measured not in kilometres, but in continents.

One morning, while I watched a fisherman pull in his nets, he shared a line that has stayed with me ever since:

**“Ei jol-e machh o ache, pakhi-o achhe”.**

*(This water has fish for us, and food for the birds.)*

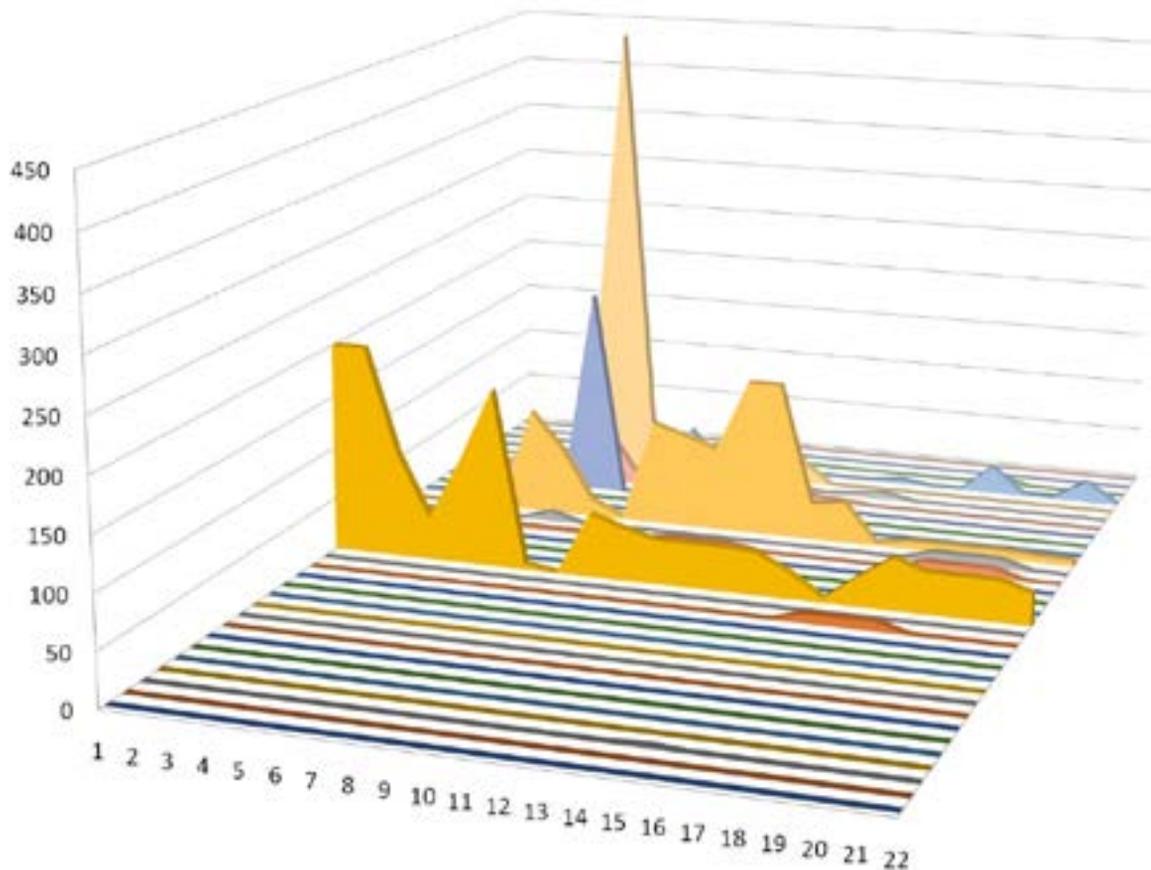
In that single sentence lay the essence of Kamduni-Kharibari – a place where human life and bird life still breathe the same air.

As the northern hemisphere cools, birds begin tracing ancient migratory pathways. Some cross mountains and deserts; others follow rivers or coastlines. And some, quietly and without grandeur, settle into inland wetlands like those of Kamduni-Kharibari. These wetlands may not be officially marked on flyway charts,

yet they function as dependable stopover stations for thousands of migrants. Across the greater East Kolkata wetland systems, more than **3,000 to 5,000 migratory birds** pass through each season, with Kamduni-Kharibari forming a smaller but crucial node in this movement.

During fieldwork, I documented a diverse array of migrants relying on this landscape. **Yellow and Citrine Wagtails** flitted through harvested fields, feeding on insects stirred from the soil. **Barn Swallows** skimmed the pond surface, capturing midges and water-bound flies. The shy **Common Sandpiper** and elegant **Wood Sandpiper** moved methodically along muddy edges, often joined by the secretive **Common Snipe**. **Bluethroats** emerged like tiny flashes of colour from the reeds. Wider regional counts added species such as **Common Redshank, Marsh Sandpiper, Little Stint, Common Greenshank, Black-tailed Godwit, Whimbrel,** and the unforgettable **Pied Avocet**, its black-and-white plumage and upcurved bill giving it a sculptured, almost calligraphic presence.

- |                         |                        |                        |                         |                    |
|-------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|
| ■ Bar-tailed Godwit     | ■ Black-headed Gull    | ■ Black-tailed Godwit  | ■ Brown-headed Gull     | ■ Common Shelduck  |
| ■ Dunlin                | ■ Falcated Duck        | ■ Gadwall              | ■ Glossy Ibis           | ■ Kentish Plover   |
| ■ Lesser Whistling Duck | ■ Little Ringed Plover | ■ Long-toed Stint      | ■ Northern Pintail      | ■ Pallas's Gull    |
| ■ Pied Avocet           | ■ Red-crested Poachard | ■ Red-necked Phalarope | ■ Red-necked Stint      | ■ Ruddy Shelduck   |
| ■ Ruff                  | ■ Spotted Redshank     | ■ Common Redshank      | ■ Tibatean Sand Plover  | ■ Temminck's Stint |
| ■ Wood Sandpiper        | ■ Grey-headed Lapwing  | ■ Little Stint         | ■ Pacific Golden Plover | ■ Marsh Sandpiper  |
| ■ Curlew Sandpiper      | ■ Common Snipe         |                        |                         |                    |



Temporal patterns of waterbird diversity and abundance in crucial inland stopover wetlands supporting migratory shorebirds near East Kolkata.

All these birds depend on what the wetlands provide: **food, silence, and safety**. The shallow ponds offer small fish, aquatic larvae, snails, and benthic invertebrates. Paddy fields supply abundant insects after harvest. Homestead gardens provide seasonal fruits and scattered feeding opportunities. This layered habitat mosaic ensures that each migratory species, from wagtails to godwits, finds a niche suited to its needs.

What makes Kamduni-Kharibari exceptional is that it functions like a sanctuary **without ever being declared one**. There are no signboards, no buffer zones, and no official protection mechanisms. What sustains it is the traditional, low-impact lifestyle of the community – fishers regulating water levels in ponds, farmers working fields that double as feeding grounds, and families whose days revolve around water and land. Their sustainable practices have allowed ecological richness to persist in a landscape otherwise threatened by urban expansion.

But the pressures are mounting. From **2015 to 2025**, satellite-based land cover analysis in the region indicates a **17% loss in open water** and a **34% increase in built-up areas**. Encroachment, pollution, plastic waste, and shrinking agricultural lands are slowly eroding the wetlands' natural character. Many of these sites lack baseline ecological documentation and remain absent from formal conservation frameworks. They are not included in the **Asian Waterbird Census (AWC)**, are missing from state wetland registers, and lie outside national conservation networks like **Important Bird Areas (IBAs)**. As international conservation priorities increasingly highlight migratory connectivity, the omission of wetlands such as Kamduni-Kharibari becomes even more concerning.

Yet the path forward is hopeful. The same community that has lived with these wetlands for generations can also lead their conservation. Simple actions – keeping certain ponds undisturbed during peak migration, reducing plastic waste, limiting pesticide use, and involving local youth in bird monitoring – can secure the future of this habitat. Community stewardship, supported by scientific documentation, is the most powerful tool these wetlands possess.

Kamduni-Kharibari may not appear on global migration maps, but its role is undeniable. It offers rest to the exhausted, food to the hungry, and silence to the wary. Its ponds and fields, intertwined with human tradition, create a landscape where nature is not an outsider but an everyday companion. As long as the fisherman's words remain true – "**Ei jol-e machh o ache, pakhi-o achhe**" – these wetlands will continue guiding the winged travellers who trust their waters year after year.



### About Author

## PRIYANKA SINGH

Priyanka is a student of Zoology who is passionate about wildlife and biodiversity. She is driven to understand how every organism – no matter how small – plays a vital role in the larger ecological tapestry. For her, science is both exploration and adventure: nature is her classroom, curiosity her guiding force, and her muddy shoes and watchful eyes reflect her deep engagement with the natural world.



Red-headed Bunting

**DEBOJYOTI CHAKRABORTY**

## **UNPLANNED & UNFORGETTABLE WETLAND: MY NALSAROVAR BIRDING**

**N**al Sarovar Bird Sanctuary, consisting primarily of a 120.82 square-kilometre lake and surrounding marshes, is a Ramsar Site, situated about 64 km to the west of Ahmedabad near Sanand Village, in the Indian state of Gujarat. It is celebrated among birdwatchers and photographers for its rich wetland biodiversity.

My original plan was to visit the Little Rann of Kutch in December, but circumstances pushed the trip to February. I found mixed opinions online about Nalsarovar's birdlife in late winter, which made me a bit unsure—yet curiosity won.

On 15 January 2026, with no formal planning, I decided to go. Flights were booked at the last minute, and finding a guide was tricky, but after some searching, I managed. Most birds of India's Western region were lifers for me, so I kept my target list flexible and shared a short wishlist with the guide.

Please check attached ebird trip report for more details: <https://ebird.org/tripreport/464816>

## DAY 1: ARRIVAL & NIGHT BIRDING

Our adventure began on January 16, 2026, as we set out at 8a.m. for Kolkata airport. We landed at Ahmedabad around 2:00 p.m. and took an Uber directly to Nalsarovar. We stayed at Nal Village Resort, which proved to be an excellent base for birders—the proximity to the wetland was a major advantage, even though the food options were somewhat limited. Overall, being so close to the heart of the action made up for any minor inconveniences.

Within the resort premises, birding got underway: both a Red-breasted Flycatcher and a Pallid Harrier briefly appeared, though unfortunately, I couldn't capture any photographs. By afternoon, our guide arrived, and we hurried to the Namaqua Dove spot. Fortune favoured us—excellent shots of Namaqua Dove, Greater Short-toed Lark, Ashy-crowned Sparrow-Lark, and Isabelline Wheatear, with Bay-backed Shrikes abundant throughout the area.

As dusk settled, we photographed male and female Eurasian Marsh Harriers. Night birding followed: although the Pallid Scops Owl didn't show despite waiting 30 minutes, we soon found a Sykes's Nightjar. Seeing and photographing it—my first nightjar outside West Bengal, and from a night safari—was magical. From owls to ducks, pipits to eagles, Nalsarovar truly felt like a one-stop paradise. We wrapped up a satisfying first day.

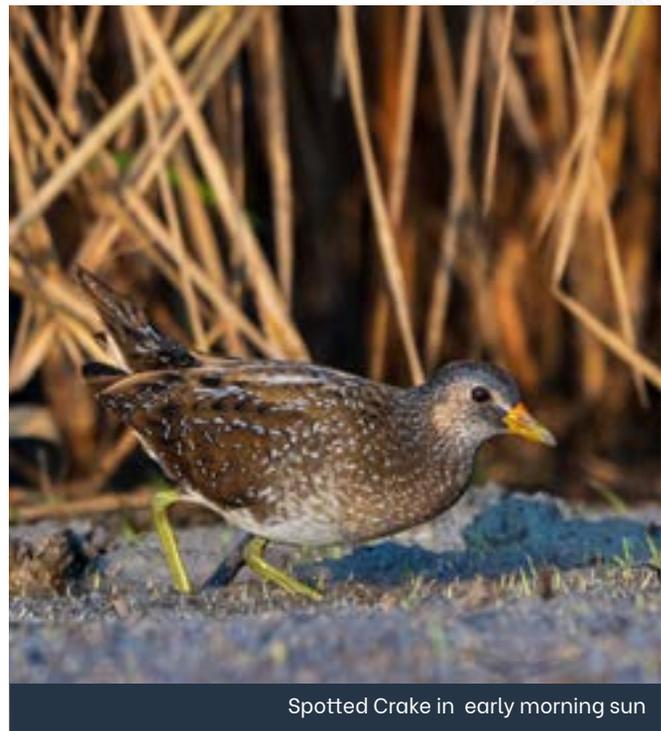


Sykes's Nightjar

## DAY 2: CRANES, CRAKES & A SURPRISE FALCON

We started early—7:00 a.m., which is early by western India standards due to the late sunrise. At the crane spot, we photographed Black-breasted Baya Weavers, Baillon's Crake, and Spotted Crake (Water Rail will wait for next visit). Just as we were about to leave, a falcon-like bird flew past with prey. Initial thought: Red-necked Falcon. Hazy shots later revealed a Barbary Falcon (a Peregrine subspecies)—a rare sighting here. We chased for better views and managed record shots!

