

# FANTAIL NEWSLETTER

Volume 6 | Issue No. 1 | July - Sep 2026



## HEALING AVIANS

BIRDS, VETS & REHABILITATION

**PENTAX**

BINOCULAR

Since 1938

# NEW A-SERIES AND S-SERIES BINOCULARS

ED (Extra-low Dispersion)  
optical elements deliver a sharp,  
high-contrast, blur-free view.



\*T&C APPLIED



+91 88044 04499 @ricohpentaxindia www.ricohpentax.in

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

**Editorial Flock:**

Click on this link to know about FANTAIL editorial team

<https://birdwatcherssociety.org/publications-newsletters/flock>

**Theme:**

**Healing Avians: Birds, Vets & Rehabilitation**

**Front & Back Cover Design:**

W3Webhelp

**Front Cover:**

AI Generated

**Back Cover:**

Bengal Birders' Meet Announcement

**Design, Layout & Graphics:**

W3Webhelp (www.w3webhelp.com)

**Publisher:**

Birdwatchers' Society  
Address: DB 75, Salt Lake,  
Kolkata 700064, INDIA

**Printer:**

Sadhana Udyog  
Address: 76 B B Ganguly Street,  
Kolkata 700012

**Email:**

birdwatcherssocietywb@gmail.com

**Website:**

<https://birdwatcherssociety.org>

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

**01 Editorial**

**03 Birds In Distress**

Dr Indrani Ghosh

**07 Healing Avians: Operation Avian Rajasthan**

Dr Mathew Rendle

**14 Anthropogenic Aerial Hazards And Urban Bird Mortality: Insights From The Jaipur Kite Festival 2026**

Dr Joy Gardner, Mr V Ketan Kumar and Mr Uday Saini

**23 Handle With Care! Correct Way To Hold A Bird During Ringing**

Soumyojit Talukder

**26 BAN Foundation: Committed To Bird Rescue And Rehabilitation**

Soumitra Roy

**31 Bird Rescue, Recovery & Release: What You Must Know First**

Chitrak Pramanik

**35 The Spooky Serendipity: Migration, Science And The Pursuit Of A Rarity**

Somnath Goswami & Priyam Chattopadhyay

**43 Swarovski CI Companion 10x30 (2026): The New Companion In The Wild**

Arijit Banerjee

**48 Flights Of Fancy**

**50 পাখির পুনর্বাসন**

Biswa Ranjan Goswami

**54 Makaltala: Mapping A Landscape Of Biodiversity, Memory, And Survival**

Disappearing Dialogues

**67 School of Birds Update**

Titash Chakrabarti

**73 BWS Updates**

Summer Bird Camp 2026 - Sikkim

Poila Boishak Bird Count (PBBC)

Report on School of Birds Presentation on World Environment Day 2026

An Evening with a World Birding Legend

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

Priyam Chattopadhyay

**Crossword**

Hiya Chatterjee

**Perspectives**

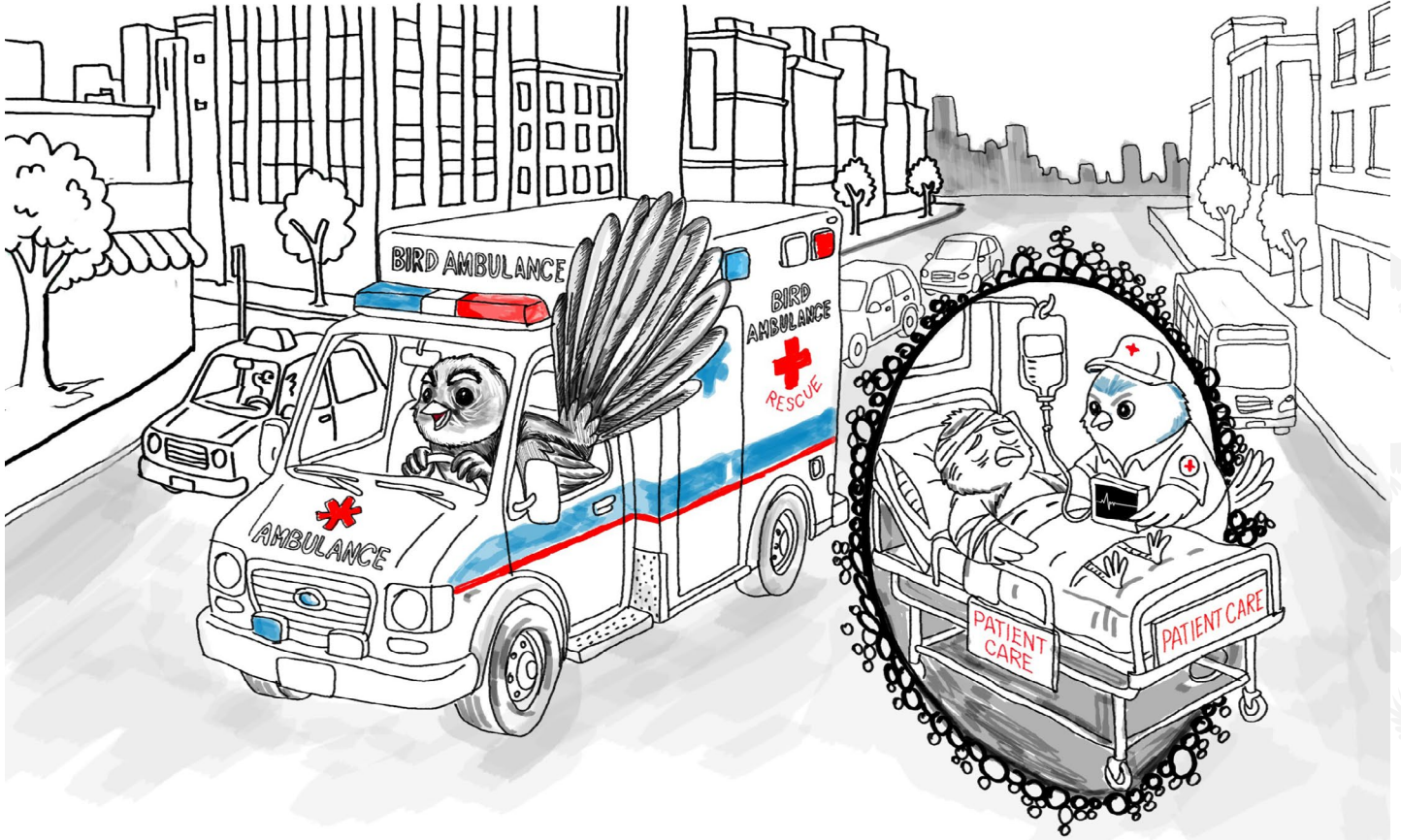
\* Fanny:

Aindrila Sarkar Deb

\* The Juvenile Birder:

Titash Chakrabarti

# PERSPECTIVE



Courtesy: Aindrila Sarkar Deb

# Bengal Birders' Meet

Venue: Biswa Bangla Convention Centre Hall No. -7  
 18 -19 July 2026  
 KOLKATA INDIA  
 From 10:00 am onwards



**SPEAKER LIST**  
TENTATIVE

**DAY -1**

- SESSION 1**

**MR BISWAPRIYA RAHUT** President, BWS  
 Welcome Address – BWS Beyond 2026
- SESSION 2**

**CHIEF WILDLIFE WARDEN** Govt of West Bengal – Guest of Honour  
 Guest of Honour's Address
- SESSION 3**

**MR RAVI SINGH** CEO WWF  
 Keynote Speaker's Address
- SESSION 4**

**DR SONALI GHOSH** IFS, Council Head Forest BTC and FD Manas Tiger Reserve  
 Wetlands of Kaziranga & Manas – World Heritage Sites, Assam
- SESSION 5**

**DR PRACHI MEHTA** Director WRCS  
 Owls of India
- SESSION 6**

**MR PRAVEEN KASWAN** IFS, DFO Jaldhpara  
 Landscape of Buxa TR
- SESSION 7**

**MR LESTER PERERA** Environmentalist, Bird Artist and Birder, Sri Lanka  
 Birds of Sri Lanka
- SESSION 8**

**DR SUBHAM BANERJEE** Post-Doc Researcher, Colorado State University, USA  
 Listening to Nature: What Bird Sounds Reveal About Ecosystem Health
- SESSION 9**

**MS VASUDHA MISHRA** Representative, HEAL  
 Drive Against Poaching of Larks in Central Bengal

**DAY -2**

- SESSION 10**

**MR ATHARVA SINGH** PhD Scholar CSIR-NEERI KCL Program Manager, WWF-India  
 Application of GIS in Bird Monitoring: From Birdwatchers' Records to Conservation Action
- SESSION 11**

**MR KOUSHEYO BAGCHI** Student Member, BWS  
 From Childhood Curiosity to Birding Enthusiasm: My Journey with Birds
- SESSION 12**

**MR SANDIP DAS (BWS) & MR SUVENDU SEKHAR SAHA (ZSI)**  
 Refinding Spoonie: A Tale of Hope Across the East Asian-Australasian Flyway
- SESSION 13**

**TITASH CHAKRABARTI & TIRTHANKAR ROY CHOUDHURY** Members, BWS  
 School of Birds Year at a Glance- Children Showcase : Little Wings, Tall Tales

Final Speakers List will be published shortly

# EDITORIAL

Dear Readers,

***FANTAIL steps into another publishing year with Volume 6, Issue #1!***

In this issue, we consciously moved beyond the familiar paths of birds, birdwatching and field identification into a world that is often hidden behind the scenes of conservation – the difficult, emotional, and deeply humane world of avian rescue, veterinary care, and rehabilitation. ***We must credit Dr Kanad Baidya for encouraging us to explore this important yet less-discussed subject.***

This special issue, themed “***Healing Avians – Birds, Vets & Rehabilitation***” is perhaps one of the most offbeat editions we have attempted. Yet, it may also be among the most important. For every birder who celebrates birds in flight, there exists another reality – birds grounded by injury, exhaustion, habitat pressures, human negligence, or unforeseen accidents. Behind every rescued bird lies a story of pain, intervention, resilience, and hope. And behind many of those stories stand individuals who quietly dedicate themselves to giving wounded wings another chance at the sky. ***Across these pages, we explore a dimension of birding that many enthusiasts may rarely encounter firsthand, yet one that every nature lover should understand with empathy and responsibility. From emergency rescue protocols and trauma management to rehabilitation ethics, field handling, and conservation-linked veterinary science, this issue attempts to bridge the gap between observation and action.***

Dr Indrani Ghosh opens the issue with “*Birds in Distress – A Blueprint for Action,*” a compelling reflection on the growing threats birds face in an increasingly urbanised and hazardous world, while also presenting the urgent need for awareness, infrastructure, and trained response systems. Matthew Rendle, RVN and Wildlife Vets International then walk us through a remarkable collaborative initiative “*Operation Avian Rajasthan*” where modern veterinary science, field pragmatism, and global cooperation converge to improve outcomes for injured birds. Complementing this is the detailed documentation by Dr Joy Gardner, V Ketan Kumar, and Uday Saini on the Jaipur Kite Festival bird rescue operations – a sobering reminder of the anthropogenic dangers hidden beneath celebration, but also an inspiring example of how coordinated intervention and community participation can significantly reduce avian mortality. This issue also explores the practical and ethical aspects of handling birds. Soumyojit Talukder’s “*Handle With Care!*” offers an important insight into safe bird handling during ringing operations, emphasizing that scientific research must always be rooted in welfare and responsibility. From grassroots conservation efforts, Soumitra Roy narrates the remarkable journey of the BAN

Foundation and its tireless rescue and rehabilitation work across West Bengal, while Chitrak Pramanik presents an accessible and much-needed guide on bird rescue, first-response care, and rehabilitation practices that ordinary citizens can learn from. Through a thoughtful exploration of bird rehabilitation, Biswa Ranjan Goswami highlights how the rescue, care, and release of injured birds not only save individual lives but also strengthen our collective responsibility towards wildlife conservation and environmental stewardship.

**Yet FANTAIL remains, at its heart, a celebration of birds and the stories they inspire.** This issue therefore also carries the thrill of discovery and migration through the beautifully narrated two-part feature “*The Spooney Serendipity*” by Somnath Goswami and Priyam Chattopadhyay – documenting the excitement, science, and emotional pull surrounding the sighting of the critically endangered Spoon-billed Sandpiper along the Bengal coast. To add to the indulgence, Arijit Banerjee returns with his favourite column – a firsthand review of the new *Swarovski CL Companion 10x30 binocular*.

Alongside these are the regular sections that our readers look forward to – *Flights of Fancy, Fresh & Rare Sightings, Perspectives, Crosswords, the School of Birds roundup, reports from the BWS Summer Bird Camp in Sikkim and the Poila Boishak Bird Count 2026.*

**This edition repeatedly reminds us that conservation is not confined to protected areas or scientific papers alone. Sometimes it begins with something as simple as stopping beside a fallen fledgling, making a rescue call, carrying an injured bird carefully, or choosing compassion over indifference. Birdwatching teaches us to observe; rehabilitation teaches us to respond.**

As we begin another year of FANTAIL, we hope this issue encourages readers not only to admire birds in the wild, but also to better understand the fragile realities they navigate in a rapidly changing world. For in the end, conservation is not merely about protecting species – it is about protecting the possibility of flight itself.

Happy Birding!

**Editorial Team**

**FANTAIL**



Pic courtesy: BAN Foundation

## **BIRDS IN DISTRESS A BLUEPRINT FOR ACTION**

**INDRANI GHOSH**

**L**ittle Pritha was walking back from the bus-stand to home after school. A stretch of 100 meters that is lined with trees. It is beginning of April and over past few weeks she has noted with her curious eyes the heightened activity of a pair of Coppersmith Barbet (*Psilopogon haemacephalus*) in one of the Rain trees (*Samanea saman*) dotting the street. A step forward and then back; a small ball-like thing was just getting crushed had she not moved her step away. In the meantime, the ball of cotton also moved voluntarily. Her eyes met with a tiny bobbing flesh with tiniest

pair of legs trying to straighten itself up. She stopped, peered and then knew not what to do. The tiny bob of flesh was alive and had fallen from the nest above. It had tiny feathers and was flitting aimlessly. Another hop and it might land in the busy street. Pritha had to do something, but what? She checked on her mother's phone and found few available information for quick actions in this situation. <sup>1234</sup>

Whereas this could be a natural phenomenon of the fledgeling fallen on ground while trying to fly on its own, **there are instances of injured birds found lying on the ground. Rapid increase of urbanization, vertical developments, increasing use of glass facades, light pollution, etc., lead to collisions in urban areas that could either cause fatality or leave them injured. Risks of injury or fatality lurks around kite strings, release of birds during religious festivals, bursting of crackers, etc. Equally collision with operational wind turbines, high voltage transmission towers and overhead transmission lines can result in similar fates. The increasing incidence of weather extremities such as storms, cyclones, flooding, drought also leads to a greater number of birds beings impacted.**

**There needs to be manifold efforts to tackle this menacing issue.** Different stakeholders responsible for urbanization, infrastructure development should identify the adverse impacts on birds and include mitigation hierarchy to avoid, reduce or mitigate the impacts based on ecological studies. Urban administrations could find methods to reduce light pollution, architects<sup>5</sup> could advise methods for reducing reflection from glass facades, renewable energy developers could use technology based early bird detection and automatic shutdown for wind turbines, install bird divertors and anti-bird perchers on transmission lines, or implementation of simpler measures such as habitat management, bird hazing or active bird removal at airports, etc could reduce collisions.



In city life or in rural areas, though we co-habit with avian friends, yet possess little knowledge of how to help them when they face adverse situations. One would note that the gap exists not only in knowledge but also in provisioning of infrastructure. **In terms of knowledge, the primary concern or query remains - what needs to be done when one comes across a fallen fledgling or an injured bird?** The second gap is the absence of suitable infrastructure where the injured bird can be brought or submitted for reliable care and treatment. The third gap is lack of reliable resources who would be providing treatment support. Fourthly, there is a poor database that would funnel the management action plan based on the existing scenario.



**There is an urgent need to fill this lack of awareness and knowledge gap, along with local infrastructure and resources for providing treatment / care along with temporary housing for the injured birds need to be developed proportionate to the existing risks.**

It is important that citizens are sensitized about their natural surroundings to not only create empathy but also teach them few basic tenets on how to rescue a fallen/injured fledgeling/bird. **School-going children could be the first target group so that they grow up to be ecologically responsible citizens. Schools could also take initiatives in educating the children by actively engaging NGO's who work on these aspects and could provide hands on training to young minds.** Nearly every city has a zoo that has an Aviary section or there are Nature Education Centers in Wildlife Sanctuaries or National Parks. Training sessions through audio-visual or manual training could educate the visitors (second target group) on methods to handle injured birds. **Special awareness campaigns may be brought up to educate the citizens where birds are adversely impacted due to religious activities carried out on specific occasions.**

The Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC) can play a critical role in establishing primary treatment centers or rescue centers for providing first aids to minor injuries at local administrative unit level. Further, tertiary treatment centers for advanced treatments should be established at District Level. Awareness about their existence, their contact details and methods of communication should be generated amongst local people. Central and State government can also provide support to local NGO's who are already engaged in similar efforts. Companies could also utilize the CSR funds to establish treatment centers for wildlife/birds especially where the risks of collisions are high.

Along with infrastructure, there is a need of trained people who would be providing treatments in these centers. As per Veterinary Council of India<sup>6</sup>, there are only 54 government aided Veterinary colleges in India as of 2024-25. The graduates from these colleges are primarily engaged in animal husbandry projects or practice in cities. **Upskilling local people to equivalent primary first aiders to perform the work at Primary Treatment facilities or Rescue Centers would generate**



**Though India has approximately 72 BNHS recognized bird sanctuaries, the major bird rescue or treatment centers are run by an NGO - People for Animals (26 hospitals/165 Units). Other notable NGOs working in this sphere are Nature Mates, Wildlife SOS, Animal Warriors Conservation Society, Jain Bird Hospital in Old Delhi, Sanjay Gandhi Animal Care Centre BAN, Wildlife Environment Saviour Trust, etc .**

**Local employment. Tertiary treatment centers could be equipped with advanced treatment facilities and qualified veterinaries.**

Efforts should be made to document the details such as injuries, location, method and person who reported or rescued the bird, cause of injury, mode of treatment, success rate of treatment, etc., A central task force should be created to analyze the data collected in each treatment center and devise future work plans from lessons learnt.

It is a need of the hour to work on the above blue-print. Several birding enthusiasts and researchers feel that there is lack of data on birds being injured due to anthropogenic and natural reasons. However, there is a common consensus on concerted large scale actions required to be taken as of yesterday to reduce the plight of the wildlife especially the avians at sovereign and non-sovereign level.

**“Between the nest and the ground lies a fragile space—where instinct meets uncertainty, and where humanity must choose to act.”**

1. <https://www.wildlifevetsinternational.org/projects/essential-first-aid-for-injured-birds>
2. <https://indianhelpline.com/birds-and-animal-helpline>
3. <https://news.wildlifesos.org/how-you-can-save-birds-in-distress/>
4. <https://www.awcsindia.org/bird-rehab/>
5. <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/press-release/reducing-bird-mortality-collisions-glass>
6. <https://cdnbbsr.s3waas.gov.in/s341e7637e7b6a9f27a98b84d3a185c7c0/uploads/2024/09/2024090417.pdf>



## About Author

### INDRANI GHOSH

Indrani Ghosh, an avid nature lover, is an environmental consultant with a deep passion for sustainability and conservation. Recently, she has rekindled her interest in birding, finding joy and inspiration in observing the avian world. Her keen eye for detail and love for nature continue to shape her professional and personal endeavors.



## HEALING AVIANS: OPERATION AVIAN RAJASTHAN

MATTHEW RENDLE, CertAVN RVN –  
WILDLIFE VETS INTERNATIONAL (WVI), UK

**W**ildlife Vets International is a small charitable NGO that has been working in India for over two decades, always in collaboration with non-government organisations and governments. Our focus is improving the care given to avian species being treated for traumatic wounds. We started with a focus on the often-horrific wounds caused by manja during the kite festival. India is an avian diversity hot spot with a huge number of migratory and native species. **It's stunning to work in avian rescue centres in India because you never know what is going to come in next: a vulture, a flamingo, or maybe a bee-eater.** As a veterinary team, we have to be ready to provide care for whatever is brought in.

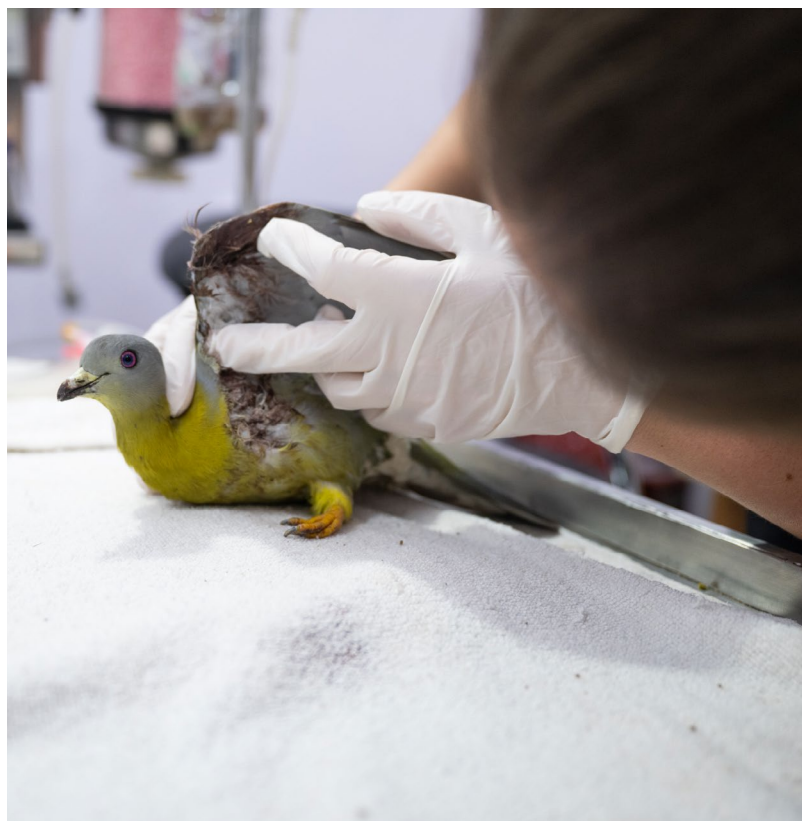
From our experience, the areas of treatment that really make a difference to outcomes are anaesthesia, analgesia, wound management (including dressings), nutritional support, and orthopaedic procedures

such as fracture fixation. Finally, we always reflect on the need for infectious disease control within rescue centres.

When starting any veterinary conservation project, it's important to assess and document what outcome is being aimed for, and when the collaboration should end. **WVI has always wanted to train those working in-country to the point we are no longer required.** Knowing what “good” looks like is important for the veterinary team, but also for those who fund these projects, who often want a projected roadmap of progress—which can be very challenging.

When starting this project in India, the training was focused on one-to-one training on live bird cases. This works well but can only be provided for a limited number of veterinary professionals. We identified that hosting an avian trauma conference would have much wider reach and impact—so **Operation Avian** was born.

In January 2020, Matt Rendle travelled to Raksha Animal Rescue in Jaipur. This centre had been highly recommended by Dr Ushma Patel, who Matt had worked with previously in India. On arrival, Matt was warmly greeted by Rohit Gangwal, who heads up the centre. Rohit is incredibly knowledgeable and passionate about Indian wildlife; he has a “can-do” attitude and resourcefulness that is both motivating and infectious. Matt quickly knew this collaboration would be fruitful and had the potential to have a great impact.



## AIM OF OPERATION AVIAN IN INDIA

Increase the number of birds injured, through interactions with humans (e.g., kite flying), that can be returned to the wild in a condition where they can live out a full life and reproduce—helping maintain their species and slow the reduction in species diversity and population density in the wild.

### How we do this

- Collaborate and work with all members of the Indian veterinary care team on all aspects of avian trauma management and provide ongoing case support.
- Share knowledge, skills, and experiences—targeting veterinary students and those directly involved with avian trauma management.

Each year, WVI sends a small team of two veterinary surgeons (one from the UK and one from America) and two veterinary nurses (from the UK) to work alongside the Raksha team. **The Raksha team is made up of approximately 20 Indian vets, vet students, and biologists, all using their skills and knowledge to achieve our shared aim.**

## KEY COMPONENTS OF AVIAN TRAUMA MANAGEMENT

### Anaesthesia

Historically, avian anaesthesia was often not successful, mostly due to birds' complex and incredibly efficient respiratory system. Birds' respiratory system is said to be 10 times more efficient than mammals', which means things happen quickly. If monitored closely, this can be a good thing—especially in terms of reducing stress.



The term “stress” is often used when talking about the care of injured birds, and it's a real issue that must be considered in any clinical plan. In Operation Avian, we teach how to avoid stressful situations for the bird. This can be tricky to assess, as we are not the bird and can't always evidence what wild birds find stressful. However, practical steps include reducing handling time to an absolute minimum, handling diurnal birds in subdued lighting, and working quietly.

I have over thirty years of experience of anaesthetising wild birds and now would always prefer a short, well-planned anaesthetic for assessing an injured wild bird rather than an extended period of handling. Anaesthetic induction in birds can be done either with injectable agents (given into a muscle) or with a gaseous agent breathed in by the bird. Within Operation Avian, we discuss the pros and cons of both methods.

Sharing knowledge and experience in this area helps improve patient safety, outcomes, and animal welfare.

### Analgesia

It always seems strange to me that, despite robust scientific evidence, pain is often not managed well in injured wild birds. Birds feel pain, and this needs controlling as a matter of urgency.

We teach that once a painful injury is identified during triage of a newly arrived wild bird, the examination is paused while the patient is given pain relief, often alongside rehydration fluids, both by injection. The bird is then returned to a warm, dark, quiet environment to allow time for the drugs to work (often around 30 minutes), so recording the time of injection is important.

Being in pain has many undesirable systemic effects on injured birds. For example, pain can delay healing of wounds and fractures, and birds in pain are much less likely to eat. When we get analgesia right, the change in behaviour is often clear: birds start eating, preening damaged feathers, and exploring their enclosure.

### Wound management (including dressings)

Understanding of wound healing in birds has progressed a lot in recent years. Interestingly, that increased understanding has resulted in a return to some long-established wound management products, such as silver, which can be very effective at helping heavily infected traumatic wounds to heal. We sometimes use honey dressings for infected avian wounds too, but because birds have a much higher normal metabolic temperature, honey dries out very quickly and is therefore less useful.

When it comes to applying dressings—especially to wings—management needs to be done well, or the results can be disastrous. A dressing applied too tightly or left on a wing for too long (we recommend changing wing dressings at least every three days), can result in tendons and ligaments contracting and the bird losing function in that wing. This may prevent release back into the wild.

We recommend that one clinician applies the dressing and another experienced team member checks it has been applied correctly. We also apply a small piece of white tape on the top of the dressing with the date the dressing needs changing and other vital information (for



example: “Fracture - change dressing under anaesthetic 12/1 MR”). Adding the initials of the person who applied the dressing improves communication and follow-up.

### Nutritional support

All animals need energy to heal injuries, and this has been extensively studied. We factor this into treatment plans: it's essential our patients are in a positive metabolic state, or we are not setting them up to succeed. While birds are in our care, we have a duty to offer a diet as close as possible to what that species would eat in the wild. This can be challenging in India for various reasons, but efforts need to be made and documented. During Operation Avian, we provide practical guidance on nutritional support, including how to tube-feed birds. This is only ever a short-term solution, but it works well. We also recommend that any bird not eating for an extended period has its analgesia plan reviewed thoroughly.



### Orthopaedic procedures

Removing the ability to fly from a wild bird is, in my opinion, ethically unsound and should be avoided whenever possible. Surgically amputating an injured wing may be technically straightforward, but the long-term impact on that bird is life changing and, in most cases, catastrophic. We must never normalise wing loss in wild birds; it is an unacceptable welfare issue.

In Operation Avian, we teach all aspects of limb-sparing surgery, including orthopaedics. We also explore the complexity of avian wing structure and function, and how we can preserve flight whenever possible. For example, **birds can struggle to maintain body temperature once a wing is removed because the feathers under the wing are often sparse and have not evolved to trap air (and therefore heat). As a result, the bird needs more energy to maintain body condition, yet due to wing loss is less able to obtain that much-needed energy.** We must always consider the long-term consequences before amputation.

## Infectious disease control

Infectious disease control is not always seen as a priority, but it is essential. We must avoid releasing a bird back into the wild with an infectious disease and avoid spreading disease around a rescue centre by working cleanly and methodically.

Alongside this, we must try to reduce the use of antibiotics in wild birds. This can be achieved by working as a team and as cleanly as possible. The One Health impact of antibiotic overuse could be catastrophic for wildlife and people.



## Conclusion

Wildlife Vets International has achieved great things in India, but this is only possible due to the passion and dedication of our Indian partners. A wise Indian friend once said: never underestimate the “fruits of collaboration”. Working together, we can do great things. I look forward to continuing to grow and progress Operation Avian in India. If you would like more information or can support this vital work, please do not hesitate to get in touch: [matthewrendlernv@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:matthewrendlernv@hotmail.co.uk)

If you would like to follow the work of Wildlife Vets International, please sign up to our newsletter ([bit.ly/WVI Newsletter](https://bit.ly/WVI_Newsletter)). You can also follow us at [@wildlifevets](https://www.facebook.com/wildlifevets) on social media (Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn).



Image credits: Operation Avian Rajasthan archives



### About Author

#### MATTHEW RENDLE

Mathew Rendle is a member of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, Veterinary Nurses Council and Chair of the Association of Zoo and Exotic Veterinary Nurses. He serves as Veterinary Partner for Wildlife Vets International and contributes as a committee member of the European Turtle Alliance, as well as a board member of ACOVENE. With a strong focus on wildlife and exotic animal care, his work bridges clinical practice, conservation, and veterinary education.



## ANTHROPOGENIC AERIAL HAZARDS AND URBAN BIRD MORTALITY: INSIGHTS FROM THE JAIPUR KITE FESTIVAL 2026

DR JOY GARDNER<sup>1</sup>, MR V KETAN KUMAR<sup>2</sup> AND MR UDAY SAINI<sup>3</sup>

**E**very January, the skyline of Jaipur fills with colour as thousands celebrate Makar Sankranti with kite flying. Yet beneath this vibrant spectacle lies a recurring and largely preventable wildlife crisis. The widespread use of glass-coated synthetic kite string—commonly known as manjha—creates nearly invisible aerial traps that slice through wings, entangle birds mid-flight, and leave many suspended from trees and electric wires for hours or days.

<sup>1</sup> Director - Hope and Beyond, <sup>2</sup> Deputy Conservator of Forest - Jaipur, Rajasthan Forest Department, <sup>3</sup> Wildlife Biologist - Hope and Beyond

Recognizing the scale and urgency of this seasonal threat, the **Wild Bird Conservation During Kite Flying Festival – Jaipur 2026** initiative was launched to mitigate avian injuries across the city. Implemented between 1st December 2025 and 15th February 2026, the project combined rapid rescue operations, centralized veterinary treatment, structured rehabilitation, systematic data collection, and extensive community awareness.

The results highlight both the severity of the threat and the power of coordinated intervention.

## THE URBAN ECOLOGICAL CONTEXT

Jaipur sits within a mosaic of wetlands, scrub forests, agricultural fringes, and dense urban settlements. Water bodies such as Mansagar Lake, Kanota Dam and Chandlai Lake attract migratory waterfowl during winter, while resident raptors, owls, pigeons, parakeets, and ground birds thrive in the city’s varied habitats.

Makar Sankranti coincides with peak winter migration. During this period, avian density is at its highest—and so is exposure to kite strings. Suspended and discarded manjha intersect established flight corridors, particularly affecting species that soar, glide, or forage at low altitudes.



**Rapid Response and Field Care for Injured Birds**

### **Injury patterns observed during the 2026 intervention included:**

- Deep wing lacerations
- Humeral and radial fractures
- Dehydration from prolonged entanglement
- Tendon and nerve damage
- Severe blood loss and shock

## RESCUE AND CLINICAL RESPONSE

A coordinated network of trained mobile rescue teams was deployed citywide. Rescue alerts were received through public reporting, institutional coordination, and active field surveillance. On-site stabilization—including safe disentanglement and haemorrhage control—was carried out before birds were transported to the Central Base Camp at Bird House, Nindar.

### **Each admitted bird underwent structured triage:**

- Minor injuries
- Moderate trauma
- Critical condition



**Veterinary Intervention for Avian Injuries**

Veterinary management included wound debridement, antiseptic treatment, fracture stabilization through splinting or surgical fixation, fluid therapy, antibiotics, analgesics, and post-operative care under controlled recovery conditions.

Following clinical stabilization, birds were shifted to rehabilitation aviaries where they underwent:

- Continuous medical monitoring
- Flight conditioning
- Behavioral assessment
- Pre-release fitness evaluation

Release decisions were based strictly on restored flight ability, independent feeding behavior, and full wound healing. Birds unable to regain sustained flight were classified as lifetime grounded and placed under long-term humane care.



**Rehabilitation and Recovery Facilities**

## KEY OUTCOMES: NUMBERS BEHIND THE CRISIS

During the reporting period, **633 birds representing 25 species** were rescued and documented.

### Outcome distribution:

**399 BIRDS (63.03%)**  
successfully treated  
and released

**93 BIRDS (14.69%)**  
remained under  
rehabilitation

**141 BIRDS (22.27%)**  
succumbed to injuries

**64 BIRDS (10.11%)**  
classified as  
permanently grounded

Mortality was strongly associated with delayed rescue and advanced trauma at the time of admission. Birds brought in early showed significantly higher survival rates, underscoring the importance of rapid reporting.

### Species-wise trends revealed:

- **Black Kite** recorded the highest number of rescues among raptors
- Significant cases in **Eurasian Collared Dove, Red-wattled Lapwing, and Asian Barn Owl**
- Moderate rescues among parakeets, green pigeons, mynas, and crows
- Lower but notable cases in larger raptors and specialized species

The distribution clearly reflects the ecological interface between urbanization and wildlife vulnerability.

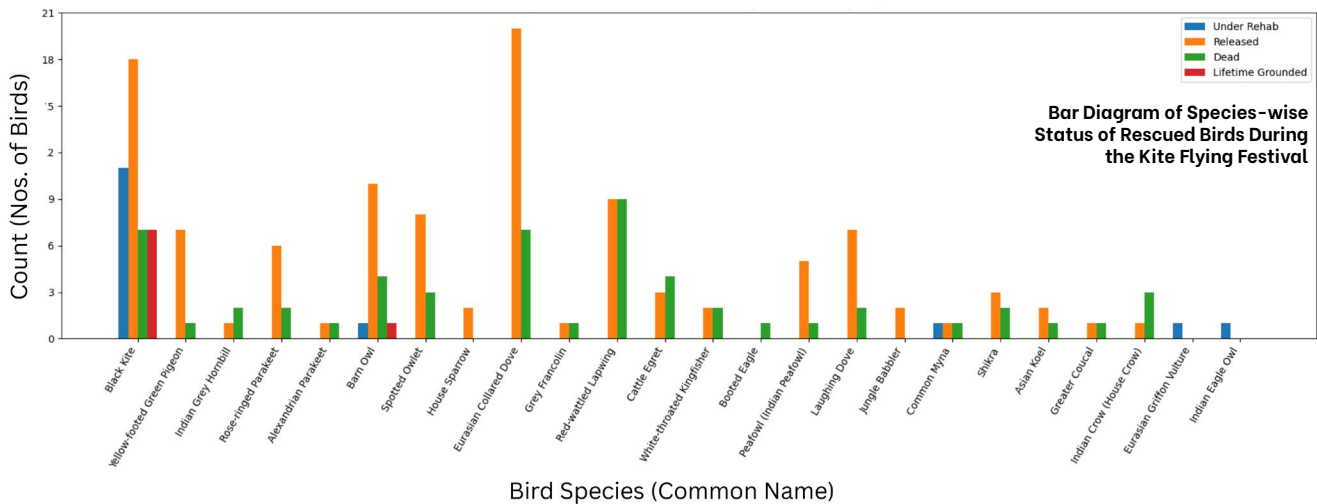
Sr No	Species	Scientific Name	Rescued	Status			**Lifetime Grounded
				*Under Rehab	Released	Dead	
01	Black Kite	<i>Milvus migrans</i>	36	11	18	7	7
02	Yellow-footed Green Pigeon	<i>Treron phoenicopterus</i>	8	0	7	1	0
03	Indian Grey Hornbill	<i>Ocyrceros birostris</i>	3	0	1	2	0
04	Rose-ringed Parakeet	<i>Psittacula krameri</i>	8	0	6	2	0
05	Alexandrian Parakeet	<i>Psittacula eupatria</i>	2	0	1	1	0
06	Asian Barn Owl	<i>Tyto alba</i>	15	1	10	4	1
07	Spotted Owlet	<i>Athene brama</i>	11	0	8	3	0
08	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	2	0	2	0	0
09	Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	27	0	20	7	0
10	Grey Francolin	<i>Ortygornis pondicerianus</i>	2	0	1	1	0
11	Red-wattled Lapwing	<i>Vanellus indicus</i>	18	0	9	9	0
12	Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	7	0	3	4	0
13	White-throated Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon smyrnensis</i>	4	0	2	2	0
14	Booted Eagle	<i>Hieraetus pennatus</i>	1	0	0	1	0
15	Peafowl (Indian Peafowl)	<i>Pavo cristatus</i>	6	0	5	1	0
16	Laughing Dove	<i>Spilopelia senegalensis</i>	9	0	7	2	0
17	Jungle Babbler	<i>Argya striata</i>	2	0	2	0	0
18	Common Myna	<i>Acridotheres tristis</i>	3	1	1	1	0
19	Shikra	<i>Accipiter badius</i>	5	0	3	2	0
20	Asian Koel	<i>Eudynamys scolopaceus</i>	3	0	2	1	0

Sr No	Species	Scientific Name	Rescued	Status			**Lifetime Grounded
				*Under Rehab	Released	Dead	
21	Greater Coucal	<i>Centropus sinensis</i>	2	0	1	1	0
22	Indian Crow (House Crow)	<i>Corvus splendens</i>	4	0	1	3	0
23	Indian Rock Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>	453	78	289	86	56
24	Eurasian Griffon Vulture	<i>Gyps fulvus</i>	1	1	0	0	0
25	Indian Eagle Owl	<i>Bubo bengalensis</i>	1	1	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>			<b>633</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>399</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>64</b>

### Species-wise Status of Rescued Birds During the Kite Flying Festival

\* Under Rehabilitation: Birds that sustained injuries requiring extended medical treatment and recovery time. These individuals remain under veterinary care and monitoring until they regain sufficient strength and flight capability for safe release into the wild.