Next came Sarus Cranes and Common Cranes, seen beautifully. Alongside them, I picked up a Long-billed Pipit. On our return, an Indian Spotted Eagle added another highlight. The afternoon was quieter: Tawny Pipit, Black-headed Bunting, Red-headed Bunting, and a few larks (IDs still in progress).



Spotted Crake in early morning sun



Long-billed Pipit



Sarus Crane Portrait

### DAY 3: DUCKS & A GRAND FINALE

The final morning delivered classic wetland magic—vast flocks of ducks, the thunder of wings, and a Greater White-fronted Goose (a wonderful lifer). We also photographed Demoiselle Cranes in flight and elegant Lesser Flamingos. With that, the trip came to a close.



Isabelline Shrike basking in sun



Common Kingfisher

## ABOUT NALSAROVAR (WHY IT'S SPECIAL)

**Ramsar Site:** Recognized internationally for wetland conservation.

**Habitat:** A vast shallow lake with marshes, mudflats, and islands—ideal for waterfowl and raptors.

**Bird Diversity:** Over 250 species recorded, especially rich during winter migration (November–February).

**Accessibility:** Just ~65 km from Ahmedabad, making it one of India's most accessible premier birding wetlands.

**Experience:** From night birding to sunrise spectacles, Nalsarovar offers incredible variety in a compact landscape.



## FINAL THOUGHTS

Nalsarovar exceeded expectations. February turned out to be rewarding, proving that spontaneous plans sometimes bring the best surprises. One place, countless habitats, and birds at every turn—this wetland truly deserves its reputation. Highly recommended for anyone who loves birds, biodiversity, and the thrill of discovery.

*All photographs by author.*



### About Author

#### DEBOJYOTI CHAKRABORTY

Debojyoti Chakraborty, a software engineer by profession, took to birdwatching and photography in 2022. Since then, he has developed a keen interest in studying birds in greater depth, continually learning from both the species he observes and the natural world around him.

# SIKKIM BIRDS TOURS & TRAVELS

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Heterodactyl  
feet of the Trogon

**SANDEEP CHAKRABORTY**

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## THE STORY OF DACTYLS

**D**id you know that trogons and quetzals have a secret weapon? They are the only birds from the same family in the world with Heterodactyl Foot

The word dactyl comes from the ancient Greek word for finger.

Think of your finger's three parts: one long joint followed by two shorter ones. This is exactly what a dactyl is in poetry—a rhythm with one long, stressed syllable followed by two short, unstressed ones. This poetic rhythm was a key part of ancient poems, like the famous epics of Homer, the Iliad and the Odyssey.

### THE MYTHICAL STORY OF THE DACTYLS

In Greek mythology, the word takes on a more magical meaning. The Dactyls were a group of mythical beings known as the “fingers” of the goddess Rhea. According to the story, when Rhea was about to give birth to Zeus on Mount Ida, she pressed her fingers into the earth. From those spots, the Dactyls were born. There were said to be ten of them, just like the fingers on two hands.



These mythical beings were much more than just fingers. They were considered ancient smiths and magicians. They were believed to have discovered how to use iron and fire and are even credited with inventing rhythm and music.

## THE UNIQUE "DIFFERENT TOES" OF A BIRD'S FOOT

Building on the meaning of “hetero“ (different) and “dactyl“ (finger), a heterodactyl foot is a truly unique and specialized foot arrangement found in some birds. Unlike most birds with three toes forward and one back, these birds have a foot with a “different“ configuration.

In a heterodactyl foot, two toes point forward and two toes point backward. Specifically, the third and fourth toes face forward, while the first and second toes face backward. This distinct setup sets it apart from the more common zygodactyl foot (found in parrots and woodpeckers) where the first and fourth toes are turned backward.

## MEET THE TROGON

The most well-known bird with heterodactyl feet is the trogon. These vibrant, often brilliantly colored birds are native to tropical forests. The unique toe arrangement gives them a strong, stable grip on branches and allows them to perch with great balance. This is crucial for their survival, as they often sit motionless for long periods, waiting to snatch insects or fruit from the air or from a leaf. The specialized foot acts like a powerful clamp, giving them an advantage in their arboreal lifestyle.

Most birds have an anisodactyl foot, with three toes pointing forward and one pointing backward. Parrots and woodpeckers, on the other hand, have a zygodactyl foot, with two toes forward and two backward, which helps them climb. But trogons and quetzals are the only birds in the world with a “Heterodactyl“ foot. This means their first and second toes point backward, while their third and fourth toes point forward. This unusual configuration allows them to cling vertically to trees, an important adaptation for their lifestyle. Their weak legs aren't great for walking, but this specialized toe arrangement makes them absolute masters of their forest homes. It's even believed their name, “trogon,“ comes from a Greek word for “nibbling,“ referring to how they hollow out nesting holes in trees.

Anisodactyl



Zygodactyl



Heterodactyl



Syndactyl



Pamprodactyl



Cuvier Le Re'gne Animal, 3rd edition, 22 volumes, 1836-1849, modified by Joao Francisco Botelho, Daniel Smith-Paredes and Alexander O. Vargas

**Types of Bird Feet:** Bird feet have several distinct toe arrangements, known as “dactyl” feet, that are adapted for different lifestyles and environments. The names are based on Greek roots describing the number and position of the toes.

### **Anisodactyl**

This is the most common foot type, with three toes pointing forward and one toe (the hallux, or first toe) pointing backward. This arrangement is ideal for perching, allowing a bird to securely grasp a branch.

### **Zygodactyl**

This arrangement features two toes pointing forward and two toes pointing backward. It provides a powerful grip, which is essential for climbing trees and holding food. This trait has evolved independently in several different bird lineages.

### **Heterodactyl**

This is a very rare type of foot, similar to the zygodactyl arrangement but with a different toe pairing. The third and fourth toes point forward, while the first and second toes point backward. It’s a specialized adaptation for clinging to vertical surfaces.

### **Syndactyl**

In this arrangement, two or more of the front toes are fused together for part of their length. This provides a broad, stable base for perching and can also be helpful for digging.

### **Pamprodactyl**

This foot type allows all four toes to be rotated forward. This unique ability helps birds like swifts cling to vertical surfaces, sometimes even upside down.

### **Other Types**

In addition to these dactyl arrangements, some birds have specialized feet for other purposes, such as raptorial feet with sharp talons for hunting (e.g., eagles and owls), and webbed or lobed feet for swimming (e.g., ducks and grebes).

*Image Copyright*

*Image 1: Sandeep Chakraborty*

*Image 2: Bird Nation Blog ([birdnationblog.wordpress.com](http://birdnationblog.wordpress.com))*

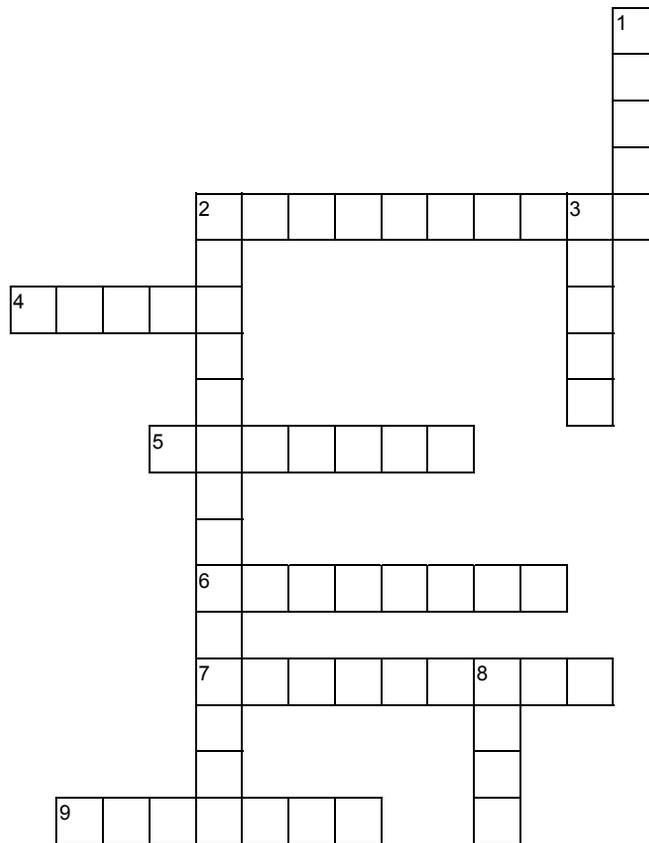


## **About Author**

### **SANDEEP CHAKRABORTY**

Sandeep’s childhood fascination with birds has grown into a lifelong, full-time pursuit. He has devoted his life to studying the avian world, spending most of the year in the field. A dedicated recordist and photographer, he seeks to uncover hidden behaviours and capture the unique calls of India’s lesser-known species. While he runs Birding Xtreme India, his true home lies in the wilderness, where he documents the rich and often unheard soundscapes of birds.

# CROSSWORD



## Across

- 2 Upturned nose? No, upturned beaks!/These b&w birds are found in creeks!
- 4 A bird or a machine? Perhaps both/ \_\_\_\_\_ your neck to crack this code
- 5 The name's not sweet, neither sour/Finding this bird needs a lot of eye power!
- 6 This rosy beauty in full height stands/One of the glories of the West's wetlands.
- 7 A piece of cutlery found in this bird's name/Used by it to catch its game!
- 9 If you solve this, you get ten on ten/This bird is none other than the Eurasian \_\_\_\_\_.

## Down

- 1 These feathery fellows are strangely built/Seems as if they're standing on \_\_\_\_\_.
- 2 Fair is foul, and foul is fair/ Look how this black and white bird doth hover in the air!
- 3 Do not fret, do not fret/Just find the right rhyme, and you won't 'regret'.
- 8 These leggy birds have downcurved bills/Crustaceans are their primary meals.



# FLIGHTS OF

## THE KITES KEEP COMING

Shreejata Roy

The Kites keep coming,  
Nay, they don't just arrive,  
For I wonder if they were ever gone?  
Despite the glass threads of your sporty kites  
That at times snatch the souls of rushing bikes or even pigeons,  
The Kites alight and gaze about with an indifference ,  
That crows would not murder to assume,  
The sparrows are occupied,  
But it is the Eagles that capture my glance  
That linger on them for a while longer,  
As they swoop down, that they are known to do,  
For prey or to simply gather twigs for their homes  
In other realms.

Sreejata Roy is an independent researcher and creative writing practitioner based in Kolkata. Her current interests lie in medical humanities, creative writing and well being. The poem she submitted was a result of her newfound fascination for eagles as found in her urban environment.

## একটি নদী চুরির গল্প

Kaustav Banerjee

আমার মাসির বাড়ি বীরভূমে অজয় নদের ধারে। কবির ভাষায় বৈশাখ মাসে তাতে হাঁটু জল থাকে। বৈশাখের হাঁটু জলের সে নদের রূপ বর্ষাকালে আমূল বদলে যায়। বছরের পর বছর বন্যা দেখে এসেছে অজয় নদের পাড়ে থাকা গ্রামগুলো। কিন্তু বন্যা হোক আর না হোক, বর্ষা কাল বাদে মোটামুটি সারাবছরই হাঁটু জল অন্তত থাকতো নদীতে, আর থাকতো দিগন্ত বিস্তৃত বালির চরা। শীতকালে এই হাঁটু জলের সুবিধা নিতে বহু দূর দুরান্ত থেকে পাখি আসতো। অগভীর জলে দাঁড়িয়ে সুস্বাদু মাছ, গেঁড়ি-গুগলির স্বাদ নিতো তারা। ছোট বেলায় যখন যেতাম মাসির বাড়ি, তখন পাখি দেখতে যেতাম, চিনতাম না সব পাখি, কিন্তু আলাদা আলাদা অনেক রকমের পাখি যে আসতো সেটা বেশ বুঝতে পারতাম। ক্রমে বড় হলাম, কলেজ, চাকরি ইত্যাদি নিয়ে ব্যস্ত হয়ে পড়লাম, আর গ্রামে যাওয়া প্রায় বন্ধ হয়ে গেল। বহু বছর পর গত শীতে গেছিলাম মাসির বাড়ি। পাখি এখন বেশ চিনি, দূরবীন গলায় ঝুলিয়ে ঘুরি, অল্প বিস্তর ছবিও তুলি। দুপুরের রোদ পড়তেই যখন পায়ে জুতো গলাচ্ছি, দাদা জিজ্ঞেস করলো - কোথায় যাচ্ছিস?