\*\* Lifetime Grounded: Birds that suffered permanent wing or musculoskeletal damage preventing them from flying again. Such individuals cannot be released back into the wild and are maintained under long-term humane care or transferred to authorized wildlife rehabilitation facilities.



### Beyond Rescue: Data-Driven Conservation

A defining feature of the 2026 initiative was its structured data management system. Each rescued bird received a unique case ID documenting:

- Species identification
- Treatment administered
- Rescue location
- Rehabilitation status
- Injury type
- Final outcome

Daily logs were verified, cross-checked, and consolidated digitally. This created a scientifically robust injury database capable of informing:

- Species vulnerability analysis
- Policy advocacy against illegal manjha use
- High-risk zone identification
- Response-time assessment

Such structured datasets remain rare in urban wildlife rescue operations and represent a significant step toward evidence-based conservation planning.

## Community Awareness and Youth Engagement

Emergency response alone cannot address a recurring seasonal crisis. Prevention requires social change. The project conducted awareness programmes in 10 schools across Jaipur, educating students about:

- Ecological impacts of glass-coated manjha
- Early reporting mechanisms
- Bird-safe kite practices
- Responsible festive participation

Students visited the Bird House at Nindar to observe rehabilitation procedures and interact with veterinarians. This experiential approach strengthened empathy and fostered conservation-minded behavior among youth. Community sensitization led to improved public responsiveness and faster reporting of injured birds—directly contributing to improved survival outcomes. Additionally, a Clean Manjha Drive was organized in collaboration with Forest Department staff to remove hazardous strings from trees and open landscapes, reducing post-festival injury risks.



Awareness Campaigns to reduce Manjha Menace

## Ecological and Institutional Impact

The initiative produced measurable outcomes across multiple dimensions:

### Ecological Impact

- Reduced preventable mortality
- Successful rehabilitation of migratory and resident species
- Protection across diverse avian guilds
- Ethical long-term care for permanently injured birds

### Operational Impact

- Functional centralized rescue infrastructure
- Rapid decentralized citywide response
- Standardized veterinary and rehabilitation protocols
- Systematic case documentation

### Institutional Impact

The strength of the 2026 intervention lay not only in field rescue efforts, but in the depth of institutional collaboration that sustained it. The initiative was anchored by Vantara, whose role as Conservation Partner brought both technical expertise and critical financial support to the programme. Their veterinary guidance enhanced surgical precision, post-operative care standards, and overall treatment outcomes during the peak injury period. Equally instrumental was the proactive involvement of the Rajasthan Forest Department, which facilitated permissions, logistical coordination, and field-level support, ensuring that rescue teams could respond swiftly across Jaipur's urban landscape



Veterinary Volunteers Supporting the Bird Rescue Initiative

A remarkable feature of the campaign was the active participation of leading veterinary institutions. Faculty members, clinicians, and students from the Post-Graduate Institute of Veterinary Education & Research (PGIVER), Jaipur; Mahatma Jyotiba Fule College of Veterinary & Animal Science, Chomu; R.R. College of Veterinary and Animal Science, Deoli; Nagpur Veterinary College; College of Veterinary and Animal Science, Udaipur; and The Apollo College of Veterinary Medicine, Jaipur contributed their professional expertise to trauma management, surgical intervention, and structured rehabilitation. **This collaborative framework transformed what could have been a short-term rescue effort into a coordinated, science-led conservation response.** The partnership stands as a compelling example of how governmental agencies, academic institutions, and conservation organizations can unite to protect urban wildlife during high-risk cultural events.

### A Scalable Urban Conservation Model

- The 2026 intervention demonstrates that a coordinated, veterinary-led, data-driven, and awareness-integrated approach can substantially reduce seasonal avian mortality during high-risk cultural events.
- However, rescue statistics also serve as a stark reminder: celebration without ecological responsibility carries a heavy cost.
- While 399 birds regained the sky, 141 did not survive. Each number represents a living being caught in an avoidable hazard.
- Urban wildlife conservation must therefore move beyond reactive care toward sustained prevention—through stronger enforcement, safer alternatives to hazardous kite strings, expanded awareness campaigns, and continued preparedness during peak migration seasons.

- Jaipur's experience offers a replicable model for other cities facing similar seasonal threats. When institutions collaborate, communities participate, and science guides action, even deeply embedded cultural practices can evolve toward coexistence.
- In the end, safeguarding the skies is not about restricting celebration—it is about ensuring that the freedom of our festivals does not come at the cost of flight.



### About Author

#### **DR JOY GARDNER**

Dr Joy Gardner is a wildlife biologist and conservationist, and Chairman of Hope & Beyond, a Jaipur-based NGO. His work spans wildlife biology, remote sensing, animal behaviour, and biodiversity conservation, with a strong focus on research-driven action. He is actively involved in animal rescue and rehabilitation, combining field experience with scientific analysis to advance wildlife conservation in changing environmental conditions.



#### **MR V KETAN KUMAR**

V Ketan Kumar IFS, is the Deputy Conservator of Forest with the Forest Department, Government of Rajasthan. With extensive experience in forest management and wildlife conservation, he plays a key role in protecting habitats and strengthening conservation practices. His work focuses on sustainable forest governance, biodiversity protection, and effective field-level implementation across Rajasthan's diverse landscapes.



#### **MR UDAY SAINI**

Uday Saini is a wildlife biologist at Hope & Beyond, where he contributes to research-driven conservation initiatives. His work focuses on field ecology, wildlife monitoring, and habitat assessment, with a keen interest in animal behaviour and biodiversity conservation.



Tagged Wood sandpiper 10K

## **HANDLE WITH CARE!**

# **CORRECT WAY TO HOLD A BIRD DURING RINGING**

**SOUMYOJIT TALUKDER**

**H**umanity's innate curiosity about the natural world has inspired countless expeditions and scientific endeavours since the dawn of civilization.

'Bird Ringing' though it might not sound exciting, is an important scientific research technique that is done to study migratory patterns, molting patterns as well as site fidelity. Without the introduction of Bird ringing in the field of Ornithology, research capabilities would have remained prehistoric and filled with insufficient data.

Bird ringing in India was initiated in 1959 by the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) under the supervision of Dr Salim Ali. BNHS has always been a stalwart in Bird migration studies in India, as well as successfully implementing bird ringing programme all over India from Point Calimere to Bhagalpur. Methods used for Ringing birds may vary from bird to bird but most of the process is quite similar. I had

the opportunity to witness the ringing process firsthand with the MTHL\* team, and I am especially grateful to our seniors who encouraged us to learn more about it.

Today's article will not be about the ringing process and its importance as that was previously mentioned by Dr S Balachandran in earlier issue of FANTAIL (Volume 5: Issue#3). In this article I wish to highlight handling of birds, which is an essential part of the bird ringing technique.

As a responsible bird-bander, it is mandatory to prioritise the bird's safety and comfort to minimise unnecessary stress and prevent injury. Because ringing operations may involve catching thousands of birds,

proper contingency plans should be in place to avoid complications. Ensuring bird safety requires continual training, close monitoring, and a clear set of precautions established before the work begins.

For starters, selecting the right time and place is crucial for bird ringing. The process usually begins after dusk, when birds settle down after foraging, making it an ideal time to catch them. Locations such as salt pans are often chosen during high tide, when waders gather to rest and are more accessible for capture. At BNHS, waders are ringed extensively under the MTHL Project. For safety, gloves and masks are used to reduce the risk of transmitting unknown diseases, and the field station is set up in advance. The ringing station is established close to the capture point to minimise delays, which could otherwise affect the birds' health. Typically, traps are set at a single point, from where trapping personnel bring captured birds to the ringing station. Specialised wader nets are used to capture the birds to minimise injury; nevertheless, first-aid kits are kept on hand as an added precaution. For ringing, it is imperative to obtain permission from local authorities and forest departments.



Fig 1: Banders Grip ( Source internet )



Fig 2: Photographers' Grips ( Source internet )

Upon capture, handling the actual bird can be difficult. Two types of specialized techniques are used to restrain the bird in place during the entire ringing procedure. Most common technique is the Banders Grip (as shown in Fig 1). This is one of the most common techniques used for bird ringing all over the world as it uses one hand (non-dominant hand) to restrain the bird making it easy to do ringing. Second technique is more often used to take photographs for documentation – Photographers' grip (as shown Fig 2) which also uses single hand to restrain the bird to properly take its photograph. **On a serious note – never try this at home, as this is only done by trained professionals.**

Around the world, hundreds of birds are ringed every day by trained professionals using proper precautions and techniques. As the saying goes, “Prevention is better than cure”; even with the greatest care, minor cuts or wing abrasions can occur while handling birds in confinement. In such cases, basic first aid is given to prevent further harm, while more serious injuries, such as fractures or deep cuts, are treated by a veterinarian. Prolonged handling can also cause stress, especially under head-torches during ringing; therefore,



Ringing done by BNHS employee (Source internet)

the bird is often allowed time to settle in the dark before release. Despite all precautions and training, rare mishaps may occur and, in exceptional cases, may lead to mortality.

Nevertheless, ringing programmes remain vital for scientific research, as many people in West Bengal have seen firsthand—such as the sighting of a Spoon-billed Sandpiper with a 2K tag, ringed as a juvenile by Russian scientists. Such records help us understand survival rates of young birds in a challenging world full of perils. I hope more of these remarkable creatures are ringed each year so that we can learn even more about them.

\* MTHL: Mumbai Trans-harbour Link



## About Author

### **SOUMYOJIT TALUKDER**

A postgraduate in Zoology, Soumyojit 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.



# **BAN FOUNDATION** **মানুষ ও বন্যপ্রাণের স্বার্থ**

## **COMMITTED TO BIRD RESCUE AND REHABILITATION**

**BONDING WITH ANIMALS AND NATURE – WEST BENGAL, INDIA · EST. 2022**

**SOUMITRA ROY**

### **ORIGINS**

The story of BAN Foundation did not begin in a conference hall or through formal announcements.

It began quietly, in villages, wetlands, railway sidings, riverbanks, and crowded neighbourhoods of West Bengal – wherever an injured bird, a trapped snake, or a frightened wild animal needed help.

Long before the organisation officially came into existence in 2022, its founders had already spent years responding to distress calls, often travelling through difficult terrain with little more than field experience, determination, and compassion for wildlife. Although they came from different landscapes and backgrounds, they were united by the same concern – the growing distance between people and

nature, and the rising incidents of human-wildlife conflict across rural and semi-urban Bengal.

They realised that conservation could not survive through legislation alone. It needed people on the ground, communities willing to coexist, and responders capable of acting swiftly when conflict situations unfolded.

**Thus emerged BAN Foundation – Bonding with Animals and Nature Foundation – with a vision rooted not merely in rescue, but in coexistence.**

Today, the organisation works across several districts of West Bengal including North 24 Parganas, South 24 Parganas, Nadia, Alipurduar, Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar, Birbhum, Murshidabad, Bankura, and West Burdwan. In these diverse landscapes, the team responds to wildlife rescue calls, conducts snakebite awareness programmes, supports migratory bird conservation, mitigates human-wildlife conflict, and carries conservation education into schools and communities.

### BIRD RESCUE & REHABILITATION

Among its most emotional and demanding responsibilities is bird rescue and rehabilitation.

For the members of BAN Foundation, every rescue call carries uncertainty. Sometimes it is a migratory bird weakened during its long seasonal journey. Sometimes it is an owl electrocuted on power lines, a kite entangled in deadly manja strings, or a waterbird trapped in ghost fishing nets along wetlands and river channels. At other times, frightened chicks fall from nests during storms, while illegally trapped birds are recovered from hunters before they disappear into trade networks.

The calls often arrive unexpectedly – during heavy rain, late at night, or from remote villages where awareness about wildlife remains limited. Yet the responders move immediately, carrying with them years of practical field knowledge shaped through experience rather than institutional classrooms. Though not formally trained by registered institutions, the rescuers of BAN Foundation have spent years learning directly from the field – understanding animal behaviour, handling stressed wildlife carefully, and navigating tense conflict situations with patience and responsibility.





## INTELLIGENCE & VIGILANCE AGAINST GHOST NETS

The organisation has also been actively working over the past few years against the illegal use of ghost nets, which are often deployed to trap migratory birds across wetlands and agricultural landscapes. To monitor such activities, BAN Foundation maintains a dedicated vigilance and intelligence network that regularly collects field information and conducts surveillance in vulnerable areas.

### FIELD CASE · INTELLIGENCE NETWORK

#### **Baya Weaver Rescue: Poachers Caught Red-Handed**

*The intelligence team received information that a group of poachers was using ghost nets to trap Baya Weavers. The incident immediately raised concern, as cases of poachers targeting Baya Weavers for bush meat are extremely rare and seldom encountered in the region.*

*Acting swiftly on the information, the rescue team reached the location and caught the poachers red-handed. The accused individuals were later handed over to the concerned authorities for legal action.*

*Incidents such as these reveal the hidden pressures faced by even the most familiar bird species, and underline the importance of vigilance, rapid response, and community-supported conservation efforts.*

**35** Baya Weavers were rescued and released at the same location, minimising stress and handling time.

Every rescue is a delicate balance between urgency and compassion. The team frequently works under difficult field conditions, facing shortages of equipment and resources, challenging terrain, and at times resistance from local communities fearful of wildlife or concerned about livelihood losses.

Yet these very challenges have strengthened the organisation's belief that conservation must include empathy for both people and animals. BAN Foundation understands that coexistence cannot be imposed; it must be nurtured through dialogue, awareness, and trust.



### PARTNERSHIPS & SUPPORT

With support and guidance from the West Bengal Forest Department, the organisation has gradually built a strong grassroots rescue and rehabilitation network. Collaborations with institutions such as Wildlife Trust of India, World Animal Protection, and the Birdwatchers' Society have further strengthened its conservation initiatives through coordinated rescue responses, technical support, and public engagement.

### REHABILITATION: BEYOND TREATMENT

Once rescued, injured birds are provided immediate first-response care, safe handling, hydration, temporary shelter, warmth, and continuous monitoring. Birds requiring medical intervention are treated in coordination with veterinarians, forest officials, and wildlife experts.

Rehabilitation, for BAN Foundation, extends beyond treatment. The goal is always to restore strength, confidence, and natural behaviour so that every bird can eventually return to the wild where it belongs.

And when that moment finally arrives – when healed wings open once more against the sky – it becomes more than a release. It becomes a quiet affirmation that timely human intervention can still repair some of the damage caused by an increasingly fragmented world.



### AWARENESS & PREVENTIVE CONSERVATION

Beyond rescue operations, BAN Foundation continues to invest deeply in awareness and preventive conservation. Through school outreach programmes, village meetings, nature education activities, and stakeholder engagement, the organisation spreads awareness against bird hunting, illegal trapping, and habitat destruction.

Their message remains simple yet urgent: protecting birds also



means protecting wetlands, grasslands, rivers, trees, and ultimately the ecological balance that sustains human life itself.

**For BAN Foundation, conservation is not measured only by the number of rescues conducted. It is reflected in changing attitudes – a villager choosing to report an injured bird instead of harming it, a child learning that snakes are not enemies, or a community beginning to understand that coexistence is possible. Each rescued bird, each rehabilitated animal, and each life returned to the wild carries forward that hope.**

“Rescue work often begins where roads end – in flooded fields, crowded marketplaces, tangled wetlands, and communities struggling to live alongside wildlife.”

– Soumitra Roy, Founder · BAN Foundation

All images are from BAN archives



## About Author **SOUMITRA ROY**

Soumitra is a passionate wildlife rescuer and grassroots conservationist dedicated to promoting coexistence between people and nature across West Bengal. As the founder of the BAN Foundation (Bonding with Animals and Nature Foundation), he has been actively involved in bird and wildlife rescue, anti-poaching initiatives, conflict mitigation, and conservation awareness at the community level. Known for his field-driven approach and rapid response during wildlife emergencies, he continues to inspire young conservation volunteers through hands-on action and public engagement.



## BIRD RESCUE, RECOVERY & RELEASE: WHAT YOU MUST KNOW FIRST

CHITRAK PRAMANIK  
(PRESIDENT - WILDLIFE ENVIRONMENT SAVIOUR TRUST)

“Birds are indicators of the environment. If they are in trouble, we know we’ll soon be in trouble.”  
– Roger Tory Peterson\*\*

**B**irds are among the most sensitive indicators of our environment and play a vital role in maintaining ecological balance. Imagine you are stepping out of your house and suddenly notice a bird lying motionless on the roadside or near your home. As you approach, you realize the bird may be injured and in need of immediate help. In such situations, knowing the basic principles of bird rescue and being aware of the Indian wildlife protection laws becomes extremely important. Upon encountering an orphaned chick or an injured bird, the very first step is to inform the nearest Forest Department office. You may also contact an experienced wildlife rescuer or a wildlife rescue organization. Forest officials or trained rescuers can guide on proper rescue procedure.

Birds become injured for many reasons, although certain seasons increase the risks significantly. During summer, many birds suffer from dehydration and heat stress. Firecrackers during festivals cause serious injuries and disorientation. In winter, nylon kite strings (“manja”) severely injure numerous birds. Storms and heavy rainfall often destroy nests, leaving chicks homeless. Excessive decorative lighting on trees at night disturbs nocturnal birds, while nets placed over ponds and wetlands have become another major cause of bird injuries.



Before attempting a rescue, one should carry gloves, a well-ventilated plastic or wooden box, and a cloth to cover the box. On reaching the spot, carefully observe the surroundings first. Not every chick sitting on the ground requires rescue. A featherless juvenile chick should ideally be returned to its nest if the nest can be located nearby. If a partially feathered fledgling is found hopping or making short flights, it should be placed safely on a nearby branch or shaded area and observed from a distance so that its parents can locate it. Rescue should only be considered when these options are not possible.

While rescuing a bird, always wear gloves and gently place the bird inside the ventilated box, covering it with a cloth to reduce stress from noise and light. Never squeeze the bird’s wings together tightly or hold its legs forcefully. Instead, hold the bird gently with its wings folded naturally against the body. During the rescue of raptors, providing a small branch for the bird to grip is helpful. Covering the bird’s eyes also helps calm it.

Once rescued, the bird should be handled with extreme care. Food or water should not be offered immediately. The nearest Forest Department officials must be informed without delay. Before trained personnel arrive, wounds may be gently cleaned with an antiseptic solution and antiseptic ointment applied. If bleeding occurs,

light pressure using clean cotton or cloth should be applied to stop it. Dried blood clots should never be removed forcibly. The bird should then be kept in a quiet, clean, well-ventilated box lined with paper.

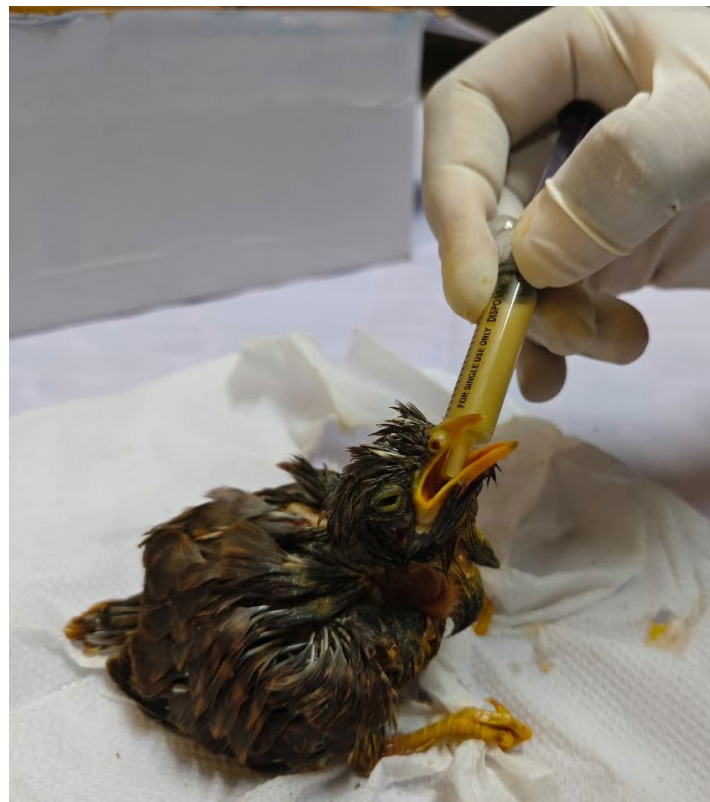
Birds suffering from heat stress or dehydration require special attention. Light water spray on the body and wrapping the bird briefly in a damp cloth in a cool place may help stabilize it. Once the bird recovers slightly, oral rehydration solution (ORS) suitable for pets may be given carefully. Water should always be administered slowly from the side of the beak because the airway opening lies inside the mouth, and improper feeding may cause choking.

Birds are extremely sensitive animals and should be handled as little as possible. Excessive handling can lead to severe stress and even death. It is important to remember that injured birds or chicks cannot legally be kept as pets. All native wild birds in India are protected under the Indian Wildlife Protection Act, and violation of the law may result in fines or imprisonment. Anyone temporarily caring for a rescued bird must inform the Forest Department authorities.



**Different bird species have different dietary requirements, so expert advice should always be taken before feeding them. Fruit-eating birds such as parakeets, mynas, bulbuls, barbets, and orioles may be hand-fed when young, followed later by native fruits like guava, papaya, mango, and jamun. Waterbirds such as egrets, pond herons, openbill storks, kingfishers, and waterhens may be given small fresh fish, frogs, snails, lizards, or mealworms. Insectivorous birds like Common hawk cuckoo, drongos, flycatchers, woodpeckers, nightjars, and magpie robins prefer mealworms, grasshoppers, or ant eggs.**

**Owls require special care because they are nocturnal birds. They should ideally be fed after sunset.** Since owls regurgitate indigestible matter as pellets, their diet should include not only minced meat but also small bones and feathers. Feeding rats occasionally is also beneficial. Raptors such as kites, eagles, and shikras may be fed fish pieces and minced meat. All rescued birds should receive proper veterinary consultation. Digestive enzymes, vitamins, probiotics, or other supplements may be necessary depending on the bird's condition and age. The rescue enclosure must always remain clean and spacious enough for movement. Chicks should be kept warm, while larger birds should have a perch or branch to sit on. Hands must be washed thoroughly before feeding or medicating birds, and gloves should always be used.



No bird or wild animal should ever be rescued or kept without the permission of the Forest Department. Over the past decade, I have rescued and rehabilitated numerous injured birds and wildlife with official permission and successfully released many back into nature. This work has been supported by several organizations and individuals, including the - Ministry of Environment Forest & Climate Change, Govt. of India; Forest Department, Govt. of West Bengal; Shri Anirban Chaudhuri; and Bagnan Human Animal Nature Welfare Society. Ultimately, protecting birds means protecting their habitats. We must plant more fruit-bearing trees, conserve wetlands, preserve old native trees, reduce noise pollution, stop the use of firecrackers, and minimize pesticide use in agriculture. If birds survive, humanity survives with them.



*“To protect birds is to protect the songs, silences, and ecological rhythms that keep our planet alive.”*

*– Chitrak Pramanik*

\*\* Roger Tory Peterson was one of the most influential ornithologists, naturalists, and wildlife artists of the 20th century. He is best known for revolutionizing birdwatching through his field guides, especially the landmark book “A Field Guide to the Birds” first published in 1934.

All images are from the archives of Wildlife Environment Saviour Trust



## About Author **CHITRAK PRAMANIK**

Chitrak is a wildlife rescuer and conservationist from Howrah, West Bengal, and the President of the Wildlife Environment Saviour Trust. For the past decade, he and his dedicated team have answered countless calls for help—rescuing thousands of wild animals, providing urgent care and rehabilitation, and returning them safely to the freedom of their natural habitats. Guided by compassion and a deep respect for nature, Chitrak continues to work toward a world where people and wildlife can thrive together.



Spoon-billed Sandpiper

# THE SPOONEY SERENDIPITY MIGRATION, SCIENCE AND THE PURSUIT OF A RARITY

## PART-1: THE TRAVAILS AND THE TRIUMPH!

BY SOMNATH GOSWAMI

**T**he late March 2026, afternoon was just another day until in one of the birding groups the news of sighting of “Spoon-billed Sandpiper (*Calidris pygmaea*) ” caught my eye. The Spooney, as we lovingly call the bird is a talismanic symbol of both the wonder and apprehension, hope and despair, strength and fragility that we associate with the birds.

It has a bill shaped like a spoon, from which the bird gets its name. It breeds in the Tundra of the freezing Arctic Russia and migrates through Japan, two Koreas, China to many wintering sights of Southern China, Thailand, Vietnam, Bangladesh etc.



**Spoon-billed Sandpiper**

We—three birders—jumped into the car and set off for Patibunia on 29th March 2026, reaching the very spot where it had been reported earlier that morning.

We asked for the exact location of the sighting and learned that from Patibunia Beach one should walk left toward a grassy stretch where the bird had been seen earlier, though we knew it might shift with the tide—or even leave the area altogether.

We reached Patibunia with apprehension and expectation in equal measure. Sunset was still an hour and a half away, but the overcast sky was already draining the light. From the top of the dike that shields the villages from saline floods, we looked out over a beach teeming with hundreds of shorebirds feeding on the exposed mudflat. Locals warned that the tide would soon rush in, adding urgency. The recommended grassy stretch lay far

*Unfortunately, largely due to habitat loss, the species—highly dependent on coastal mudflats—is declining rapidly as these mudflats are converted into farmland and repurposed for industrial development such as ports and factories. Experts estimate that only around 300–400 mature birds remain worldwide, and the population is falling by about 5% each year. If conservation efforts fail, the Spoon-billed Sandpiper could vanish within the next two decades. Yet there is still hope; dedicated conservationists and scientists are doing remarkable work across the flyway, and early results are encouraging. The rate of decline has slowed to about 5% from an earlier 8%, though it may still prove too little, too late.*

*In early April 2018, a Spooney was sighted at Kargil Beach near Bakkhali. Since then, some of the finest birders have combed the area for another glimpse of the bird—without success. But this year, the bird was seen and photographed, and the news swept through birding message boards like a tidal wave.*



**Red Knot (in breeding plumage)**

to the left, but with so many birds close at hand we chose to scan the nearby flock first and leave the bushes for later—a classic bird-in-hand dilemma.

We walked to the right for getting a suitable place to get down from the dike to the beach and found one. The climbing down involved a little bit of acrobatics, which was cake-walk for my other nimble-footed but ultimately after a few inelegant maneuvers, I got there. friends, but proved to be hair-raising for me, but ultimately, after a few inelegant maneuvers I got there. The beach was muddy and slippery as mud was deep, we discarded our shoes and started walking barefoot, an occasional stone or snail pricking underfoot, a minor discomfort but we paid little heed in the heat of the search!

On the beach there were lot of birds, in hundreds and in various plumages, some of them quite elusive as well! I saw a few Red Knots which was a lifer for me! Other than that, Whimbrels, Godwits, other Sandpipers and various Waders but no Spooney. Perhaps our mind was also playing tricks time and again, we thought we caught a glimpse, not to find it on closer inspection. It was a hallucination, a mirage! Minute by minute, darkness engulfed the beach. The distant shoreline seemed to draw nearer; at first slowly, then with increasing urgency, as white foamy waves marched relentlessly towards us. Time to call it a day! We again climbed up the dike with a big knot in our stomach. While cleaning our muddy feet at a nearby tap, we were all silent. The enormity of the task was now in front of us. We could perhaps scan only a fraction of the total area, and the number of the birds were so overwhelming! Would we ever be able to find a single little bird which is not colored distinctively in that enormous flock! We discussed endlessly alternate strategies and about the characteristics of the bird, at the end we realized that we have to be extremely lucky to see the Spooney.



Next morning we started early and reached the spot at daybreak. But the situation was now completely different. The beach that we walked upon last evening was now under several feet of water! It was high tide and however far we looked it was only water. Even the grasses that were seen far off was nowhere to be seen as they were submerged as well. So, we waited for a few minutes while weighing our options when an elderly gentleman appeared, presumably to have a cup of tea from a shanty of a tea-shop that existed there, the only one upon it. The shop-owner also came and while the tea was being prepared, we had a conversation with them. They advised us to wait out a couple of hours because the high tide was yet not at its zenith, more water would come in and that means we cannot venture upon the beach as yet.

After the tea was taken, we started walking towards left atop the dike. The path took a sharp turn leftward after about half a kilometer and once the turn was taken the scene opened to us completely. The dike was a straight line for another kilometer or so, and on the sheltered left side of it we saw a part of the village, and on the right side of it was the beach which was fully under tide water. But at the farthest point, a part of the beach, a small slice was still above the water and through binoculars we could make out hundreds upon hundreds of birds sitting there. They were waiting for the water to recede so that they can start feeding. We could understand that this was the best time to see the birds as for some time now, they would all be together, but once the water starts to recede, more areas of the beach would expose itself and the birds would scatter all over. If only we could access the beach now!

By then, more birders—many familiar faces had begun to trickle in, lifting our spirits, and after a brief hesitation we decided to cross the canal that lay ahead. Local villagers guided us along the safest route, helped with our cameras, and even steadied us on the slickest patches. The water was knee-deep, but the real challenge was the sucking, slimy mud—routine for them, daunting for us city folk. I remain deeply grateful for their generous help.

Once we were on the beach it was binocular time. The task was to check every bird that could be a Spooney, out of that flock of hundreds without coming too close lest they get spooked. In very short time we could realize what a difficult task it was, specially as most of the birds were in sitting position with their face turned away from us. Minutes after minutes passed, then an hour passed without a glimpse of the bird, and a sneaking suspicion started to grow. Was the bird at all there? Has it already moved away? Is this the right place? is this the right flock? So many doubts and no answers to allay our fear. So, we kept on trying and we were

also photographing other specialties, of which there were many to keep ourselves busy.

Meanwhile, a birder with a spotting scope threw his arms up in triumph: he'd finally found the elusive bird. Our hopes soared—proof we were in the right place and that, with patience and a little luck, we might even photograph it.

Now the water was receding. The flock was spreading and moving, making the job of scanning even more challenging. We could feel that our chance was slipping through our hands. But after a few more minutes of frantic search the spotting scoper was rewarded again, and this time he could take a photo of the bird. He could also point the area for us, bless the man, no mean a feat as this was a featureless beach hosting hundreds of similar birds. But he said that the bird was feeding near to one of the small mangrove saplings and we started to scan the area again, this time with a touch of desperation! And suddenly the bird was in my binocular's vision and the next moment it was not! I started to scan the probable area, of which now I had a vague idea, this time through my camera. The water was now receding fast, the flock was now speedily scattering, going away from us at an alarming rate! Here I could see the bird through my camera viewfinder for a millisecond and then it was again lost. I started taking shots of the flock grid-wise hoping against hope that in some of them the bird would be captured. In a few more minutes the flocks started to disintegrate, scores upon scores of the birds started to fly away from us to distant exposed areas, now even the grasses came out in the yonder. Very fast the beach, which was few hundreds of meters in width, was now spread over a few kilometers. Some of the more enthusiastic birders were still following the scattering flocks here and there, but I was now out of steam. I was so near, saw the bird but couldn't perhaps photograph it, or did I? It was time to chimp through the frames, and beyond my wildest

imagination, here it was, the Spooney, preening, feeding and running away, in a series of images. YaY, now I could really feel satisfied. I had to get back to my home that very day and this was my only chance, so it was a matter of now or never, and things worked out for me. Not everyone was that lucky, many didn't get the photographs, but they stayed over and eventually everyone got the photos the next morning, which was a matter of extreme happiness for all of us.



Spooney – Spoon-billed Sandpiper



Spooney - habitat

It was time to return. My mind was a kaleidoscope of emotions: joy—because not every day you see such a rare bird in your own backyard; apprehension—for friends who hadn't managed a photograph; awe—at the power of such a tiny traveler to cross continents and bring people together; and dread—about the future of these mudflats and the birds that depend on them.

**Above all, though, there was hope—the hope that the Spoon-billed Sandpiper invariably kindles in our capacity for kindness, collective effort, and mutual support. May their tribe increase.**

*All pictures are taken by Author*



### About Author

#### SOMNATH GOSWAMI

Somnath is a practising Chartered Accountant based in Kolkata. He has nurtured a passion for photography, nature observation, and reading since his early teens. In addition, he is actively involved in conservation initiatives.

# THE SPOONEY SERENDIPITY

## PART II: FROM TUNDRA TO THE TIDES - TRACKING A MIRACLE

BY PRIYAM CHATTOPADHYAY

**“Migration is a fascinating and complex journey, a phenomenon that links the world together.” – Dr Salim Ali**

In a world of declining bird population, conservational science and citizen science have often been creating miracles when they chance to work hand-in-hand. On the 1st of April, 2018, a group of birdwatchers from West Bengal chanced upon a very rare wader from the coasts of Bengal specifically known as the Kargil Beach near Frasergunj of South 24 Parganas. This wader: the Spoon-billed Sandpiper (*Calidris pygmaea*), critically endangered (IUCN, 2021), was the first ever documentation from West Bengal setting a precedence and hope that there remain suitable habitats for the bird in the mudflat ecosystem of coastal West Bengal.



Spoon-billed Sandpiper photographed at Kargil Beach, Frasergunj © Biswanath Mondal

With its unique spatulate bill and small size, the bird is often mistaken for stints and sanderlings when its bill is turned away from view.

A year later, in 2019, the Birdwatchers' Society (BWS) held a Coastal Camp at the same site, led by renowned researchers Dr Sayam U Chowdhury, Dr Mohammad Foysal, and Nazim Uddin Khan Prince, to build knowledge and monitor coastal habitats for their suitability as future stopover and wintering grounds. Dr Chowdhury, a key member of the Spoon-billed Sandpiper Task Force in Bangladesh, noted that the Spoon-billed Sandpiper (*Calidris pygmaea*) prefers a distinctive niche along the coastline:

1. The habitat should strictly be an inter-tidal mudflat with a fine layer of sand on it.
2. The Spoon-billed Sandpiper (*Calidris pygmaea*) is generally a voracious feeder. It is nearly the first bird to arrive in the morning at the mudflats and the last to leave for its roost.
3. The Spoon-billed Sandpiper (*Calidris pygmaea*) thrives on food source uniquely available in the tidal mudflats this restricting their habitat to very limited zones.

Today, the global wild population of the Spoon-billed Sandpiper (*Calidris pygmaea*) is estimated at only 450–500 individuals, driven down by several factors, including:

- **Yellow Sea Reclamation:** Massive loss of essential stopover mudflats in China and Korea due to industrial “land reclamation.”
- **The “Bottleneck” Effect:** Without these fueling stations, birds starve during their 8,000 km migration.
- **Subsistence Hunting:** High mortality from “mist-netting” for food on wintering grounds in Myanmar and Bangladesh.
- **Breeding Ground Shift:** Tundra habitat loss in Russia driven by permafrost melt and climate change.
- **Increased Predation:** Rising nest raids by foxes and gulls on a dwindling number of chicks.
- **Low Recruitment:** Too few juveniles survive to adulthood to replace an aging population.
- **Narrow Niche:** Extreme specialization makes them unable to adapt to alternative habitats.

After all these years on 29th March 2026, a team of birders: Sandip Das, Kaustav Khan and Soumya Aon found a Spoon-billed Sandpiper (*Calidris pygmaea*) in a huge mixed flock of waders at the mudflats of Susni Island, off the Patibunia Sea beach in district of South 24 Parganas, West Bengal, adjacent to its earlier sighting spot - Kargil beach.



Spoon-billed Sandpiper without a tag photographed at Susni Island mudflats, Frasergunj on 29.03.2026 © Soumya Aon

surveys, coordinating banding & satellite-tagging initiatives, and compiling colour-band & flag sighting records reported by birders across China. She also facilitates the timely exchange of these records with the corresponding ringing teams across the East Asian–Australasian Flyway (EAAF), mentions: “Lime 2K was banded as a wild chick at Meinypilgyno, Chukotka, Russia on 6 July 2025. This is the 1st sighting of this bird since it was banded” which means this is the first wintering of this individual within the first year of its birth.