- কোথায় আবার, নদীর ধারে যাচ্ছি, দেখি কি পাখি এলো।

দাদা - নদী? সেতো চুরি হয়ে গেছে!

আমি ফ্যাল ফ্যাল করে তাকাতে দাদা বললো - আরে নদী মানে কি শুধুই জল? নদী একটা স্বয়ংসম্পূর্ণ বাস্তুতন্ত্র, একটা সভ্যতার জীবন কাঠি। আর সেই নদীকে যদি কেউ নিংড়ে নেয় তাহলে সেটা চুরি না তো কি?

বালি আগেও তোলা হতো, কিন্তু এই হারে? আজ কত বছর ধরে গ্রামের রাস্তায় সারাদিন ডাম্পার চলছে, বিরাম নেই, বিশ্রাম নেই। নদীর বুকে দাঁড়িয়ে রাক্ষসের মতো ড্রেজিং মেশিন, যত তার গর্জন, ততোধিক তার ধোঁয়া নিঃসরণ, আর নদীর জলে মিশিয়ে চলেছে কালো হয়ে যাওয়া পোড়া তেল। ফলে স্বাভাবিক ভাবেই পাখি আর এ চত্বর মাড়ায় না বিশেষ। শুধু কি ঐ মেশিনের ভয়, নদীতে তো আর মাছই পাওয়া যায়না! নদী পাড়ের জেলে পাড়ায় গেলে ওদের কষ্টটা বুঝবি। মাছ বেচে যে ওদের দিন গুজরান হতো সে সব শেষ, নিজের পাতের কুচো মাছগুলোও তারা আর পায় না। সব মাছের মধ্যে মবিলের গন্ধ।

আমার অবশ্য দাদার এই কথাগুলো মেলাতে মোটেই অসুবিধা হচ্ছিলো না। সড়ক পথে স্টেশন থেকে আসতে আসতেই দেখেছি নদীর পাড় বরাবর বালির স্তুপ। শুধু কি তাই, নদীর ওপর লরি পার করার জন্য একটা কাঁচা ব্রিজ অবধি বানিয়ে ফেলেছে। আমি কিছুতেই গুগল ম্যাপে এই রাস্তাটা পাচ্ছিলাম না। পাবো কি করে, গুগল তো আর এই কাঁচা ব্রিজের কথা জানেনা!

এত কিছু পরেও আমি নদীর ধারে গেছিলাম। পাখি অল্প বিস্তর ছিলো, কিন্তু দেখলাম নদীটা সত্যিই চুরি হয়ে গেছে। দাদার ভাষায় অজয় নদের থেকে কেউ যে সব বালি তুলে নিতে পারে সে আমাদের ধারণার বাইরে ছিলো। নদীর বালি এমন করে তুলে নেওয়া হয়েছে যে নিচের মাটি বেড়িয়ে গেছে। গ্রামের লোক হেঁটে পেরোতে ভয় পেতে শুরু করেছে।

প্রবাদ বাক্যে পুকুর চুরি শুনেছি, আর নিজের চোখে নদী চুরি দেখলাম।

A software professional who finds inspiration in quiet moments spent bird watching and observing nature up close and enjoy penning down the moods, details and stories shaped by the natural world.



# FANCY



**BirdSketch**  
By Gaurav Chandra

Energy of Sunbirds and their sheer brilliance under bright sunlight always fascinated me. They also have an innate quality to pose in front of me exactly when the camera is put down or away after hours of unsuccessfully trying capturing them. So I decided to draw a few, to satiate my desire.



**Lonely Scarecrow**  
By Chandrima

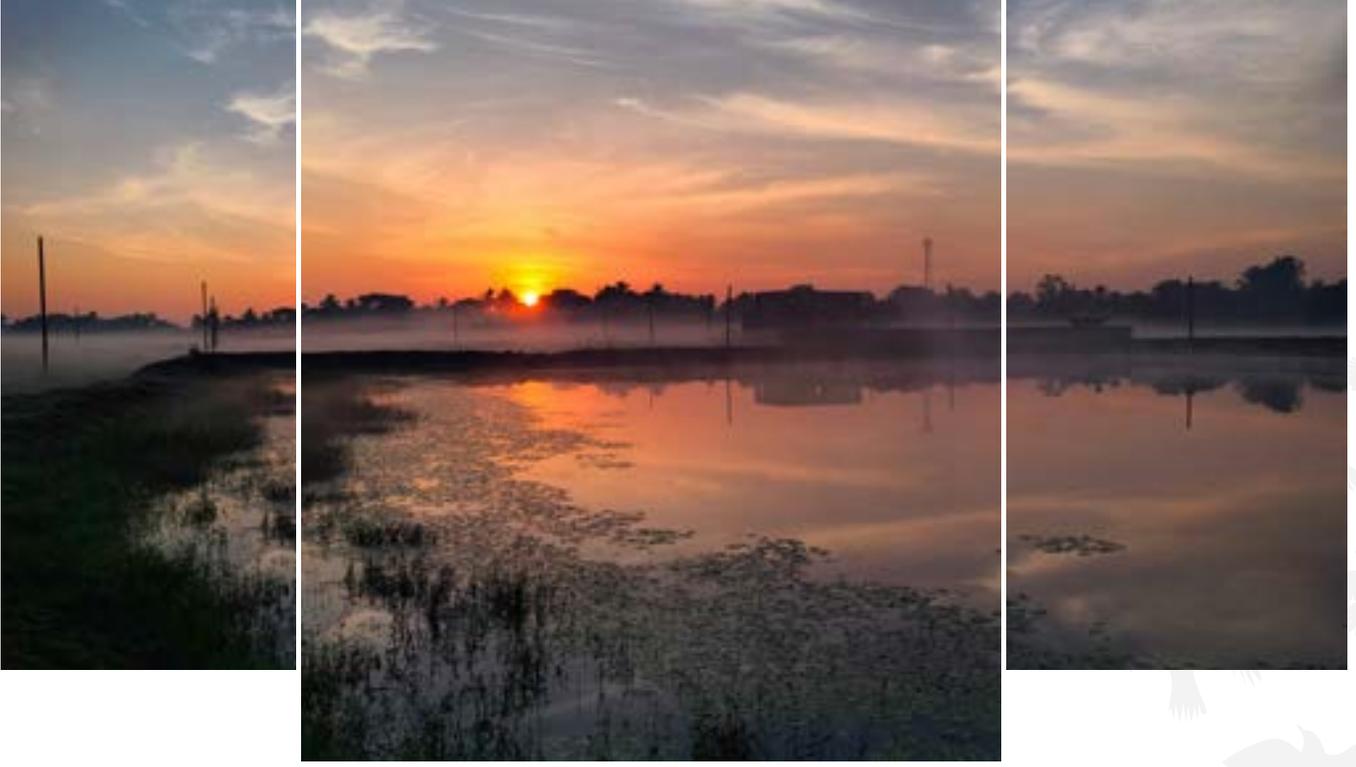
Naturalist, Environmental Educator, Teacher, Entrepreneur

A crow-shaped scarecrow takes care of the sad looking flowers. Other crows are gossiping about him because he is different and helps flowers. The painting tells us that being kind is more important than what others say.



Anurag is a class 6 student, with a "soul of a bird". His backyard birds are his long-time soul friends. He loves birdwatching, singing, painting, reading and cooking. He dreams to become an author.

**Bird Painting** by Anurag Debsarkar



বিশ্ব রঞ্জন গোস্বামী

## ভারতের জলাভূমি ও জলচরপাখি

বি

কমিক করে ওঠা হৃদ এবং ম্যানগ্রোভের ধার থেকে শুরু করে বর্ষা-পুষ্ট জলাভূমি এবং অভ্যন্তরীণ প্লাবনভূমি — ভারতের জলাভূমি জীববৈচিত্র্যের স্পন্দিত হৃদয়। তারা জীবনকে লালন করে, পরিযায়ী পাখিদের আশ্রয় দেয়। জলাভূমি বিভিন্ন ধরনের জলচরপাখি এবং জলাভূমি নির্ভর পাখিদের জন্য গুরুত্বপূর্ণ আবাসস্থল (Weller, 1999)। জলাভূমি বিশ্বের সবচেয়ে উৎপাদনশীল বাস্তুতন্ত্রের মধ্যে একটি, যা জীববৈচিত্র্যের আধার হিসেবে কাজ করে, বিভিন্ন প্রজাতির জীববৈচিত্র্যকে পুষ্ট করে (Prakash and Verma, 2023; Singh and Prakash, 2023)। জলাভূমি প্রায়শই "জৈবিক সুপারমার্কেট" হিসাবে পরিচিত। জলাভূমিগুলি প্রচুর পরিমাণে বিভিন্ন ধরনের খাদ্য উৎপাদন করে, যা বিভিন্ন প্রাণী প্রজাতিকে আকর্ষণ করে। এটি বছরের বিভিন্ন ঋতুতে বিভিন্ন প্রজাতির আবাসিক এবং পরিযায়ী পাখিদের খাদ্য, প্রজনন, বিশ্রাম এবং আবাসস্থল হিসেবে কাজ করে (Broyer and Calenge, 2010)। জলাভূমি হল জীববৈচিত্র্যের আবাসস্থল, জল এবং প্রাথমিক উৎপাদনশীলতা সরবরাহ করে যা মাছ, উভচর, সরীসৃপ, পাখি, স্তন্যপায়ী প্রাণী এবং অমেরুদণ্ডী প্রাণী সহ অসংখ্য প্রজাতির উদ্ভিদ এবং প্রাণীকে টিকিয়ে রাখে (Prakash, 2020; Singh and Prakash, 2025)। পাখি এবং জলাভূমি একটি গুরুত্বপূর্ণ পরিবেশগত সম্পর্ক ভাগ করে নেয়। পাখিরা বীজ ছড়িয়ে দিয়ে, কীটপতঙ্গ নিয়ন্ত্রণ করে এবং পুষ্টির চক্রাকারে আদান-প্রদান করে বাস্তুতন্ত্রের ভারসাম্য রক্ষায় ভূমিকা পালন করে। একইসাথে, পাখিরা জীববৈচিত্র্য বজায় রাখে এবং জলাভূমি বাস্তুতন্ত্রের স্বাস্থ্য নির্দেশ করে। ভারতে জলচরপাখি জলাভূমিতে প্রায়শই ভলো সংখ্যায় দেখা যায়, তাই বাস্তুতন্ত্রের সমৃদ্ধি এবং বৈচিত্র্যের সবচেয়ে স্পষ্ট সূচকগুলির মধ্যে একটি। জলাভূমি বৈচিত্র্যময় উদ্ভিদ এবং প্রাণীজগতের বসতি এবং সবচেয়ে জৈবিকভাবে উৎপাদনশীল বাস্তুতন্ত্রের অংশ (Wetland International, 2010)।

### ভারতের জলাভূমি:

ভারতে গড় বার্ষিক ১৩০ সেন্টিমিটারের বেশি বৃষ্টিপাত হয়। বৈচিত্র্যময় ভূপ্রকৃতি এবং জলবায়ুর কারণে বিভিন্ন ধরনের জলাভূমিকে টিকিয়ে রাখে। ভারতের

প্রাকৃতিক জলাভূমিগুলোর মধ্যে রয়েছে হিমালয়ের উঁচু অঞ্চলের হ্রদ, প্রধান নদীগুলোর প্লাবনভূমির জলাভূমি, শুষ্ক ও অর্ধ-শুষ্ক অঞ্চলের লবণাক্ত ও অস্থায়ী জলাভূমি, উপকূলীয় জলাভূমি যেমন উপহ্রদ, 'ব্যাগ ওয়াটার' এবং মোহনা; ম্যানগ্রোভ জলাভূমি; প্রবাল প্রাচীর এবং সামুদ্রিক জলাভূমি ইত্যাদি। প্রকৃতপক্ষে ভারতের জলাভূমিগুলো সমস্ত ধরনের বাস্তুতন্ত্রকে অন্তর্ভুক্ত করে। বিভিন্ন ধরনের প্রাকৃতিক জলাভূমি ছাড়াও, মানুষের তৈরি প্রচুর সংখ্যক জলাভূমিও প্রাণী ও উদ্ভিদের বৈচিত্র্যে অবদান রাখে। সেচ, জল সরবরাহ, বিদ্যুৎ, মাছচাষ এবং বন্যা নিয়ন্ত্রণের প্রয়োজনে তৈরি দেশের এই জলাভূমিগুলো সংখ্যায় অনেক। বিভিন্ন জলাধার, অগভীর পুকুর এবং অসংখ্য জলাশয় জীববৈচিত্র্যকে ও জলাভূমি সম্পদকে সমৃদ্ধ করে। অনুমান করা হয় যে, শুধুমাত্র স্বাদু জলের জলাভূমিগুলোই ভারতের পরিচিত জীববৈচিত্র্যের প্রায় ২০ শতাংশের আবাসস্থল (Prasad, et al, 2002)।

ভারতের জলাভূমিগুলো ৫৮.২ মিলিয়ন হেক্টর এলাকা জুড়ে বিস্তৃত, যার মধ্যে ধান চাষের জমিও আছে (Parikh & Parikh, 1998)। বেশিরভাগ অভ্যন্তরীণ জলাভূমি প্রত্যক্ষ বা পরোক্ষভাবে গঙ্গা, ব্রহ্মপুত্র, নর্মদা, গোদাবরী, কৃষ্ণা, কাবেরী এবং তাপ্তি-র মতো প্রধান নদীগুলোর উপর নির্ভরশীল। এগুলো গুজরাট ও রাজস্থানের উষ্ণ শুষ্ক অঞ্চল, পূর্ব ও পশ্চিম উপকূলের ব-দ্বীপ অঞ্চল, মধ্য ভারতের উচ্চভূমি, দক্ষিণ উপদ্বীপীয় ভারতের আর্দ্র অঞ্চল এবং আন্দামান ও নিকোবর এবং লাক্ষাদ্বীপ দ্বীপপুঞ্জ অর্ন্তস্থিত (Prasad, et al, 2002)। ভারতের প্রধান ধরনের জলাভূমিগুলো হলো:

(১) দক্ষিণাত্য উপদ্বীপের জলাধার, পুকুর এবং অন্যান্য জলাশয়, (২) উপদ্বীপের পশ্চিম উপকূলের 'ব্যাগ ওয়াটার' এবং মোহনা, (৩) গুজরাটের বিশাল লবণাক্ত জলাভূমি, (৪) গুজরাট থেকে পূর্বদিকে রাজস্থান ও মধ্যপ্রদেশ পর্যন্ত বিস্তৃত স্বাদু জলের হ্রদ ও জলাধার, (৫) ভারতের পূর্ব উপকূলের ব-দ্বীপীয় জলাভূমি (ম্যানগ্রোভ সহ), উপহ্রদ এবং লবণাক্ত জলাভূমি, (৬) সিন্ধু-গাঙ্গেয় সমভূমির জলাভূমি, বিল, তরাই জলা এবং চাউর ভূমি, (৭) ব্রহ্মপুত্রের প্লাবনভূমি এবং উত্তর-পূর্ব ভারতের পাহাড়ের জলাভূমি ও জলাশয়, (৮) কাশ্মীর ও লাডাখের পার্বত্য অঞ্চলের হ্রদ ও নদী, (৯) ভারতের দ্বীপপুঞ্জের জলাভূমি (প্রধানত ম্যানগ্রোভ সহযোগী এবং প্রবাল প্রাচীর)।

ভারতে জলাভূমির পরিমাণ ৫৮.২ মিলিয়ন হেক্টর এলাকার মধ্যে ধান চাষের অধীনে এলাকা ৪০.৯ মিলিয়ন হেক্টর, মৎস্য চাষের জন্য উপযুক্ত এলাকা ৩.৬ মিলিয়ন হেক্টর, প্রাকৃতিক মাছ শিকারের অধীনে এলাকা ২.৯ মিলিয়ন হেক্টর, ম্যানগ্রোভ ০.৪ মিলিয়ন হেক্টর, মোহনা ৩.৫ মিলিয়ন হেক্টর, 'ব্যাগ ওয়াটার' ৩.৫ মিলিয়ন হেক্টর ও জলাধার ৩.০ মিলিয়ন হেক্টর।

১৯৭১ সাল থেকে জলাভূমি সংরক্ষণের জন্য একটি আন্তর্জাতিক চুক্তি হয় যা রামসার কনভেনশনের অধীনে "আন্তর্জাতিক গুরুত্বের" জলাভূমি হিসেবে চিহ্নিত জলাভূমি। এই স্থানগুলো আন্তর্জাতিক গুরুত্বের জলাভূমিকে সুরক্ষা দেয়, যা জীববৈচিত্র্য এবং জল ব্যবস্থাপনায় সহায়তা করে। ২০১৪ সাল পর্যন্ত ভারতে ২৬টি রামসার স্থান ছিল, ২০১৪ সালের পর থেকে দেশ জুড়ে আরও ৬৭টি নতুন রামসার স্থান যুক্ত করা হয়েছে। ২০২৫ সালের অক্টোবর মাস পর্যন্ত দেশে ৯৪টি রামসার স্থান রয়েছে, যা ১৩,৬০,৮০৫.৬৩ হেক্টর এলাকা জুড়ে বিস্তৃত। ভারতে তামিলনাড়ুতে সর্বাধিক ২০টি রামসার স্থান রয়েছে।

## জলাভূমির পাখি: বাস্তুতন্ত্রের স্বাস্থ্যের সূচক:

জলাভূমির পাখি মেরুদণ্ডী এবং অমেরুদণ্ডী উভয় ধরনের প্রাণীর জন্য প্রাকৃতিক সূচক হিসেবে কাজ করে এবং জলাভূমির বাস্তুতন্ত্রে গুরুত্বপূর্ণ ভূমিকা পালন করে। ভারতে রেকর্ড করা ১,৩৪০টি পাখির প্রজাতির মধ্যে প্রায় ৩১০টি জলাভূমির উপর নির্ভরশীল, অন্যদিকে বিশ্বব্যাপী প্রায় ৯,০০০ পাখির প্রজাতি এই আবাসস্থলের উপর সম্পূর্ণ বা কিছুটা নির্ভরশীল (Parvin, et.al 2023)। শীতকালে পশ্চিম ও ইউরোপীয় দেশগুলি থেকে অনেক পরিযায়ী প্রজাতির পাখি এদেশে আসে। নির্দিষ্ট অনুমান অনুসারে, ভারতে পরিযায়ী পাখি মোট প্রজাতির প্রায় ২৪% (Agarwal, 2011)। ভারতে পাওয়া যায় ৩১০ প্রজাতির জলচর পাখির মধ্যে এর অর্ধেকই পরিযায়ী। তাদের প্রাচুর্য, বৈচিত্র্য এবং আচরণ জলের গুণমান, আবাসস্থলের অখণ্ডতা এবং দূষণের মাত্রার উপর নির্ভর করে। পাখির সংখ্যার পরিবর্তন পরিবেশগত ভারসাম্যহীনতার ইঙ্গিত দেয়, যা তাদের মূল্যবান করে তোলে। বিশাল জলাশয়ের উপস্থিতি পাখিদের খাদ্য এবং আশ্রয় দেয়। উচ্চ পুষ্টিগুণ এবং উৎপাদনশীলতার সাথে পরিবেশগতভাবে গুরুত্বপূর্ণ হওয়ায়, জলাভূমি পাখির বৈচিত্র্যের এক বড় উৎস। মানুষের জনসংখ্যা বৃদ্ধি, শিল্পায়ন, দূষণ ইত্যাদির কারণে জলাভূমির পরিবেশ ক্রমাগতভাবে বিঘ্নিত হচ্ছে।



ভারতে বিভিন্ন জলচর পাখির ৩০টি বংশের ২৪৩টি প্রজাতি সম্পূর্ণভাবে জলের উপর নির্ভরশীল। আর ১৬টি বংশের ৬৭টি প্রজাতি আংশিক বা পরোক্ষভাবে জলাভূমির উপর নির্ভরশীল। ভারতে জলচর পাখির উপর একটি পরিসংখ্যান নীচের সারণিতে বিশদে দেওয়া হল।

## ভারতে বিভিন্ন জলচর পাখির গোষ্ঠী:

ক্রমিক সংখ্যা	প্রচলিত গোষ্ঠীর নাম	পরিবারের নাম	বিশ্বে প্রাপ্ত প্রজাতির সংখ্যা	এশিয়া মহাদেশে প্রাপ্ত প্রজাতির সংখ্যা	ভারতে প্রাপ্ত প্রজাতির সংখ্যা	মন্তব্য
1	কালো- গলা ডুবুরি (Diver)	Gaviidae	5	4	1	আর্কটিক নুন হরিমানার যমুনা অববাহিকা এলাকায়
2	পানডুবি (Grebes)	Podicipedidae	22	6	5	
3	পেট্রেল (Petrels & Shearwaters)	Procellariidae	80	10	8	
4	Storm-petrels	Hydrobatidae	22	9	4	
5	গগনভেড় (Pelicans)	Pelecanidae	8	4	3	
6	Boobies	Sulidae	9	4	3	
7	পানকৌড়ি (Cormorants & Shags)	Phalacrocoracidae	37	11	3	
8	সাপ পাখি (Darter)	Anhingidae	4	3	1	
9	Frigatebirds	Fregatidae	5	4	3	
10	কোচ বক, গোবক, কর্চে বক, কাক, বাচকা (Hérons, Egrets & Bitterns)	Ardeidae	62	30	20	
11	শামুকখোল, মানিকজোড় (Storks)	Ciconiidae	19	11	9	
12	কাস্তেচরা ও খুন্তে বক (Ibises & Spoonbills)	Threskiornithidae	35	9	4	
13	ফ্লেমিংগো (Flamingos)	Phoenicopteridae	5	2	2	
14	কাদম্ব, শরাল, বাদি হাঁস ইত্যাদি (Ducks, Geese & Swans)	Anatidae	160	62	43	
15	সারস (Cranes)	Gruidae	15	9	6	
16	খয়রি, ডাহুক, জলমুরগি, কোরা ইত্যাদি (Rails & Coots)	Rallidae	146	34	17	
17	Finfoot	Heliornithidae	3	1	1	Masked Finfoot হলো ভারতে পাওয়া এই পরিবারের একমাত্র প্রজাতি খুব বিরল যা সারা বিশ্বে অত্যন্ত বিপদাপন্ন প্রজাতি, ভারতের উত্তরপূর্ব এলাকায় দেখা যায়।
18	জলপিপি, জলময়ূর (Jacanas)	Heliornithidae	8	3	2	
19	কুনাল পাখি (Painted Snipe)	Rostratulidae	2	1	1	Greater Painted Snipe একমাত্র ভারতীয় প্রজাতি।
20	Oystercatcher	Haematopodidae	11	2	1	Eurasian Oystercatcher একমাত্র শীতের পরিযায়ী প্রজাতি ভারতের উত্তর - পশ্চিম এলাকার উপকূলে দেখা যায়।
21	হট্টিমা, সোনালী বাটান, জিরিয়া (Plovers, Dotterels & Lapwings)	Charadriidae	67	22	19	

ক্রমিক সংখ্যা	প্রচলিত গোষ্ঠীর নাম	পরিবারের নাম	বিশ্বে প্রাপ্ত প্রজাতির সংখ্যা	এশিয়া মহাদেশে প্রাপ্ত প্রজাতির সংখ্যা	ভারতে প্রাপ্ত প্রজাতির সংখ্যা	মন্তব্য
22	কাদাখোঁচা, বালুবাটান, গুলিন্দা, চোপ্পা, জৌরলি (Sandpipers, Stints, Snipes, Godwits & Curlews)	Scolopacidae	90	60	37	
23	লাল ঠোঁঙ্গি (Ibisbill, Avocets & Stilts)	Recurvirostridae	3	3	3	
24	Phalaropes	Phalaropidae	3	2	2	
25	Crab- Plovers	Drolnidae	1	1	1	শীতের একমাত্র পরিযায়ী প্রজাতি ভারতের উত্তর - পশ্চিম এলাকার গুজরাটের কচ্ছ উপকূলে দেখা যায়।
26	শিলাবাটান (Stone Plover/Thick-knee)	Burhinidae	9	3	2	
27	বাবুইবাটান (Pratincoles)	Glareolidae	18	4	3	
28	Skuas & Jaegers	Stercorariidae	18	4	3	
29	গাঙ্গুচিল, পানপায়রা, গাঙ্গুচ্যা (Gull, Terns, and Noddies)	Laridae	91	45	30	
29	Skimmers	Rynchopidae	3	3	1	Indian Skimmer কেবলমাত্র পাঞ্জাব ও মধ্য ভারতে পাওয়া যায়।