The metal ring on the other leg mentions the

**Initially thought to be a brief stopover, the sighting drew birders from across India within a day, only for them to discover the next morning that there were two individuals—one bearing a lime-green tag and a metal ring.**

The tag reads: ‘2K’ - the description of which was detailed upon contact with the researchers who tagged it as a chick. Kathereine Leung, a member of the China field team of the ‘Saving the Spoon-billed Sandpiper Project’, plays a pivotal role in the species’ conservation efforts. Her work includes conducting population



Spoon-billed Sandpiper with the ‘2K’ tag and a metal ring, photographed at Susni Island mudflats, Frasergunj on 12.04.2026 © Priyam Chattopadhyay

registration number in the bird ringing register by the Russian Academy of Sciences, as per information provided by Dr Kaushik Deuti, Scientist at Zoological Survey of India (ZSI). The number might also contain the po box number as mentioned by Dr Sayam U Chowdhury who was closely associated with the works of Spoon-billed Sandpiper Task Force in Bangladesh and beyond.

Dr Kaushik Deuti also shared an image of the individual (Image 4) tagged 2K when it was a chick on his social media handle mentioning “*The cute little wild chick of the Spoon-billed Sandpiper tagged 2k by the Russians (N. Karlionova & D. Nizovtsev) of the Russian Academy of Sciences (Birds Russia Expedition) on 06.07.2025 at Meinyopilgyno, south-east Chukotka, Siberia*”.



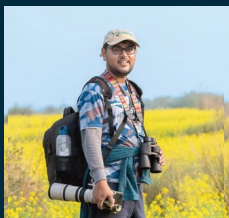
The Spoon-billed Sandpiper chick when it was tagged in Russia on 06.07.2025 © N. Karlionova

Over the next few days, birders were able to observe the tagged and the untagged bird repeatedly after which untagged bird ceased to be sighted, leaving behind only the tagged bird amongst a gradually reducing number of waders. The bird tagged 2K is still being sighted at the same mudflats well into the second week of May suggesting that the bird has no urgency to leave as it has no urgency to breed. It also means that our mudflats are providing it with a good source of food and the weather is still hospitable.

As we come across such brilliant sightings and trace back fascinating stories of migrations, we are reminded of the many reasons the world is not only built for humans but for a larger world beyond our species to survive in and we should live and breathe the fact every moment and care for every habitat so the tribe of birds like the Spoon-billed Sandpipers thrive on !

### References:

1. Facebook Post by Biswanath Mondal - <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1JqPjq33FQ/>
2. Facebook Post by Dr. Kaushik Deuti - <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1CeUgSMEI2/>
3. Facebook Post by Dr. Balachandran Sivananinthaperumal - <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1E4j573Rnu/>
4. eBird - <https://ebird.org/species/spbsan1/IN>
5. Datazone - <https://datazone.birdlife.org/species/factsheet/spoon-billed-sandpiper-calidris-pygmaea>
6. Global Flyway Network - <https://www.globalflywaynetwork.org/>
7. Personal Communications - Sandip Das



### About Author

#### PRIYAM CHATTOPADHYAY

Priyam 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.



## **THE NEW (2026) SWAROVSKI CL COMPANION 10X30 A QUICK TEST**

**ARIJIT BANERJEE**

**T**his morning two friends brought over their newly acquired Swarovski CL Companion 10X30 (New 2026) Binoculars. It was indeed nice of them.

The CL Companion Line has been around for many years. The older model, priced below the highly reputed EL series and the top of line NL Pure series, was always targeted as an affordable (by Swarovski Optik standards) light binoculars. Since I have been using the older model in 8x30 for many years, I shall try to compare the old to the new. I also had the Zeiss SFL 8x30 as a handy comparison this morning.

**Specifications compared:**

	<b>Swarovski CL Companion 10x30 (2026)</b>	<b>Swarovski CL Companion 10x30 (2011)</b>	<b>Zeiss SFL 10x30</b>
Lens Diameter (mm)	30	30	30
Magnification	10	10	10
Angular Field of View	6.6 degrees	5.7 degrees	6.9 degrees
Linear Field of View (mts/mts)	115/1000	108/1000	120/1000
Exit Pupil (mm)	3	3	3
Eye Relief (mm)	18	14	18
Minimum Focussing Distance (mts)	3	3	1.5
Twilight Factor	17.3	17.32	17.32
Brightness	9	9	9
Prisms	BAK4/ SP Roof Prism	BAK4/ SP Roof Prism	BAK4/ SP Roof Prism
Light Transmission	90%	90%	90%
Dimensions (mm)	129x113x56	119x114x58	120x107
Weight (gms)	550	515	460
Waterproofing	Yes	Yes	Yes
Nitrogen Purged	Yes	Yes	Yes
Tripod connection	No	No	No
Focusing	Central	Central	Central
Accessories	Cleaning kit, Case, strap (unique insofar as a chord wounds through strap lugs and goes around the base of eyepieces. No 'Field Pro' connector as in other Swarovski roof prism models. The lugs allow direct mounting of RYO type harness.	Objective cover and rain guard only. Strap and case is to be purchased separately To mount a RYO type harness, extended size Field pro connectors are made available free by Swarovski on request.	Case, Strap, Cleaning cloth, Objective covers, Rain Guard. Lugs allow direct mounting of RYO type harness.



The Swarovski on extreme left shows how the chord goes round the base of eyepieces (extended). The other two binoculars have RYO harnesses mounted.

The new CL Companions are viable in 3 colour schemes, brown and Black as seen here, Orange and Steel and Green and Black. The older iteration came in Black and Green and luxury leather covered versions in Brown and Black (albeit at a much higher price).

### Handling and view

Online, there seems to be a vertical split between those who like this new design vs those who do not. I personally like both. There is no reason that binoculars have to be black, green, grey or camouflage. The ergonomics are superb as is the balance. You may have noticed that the eyecups are huge and that makes on-axis eye placement very easy. The second finger naturally falls on the large focuser as it does on the SFL. The weight is handleable. The binoculars are easy to carry, especially with a harness (that keeps hands free - something photographers should keep in mind). Swarovski does sell a harness and so does Zeiss but the material is elastic and the binoculars tend to dangle low. The Rick Young Outdoors lightweight harness is an ideal solution. Made of para-chord, it sells for 24 USD or so. On Amazon it costs Rs. 4500.

The large eye box and the 18mm eye relief makes it ideal for those who wear spectacles/ sun glasses. In case of my Zeiss SFL I need to extend out the eyepieces slightly, to view the entire field comfortably while wearing spectacles. In the Swarovski, eyepiece down was okay, and entire field was visible.

The field is terrific. Period. It is as good as the Zeiss but better corrected to the edges from what I saw. A bit warm view (unlike Swarovski) with very saturated contrast colours, while the Zeiss is cooler. When I tested the SF 10X30 a few years back I did notice the cool field and the blue edge of field. Here, 80% of the field is usable. It does not appear to have field flatteners like the NL Pure or Zeiss SF (then that would add to the cost). There is no mention of use of extra Low Dispersion (ED) glass in any of the documents available yet. However, I did not notice any field relevant chromatic aberration, even while focusing on a dark tree trunk with a white featureless sky behind. Nicely done indeed. All in all a fine optic. The eyepieces are large and actually bigger than in the Zeiss SFL.

While the SFL has a diopter adjustment below the right eyepiece, in case of the Swarovski CL Companion, the yellow ring around the focuser is where the diopter adjustment is. You press down the centre and adjust left/ right. It is similar in the earlier model and a bit finicky. But once set, it stays put. This part could have been simpler as in the NL Pure where one pulls out the adjustment knob which is recessed in the focuser. (A similar arrangement exists in Leica Ultravid HD+ and Noctivid). The objectives are recessed, pinkish green coatings. Third party objective covers may be used.



The older model of CL Companion Habicht



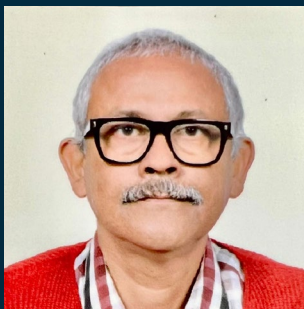
The binoculars are made in Austria and this is written below the hinge.

Going by the specifications and pricing, this binocular is positioned to compete directly with the Zeiss SFL. That Swarovski has stuck to their Austria Factory is a good thing (their My Junior 7x28 are plasticky and made in China - but aimed at children). Zeiss has outsourced the SFL to Japan. That may or may not be a consideration while purchasing. The owners of these two Swarovskis shared that the price of each set was similar to what Zeiss SFL 10x30s are selling for as on date.

#### Conclusion:

Fine Binoculars these are. Whoever decides to procure a pair will have no regrets. 8X remains my preference but 10x will do the job well. It is indeed a pair that will turn a few heads and the Hawk (Habicht) emblem is distinctly visible in front of the central hinge. The same could be said of the Zeiss SFL (and its blue shield) and it does have a slightly wider field and a closer minimum focusing distance. And the SFL turns up on e-commerce with spectacular discounts occasionally. The older model, a very sharp optic in its own right, is also available. Please contact website/ dealers for prices and availability.

***A big thanks to the two gentlemen who were kind enough to allow me handle their binoculars.***



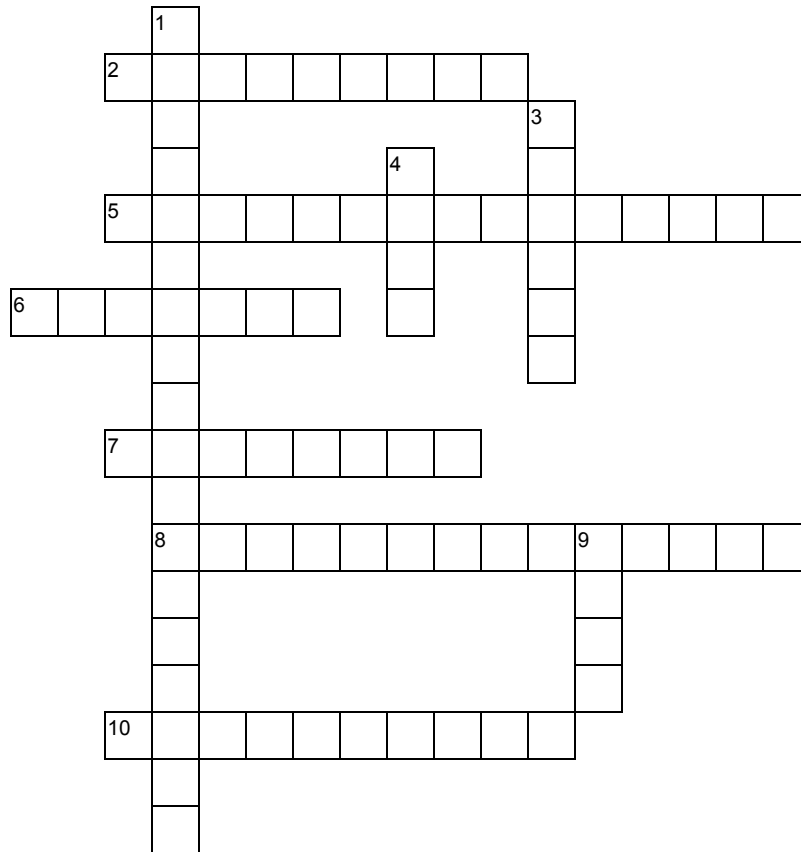
#### About Author

### ARIJIT BANERJEE

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



## Answer These



### Across

- 2 Which flightless bird is considered the most dangerous, capable of killing humans with its dagger-like claws?
- 5 Which bird is the fastest flyer, reaching speeds of over 200 mph (320+ km/h) when diving?
- 6 The American white variety of what bird can hold three gallons of water in its bill?
- 7 Name the smallest bird of prey in the world
- 8 Which bird is the smallest in the world, often mistaken for an insect?
- 10 Although native to South America, which of these birds can now be found in the wilds of New York City?

### Down

- 1 Which bird has the longest wingspan of any living bird?
- 3 Which bird is often called a 'sea parrot' and can carry multiple fish in its beak?
- 4 Roughly the size of a chicken, which bird lays the largest egg relative to its size?
- 9 What colour are flamingos when they are born?



# FLIGHTS OF



Drawings by Zainab Ali

It all happened on a random Tuesday. I was coming back from school when I saw a bright, orange coloured bird with wings as grey as the kalbhaisakhi clouds of Calcutta . At first I did not pay heed to it, thinking it was somebody's pet which had had flown out of its cage. With little to no knowledge about birds, I posted a picture of it on our community chat group which was soon noticed by our gracious and knowledgeable neighbour Mrs Batul Pipewala who identified it in an instant. It was an Orange-headed Thrush, a migratory bird. As per her instructions, we carefully took it to our nearest natural bird reserve Rabindra Sarobar Lake for its release.

To our surprise, another bird of the same species was sitting on the perch, as if waiting for its beloved friend. As soon as we released it the bird spread out its wings. The sun-kissed birds shone under the heavenly glow of the orange light of twilight. As dusk was soon approaching, the birds tweeted to their hearts' content as if to spill all their adventures; secrets so far kept hidden from the world before taking flight to the blue skies yonder, never to be seen again.

This was my short encounter with this gorgeous little being.



**Zainab Ali** is a student of class 11 at Pratt Memorial School, Kolkata. This is her first attempt to give expression to her vision and experience through this platform.



# FANCY



This is the painting of **Subhraneel Samai**  
Class VI, D  
Roll No-41 Don Bosco  
School Liluah



**Purple-rumped Sunbird Outside my School Window:**  
"Every morning, a pair of little birds come and peck at my glass window for a long time. Can you guess who? They are Purple-rumped Sunbirds too."

**Praiti Chakrabarty**  
is a student of class VII and loves birdwatching. She is not a regular birder yet but can recognize the common ones.



The Release!  
ছবিঃ BAN ফাউন্ডেশন

## পাখির পুনর্বাসন

বিশ্ব রঞ্জন গোস্বামী

পা

খি দেখা বা পর্যবেক্ষণ অনেকের কাছে অবশ্যই একটি আনন্দদায়ক অভিজ্ঞতা। তবে যেসব প্রকৃতি প্রেমিকরা নিয়মিত প্রকৃতির আগিনায় পাখি দেখতে যান তাদের লক্ষ্য কেবল পাখি পর্যবেক্ষণ করে আনন্দ পাওয়া নয়। তারা কেবল সচেতন পরিবেশপ্রেমী হিসেবে পরিবেশে পাখিদের আচার আচরণই লক্ষ্য করেন না, বরং পাখি পুনর্বাসন ও সংরক্ষণের কাজেও সচেতন হন। বনের পাখিরা অসুস্থ বা আক্রান্ত হলে তাদের মনও অধীর ও আকুল হয়ে পড়ে। তাই পাখিপ্রেমীদের প্রধান লক্ষ্য এইসব অসহায় পাখিদের উদ্ধার করে পরিবেশে ফিরিয়ে আনা। এই ভাবেই সম্ভব পরিবেশে মানুষ ও বন্যপ্রাণী তথা পাখিদের মধ্যে সংঘাত কমিয়ে জনসমাজে বন্যপ্রাণী ও পরিবেশ বিষয়ে সচেতনতা গড়ে তোলা।

পাখি পুনর্বাসনের কাজটি ব্যক্তিগত বা সংস্থাগত দুইভাবেই করা যায়। পরিবেশ বিপন্ন হওয়ায় পাখিরাও আজ বিপদগ্রস্ত। দ্রুত নগরায়ণের ফলে অগনিত পাখি মানুষের তৈরি নানা বিপদের শিকার হচ্ছে, যেমন প্রায়শ বিদ্যুৎস্পৃষ্ট হওয়া, কাঁচের দেওয়ালে সরাসরি ধাক্কা খাওয়া, জলাভূমির ক্রম সংকোচন এবং মোটের উপর পরিবেশ দূষণের কথা তো আছেই। সেদিক থেকে বাবা - মা ছাড়া পাখির ছানাদের কথাও ভাবতে হবে বৈকি। প্রাকৃতিক বিপর্যয় - যেমন তাপ প্রবাহ, খরা, বন্যা, ঝড়বৃষ্টিতে পাখিরা আহত বা অসুস্থ হওয়ার বেশ সম্ভবনা থাকে। এই পরিস্থিতিতে বহু পাখি প্রেমিক ও সংস্থা এগিয়ে আসছেন যারা অসুস্থ বা আহত পাখিদের গুশ্রা ও চিকিৎসা করে সুস্থ করে তোলেন। আবার সুস্থ হওয়া পাখিরা নিজস্ব প্রাকৃতিক পরিবেশে ডানা মেলে ধরে।

ভারসাম্যপূর্ণ বাস্তুতন্ত্র বজায় রাখার ক্ষেত্রে পাখিরা অত্যন্ত গুরুত্বপূর্ণ ভূমিকা পালন করে। তারা ফসল বা গাছ-গাছালির ক্ষতিকর পোকামাকড় দমন, গাছের পরাগায়ন ও বীজের বিস্তারে সাহায্য করে। সর্বোপরি জীববৈচিত্র্য রক্ষা করে। তবে নগরায়ণ ও দুর্ভাগ্যবশত মানুষের বিভিন্ন কর্মকাণ্ড পাখিদের সংখ্যা এবং অস্তিত্বের ওপর চরম মারাত্মক নেতিবাচক প্রভাব ফেলছে। প্রতিবছর নানা কারণে বিভিন্ন এলাকায় অসংখ্য পাখি আহত ও অসুস্থ হয়। সময়মত সহায়তা না পেলে এই পাখিরা প্রায়ই চরম ভোগান্তির সন্মুখীন হয়। এমনকি তাদের মৃত্যু পর্যন্ত হতে পারে। অনেক স্বহৃদয় ব্যক্তি, এবং পাখি পুনর্বাসন ও সচেতনতা কেন্দ্র পাখিদের জরুরী কালীন ভিত্তিতে সেবার ব্যবস্থা করেন। যার ফলে এইসব পাখিরা সুস্থ হয়ে আবার প্রাকৃতিক আবাসস্থলে ফিরে যাওয়ার সুযোগ পায়। পাখি পুনর্বাসনের মাধ্যমে জীববৈচিত্র্য ও পরিবেশের ভারসাম্য যেমন রক্ষা হয়, পাশাপাশি পরিবেশের ওপর মানুষের ক্ষতিকর প্রভাব কমানো এবং আহত প্রাণীদের প্রতি দায়িত্ববোধ থেকে তাদের সুস্থ করে তোলাও একটি নৈতিক দায়িত্ব। আহত পাখিদের উপযুক্ত চিকিৎসার মাধ্যমে পুনরায় প্রকৃতিতে ফিরিয়ে দেওয়া বাস্তুতন্ত্রের ভারসাম্য বজায় রাখে।

প্রকৃত সংরক্ষণ শুরু হয় শিক্ষা এবং সাধারণ মানুষের অংশগ্রহণের মাধ্যমেই। পাখি পুনর্বাসন ও সচেতনতা কেন্দ্র যে কেবল পাখি উদ্ধারের কেন্দ্র হিসাবেই কাজ করে তা কিন্তু নয়। এই সকল সংস্থাগুলো কার্যকর পদক্ষেপ নিয়ে স্থানীয় লোকজনকে সংগঠিত করে বন্যপ্রাণীদের প্রতি সহানুভূতিশীল এক সমাজ গড়ে তোলারও একটি মঞ্চ। স্থানীয় স্কুল, কলেজ ও জনগোষ্ঠীর সাথে যুক্ত হয়ে প্রতিটি ব্যক্তি যেন প্রকৃতির একজন অভিভাবক হয়ে ওঠে।

আপনি যদি আপনার বাড়ীর আঙ্গিনায় কিংবা বাইরে চলাফেরার সময় কোন আহত পাখি দেখতে পান, তবে তাড়াতাড়ি কিছু ব্যবস্থা নিয়ে পাখিটির জীবন বাঁচাতে পারেন। প্রথমেই এই কাজে পরিস্থিতিটি সঠিকভাবে বোঝা খুব জরুরী যাতে আপনি বুঝতে পারেন কীভাবে হস্তক্ষেপ করা দরকার বা আদৌ কোন হস্তক্ষেপের প্রয়োজন আছে কিনা। বসন্ত, গ্রীষ্ম ও শরতের শুরুতে আমরা প্রায়ই মাটিতে ছোট ছোট পাখির ছানা পাই। এরা তখন বাসা ছেড়ে বের হয়ে কখনও স্বাধীনভাবে খাবার খুঁজে বেড়ায় বা ওড়া শিখতে শুরু করে। তাই এদেরকে উদ্ধার করার কোন দরকার পড়ে না। তবে যদি কোন পাখি আহত বা অসুস্থ বলে মনে হয়, কিংবা তার কাছ গেলেও সঙ্গে সঙ্গে উড়ে পালায় না, এই ক্ষেত্রে আপনি নিজে পাখিটির সেবা – যত্ন করার চেষ্টা করবেন না। এই পাখিটিকে সুস্থ করে তোলার জন্য একজন প্রশিক্ষিত বা দক্ষ লোকের সাথে যোগাযোগ করুন। আপনি যদি নিশ্চিত হন যে পাখিটিকে উদ্ধার করা জরুরী, অথচ কাছাকাছি কোন অভিজ্ঞ লোকজন কেউ নেই তখন প্রাথমিকভাবে যা করতে হবে তা হল:-

পাখিটি যদি কোন কুকুর বা বিড়ালের মুখের মধ্যে কিংবা কোন বেড়ার ফাঁকে আটকে থাকে তখন তাড়াতাড়ি সতর্কতার সাথে সেই পাখিটিকে মুক্ত করতে হবে। পাখিটি যাতে উড়ে পালিয়ে না যায় বা আঘাতজনিত কারণে মারা না যায় তা নিশ্চিত করতে ঠিকভাবে ধরে রাখার চেষ্টা করা উচিত।

পাখিটি যদি মাটিতে পড়ে থাকে ও উড়তে না পারে, তখন পাখিটির পেছন দিক থেকে নিঃশব্দে ও আস্তে আস্তে তার দিকে এগিয়ে যান। এরপর দ্রুত ও যতটা সম্ভব নীচু হয়ে পাখিটিকে ধরার চেষ্টা করুন। কোন রকম দ্বিধা না করে পাখির কাঁধের বা পিঠের উপরের দিকে আপনার হাতটা রাখুন। তারপর ডানাদুটি শরীরের সাথে ভাঁজ করে চেপে ধরে পাখিটিকে তুলে নিন।



ছবিঃ BAN ফাউন্ডেশন



ছবিঃ শেখ আরফান আলীর থেকে প্রাপ্ত



ছবিঃ শেখ আরফান আলীর থেকে প্রাপ্ত

আহত পাখিটি দৌড়াতে, হাঁটতে বা লাফিয়ে চলতে পারে তখন পাখিটিকে ধরার সুবিধার্থে কৌশলে ঘরের কোনায় বা দেওয়ালের একপাশে নিয়ে যাওয়ার চেষ্টা করুন। পাখি ধরার জাল এক্ষেত্রে বেশ কার্যকর হতে পারে। কখনও যদি পাখিটি ভালোভাবে উড়তে পারে অথচ তার শরীরে কোন আঘাতের চিহ্ন দেখা যায় তখন তাকে তাড়া করবেন না। তখন মাটিতে কিছু শস্যদানা বা খাবার ছড়িয়ে দিয়ে কোন খাঁচার দিকে নিয়ে যাবার চেষ্টা করুন। তারপর পাখিটি খাঁচার ভিতরে প্রবেশ করলে খাঁচার দরজাটি বন্ধ করে দিন। কিন্তু আহত পাখিকে কোন সুস্থ পাখির সাথে একই খাঁচায় রাখবেন না।

#### পাখিটিকে ধরার সময় কিছু বিষয় সম্পর্কে সচেতন থাকতে হবে:-

আহত বা অসুস্থ পাখিটি যদি কোন এক অপরিচিত পরিবেশে থাকে তবে পাখিটির খুব ভয় পাওয়ার সম্ভাবনা থাকে। কেননা সে তার সঙ্গী বা ঝাঁক থেকে বিচ্ছিন্ন হয়ে আপনার হাতে বন্দী। সে কিন্তু আপনার উদ্দেশ্য সম্পর্কে অবগত নয়। আপাত পাখিটি চুপচাপ, কিন্তু তার মানে পাখিটি খুব শান্ত প্রকৃতির নাও হতে পারে। পাখিরা যখন মনে করে তাদের জীবন বিপন্ন, তখন তারা কৌশলগত কারণে স্থির হয়ে থাকে। নিজেদের রক্ষা করার এক কৌশল মাত্র।

কোন আহত প্রাপ্তবয়স্ক বিশেষ করে ছোট মাপের পাখিকে দরকারের চেয়ে বেশি সময় ধরে আটকে রাখা উচিত হবে না কেননা মানসিক চাপের কারণে তারা মারাও যেতে পারে। এই অবস্থায় আপনি পাখিটিকে যতটা সম্ভব কম নড়াচড়া করবেন। তখন তাদের আদর করলে তারা আরাম পাবে না, বরং ভয় পাবে।

পাখিটিকে ভেতরে একটি নিরাপদ ঘরে নিয়ে যান যেখানে ঘরটির দরজা- জানলা বন্ধ করা যায়। দেখতে হবে সেখানে যেন কোন শিশু বা কুকুর বিড়াল না থাকে। যদি মনে হয় পাখিটি উড়তে পারে, তবে পাখিটিকে খাঁচার ভেতরে না আনা পর্যন্ত জানালাগুলো বন্ধ রাখাই ভালো। তা নাহলে পাখিটি আপনার কাছ থেকে পালিয়ে যেতে পারে বা জানালায় ধাক্কা খেয়ে আহত হতে পারে। পাখিটি বেশি আহত বা অসুস্থ হলে পাখিটিকে যত তাড়াতাড়ি সম্ভব একজন দক্ষ পুনর্বাসনকারীর কাছে পৌঁছে দেওয়া উচিত। গাড়ি করে নিয়ে যাওয়ার সময় পাখিসহ খাঁচা বা বাক্সটিকে সরাসরি রোড ও গাড়ির এয়ার-কন্ডিশনারের বাতাস থেকে দূরে রাখাই ভালো হবে।

পুনর্বাসন কারী বা চিকিৎসকের কাছে পৌঁছে যাওয়ার পর কিছু তথ্য তাকে জানানো জরুরী যেমন আপনার নাম, ঠিকানা, ফোন নম্বর ইত্যাদি। তাছাড়া পাখিটিকে কোথায়, কখন খুঁজে পান, সেই জায়গার নির্দিষ্ট বিবরণ, পাখিটির ঠিক কি হয়েছিল তা যদি আপনি দেখে থাকেন ইত্যাদি তথ্য জানানো দরকার।

মনে রাখা দরকার এই তথ্যগুলো শুধুমাত্র আহত বা অসুস্থ পাখিদের ক্ষেত্রে ব্যবহারের জন্যই বলা হয়েছে। যে পাখি আহত বা অসুস্থ নয় তাকে ধরে রাখার কোন যুক্তি নেই বরং তা একদম বেআইনি। পাখিটিকে পুনর্বাসনকারী বা চিকিৎসকের হাত তুলে দেওয়ার পর নিজেকেই নিজে অভিনন্দন জানান কারণ একটি পাখির জীবন বাঁচাতে ও তাকে আবার বন্য পরিবেশে ফিরিয়ে দেওয়ার কাজে আপনি আপনার সাধ্যমত সেরা প্রচেষ্টাটি করেছেন।

পশ্চিমবঙ্গে ব্যক্তিগত উদ্যোগ, বিভিন্ন স্বেচ্ছাসেবী সংস্থা ও সরকারী সহায়তায় বেশ কিছু পাখি পুনর্বাসন ও সচেতনতা কেন্দ্র কাজ করছে। আহত বা অসুস্থ পাখির চিকিৎসা ও তাদের সুস্থ করে প্রকৃতিতে ফিরিয়ে দেওয়াই এদের মূল উদ্দেশ্য।

#### আমাদের রাজ্যের উল্লেখযোগ্য কিছু পাখি পুনর্বাসন ও সচেতনতা কেন্দ্রের নাম দেওয়া হল:-

- **Nature Mates** : এরা কলকাতার একটি সংস্থা। এরা আহত বন্যপ্রাণী ও পাখি উদ্ধার করে এবং বন দপ্তরের সহযোগিতায় তাদের প্রকৃতিতে ফিরিয়ে দেওয়ার জন্য পুনর্বাসন কেন্দ্র চালায়। যোগাযোগের নম্বর (+91) 7044697179
- **Love N Care for Animals**: এই সংস্থাটি দক্ষিণ ২৪ গরগনার মহেশতলায় অবস্থিত। এই সংস্থাটি আহত ও অসুস্থ বিভিন্ন পাখির চিকিৎসা ও পুনর্বাসন করে। যোগাযোগের নম্বর (+91) 9830037693
- **Animal Rescue & Care (ARC)**: এটি কলকাতার একটি অন্যতম পুরানো প্রাণী কল্যাণ সংস্থা যারা আহত পাখিদের উদ্ধার ও পুনর্বাসন করে থাকে।
- **Nandy Sanctuary**: এই প্রতিষ্ঠানটি নদীয়া জেলার মায়াপুরে পিপল ফর অ্যানিমেলস ইন্টারন্যাশনাল দ্বারা পরিচালিত। এই সংস্থা নদীয়া জেলায় আহত ও অবহেলিত প্রাণীদের আশ্রয় ও চিকিৎসা দেয়।
- **Animal Kingdom Shelter**: কলকাতার কাছে বজবজে প্রাণীদের এক মুক্ত আশ্রয়স্থল যেখানে উদ্ধার হওয়া পাখিদের পুনর্বাসন দেওয়া হয়।
- **PAWS Kolkata**: উত্তর ২৪ পরগনার বারাসাত এলাকায় আহত পাখি ও প্রাণীদের উদ্ধারের কাজ করে।



ছবিঃ শেখ আরফান আলীর থেকে প্রাপ্ত

- **Birdwatchers' Society (BWS):** কলকাতা ও রাজাবাপী এই সোসাইটি নিয়মিত বার্ড ওয়াক (Bird Walk), কর্মশালা এবং সচেতনতামূলক অনুষ্ঠান আয়োজন করে। উত্তর ২৪ পরগনার বারাসাত এলাকায় আহত পাখি ও প্রাণীদের উদ্ধারের কাজ করে।
- **শেখ আরফান আলী,** নিমতা ফতুল্লাপুর, ২৪ পরগনা (উত্তর) এলাকার বাসিন্দা। সে বয়সে একদম নবীন খুব উৎসাহী বন্যপ্রাণ উদ্ধারকারী। এই নিবন্ধে পাখির যে রয়েছে ছবিগুলি সেগুলি সব ওর থেকে সংগ্রহ করা। এর জন্য ওর কাছে অশেষ কৃতজ্ঞ জ্ঞপন করছি। ওর কিছু পরিচিত লোকজন যারা বন্যপ্রাণ নিয়ে কাজ করেন এবং বনদপ্তরের সহযোগিতায় সে উদ্ধার করে ঠিকমতো পরিচর্যা করে সুস্থ করে শেষে কাছের কোন বনদপ্তরে হস্তান্তরিত করে। সাপ নিয়ে ওর বেশ উল্লেখযোগ্য কাজ আছে। আরফান আলী, খুব নিবেদিত তরুন যে কিনা আহত বন্যপ্রাণী ও পাখি উদ্ধার করে এবং বন দপ্তরের সহযোগিতায় তাদের প্রকৃতিতে ফিরিয়ে দেয়। ওর সাথে যোগাযোগের নম্বর (+91) 8420037177.

উদ্ধার পাওয়া প্রতিটি পাখিই অস্তিত্ব বজায় রাখার জন্য আশা ও স্বাধীনতার এক জীবন্ত উপাখ্যান। পাখি পুনর্বাসন ও সচেতনতাকেদ্রকে সহায়তা করার মাধ্যমে একদিকে আপনি যেমন সরাসরি জীববৈচিত্র্য সংরক্ষণে অবদান রাখছেন, আবার নিশ্চিত করছেন যে ভবিষ্যত প্রজন্ম যেন পাখির কলকাকলিতে মুখরিত এক প্রাণবন্ত পরিবেশের স্বাদ পায়। একথা অনাস্বীকার্য যে প্রকৃতির অঙ্গনে থাকলে এক অনাবিল আনন্দ বোধ করা যায়। পাখি পর্যবেক্ষণের সাথে সাথে পাখি পুনর্বাসনের কাজে নিজেকে যুক্ত করে মানসিক প্রশমতার এক গভীর তৃপ্তি এবং জীবনের প্রতি মূহুর্তে মনের সজীবতা অনুভব করুন।

তথ্যসূত্র-

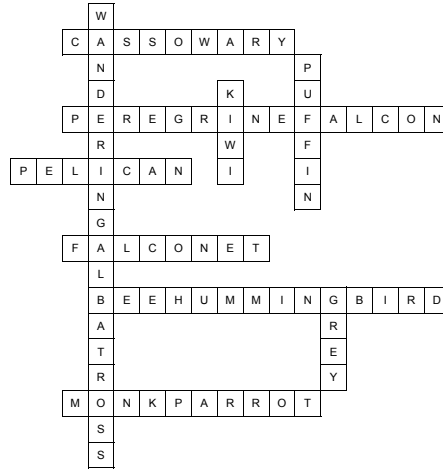
1. <https://avianrehabilitationclinic.com>
2. <https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au>



## 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 Which flightless bird is considered the most dangerous, capable of killing humans with its dagger-like claws?
- 5 Which bird is the fastest flyer, reaching speeds of over 200 mph (320+ km/h) when diving?
- 6 The American white variety of what bird can hold three gallons of water in its bill?
- 7 Name the smallest bird of prey in the world
- 8 Which bird is the smallest in the world, often mistaken for an insect?
- 10 Although native to South America, which of these birds can now be found in the wilds of New York City?

### Down

- 1 Which bird has the longest wingspan of any living bird?
- 3 Which bird is often called a 'sea parrot' and can carry multiple fish in its beak?
- 4 Roughly the size of a chicken, which bird lays the largest egg relative to its size?
- 9 What colour are flamingos when they are born?



## MAKALTALA: MAPPING A LANDSCAPE OF BIODIVERSITY, MEMORY, AND SURVIVAL

BY DISAPPEARING DIALOGUES

**D**isappearing Dialogues(dD) is a collaboration of minds, passions, and artistic spaces dedicated to preserving heritage, culture, and environments gradually disintegrating. Through community engagement, local knowledge is documented and disseminated via exhibitions and public interactions. The collective operates across community, institutional, and public spheres, fostering intergenerational exchange through indigenous archives, immersive research, educational outreach, festivals, and installations. For a decade it has been working in the various villages of East Kolkata Wetlands- Pailen, Bhojerhaat, Dhalipara etc. This year it has focused on a village named Makaltala for its unique traditional knowledge systems, vibrant biodiversity as well as its vulnerability in the face of ecological loss.



Ala- a watch-house generally made on the divider of agricultural land or beside the fishing ponds



A daily scene of drying paddy in Makaltala

Makaltala is a landscape where water, soil, people, and memory are deeply intertwined. Situated within the ecological system of the East Kolkata Wetlands, this area is more than just a physical location. It is a living environment shaped by biodiversity, indigenous practices, and traditional livelihoods that have evolved in close relationship with water and land. In Makaltala, ecological richness and human life have historically existed in balance, creating a space where culture and nature grow together. Yet today, this fragile balance faces increasing threats, particularly from the nearby leather complex.

**The tensions between ecological life and industrial development have gradually led to the creation of the Makaltala Mapping Studio, an initiative that seeks to document, understand, and protect this changing landscape.**



Makaltala Mapping Studio from inside



The view of the leather complex from the Studio

Makaltala is remarkable for its biodiversity. The wetlands, ponds, canals, and surrounding fields support a wide range of plant and animal life. Aquatic plants like taro, water spinach and other superfoods flourish along the edges of water bodies, while fish, frogs, insects, and migratory birds depend on these habitats for survival. Various kinds of butterflies and dragonflies hover above the water during warmer months, while birds use the ponds and wetlands as resting and feeding grounds. Seasonal changes bring subtle shifts in the landscape as water levels rise and fall, plants grow and disappear, and different species appear at different times of the year. For generations, people living here have understood these rhythms and adjusted their lives according to them.



**A flock of cattle egrets searching for food in agricultural field**

The communities of Makaltala have traditionally lived with this biodiversity rather than exploiting it. Fishing, small-scale agriculture, and the gathering of aquatic plants have long formed the backbone of local livelihoods. Collecting snails (geri googly) and other such practices dominate the local cuisine. Fishermen move through the ponds and canals that connect the Wetlands, casting nets and observing the water carefully. Farmers cultivate various kinds of paddy all year long. Others gather edible plants, medicinal herbs, or materials used for household crafts. There are various houses that are still built out of bamboo dormas and mud paying homage to traditional practices. These practices represent knowledge systems built through observation and lived experience over generations.