তাছাড়া আরও ১৬টি পরিবারের পাখি জলচর না হলেও জলাভূমির উপর পরোক্ষভাবে বা আংশিকভাবে নির্ভরশীল। এরা প্রধানত জলাভূমির কাছাকাছি বাস করে ও মূলত জল থেকে মাছ ও অন্যান্য জলচরজীব শিকার করে। তার একটি তালিকা নীচে দেওয়া হল:-

ক্রমিক সংখ্যা	গোষ্ঠীর নাম	পরিবারের নাম	এই গোষ্ঠীর প্রধান পাখিরা
1	Eagles, Kites & Harriers	Accipitridae	শঙ্খ চিল (Brahminy Kite), সাদা পেট ঈগল (White-bellied Sea-Eagle), কোড়াল (Pallas's Fish-Eagle), White-tailed Sea-Eagle, Lesser and Greater Grey-headed Fish Eagle, Western Marsh-Harrier, Greater Spotted Eagle, Steppe Eagle, Eastern Imperial Eagle
2	Osprey	Pandionidae	মাছমোরাল (Osprey)
3	Falcon	Falconidae	বহেরি (Peregrine Falcon)
4	Partridges	Phasianidae	Swamp Francolin
5	Owls	Strigidae	ভুতুম পেঁচা (Brown Fish-Owl), তামাটে মেছো পেঁচা (Tawny Fish-Owl), মেটে মেছো পেঁচা (Buffy Fish-Ow)
6	Kingfishers	Alcedinidae	ছোটো মাছরাঙা (Small Blue Kingfisher), নীলকান মাছরাঙা (Blue-eared Kingfisher), বাদামী ডানা মাছরাঙা (Brown-winged Kingfisher), গুড়িয়াল (Stork-billed Kingfisher), লাল মাছরাঙা (Ruddy Kingfisher), সাদাবুক মাছরাঙা (White-breasted Kingfisher), কালোমাথা মাছরাঙা (Black-capped Kingfisher), কণ্ঠী মাছরাঙা (Collared Kingfisher), কড়িকাঠ (Pied Kingfisher)
7	Swallow and Marlin	Hirundinidae	বালি নাকুটি (Sand Martin), নাকুটি (Plain Martin), মেঠো আবাবিল (Common Swallow), ছিট আবাবিল (Red-rumped swallow)
8	Bee-eaters	Meropidae	সাধারণ বাঁশপাতি (Asian Green Bee-eater), বড় বাঁশপাতি (Blue-tailed Bee-eater), লালমাথা বাঁশপাতি (Chestnut-headed Bee-eater) ইত্যাদি

ক্রমিক সংখ্যা	গোষ্ঠীর নাম	পরিবারের নাম	এই গোষ্ঠীর প্রধান পাখিরা
9	Wagtail & pipit	Motacillidae	সাদা খঞ্জন(White Wagtail), হলুদ খঞ্জন(Yellow Wagtail), হলদেমাথা খঞ্জন(Citrine Wagtail), সাদা কালো খঞ্জন(Pied Wagtail), ধূসর খঞ্জন(Grey Wagtail), লালগলা বগেরী(Red-throated Pipit), গোলাপী পিপিট(Rosy Pipit)
10	Dippers	Cinclidae	সাদাবুক ডুবুরি(White-throated Dipper), বাদামী ডুবুরি(Brown Dipper),
11	Wrens	Troglodytidae	ফুটকি(Winter Wren)
12	Accentor	Prunellidae	সোনালী পানগির্দি (Golden-fronted Redstart), ধলাটুপি পানগির্দি(White-capped Redstart), কালোপিঠ চেরালেজ(Black-backed Forktail)
13	Babblers	Timaliinae	বাদা ছাতারে(Marsh Babler), জর্ডনের ছাতারে(Jerdon's Babbler)
14	Parrotbills	Panurinae	কালোবুক টিয়াটুটি(Black-breasted Parrotbill).
15	Prinias & Warblers	Sylviinae	ঘাসফুটকি(Rufous-rumped Grass-Warbler), Long-tailed Prinia, Broad-tailed Grass-Warbler
16	Whistlers	Pachycephalinae	নোনাবন শিসমার(Mangrove Whistler)

প্রধান জলপাখি পরিবারের মধ্যে, Anatidae (হাঁস, রাজহাঁস) পরিবারকে সবচেয়ে বেশি গুরুত্ব দেওয়া হয় এবং মানুষকে সবচেয়ে বেশি আকর্ষণ করে। পাঁচশো বছরের পুরনো মিশরীয় সমাধিতে রাজহাঁসের চিত্র পাওয়া যায়। বন্য জলচর পাখিকে ঘিরে অনেক কিংবদন্তি ছড়িয়ে আছে; বিশেষ করে রাজহাঁসকে প্রাচীনকাল থেকেই বিশ্বজুড়ে পবিত্র এবং জাদুকরী গুণাবলীর অধিকারী হিসেবে বিবেচনা করা হয়ে আসছে। ভারতসহ বিশ্বের নানা দেশের শিল্প, সাহিত্যে, মহাকাব্যে জলচর পাখিদের নিয়ে অনেক চর্চা, কিংবদন্তী খুঁজে পাওয়া যায়। অনেক দেশে এই পাখিগুলিকে খুব পবিত্র বলে মনে করা হয়। জলচর পাখিরা যেখানে বাসা তৈরি করে, তা জনপ্রিয়ভাবে 'হেরনারজ' নামে পরিচিত। ভারতে উপনিবেশগতভাবে (হেরনারিতে) বাসা বাঁধা ২৬ প্রজাতির পাখির কথা জানা যায় এবং তাদের মধ্যে ইন্ডিয়ান পন্ড হেরন, ক্যাটল ইগ্রেট, লিটল করমোরেন্ট, ব্ল্যাক-ক্রাউনড নাইট হেরন এবং লিটল ইগ্রেট হল সবচেয়ে বেশী পরিমাণে বাসা বাঁধার প্রজাতি (Subramanyum, 1966)।

## জলাভূমি বাস্তুতন্ত্রের জন্য ক্রমবর্ধমান হুমকি

শুধুমাত্র এশিয়াতেই, কৃষি, বাঁধ নির্মাণ এবং অন্যান্য ব্যবহারের কারণে প্রতি বছর প্রায় ৫০০০ বর্গকিলোমিটার জলাভূমি এলাকা হারিয়ে যায় (McAllister et al., 2001)। তাছাড়া এই পরিবেশে জল এবং অন্যান্য সম্পদের উপর নির্ভরতা বিশ্বব্যাপী বাস্তুতন্ত্রের উপর প্রচণ্ড চাপ সৃষ্টি করেছে, যার ফলে প্রজাতির বৈচিত্র্য এবং সংখ্যার উপর সরাসরি প্রভাব পড়েছে (Molur et al., 2011)। বিশ্বব্যাপী, জলাভূমির ক্ষতির প্রধান কারণগুলি হল: নগরায়ন; ভূমি ব্যবহারের পরিবর্তন; কৃষি ব্যবহারের জন্য সেচ, অবকাঠামোগত উন্নয়ন; শিল্প বর্জ্য এবং কৃষি রাসায়নিক সার ও কীটনাশক থেকে জল দূষণ; জলবায়ু পরিবর্তন।

১৯৫১ থেকে ২০১১ সালের মধ্যে, ভারতের মোট জনসংখ্যা ০.৪ বিলিয়ন থেকে বেড়ে ১.২ বিলিয়নে দাঁড়িয়েছে, যার গড় বৃদ্ধির হার প্রায় ২২%। ১৯০১ থেকে ১৯৯১ সাল পর্যন্ত ৯০ বছরের সময়কালে, নগর এলাকার সংখ্যা দ্বিগুণ হয়েছে এবং শহরের জনসংখ্যা আটগুণ বৃদ্ধি পেয়েছে (Basi & kumar, 2012)। এই বৃদ্ধির মাত্রা ক্রমবর্ধমান জনসংখ্যার জল এবং খাদ্য চাহিদা মেটাতে জলাভূমি এবং প্লাবনভূমির উপর প্রচণ্ড চাপ সৃষ্টি করেছে। ১৯৫০-১৯৫১ এবং ২০০৮-২০০৯ সালের মধ্যে, ভারতে মোট চাষযোগ্য জমি প্রায় ১২৯ লক্ষ বর্গ হেক্টরে থেকে বেড়ে ১৫৬ লক্ষ বর্গ হেক্টরে দাঁড়িয়েছে। এছাড়াও, অকৃষি ব্যবহারের (বাণিজ্যিক বা আবাসিক ব্যবহারের) আবাসিক এলাকা ৯ লক্ষ বর্গ হেক্টর থেকে বেড়ে ২৬ লক্ষ বর্গ হেক্টরে দাঁড়িয়েছে (তথ্য সূত্র: India stat)। ভারতের বেশিরভাগ প্রধান নদী অববাহিকায়, কৃষি ও অকৃষি উভয় ক্ষেত্রেই ব্যবহারের জন্য জমি বৃদ্ধির ফলে ক্রমবর্ধমান জনসংখ্যার চাহিদা মেটাতে প্লাবনভূমি, প্রাথমিক বন, তৃণভূমি এবং সংশ্লিষ্ট স্বাদুজলের বাস্তুতন্ত্রের রূপান্তরের মূল্য দিতে হয়েছে (Jhou et.al, 2006)।

জলাভূমির জীববৈচিত্র্যের মূল্যায়ন করারও প্রচেষ্টা করা হয়েছে। ২০১১-২০১২ সালে, মৎস্য সম্পদ (সামুদ্রিক এবং অভ্যন্তরীণ উভয়) ভারতের জিডিপিতে (বর্তমান মূল্যে) প্রায় ১০.৯ বিলিয়ন মার্কিন ডলার ছিল (কৃষি মন্ত্রণালয়, ২০১২)। অভ্যন্তরীণ মৎস্য সম্পদের উপর ভারতের মত দেশে প্রায় ৬০ লক্ষ মানুষের জীবন ও জীবিকা নির্বাহ হয়।

জলাভূমি জলচরপাখিদের জন্য গুরুত্বপূর্ণ আবাসস্থল হিসেবে কাজ করে—পরিযান এবং অন্যান্য সময়ে প্রয়োজনীয় সম্পদ সরবরাহ করে এবং প্রজননের ক্ষেত্র হিসাবে গণ্য হয়, তাদের জৈব-ভৌগোলিক বন্টন এই অঞ্চলের পরিবেশগত ভারসাম্য বজায় রাখার ক্ষেত্রে গুরুত্বপূর্ণ ভূমিকা পালন করে। তবে, দ্রুতশিল্পায়ন এবং ক্রমবর্ধমান মানুষের চাপের ফলে জলাভূমিতে দূষণের মাত্রা বৃদ্ধি পেয়েছে, যার ফলে স্থানীয় এবং পরিযায়ী জলপাখির সংখ্যার গতিশীলতা এবং পরিসরনের

পরিবর্তন এসেছে। যদিও জলাভূমি জলাচরপাখিদের জন্য সবচেয়ে গুরুত্বপূর্ণ আবাসস্থলগুলির মধ্যে একটি, তবুও মানুষের ক্রমবর্ধমান কার্যকলাপের ফলে ব্যাপক অবক্ষয় এবং ক্ষতি হয়েছে। মানুষ ও প্রাকৃতিক সম্পদের সীমিত প্রাপ্যতা কার্যকর আবাসস্থল সংরক্ষণকে আরও জটিল করে তোলে, যা জলাভূমি সংরক্ষণকে একটি জরুরি অগ্রাধিকারে পরিণত করে।

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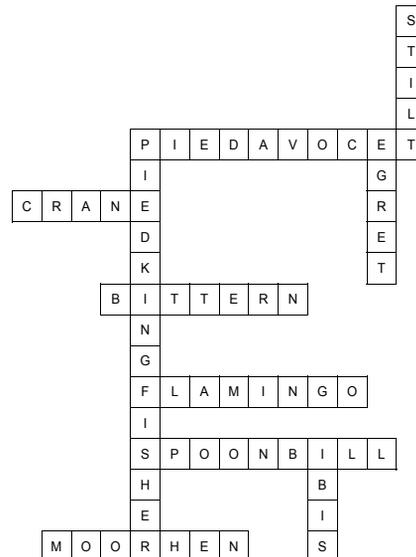


### About Author

## 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



#### Across

- 2 Uprturned nose? No, upturned beaks!/These b&w birds are found in creeks!
- 4 A bird or a machine? Perhaps both/ \_\_\_\_\_ your neck to crack this code
- 5 The name's not sweet, neither sour/Finding this bird needs a lot of eye power!
- 6 This rosy beauty in full height stands/One of the glories of the West's wetlands.
- 7 A piece of cutlery found in this bird's name/Used by it to catch its game!
- 9 If you solve this, you get ten on ten/This bird is none other than the Eurasian \_\_\_\_\_.