**A caterpillar resting on the leaves**



A house in Makaltala made with organic materials like bamboo and dorma

Everyday life in Makaltala reflects this intimate relationship with the environment. Early mornings begin with fishermen preparing nets and heading toward ponds, while farmers walk along narrow earthen paths separating waterbodies and fields. The sounds of birds, insects, and flowing water become a part of daily life. Children grow up learning the names of fish and birds, understanding where certain plants grow, and watching elders work with the landscape. The wetlands provide food, livelihood, and a sense of identity to the people who live here.



A woman fishing in the pond



Image of a cultivated field



Extracting meats from the shells of the snails



**A clay oven in Makaltala - part of most of the kitchens of the village**



**A close view of the Kolkata Leather Complex - white foam developing in the water that left white marks on the land as well**

However, this balance has increasingly been disrupted by industrial pressures, especially the presence of the nearby leather complex. Shifted from Topsia, the Kolkata Leather Complex is the largest leather belt in India. Initially the complex was 450 square kms and now it has expanded to 1150 square kilometers and is still growing. While the complex represents economic development, its environmental consequences have begun to affect the surrounding ecosystems and communities. Wastewater and chemical discharge from the leather processing activities have altered the quality of water in nearby ponds and canals.

Over time, several troubling incidents have revealed the extent of this environmental impact. Villagers have reported cows dying after drinking water from contaminated ponds. The water in some areas has visibly changed colour, turning pink or taking on other unnatural shades due to chemicals and dyes released from the leather processing units. Such changes are not only alarming to local residents but also damaging to the delicate ecosystems that depend on clean water.



**Change of colour of the lake connected to the leather complex - the water turned pink because of the industrial waste of salt, acid and synthetic dyes released into the lake**



Kids playing

The effects on wildlife have also been noticeable. In the past, the ponds near the leather complex would host migratory birds during certain seasons. One such visitor was the lesser whistling duck, which regularly migrated to a lake located close to the complex. Over time, however, these birds have stopped returning to the area. Their absence is a quiet but powerful sign of ecological change. When migratory birds no longer find a habitat suitable, it reflects deeper disruptions within the ecosystem.

For the people of Makaltala, these changes are not distant environmental concerns but everyday experiences. Fishermen observe declining fish populations or changes in the water's smell and colour. Farmers worry about the quality of water reaching their fields. Most of the fields have turned barren and production of crops seems to be a distant memory for those lands now. The changes brought by the leather complex are affecting the traditional livelihood practices. The land and water growing slowly unsuitable for fish and crop cultivation due to



Threshing in Makaltala

chemical pollutants coming from the leather complex is ensuring a hindrance in these earning techniques. Community members in turn are forced to become labourers in the very leather complex that took away their land and water as well as their indigenous means of livelihood. Elders remember a time when ponds were clearer, birds were more abundant, and the land supported richer life. The gradual loss of ecological balance is also a loss of memory, as traditional knowledge tied to the land becomes harder to sustain.

These changes ought to bring a vivid impact on the city of Kolkata. On 23rd September 2025, the city of Kolkata drowned due to heavy rainfall and water clogging. The canals are heaped with solid and synthetic waste making it impossible to drain the excess water flooding the whole city. The pictures of the villages in the wetlands were quite the opposite. Our staff member Nayna stated that she did not realise that Kolkata was threatened as her village remained untouched by this natural calamity. The incident ignited the realization that wetland protects the city of Kolkata in its embrace and if the ecological loss continues, Kolkata will cease to exist.

**It was within this context that the idea of the Makaltala Mapping Studio emerged. The studio was conceived as a way to document and understand the ecological and cultural landscape of Makaltala before most of it disappears. Rather than being a conventional research space, the Mapping Studio became a community-led initiative where knowledge, art, memory, and ecology could come together.**



A photograph of the flood in Kolkata due to the cloud burst on 23rd September 2025



The studio itself was built by community members using traditional construction styles. Local residents contributed their skills, labour, and materials to create the structure, making the space feel rooted in the cultural and architectural practices of the area. Children from the community also played an active role in shaping the space. They wove a gate using leaves and bamboo, symbolically marking the entrance to the studio and reflecting the creativity and participation of the younger generation.

Within this space, mapping was understood in a broad and inclusive way. It did not only involve drawing maps of land and water but also documenting stories, memories, and ecological observations. The studio became a place where students, artists, educators, and local residents could come together to understand Makaltala's changing environment. dD decided to celebrate the 9th year of Jolabhumi Utsav, a festival to commemorate World Wetland's Day through the Makaltala Mapping Studio. Over two days, hundreds of students, teachers and experts from a vibrantly varied field joined us for the Jolabhumi Utsav and initiated a dialogue about this uniquely beautiful yet vulnerable village through performances, workshops and other activities.



A tapestry corner as part of the Studio where dD invited the onlookers and community people to develop an embroidered piece that would cover the view of the leather complex.

As a part of Jolabhumi Utsav, several activities took place within the Mapping Studio to explore and communicate the crisis facing the area. One such initiative was a puppet performance that depicted the environmental challenges of Makaltala. Through storytelling and performance, the puppet show portrayed the effects of polluted water, disappearing biodiversity, and the struggles of local communities, making complex issues understandable and emotionally engaging. This initiative that was guided by dD staff members and fellows in collaboration with Titas Chakraborti and Santanu Manna of BWS: (School of Birds) involved 37 children from Makaltala: a vibrant future generation of leaders.

Traditional cultural expression also formed an important part of the studio's activities. A Jhumur performance by Kalpana Mahato and Parimal Sardar brought music, dance, and storytelling into the space, connecting environmental themes with local cultural traditions. Such performances reminded participants that ecological awareness can also be expressed through cultural forms that have long been part of community life.



Puppetry performance by the Makaltala kids outside the Studio



A student presenting their research outcomes as part of the internship programme offered by dD

Women from the community played an active role by organising food stalls at the studio gatherings. These stalls not only provided meals and refreshments but also highlighted traditional foods connected to local agricultural and wetland resources. In doing so, they created economic opportunities while celebrating culinary traditions tied to the landscape.

Workshops formed another important component of the Mapping Studio's work. These included both art-based and ecology-focused sessions where participants explored butterflies with Agastya Chanda, Fig trees with ecologist Mahua Ghara, organic imprint with Ahiree Banerjee's Karu Pottery and painting with natural colours led by artists Soumava Das and Santanu Manna.



A performance with mandolin, poem and dance by Titas, Sulagna and Suchana respectively, in the Studio



Jhumur performance in front of the Studio by Kalpana Mahato and Parimal Sardar



The cooks and facilitators of the open kitchen from the community



Cooking on clay oven



participants with Ahiree at the Karu Pottery workshop



Drawings developed with natural colours



in search of the butterflies and fig trees during the eco-sessions

An oral history screening was also organised as part of the studio's activities. Community members shared stories about Makaltala's past about fishing traditions, seasonal changes in water bodies, migratory birds that once filled the skies, and the gradual transformations they have witnessed over the years. Recording and screening these stories helped preserve memories that might otherwise disappear with time.



SS: Earlier we used to say thick paddy, thick cloth which we have forgotten these days.

A scene from the film on Makaltala, featuring the compiled conversations with the community people

Through these diverse activities, the Makaltala Mapping Studio became more than just a physical space. It evolved into a platform for collective reflection, creativity, and documentation. It allowed the community to tell its own story while also inviting others including students, educators, and visitors to learn from the landscape.

**Makaltala today stands at a crossroads. On one side lies a landscape rich in biodiversity, traditional knowledge, and cultural memory. On the other side lies the growing pressure of industrial development that threatens to alter the land and water permanently.** The beauty of Makaltala is not only found in its wetlands, birds, or fish but in the relationships between people and nature that have shaped this place for generations.



a corner of the Studio

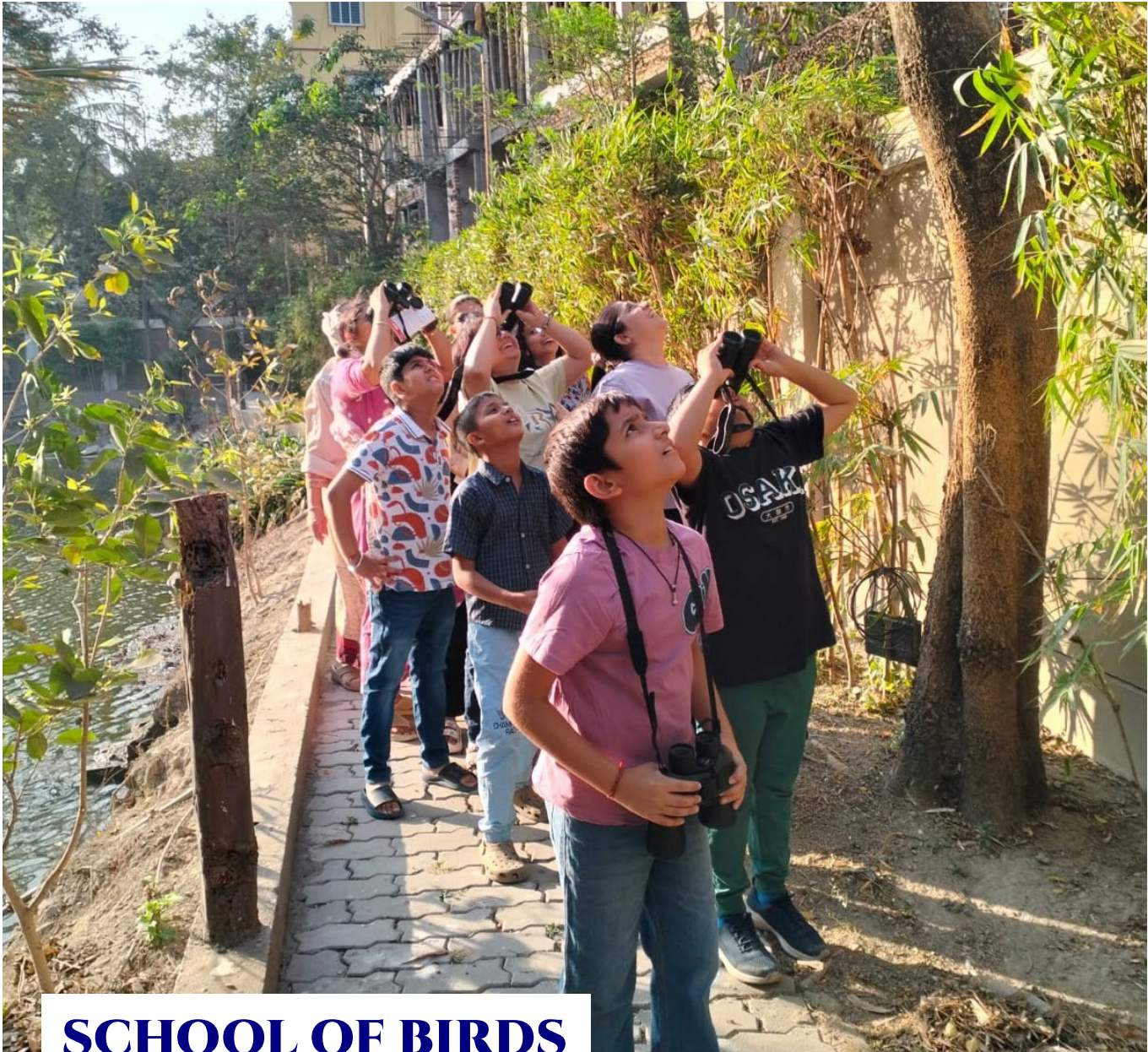
The Makaltala Mapping Studio represents an effort to hold onto these relationships. By documenting biodiversity, recording oral histories, and creating artistic expressions of ecological change, the studio seeks to preserve both the natural and cultural heritage of the area. In doing so, it reminds us that landscapes like Makaltala are not empty spaces waiting to be developed but living environments that carry knowledge, livelihoods, and stories worth protecting.



The gathering space outside the Studio

Image credits: Disappearing Dialogues

This article was created by the members of the Disappearing Dialogues Foundation: an organisation working with the East Kolkata Wetlands through social arts practices to depict the tales of the uniquely beautiful yet ecologically vulnerable village of Makaltala. Birdwatchers' Society has been a partner and collaborator in many of dD's initiatives



## **SCHOOL OF BIRDS**

### **FEB 2025 - APR 2026**

### **SPREAD THE WORD, BIRD BY BIRD**

**TITASH CHAKRABARTI**

**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.

The last 3 months were defined by a celebration of local biodiversity, community participation, and creative approaches to nature learning. Through bird walks conducted as part of the Great Backyard Bird Count, a puppet show at the JOLABHUMI UTSAV 2026, and educator-focused webinars, we engaged learners, families, and educators in meaningful encounters with nature.

From encouraging citizen science and wetland awareness to equipping educators with practical tools for nature walks and art-integrated learning, these initiatives reflected our commitment to making nature education accessible, engaging, and rooted in everyday experiences. At the same time, our explorations of birds, butterflies, insects, trees, and wetlands reinforced our holistic approach to nature education

## GBBC 2026

The Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) was a major focus this quarter, bringing together educator engagement and citizen science. Ahead of the event, we delivered a nationwide webinar for about 80 nature educators from across India, equipping them with ideas and tools for leading bird walks. This was organized by Bird Count India.

During the four-day GBBC, we organised 11 bird walks, focusing on adding new sites to the GBBC map and expanding participation into underrepresented areas. Walks for children included illustrations, games, and other interactive activities that encouraged deeper observation and engagement with birds.



**Great Backyard Bird Count 2026 Webinar Series**  
**How to Plan & Lead a Bird Walk**  
 IDEAL FOR ANYONE PLANNING A BIRD WALK DURING GBBC

**Titash Chakrabarti**  
 Founder, School of Birds

**6 FEBRUARY 2026**  
 7:00 PM (IST)  
 ONLINE (ZOOM)

Open to all | Free to attend

Scan QR to join webinar on Zoom

Brought to you by Bird Count India in collaboration with School of Birds & Birdwatchers' Society

**Poster for the webinar on GBBC preparations**



**GBBC GAG**



Birding Trail, Uparsole, Bankura



Bird Checklist, Haatgaccha, East Kolkata Wetlands



Art Integration, Rakshitpur, Paschim Bardhaman



Illustrations, Makaltala, East Kolkata Wetlands



Bird Puzzles, Rabindra Sarobar, Kolkata



Thoughts & Expressions, Haatgaccha, East Kolkata Wetlands

### BIRD PUPPET SHOW: Jolabhumi Utsab 2026

Building on six months of collaboration with Disappearing Dialogues (dD), our puppet show on the fragile ecology of the East Kolkata Wetlands (EKW)—a Ramsar site—reached a significant milestone this quarter at the 9th edition of the Jolabhumi Utsab 2026. What began as a creative journey with the three wetland fellows of the dD-BWS Wetland Fellowship Programme grew into a community-led production involving over 30 children from Makaltala village.

The festival brought together children and teachers from 11 schools participating in Disappearing Dialogues' school outreach programme, creating a vibrant platform to raise awareness about the deteriorating health of the East Kolkata Wetlands. Presented before this diverse audience, the puppet show used storytelling, music, and performance to highlight the challenges facing the wetlands and the communities that depend on them. The performance culminated in a powerful chorus—"To save yourselves, you must save the Wetlands"—with many in the audience joining in, transforming the show from a performance into a shared call for conservation.



Bird Games were a hit!



The packed audience!



More than birds!

## NATURE WALKS

This quarter, we further expanded our nature walks beyond birds to explore other facets of urban biodiversity. In collaboration with Trees of Kolkata, we conducted a tree walk centred around the spectacular blooming of the Parul tree (*Stereospermum suaveolens*) as a part of SeasonWatch's March Tree Festival.

Participants learned about the cultural significance, ecology, and seasonal rhythms of this native species while gaining a deeper appreciation of the city's green heritage.

An Insect walk at Chintamani Kar Bird Sanctuary invited participants to slow down and observe the often-overlooked diversity of insects that thrive in urban habitats. We also joined the global City Nature Challenge, lead by our partners Nature Mates in West Bengal, encouraging children and adults to document all forms of life using the iNaturalist platform. A special highlight was the enthusiastic leadership shown by young Naturalist Agastya Chandra, who led participants alongside our facilitators, demonstrating the power of youth-led nature learning.

Following one of our birding sessions in the Maidan area, we partnered with Clean-up Kolkata for a post-birding clean-up walk, combining nature appreciation with civic action.

Furthering our commitment to a holistic approach to nature education, we also conducted a butterfly walk with members of the Nature Club at Sushila Birla Girls' School. By shifting the focus from birds to another vibrant and ecologically important group, the walk encouraged participants to appreciate the interconnectedness of the natural world.

While birds remain our primary lens, the spirit of the School of Birds has always been to nurture curiosity, observation, and a sense of connection with all forms of life.





### The Way Forward

This quarter, each programme, whether focused on birds, wetlands, trees, or insects, strengthened a growing culture of stewardship by encouraging participants to observe, understand, and care for the ecosystems around them.

Looking ahead, we aim to build on this momentum by reaching new communities, nurturing young leaders, and creating more opportunities for people to connect with nature. By deepening these relationships, we hope to further strengthen the network of informed and engaged stewards that is already taking shape through our work.

### FEBRUARY 2026 TO APRIL 2026

• Number of Children

**704**

• Children- Contact Hours

**3700**

• Number of Institutions

**13**

• Adult- Contact Hours

**1130**

• Number of Adults

**232**

# SIKKIM BIRDS TOURS & TRAVELS

A GOVT OF SIKKIM REGISTERED  
TOUR OPERATOR



EXPERIENTIAL  
BIRDING TOURS IN  
NORTH-EAST INDIA



[WWW.SIKKIMBIRDS.COM](http://WWW.SIKKIMBIRDS.COM)  
[INFO@SIKKIMBIRDS.COM](mailto:INFO@SIKKIMBIRDS.COM)  
9382083201 7003389381



## BWS UPDATE



# BWS SUMMER CAMP KEWZING-MEANAM-TINGTAM, SIKKIM

KEWZING-MEANAM FOREST-APRIL 2<sup>ND</sup>-5<sup>TH</sup> 2026

A REPORT BY SOURAV MONDAL

*"IN THE HIMALAYA, YOU DO NOT JUST WATCH BIRDS—YOU LISTEN TO THE MOUNTAINS BREATHE THROUGH THEM."*

— RUSKIN BOND

**F**rom running just one camp annually, the surging demand for BWS Birding Camps led us to offer two each year since 2024. With our growing membership and their insatiable appetite for hands-on learning and team adventures, **the third camp of the 2025-26 season was launched though it was held in April 2026.**

The BWS Summer Camp 2026 (Kewzing-Maenam-Tingitam), got underway during 2nd to 5th April 2026 for 3 nights and 4 days, with 25 participants in the Himalayan foothills of South Sikkim, spanning Kewzing, Maenam, and Tingitam. This region boasts diverse habitats - from lowland forests to alpine meadows - that support a rich array of avifauna. Against the stunning Himalayan landscapes, birdwatching becomes truly breathtaking, amplified by the area's serene environment.