#### Down

- 1 These feathery fellows are strangely built/Seems as if they're standing on \_\_\_\_\_.
- 2 Fair is foul, and foul is fair/ Look how this black and white bird doth hover in the air!
- 3 Do not fret, do not fret/Just find the right rhyme, and you won't 'regret'.
- 8 These leggy birds have downcurved bills/Crustaceans are their primary meals.



TITASH CHAKRABARTI | ANANDARUP BHADRA

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## SCHOOL OF BIRDS

### NOV 2025 - JAN 2026

SPREAD THE WORD, BIRD BY BIRD

**S**chool of Birds is the flagship initiative of Birdwatchers' Society, 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.

Over the last three months, we have taken participants across a remarkable range of urban & peri-urban landscapes in and around Kolkata, allowing them to encounter biodiversity in living, breathing habitats rather than textbooks. **Walks at sites such as Nalban Bheri, Dhalipara, Makaltala & Tihuria in the East Kolkata Wetlands, and the grasslands & marshes of Baruipur, introduced participants to rich ecosystems where birds, butterflies still flourish..**

Equally important were explorations of urban green spaces like Rabindra Sarobar, Subhas Sarobar, Banabitan Biodiversity Park, the AJC Bose Indian Botanic Gardens, and institutional campuses such as Modern High School and IIM Joka.

## WINTER WALKS

Across wetlands, grasslands, city parks, campuses, and community venues, the participants encountered not just birds and butterflies but also the idea that nature exists everywhere—and that attentive observation, curiosity, games and storytelling can transform familiar landscapes into spaces of discovery and care.

Nature journaling, quizzes on evolution and taxonomy, and informal observation sessions helped students recognise everyday backyard wildlife and understand their ecological connections.

Together, these shared experiences nurtured not only knowledge, but also a lasting sense of wonder and belonging within the natural world, and a sense of responsibility and stewardship towards it..



*Storytelling at Subhas Sarobar*



*Nature Journaling at EKW*



*Sensory awakening at EKW*



*Puzzle solving at B. Garden*

## YOUNG BIRDERS' MONTH

The first edition of Young Birders' Month, a nationwide celebration of birds for children initiated by Early Bird and WWF-India, was a resounding success to say the least. November was the chosen month and BWS-School of Birds took part whole-heartedly. Out of the 202 events that happened throughout the country, we conducted 12 events, across 6 districts of West Bengal, bringing 276 young participants closer to birds and Nature at large.

Our work was covered by Newspaper dailies viz. Times of India, Anandabazar Patrika, Sangbad Pratidin

and The Wall (online). Interviews by two of our young members were featured in the children’s newspaper RobinAge, a welcome recognition for the future stewards of our environment. Here’s what they had to say:

**Abhigyan Aich, Class 7,  
Indus Valley World School, Kolkata**

🔴🔴 I frequently go on bird walks in places like Rabindra Sarobar and Banabitan, during which experts teach us to identify birds based on their colouring and calls. I’ve spotted many birds, including the white-crested laughingthrush, during nature walks and family trips. I’m fond of nature walks as they give me a break from the hustle and bustle of city life and help me reconnect with nature. My family members often accompany me on nature walks and my passion for birds has sparked a birding interest among them. I also engage in backyard bird-watching. We have many plants and feeders near my house that create a welcoming environment for birds. As many migratory birds visit India, we need to ensure the areas where they stop are well protected. 🔴🔴



**Anubhav Banerjee, Class 6,  
Don Bosco School, Park Circus, Kolkata**

🔴🔴 I have been on many bird walks, including walks in Baruipur and East Kolkata Wetlands, where it was fun to explore birds in their habitat with binoculars and scopes. I spotted many birds such as Siberian stonechats, herons, ducks and shrikes. Shrikes are known for their extraordinary hunting behaviour. These birds press their prey against thorns or other sharp objects that hold it in place and they even return later to feed on the stuck prey. As the greenery around us is reducing, going on bird walks helps me reconnect with nature. I learn new facts, which helps me educate myself and also share my knowledge with others. As birds are an important part of the food chain, learning about them and their habitats can save huge ecosystems. 🔴🔴



### **BIRD PUPPET SHOW : “JOLABHUMI UTSAB 2026”**

For the last 6 months, we have been collaborating with Disappearing Dialogues (dD) in building a puppet show highlighting the issues threatening the vulnerable ecology of the East Kolkata Wetlands (EKW), a Ramsar site. Our work started with the three wetland fellows of dD-BWS Wetland Fellowship Program. Soon, it grew to a larger production involving more than 30 children from the Makaltala village, the chosen venue for the 9th edition on the Jolabhumi Utsab (a dD initiative) to be held on 14th February, 2026.

The curtain raiser for the festival was held on 25th January, with people from the city proper joining hands with the community at Makaltala for an immersive day-long experience, including nature walks, nature workshops, Jhumur performances as a part of climate memory, apart from the fruit of our labour - the puppet show itself, a work in perpetual progress.



Preparing landscapes, Practising movements!



Bringing the show to Life!



Bird Games from the curtain raiser

## OTHER HIGHLIGHTS

We would like to thank Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta, for granting permission to the members of BWS-Citizens' Interest Group for a Bird Walk within their campus in January.

BWS collaboration with IIM-C started during Campus Bird Count 2025, under the leadership of former BWS member, Late Mr. Dev Baul, who was also an IIM alumnus. We wish to continue his legacy by planning engagements with interested students and faculty members of IIM-C on a regular basis in the years to come.

Our work with the Bird Club at Children's Welfare Association High School for Girls, Sarsuna, has completed its 2nd year. After careful assessments, we have added seven more members from our year-long program with a new batch, to the Bird Club.

The Bird Club is entering its 3rd year, and we have have long-term projects with them in mind, starting with mapping the biodiversity around the school and understanding the connections between them.

We are also planning to start off work with another new batch of students from the 8th standard for the upcoming academic year, to keep the cyclical process that keeps the Bird Club and the idea behind it moving ahead with mindful purpose.

In other highlights, during this period we have developed a Nature Quiz for beginners, designed to focus on aspects of bird identification and behaviour. We had conducted an online session with children as well as adults associated with WWF-India, as a part of Young Birders' Month celebrations.



As a part of priming educators to lead bird walks for the first time during GBBC 2026 and learn some tips and tricks for leading bird walks in general, we have received an invitation from Bird Count India to conduct a webinar on this topic. We are looking forward eagerly!

## SUMMING UP

We are glad to have partnered with WWF-India, IIM Calcutta, & ATAABI Bird Foundation for the first time during this period. We are planning ahead for our long-term ventures with all our partner organizations and institutions.

We are looking forward to host a number of schools during Jolabhumi Utsab 2026 and we are preparing for meaningful action during Great Backyard Bird Count 2026.

We thank all the volunteers and the BWS family for making this work possible. Our partners, and host institutions are also invaluable in our efforts. We also look forward to publishing our yearly report in the next edition of FANTAIL.

### FROM NOV 2025 TO JANUARY 2026

• Number of Children <b>569</b>	• Children- Contact Hours <b>3350</b>	• Number of Institutions <b>11</b>
• Number of Execution Partners <b>13</b>	• Adult- Contact Hours <b>1210</b>	• Number of Adults <b>221</b>



**We're one big family**



## BWS ACTIVITIES

# BWS WINTER CAMP, DECEMBER 13-17, 2025

## KALINGA MANE, AGUMBE, KARNATAKA

**K**alinga Mane – famously known as the “Home of the King Cobra” – became home to the BWS birders during these five immersive days in the wild. The camp was organised and facilitated by the Kalinga Foundation at its Kalinga Centre for Rainforest Ecology (KCRE) in Agumbe. Established in 2012, KCRE houses a research, training, and snake rescue centre at Agumbe, and is guided by a vision to evolve into a self-sustaining, premier conservation institution. It seeks to advance environmental education, nurture responsible citizenship, and provide state-of-the-art scientific training in environmental field studies. In recent years, KCRE has also opened its doors to a limited number of responsible, nature-loving visitors, ensuring that conservation and sustainability remain central to its engagement. Located deep within the Western Ghats, Agumbe’s tropical evergreen rainforest is a realm of mystery and ecological richness. It supports one of the most diverse assemblages of flora and fauna in the country and holds the distinction of having the highest density of King Cobras in India. Often referred to as the “Cherrapunji of the South” for its high rainfall, the Western Ghats – a UNESCO World Heritage Site – are

globally recognised for their extraordinary biodiversity and dramatic landscapes.

The rainforest surrounding Kalinga Mane teems with life: mammals, reptiles, spiders, butterflies, moths, innumerable insects, and a remarkable diversity of birds. It is also home to leeches and ticks – persistent reminders that in a rainforest, every life form, however small or unsettling, plays its part in the grand ecological tapestry.

For many BWS members, this camp marked their very first step into the rainforests of the Western Ghats – a biodiversity hotspot celebrated for its remarkable bouquet of endemic birds. From the haunting calls echoing through the canopy to fleeting glimpses of brilliantly coloured forest specialists, the experience opened a new chapter in their birding journey, introducing them to species found nowhere else in the world.

**You can find the trip report here: <https://ebird.org/tripreport/442218/623817>.**

We present below few snippets shared by the campers:

## **RETURN TO THE WESTERN GHATS: NEW ENCOUNTERS AND THE PHANTOM OF AGUMBE**

- Dr Anirban Bhaduri

This was my eighth trip to the Western Ghats. On my first trip with family, I had a glimpse of the White-bellied Treepie and the Dark-fronted Babbler, in Tamil Nadu. On another trip to Goa, the White-bellied Woodpecker, a giant bird of the woodpecker family had given a tantalising glimpse. So a camp in the Western Ghats? What was in it for me? Well, I needed the break and it was the promise of good company, the camaraderie and bonding that happens in a typical BWS camp were the main attractions, for which I signed up. Also an opportunity to explore the Ghats in Karnataka, where I hadn't been before, especially with a Tropical Rainforest Research Centre thrown in. Agumbe more than lived up to its expectations. Most of the Western Ghat rarities were all visitors to the camp, starting from early morning of Day 1.

My personal best was the White-bellied Blue Flycatcher, that we spied in the dark undergrowth and had time to appreciate. I had heard this bird earlier, but this was the first time I could enjoy its beauty. Apart from the avian life, we learnt a lot about insects, arachnids and lizards from the experienced naturalists and researchers who accompanied



**Brown Fish Owl, Pic by Anirban Bhaduri**

us. The Indian Draco, a flying lizard was a first too. The highlight was an enlightening interaction with the founders of 'Kālinga Mane, the Abode of the King Cobra'. The accommodation was excellent and so was the local cuisine.

We came back, with each member having returned with some individual goals achieved, but as a team, we did quite well as the trip report shows. I had two lifers, the Malabar Imperial Pigeon and Malabar Starling, but the White-bellied Treepie remained a phantom presence, revealing itself on the first day itself and then eluded me for the rest of our stay. Will look forward to the next opportunity to encountering her again.

## **LIFERS AND LEARNING: A CAMP TO REMEMBER**

**- Pampa Mistri**

The day it was announced that 2025 winter camp will be at Agumbe rainforest area, excitement started building up. Kingdom of the King cobra - we are going to visit! And not only that, eBird listing showed so many lifers for me!! Apart from birds, mammals and nature, another cherished part is the good company of birder friends - knowledgeable and witty!

Grouping and planning for 2025 BWS winter camp started on 29 Aug 2025 when our secretary Sujan Chatterjee formed a WhatsApp group for winter camp participants. Finally, 10 members signed up to venture into the rainforest at Agumbe. Excitement soared as we began planning our tickets, accompanied by lively discussions about the forest's notorious ticks and leeches.

This time we all sadly missed our regular camper and senior member ever energetic Dev Baul - our "Deb-da". At every BWS camp, Deb-da was always present as a participant, accompanied by his wife. This time also Deb-da was the first to enquire about the route to reach the camp from Kolkata. But unfortunately, the



**In the field Indiana Sarkar Or Swarup Jones**

same afternoon he passed away. We were utterly shocked at his sudden and untimely demise. We extend our heartfelt condolences to all his family members and wish for his soul to rest in peace.

This is the first camp of BWS, where all members had to wash their utensils including tea/coffee cups!! This was such a reality check for the members!

Other than the birds, I was quite excited to sit by the side of the stream and to watch the dancing frogs on the rocks!! But that is better observed in monsoon, not winter!

Birding was quite rewarding for me with 23 lifers! Total 125 species we observed there.

At this very camp, Swarup achieved a milestone, his 1000th bird in India! So, at the end of the trip, we had a nice celebration while waiting at the airport in between the flights back home. Not only birds, with so many knowledgeable people around, BWS camps are perfect place for knowledge sharing, as well as fun with lovely sporting people.

## LESSONS FROM AGUMBE: TICKS, BULLETS AND BROKEN CHAIRS

-Major B S Parihar



Blue-capped Rock Thrush, Pic by BS Parihar

It is heartening to know that we made a positive impression at Agumbe camp and our visit is being talked about (as reported by Prashanth and Gauri Shankar). Representing BWS at any level/forum/place comes with a lot of responsibility and we are glad we lived up to it.

Three learnings from this trip:

1. Looking at the tick bite marks on my esteemed neighbour Dr. Bhaduri, my tick bite seems like it came from a juvenile (inexperienced) tick; let's call it Tikku.
2. Never knew that I had been riding a bullet all my life.. Brrrrmmmm Brrrrmmmm...
3. Seemingly docile people turn violent at the drop of a hat and start breaking chairs and glass shelves, for no rhyme or reason.

Till we meet again and learn new things about each other.

## AN IMMERSIVE JOURNEY OF DISCOVERY

- Malobika Roy

I truly enjoyed my visit to the Kalinga Centre for Rainforest Ecology. The administrative arrangements made by the senior members of BWS were highly commendable. From seamless transportation and well-planned bird walks to the breathtaking sight of meteor falls and the memorable visit to Koodlu Tirtha Waterfalls, every detail was thoughtfully organised. The good food and the punctual, well-synchronised schedule of activities added greatly to the overall experience.

I particularly appreciated the guidance in identifying birds by their calls and flight patterns, and learning to document them accurately in the eBird list – it was an invaluable learning experience for me. I am grateful to everyone for their warmth, support, and wonderful company throughout the camp.



Greater Racket-tailed Drongo,  
Pic by BS Parihar



Dark-fronted Babbler, Pic by Chaiti Bannerjee

## A PERFECT SCORE: 100% BIRDING SUCCESS

- Swarup Sarkar

A lovely camp with 100% birding success and lovely food plus best in class accommodation Thanks to all of you for making it so enjoyable. Enjoyed it at its fullest



Orange Minivet,  
Pic by BS Parihar



Grey-headed Bulbul, Pic by Sujan Chatterjee



White-bellied Woodpecker,  
Pic by Sujan Chatterjee

## **FEEDBACK FROM THE ORGANISERS:**

*For a place that has become synonymous with reptiles, welcoming bird watchers to the six-day birdwatchers' educational programme felt like a dream come true moment for us at Kalinga Foundation.*

*In the Western Ghats, a biodiversity hotspot with thick foliage and low light, a birdwatcher may almost hear a challenge from the birds, telling, 'Let me see if you can spot me!'*

*You can hear them flutter, listen to their songs and chirps, and in a whiff they may fly past you to settle beneath a leaf to merge against the many shades of green. It was then that we witnessed the real dedication of the team from the Birdwatchers' Society (BWS). They slowed down, tuned in, and had the patience to walk, look, and enjoy the little moments as much as the exhilarating moments when they did spot and photograph a bird.*

*Spotting the Grey Junglefowl topped the list of lifers for a few, while the Malabar Whistling Thrush, Malabar Trogon, and Rosefinch made their way into most captures.*

*For our students at the Kalinga Foundation, the team's disciplined approach to watching birds and their diligence in identifying and counting felt like an unspoken lesson that transpired over the six days.*

*Wild spaces, minds, and knowledge come together when teams like the BWS and Kalinga Foundation join hands, inspiring more people to connect with nature through birdwatching.*

*The team has left a lasting impression. Even now, most of our birdwalks carry stories and knowledge exchanged with the BWS team. We eagerly await more such gatherings and wish the best as they continue to inspire.*

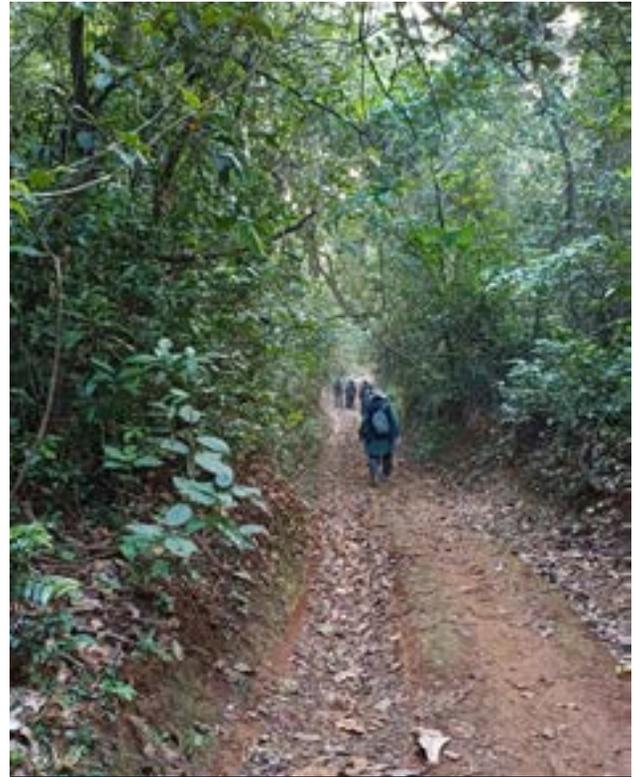
**SHARMILA GOWRI SHANKAR**  
**ASST. DIRECTOR**  
**KALINGA CENTRE FOR RAINFOREST ECOLOGY (KCRE)**



Glad-eye Bushbrown-Endemic to Agumbe, Pic by Pampa Mistri



Through the living steps



Walking the trail



Bicoloured Frog, Pic by BS Parihar



Lion-tailed Macaque, Pic by Chaiti Bannerjee



Height Doesn't Matter



Spotted Owlet, Pic by Batul P



The Camp Main Hall





## BWS ACTIVITIES

# BWS COASTAL CAMP 2026

**T**he Birdwatchers' Society has been consistently conducting bird camps around the Gangetic Delta and the Sundarbans settlements every year since 2020. These annual coastal expeditions have steadily built a rich tradition of exploration, documentation, and camaraderie, while contributing valuable field observations from one of India's most dynamic and fragile ecosystems.

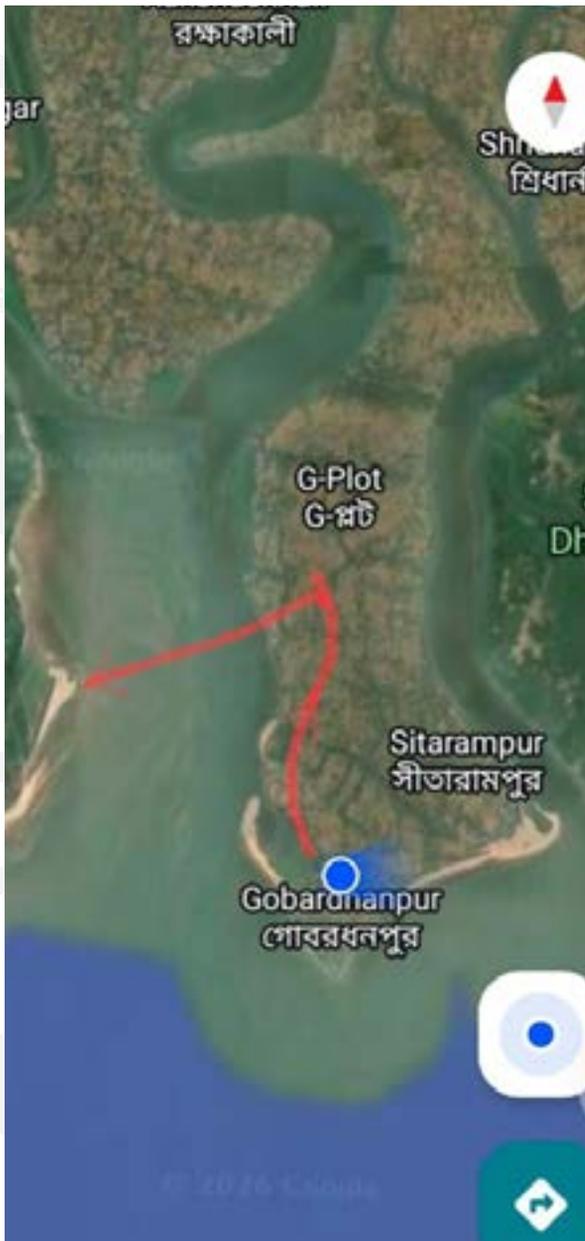
BWS Coastal Camp 2026 carried this legacy forward with a focused objective – to explore the relatively under-birded G-Plot area, known for its scarcity of checklists, while also covering the famed Lothian Island. The aim was not merely to revisit established birding grounds, but to expand the Society's documentation efforts into lesser-explored terrain.

More than 20 enthusiastic birdwatchers came together for this coastal adventure, relishing the opportunity to survey habitats where systematic birding has been minimal. The strategic proximity of the base location proved to be a significant advantage, allowing the team to dedicate a full, uninterrupted day to birding at Lothian Island – a luxury made possible by reduced travel time.

The weather was exceptionally favourable, adding to the overall experience. The team embraced

the rawness of the deltaic landscape, venturing across expansive mudflats and quite literally getting themselves muddy in the determined pursuit of species. It was immersive fieldwork – demanding yet deeply rewarding – as participants scanned tidal creeks, mangrove edges, and open flats for waders, gulls, and raptors.

Although the much-anticipated rarities such as Nordmann’s Greenshank and Eurasian Oystercatcher – recorded in previous years – remained elusive this time, the spirit of exploration never waned. The camp concluded on a spectacular note when a pod of Humpback Dolphins surfaced around the boat, almost as if to see the team off. Their energetic feeding display around the vessel provided a dramatic and unforgettable finale.



The area surveyed

Overall, BWS Coastal Camp 2026 was a true adventure – marked by exploration, teamwork, resilience, and the enduring thrill of birding in the wild delta.

**Trip report**

<https://ebird.org/tripreport/473138>



Lesser Whistling Ducks following our boat



On the lookout

**BWS Coastal Camp Participants:**

- *Manjula Desai*
- *Tisha Mukherjee*
- *Saikat Das*
- *Suman Das*
- *Hasnat Hossain*
- *Sourav Mondal*
- *Arunava Dutta*
- *Bhaskarjyoti Banerjee*
- *Tirthankar Roy Chowdhury*
- *Asabul Islam*
- *Dinesh Pradhan*
- *Swarup Sarkar*
- *Paramanu Sarkar*
- *Swarnab Ghosh*
- *Saptarshi Mukherjee*
- *Sunanda Kumar Das*
- *Sayantana Majumdar*
- *Soumi Chaudhury*
- *Sankha Mishra*
- *Kanad Baidya*
- *Avijit Das*
- *Santanab Majumdar*

**Supported by:**

*Mridul Kanti Kar, Mrinal Kanti Kar, Koushik Mukhopaddhay*



## BWS COASTAL CAMP 2026

### Camper's Feedback



This year's BWS coastal camp was coordinated by Warbler's Adventure managed by Mridul Kanti Kar, Mrinal Kanti Kar, and Kaushik Mukhopadhyay, who are also BWS members. Mrinal and Kaushik arrived a day early at the hotel to take care of all the arrangements.

Thank you all for making the three days memorable; stories, people, places, knowledge, food, laughter and new birding buddies...

Thanks to BWS for arranging this tour.

Soumi Chaudhury 



Amazing would be an understatement if I even attempt to describe last 3 days !!! I am truly impressed by the punctuality and dedication of our members—everyone woke-up promptly from bed whenever the leaders called, even at 4 a.m. or 5 a.m., all set and ready to join the birding session with great enthusiasm and team spirit. Some amazing memories made, met some wonderful people across age groups!

Look forward to such events in the future.

Sunanda Kumar Das 



A huge shout-out to BWS team for putting together an absolutely stellar three-day birding expedition. It is no small feat to coordinate a trip that satisfies both the seasoned “lifer” hunters and those who just bought their first pair of binoculars, but you managed it with effortless grace. It wasn't just a birding trip; it was a masterclass in community building.

While seeing so many different birds was great, the best part was the friendly environment that was built. You brought together people who knew a lot and people who were just starting, making us feel like one big team. We're all going home as better birders with great memories, all thanks to your hard work and your love for the outdoors. I am looking forward to join many more trips like this with you in the future!

Big thanks to our sponsors Saptarshi Da and Kanad for keeping the team hydrated in the best way possible.

Sayantana Majumdar 

## BWS COASTAL CAMP 2026 Participant Feedback

“

Since inception any Camp by BWS rocks. Though this one was sans Nordmann's & Oystercatcher still there was no dearth of enthusiasm in the team. Icing on the cake was the pod of Humpbacks who escorted us to the final jetty. Hope everyone will carry back lovely memories & awesome experience.

**Bhaskar Bannerjee** ”

“

It was a fantastic journey with u guys. And after this trip, I am totally confident that BWS is growing in exactly the right direction. The birder community of Bengal is expanding and also the future is encouraging. This is my 5th journey to a BWS camp. Some veterans, who joined us previously, were unable to come for personal issues. Some new faces were with us on this trip. But for me, these types of trips are like the Jamaican Rum. This time I have enjoyed more than the previous one.

Kudos to your dedication, Kudos to BWS and Kudos to Kanad, Mridul, Mrinal n Kaushik for their efforts.

**Saptarshi Mukherjee** ”

## BWS ACTIVITIES

# BWS & BBM REFERENCE IN MADHYAMIK (CLASS-X) BOARD ENGLISH PAPER.

### A PROUD MOMENT FOR THE BIRDWATCHERS' SOCIETY

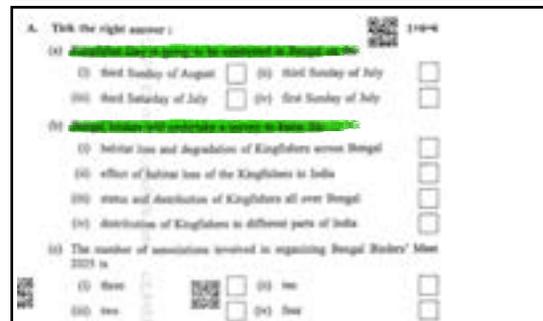
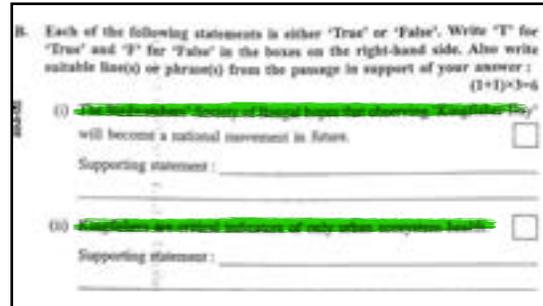
THE BENGAL BIRDERS' MEET, KINGFISHER DAY, AND THE WORK OF THE BIRDWATCHERS' SOCIETY FOUND A PLACE IN THE ENGLISH PAPER OF THE WEST BENGAL MADHYAMIK EXAMINATION 2026.

This is truly a proud and heartening moment for all of us. We sincerely thank the West Bengal Board of Secondary Education (WBBSE) for choosing a theme that highlights birds and the importance of their conservation. Such recognition helps bring the message of nature awareness and responsible stewardship to a much wider audience.

Through this initiative, nearly 10 lakh students appearing for this year's Madhyamik Examination will encounter ideas related to bird conservation and citizen engagement with nature. We hope this inspires curiosity, empathy, and a deeper appreciation for the natural world among young learners.

We extend our warmest wishes to all the students for success in their examinations and in the journeys that lie ahead.

**Note: A total of 9,71,340 candidates are enrolled for the 2026 Madhyamik Examination, including 5,44,606 female, 4,26,733 male, and one transgender examinee.**

## PERSPECTIVES



**Title: North, South, East...Waste**

**Titash Chakrabarti**

# FRESH & RARE SIGHTINGS (ARRIVALS)

**PRIYAM CHATTOPADHYAY**

From December'25 till beginning of March'26, the avian world was abuzz with activity and so were our birders. This vibrant season brought the excitement of migration and the signs of breeding behaviour, keeping eyes glued to binoculars and notebooks filled with observations. It was a thrilling time for both birds and birders, as the list below reveal.

## 2025-2026 Arrivals - Dec-Jan-Feb-Mar (Dec 8th 2025 - Mar 7th 2026)

Sr No	BIRD SPECIES	LOCN - 1	LOCN - 2	SIGHTING DATES
01	Firethroat	Buxa Tiger Reserve, Alipurduar	Buxa Tiger Reserve, Alipurduar	8th December 2025; 16th February 2026
02	Lanceolated Warbler	Baruipur Marshes, South 24 Parganas	Baruipur Marshes, South 24 Parganas	9th December 2025; 28th February 2026
03	Brown-winged Kingfisher	Sundarban Tiger Reserve, South 24 Parganas	Sundarban Tiger Reserve, South 24 Parganas	11th December 2025; 6th March 2026
04	Buffy Fish Owl	Sundarban Tiger Reserve, South 24 Parganas		11th December 2025
05	Great Parrotbill	Tinchuley, Singalila NP, Darjeeling	Senchal Wildlife Sanctuary, Darjeeling	11th December 2025; 26th December 2025
06	Snowy-browed Flycatcher	Rongtong, Darjeeling	Adina Deer Park, Malda	11th December 2025; 16th February 2026
07	Red-necked Falcon	Paschim Narayanpur, Birbhum	Surul, Birbhum	12th December 2025; 13th February 2026
08	Rufous-necked Hornbill	Jhandi, Kalimpong	Latpanchar, Darjeeling	12th December 2025; 7th March 2026
09	Grey-headed Fish Eagle	Aamjamtola, Malda	Nepalganj, South 24 Parganas	13th December 2025; 15th February 2026
10	Rosy Starling	Dumdum, Kolkata	Belur, Hooghly	14th December 2025; 7th March 2026
11	Hodgson's Bushchat	Dakshin Harirampur, Birbhum	Paschim Bahadurpur, Birbhum	18th December 2025; 22nd February 2026
12	Long-billed Wren Babbler	Lava, Kalimpong	Lava, Kalimpong	19th December 2025; 3rd February 2026
13	West Himalayan Bush-Warbler	Gheropara, Birbhum	Baruipur Marshes, South 24 Parganas	21st December 2025; 16th February 2026
14	Chestnut-eared Bunting	Baruipur Marshes, South 24 Parganas	Lohagarh, Birbhum	21st December 2026; 17th February 2026
15	Red-throated Pipit	Paschim Bahadurpur, Birbhum	Kamarpara, Birbhum	25th December 2025; 20th February 2026
16	White-bellied Redstart	Chunbhatti, Darjeeling	Rongtong, Darjeeling	26th December 2025; 28th February 2026
17	Crested Bunting	Siliguri, Jalpaiguri	Jangal Khas, Jhargram	27th December 2025; 14th February 2026
18	Pallid Harrier	Suri, Birbhum		27th December 2025
19	Greater White-fronted Goose	Gajoldoba, Jalpaiguri	Gajoldoba, Jalpaiguri	28th December 2025; 22nd February 2026

Sr No	BIRD SPECIES	LOCN - 1	LOCN - 2	SIGHTING DATES
20	Tundra Bean Goose	Gajoldoba, Jalpaiguri	Gajoldoba, Jalpaiguri	31st December 2025; 22nd February 2026
21	Yellow-breasted Bunting	South 24 Parganas	South 24 Parganas	December 2025; February 2026
22	Pale-capped Pigeon	IIT Kharagpur, Paschim Medinipur	IIT Kharagpur, Paschim Medinipur	6th January 2026; 25th January 2026
23	Grey-headed Parrotbill	Noam Forest, Kalimpong	Doorkhola, Kalimpong	8th January 2026; 14th February 2026
24	Eared Grebe	Farakka IBA, Malda	Gajoldoba, Jalpaiguri	11th January 2026; 5th March 2026
25	Syke's Nightjar	Farakka IBA, Malda	Gajoldoba, Jalpaiguri	11th January 2026; 18th January 2026
26	Montagu's Harrier	Paschim Bahadurpur, Birbhum	Kamarpara, Birbhum	17th January 2026; 15th February 2026
27	Smew	Farakka IBA, Malda	Farakka IBA, Malda	17th January 2026; 18th February 2026
28	Short-eared Owl	Farakka IBA, Malda	Paschim Bahadurpur, Birbhum	18th January 2026; 22nd February 2026
29	Common Quail	Farakka IBA, Malda	Paschim Bahadurpur, Birbhum	25th January 2026; 21st February 2026
30	River Tern	BoroGobindapur, Bankura	Borshul, Purba Burdwan	26th January 2026; 10th February 2026
31	Fire-capped Tit	Hijuli Forest, Nadia	Mahaldiram, Darjeeling	8th February 2026; 23rd February 2026
32	Black-breasted Thrush	Brindabonpur, Jhargram	Brindabonpur, Jhargram	9th February 2026; 13th February 2026
33	Black-necked Stork	Tikli Chawr, Murshidabad	Farakka IBA, Malda	9th February 2026; 28th February 2026
34	Common Starling	Baruipur Marshes, South 24 Parganas		13th February 2026
35	Painted Stork	Garia, South 24 Parganas	Rabindra Sarobar, Kolkata	13th February 2026; 7th March 2026
36	Brown-rumped Minivet	Arambagh, Hooghly	Mayapur, Nadia	15th February 2026; 7th March 2026
37	Greater Scaup	Farakka IBA, Malda		15th February 2026
38	Slaty-backed Flycatcher	Rabindra Sarobar, Kolkata	Rabindra Sarobar, Kolkata	25th February 2026; 26th February 2026
39	Indian Pitta	Rabindra Sarobar, Kolkata	Rabindra Sarobar, Kolkata	26th February 2026; 3rd March 2026
40	Long-tailed Sibia	Mouchuki, Kalimpong		4th March 2026
41	Rufous-backed Sibia	Mouchuki, Kalimpong		4th March 2026

Species of Highest Priority in State of West Bengal as per State of India's Birds Report, 2023



## About Author

### PRIYAM CHATTOPADHYAY

Priyam Chattopadhyay is an IT Professional based out of Kolkata with a passion for birdwatching and photographing birds with special interest in studying varied habitats and bird migration. He has been watching and photographing birds for the last 10 years.



### **Pheasant-Tailed Jacana: Lily-Pad Polyandrist**

*Hydrophasianus chirurgus* (Pheasant-tailed Jacana) exhibits remarkable adaptations for its wetland habitat. Its elongated toes and nails—up to 10 cm long—distribute weight across aquatic vegetation, enabling it to forage on floating plants like water lilies without submersion, a classic example of the “lily-trotter” syndrome in jacanids. Notably polyandrous, females maintain territories with multiple males (up to four), sequentially laying clutches of 4 eggs each; males solely handle incubation and chick-rearing, freeing females for further mating. A prime model of reversed sexual roles in birds.



### **Ashwati Biju**

Ashwati is a student at the Wildlife Institute of India, a budding naturalist from Kerala, she combines rigorous fieldwork with creative outreach. Alongside her research, she works as a nature educator and science illustrator, using mixed-media art, comics, and crafts to communicate ideas around ecology and conservation. She shares her reflections through Substack and her Bookstagram account, [@bibliophilecrocodile](#).

Her science illustrations can be found on Instagram at [@thrpantastichooman](#).

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