Little did we know when the camp was announced, that it would turn out to be such a grand success. Over the course of the camp, participants recorded more than 160 bird species, with everyone adding a few lifers to their list. **Beyond birding, it was also a wonderful opportunity to make new friends, reconnect with old ones, and explore the beautiful forests of Kewzing, Maenam, and Tinkitam in Sikkim.**

Birding in the Himalayas always carries an element of surprise—the chance of spotting a new species keeps drawing birders back again and again. North Bengal, in particular, is one of the most cherished destinations, home to an incredible diversity of birds. This BWS Summer Camp was being organized, in the Himalayas, after a gap of three years, which made it even more special.

As soon as it was announced, registrations filled up rapidly. The camp promised not just birding, but also the company of experienced birders, knowledgeable guides, skilled photographers, and engaging storytellers. It was a perfect blend of learning, exploration, and camaraderie. Soon after confirmations, the WhatsApp group for the camp became active with discussions on travel plans, train bookings, and logistics. When train reservations opened, there was a rush—some secured confirmed tickets, while others had to settle for waitlisted ones, hoping for last-minute confirmations.



As the camp approached, participants began wrapping up their year-end assignments, (March being the end of the financial year for much of India) and started drawing out their wish lists including local interests. Meanwhile, the organizers had already set the ball rolling. They assembled ahead of time to ensure every aspect was tied up and in place, including reconnaissance birding. Finally, the day arrived. Work was wrapped up, timesheets submitted, and backpackers set off for North Bengal—our destination being NJP Railway Station, where transport to the camp awaited.

#### Day 0: 2 April 2026

We gathered at the parking area of NJP station and boarded the bus to Kewzing. Our first halt was at Abhinay Restaurant for breakfast. There, we met four friends travelling separately from Kolkata, led by Sankha. After enjoying aloo parathas, momos, and hot tea, we resumed our journey through winding mountain roads. After a four-hour journey, we reached our next stop, Thuche Kitchen, where Dr Kanad Baidya (BWS Asst Secretary) and the Mr. Biswapriya Rahut (BWS President) hosted the team lunch. Post the delicious meal and a much needed leg stretch, we indulged for bit of bird photography, before setting off for the camp destination.

We reached Kewzing around 4:30 PM and checked into our homestays. In the evening, everyone gathered at **Bon Farm House, the “birder-only” homestay run by the renowned birder Mr Chewang Bonpo, who was also the lead guide for the camp.** Over cups of steaming tea, BWS President introduced everyone to Mr Chewang Bonpo, sharing stories from his birding adventures. Mr. Chewang then briefed us on the terrain, bird species, and the plan for the next two days. Finally the day was wrapped up in high spirits with an early dinner.

**Sikkim is a birding hotspot because its steep altitudinal range—from subtropical valleys to alpine zones near Kangchenjunga—creates a dense mosaic of habitats supporting exceptional bird diversity.**

#### Day 1: 3 April 2026

We woke up to a foggy morning filled with the chorus of birds. Despite the possibility of rain, cold, and leeches, many birders couldn't resist stepping out early. After a quick breakfast, we gathered at Bon Farm House for the group photo before heading out. Guided by a local birder, we walked through the village into forested areas where serious birding began. While novice birders took their time observing and photographing, experienced birders ventured deeper into the forest in search of elusive species. However, the onslaught of leeches eventually forced many of us back to the village road, where we regrouped and continued birding. Concluding a productive four-hour session, we returned to camp, had lunch, and prepared for the afternoon outing.

The afternoon session was led by Mr. Chewang. We followed a trail connecting to the Kegship–Rabongla Road and proceeded toward Mamring Monastery. A brief halt at a viewpoint offered stunning views of the valley and terraced farmlands. At the monastery, Mr. Daga flew his drone, capturing beautiful aerial footage. As daylight faded, we got back to base. The evening “adda” with snacks and pakodas turned out to be a highlight—filled with stories, laughter, and discussions about birding experiences. After planning the next day, we called it a night.

“ **Sikkim taught us that birding is not a checklist—it is a connection.** ”

Sourav Mandal (BWS Camp Participant)

### Day 2: 4 April 2026

We headed to the Tinkitam area, about 15 km away. Driving through Ravangla and Upper Rayong, we reached near View Tower Tinkitam. About 5 km before the tower, we got off the bus and began walking. The road was quiet, with minimal traffic—perfect for birding. The area was rich in bird activity, which slowed our pace significantly. Led by Mr. Chewang, whose knowledge of local species and behaviour is exceptional, we spotted numerous birds. After a four-hour session and a 3 km walk, we had lunch at Pine View Hotel in Upper Rayong.

Post-lunch, we returned to the same stretch and continued birding. The species count increased steadily—many birds were heard, some seen, and several lifers added. The highlight was spotting the elusive Rufous-throated Wren-Babbler, thanks to Mr. Chewang. After another three hours, we returned to our homestays—exhausted n excited.

The evening once again brought everyone together for discussions, and reflections. Dr. Kanad announced the upcoming Bengal Birder Meet. After seeing off Gaurav and his team for their overnight journey back to Kolkata, we wrapped up the day.

### Day 3: 5 April 2026



Although the camp had officially concluded, we couldn't leave without attempting to spot the Chestnut Thrush, reported near the homestay. We woke up early, geared up with binoculars and lenses, and set out. Fortunately, we managed to spot and photograph the bird within a short time. After this brief but rewarding session, we prepared for our return journey to Siliguri to catch our onward transport home.

**“ Leading this camp in Sikkim was a reminder that birding is not merely about sightings, but about shaping minds—where every call we followed and every trail we walked brought us closer to nature, and to our shared responsibility of conserving it. ”**

*Biswapriya Rahut (President BWS)*

### Camp Participants

- |                         |                        |                         |
|-------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Biswapriya Rahut     | 10. Pinaki Ghosh       | 19. Saikat Das          |
| 2. Syed Mashkur Kirmany | 11. Sayantan Majumdar  | 20. Kaushani Banerjee   |
| 3. Syed Mazlum Masir    | 12. Krishna Kumar Daga | 21. Saurabh Sharma      |
| 4. Chinmoy Saha         | 13. Dipankar Sinha     | 22. Kanad Baidya        |
| 5. Gaurav Chandra       | 14. Nupur Sinha        | 23. Bhaskar Banerjee    |
| 6. Batul Pipewala       | 15. Soumya Kundu       | 24. Sanchita Dey        |
| 7. Supriya Ghatak       | 16. Sankha Misra       | 25. Dr. Binita Dutta    |
| 8. Suman Das            | 17. Sangeeta Das       | 26. Saptarshi Mukherjee |
| 9. Aryabhatta Dey       | 18. Arnab Mazumdar     |                         |

Trip Report: <https://ebird.org/tripreport/497475>



## MUSINGS OF AN AWAKENED BIRDER

---

### SANCHITA DEY

The **WhatsApp** announcement read, '**BWS Summer Camp-Sikkim**', early April 2026. This was temptation enough to awaken birder in me. That part of the Himalayas which has it all...untouched forests, the mountains, the mist and of course the rich biodiversity was one of the top hotspot for birders.

The moment the notice popped up, I signed up at lightning speed - before my usual sane self could object.

#### **My apprehensions.... Wait! what did I just do?**

**First:** a trek in Kewzing and Maenam Wildlife Sanctuary, climbing up to 3000 feet. Would my creaky knees hold—or start negotiating terms and conditions halfway up?

**Second:** the leeches. Numerous. Enthusiastic. Possibly better motivated than me—and definitely least interested in personal boundaries.

**Third:** the vivid mental image of myself as an elderly lady in a poncho, feet stuffed into oversized leech socks, juggling a camera, lenses, mobile phone, a backpack, and a many-pocketed jacket whose contents would inevitably choose that exact moment to make a dramatic escape.

And then there was the small matter of barely knowing my co-travellers. Would I really be able to pull it off—or would I become the camp's cautionary tale?

**What steadied me ...** I did know one thing for sure - we'd be guided by some truly brilliant minds—people who would not only lead us through the mountains, but also share generous helpings of hard-earned experience.

The trip finally began with our 25-strong tribe crammed into a bus at NJP, ready to roll. Arrivak in Kewzing was late afternoon. A soft breeze teasing the prayer flags around the monastery pulled us instantly into the mountains' spell. Soon, tucked into our homestays, we happily surrendered to its charms.

What follows is a reflection on the moments from **my first BWS Camp** that touched me most—and stayed with me long after.

#### **A. The trails we traversed.**

Kewzing was our first hush - a sleepy hamlet at 1500 metres, cradled between Sikkim's monasteries and mossy forests where hutments and livestock appeared like punctuation marks in green. In Maenam Wildlife Sanctuary, the trail was wound over layers of leaf litter and vine, fern and bloom; fallen trunks wore fine lacework of fungus, and ancient chortens kept quiet watch. Cloud-wisps brushed our faces, and we walked on until the forest's whispers and bird-melodies began to feel like our own.

That spell travelled with us to Tingitam - higher, colder - into a dense reserve where the road curled like a ribbon, vanishing into cloud and reappearing under sudden azure. The slopes were alive but secretive; only as we drifted in twos and threes did the silence open - foraging, courting, feeding, occasionally breaking into the sweetest song. And then, in a blink, this apparent calmness would be broken by the onslaught of a hunting flock their frenetic activity unnerving us.

Secluded jewels of the wild, each trail shining in its own quiet way.

## 2. The Birding experience.

This trip showed me what I'd been missing on my usual birding runs: the tyranny of target and lifer lists (even though I'd made one, out of habit). Here, there were no targets. Veterans and newcomers moved as one, drifting in small groups along the Damthang–Rabongla Road, stopping when they wished, lingering without apology. No rushed hops from “productive spot” to “next call” – just the quiet thrill of finding a bird on your own. Even your sharpest shot didn't matter. For two days, the rules loosened, and the pressure we carry in everyday life simply fell away.

## 3. The 25 of us

Those three days with the group felt quietly soulful. We were a wonderfully mixed flock – old hands and first-timers, a bubbly schoolkid and a nerdy youngster, professors, teachers and techies – united by a fierce love for nature. Each evening, the bond formed fast as we swapped field stories and the moments that first pulled us into birding, guided with ease by Kanad and Biswapriya.

Somewhere between those conversations and shared meals, the “Foxtrots” and “Zigzag India Tours” melted into one extended family – ready to head out again, laughing like we'd always belonged.

Special thanks to Biswapriya, Mousumi and Kanad for conducting such a happy camping experience and to all the fellow participants for such an enriching experience. It became, once again, a way of listening – to forests, to friendships, and perhaps to oneself.

**“For birdwatchers the forest is a classroom as well as a place of quiet wonder, an opportunity to learn, explore and experience the magnificent landscape and its rich birdlife”**

### Whispers from the wild

*Reached home safe and sound... a bit hungry, but not tired. Ready for another round of chestnut thrush expedition will miss you people for this memorable trip with like-minded company and awesome moments to cherish on days to come. thank you BWS!*

**BINITA DUTTA**

*This was my first camp with BWS. I must say it surpassed all expectations. Details will be up soon. Had a most enjoyable experience. Thank you*

**SANCHITA DEY**

## Whispers from the wild

“

*Reached home. A big thanks to BWS for organising such intriguing Birding Trip. Special thanks goes to Biswapriya da, Kanad, Saikat, Bhaskar, Shankha, Soumya and others who carried all activities so efficiently to make the trip a memorable one. Last but not the least Nupur joins me to extend our greetings to other members of the team.*

**DIPANKAR SINHA**

”

“

*Hey reached home safely. it was great meeting all of you. Enjoyed the trip throughly!....*

*Pochur sikhechi ei meet e from all the seniors. Tar jnno asonkho dhonnobad!*

**ARYABHATTA DEY**

”

“

*Reached home last night. This has been a very memorable camp for both Saurabh and I. Thank you everyone for your splendid company and the BWS crew for being immensely accommodating for each and every request.*

*Looking forward to the next BWS camp!*

**KAUSHANI BANERJEE**

”



## POILA BAISAKH BIRD COUNT (PBBC) 2026

**F** The fourth edition of the Poila Baisakh Bird Count (PBBC) 2026, jointly organised by Bird Count India and the Birdwatchers’ Society, was conducted across West Bengal during the Bengali New Year period from 17 April 2026 to 19 April 2026. Conceived as a citizen–science initiative to document Bengal’s avifaunal diversity at the onset of summer, the event once again brought together birdwatchers, photographers, students, nature enthusiasts and eBird contributors from across the state. Despite several logistical challenges this year—including extensive election-related poll duties and training schedules that affected participation across multiple districts—the exercise recorded an encouraging preliminary total of 412+ species from approximately 465 submitted checklists. While these figures remain below the impressive totals of previous editions (544 species in 2024 and 523 species in 2025), the event nevertheless demonstrated the continued enthusiasm and commitment of West Bengal’s birding community.

A comparison with the previous year indicates a substantial reduction in checklist submissions, with the 2025 edition generating nearly 775 checklists. Several active birders and contributors from different districts were unable to participate owing to election responsibilities, academic schedules and administrative duties. Additionally, the remarkable appearance of the critically endangered Spoon-billed Sandpiper at Patibunia in South 24 Parganas—only the second confirmed record of the species in West Bengal since 2018—drew a significant concentration of birders to a single coastal site during the count period. Nevertheless, PBBC 2026 produced several noteworthy sightings and highlighted the remarkable diversity of habitats across the state. Key species reported during the count included:

- Spoon-billed Sandpiper from Patibunia mudflats, South 24 Parganas
- Black-tailed Gull from Kargil Beach, South 24 Parganas
- Green Cochoa from Latpanchar in Darjeeling district
- Firethroat
- Chestnut-winged Cuckoo

District-wise participation once again reflected the strong contribution of both the Himalayan and coastal landscapes of West Bengal. Preliminary analyses indicate that Darjeeling emerged as the leading district in terms of species diversity with approximately 194 species, followed by South 24 Parganas with around 129 species, and Birbhum with nearly 100 species. In checklist submissions, South 24 Parganas led the state with approximately 66 checklists, followed by Darjeeling (49) and North 24 Parganas (45). Participation was recorded from all districts except Jhargram and South Dinajpur.

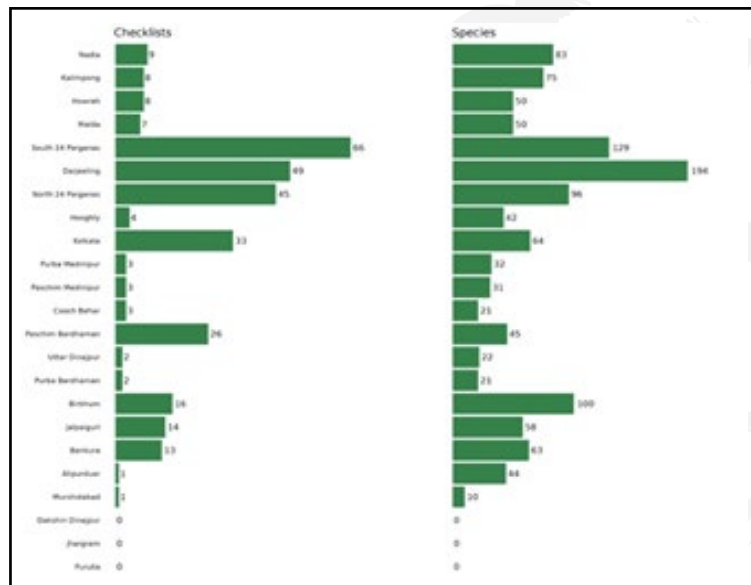


Figure 1 PBBC 2026: District-wise checklists & species count

The PBBC continues to underline the importance of citizen science in understanding seasonal bird distribution patterns across Bengal. This year’s results also suggest the growing reach of bird monitoring initiatives beyond traditional hotspots into urban landscapes, agricultural belts, wetlands and forested regions.

As the Poila Baisakh Bird Count enters its fourth year, it has evolved into an important annual platform that celebrates Bengal’s avian diversity while fostering conservation awareness, documentation and community participation. The organisers hope that future editions will see broader participation and deeper engagement from birders across every district of the state.

# WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY 2026

**Date of event –5th June 2026** (World Environment Day)

**Place of Event** – Hariharpara High School (H.S.), P.O.-Hariharpara, Dist.- Murshidabad

**Event Type (Bird Walk/classroom etc.)** – Classroom Based with Quiz and Activity

**Partner Organization** – Birdwatchers’ Society

**Start Time** – 7:30 A.M. **End Time** –9:30A.M.

**No. of Children Participants** : 30+ **No. of Adult Participants** - 2 **Name of Educator**- Asabul Islam

On the occasion of World Environment Day on 5th June 2026, Hariharpara High School (H.S.) organized several awareness programs to promote environmental conservation among students.

One of the major events was a “School of Birds“ Presentation conducted by the Birdwatchers’ Society. The session aimed to educate students about the important relationship between birds and the environment. Students learned how birds contribute to ecological balance, how to identify different bird species, and the basic tools and equipment used for birdwatching.

The program was made interactive through a series of bird-related quizzes and question-answer sessions. Students who actively participated and answered correctly were awarded on the spot prizes.

**Date of event –5th June 2026**

**Place of Event** – Munsong Village, Kalimpong District’ and ‘Hariharpara High School (H.S.), P.O.-Hariharpara, Dist.- Murshidabad’

**Event Type** – Classroom orientation on bird watching among the students of the school. Munsong Higher Secondary School is located at Munsong village which is located in the extreme north of West Bengal state. The village is in the Cinchona plantation area, with rich biodiversity through different medicinal trees and regular plants available at 4000+ feet altitude. The school is around 77 years old around 110 students attend the school from 5 to 12 standard.

On the occasion of World Environment Day 2026, the school approached BWS to conduct a Bird watching awareness program at the school premises. A 1 hour presentation on Bird watching and how the student benefits from Bird watching were discussed through an interactive session. Session attended by the students of class 7 to 10.

**Name of school** –

Munsong Higher Secondary School, Kalimpong

**Event Type** –

Classroom interactive session on bird watching

**Start time** – 12:00 Noon

**End time** – 1:30 PM

**No. of participants** –

60 Students, 6 Teachers and Munsong Nature Club Members

**Name of educator** –

**Suman Dasgupta (BWS Member)**



## AN EVENING WITH A WORLD BIRDING LEGEND

13TH JUNE 2026

**T**he Birdwatchers' Society had the privilege of hosting **Peter Graham Kaestner**, one of the most remarkable birders of our time, for an inspiring and highly engaging interaction with birdwatchers in Kolkata. Peter is the **first and only person in the world to have conclusively recorded all bird families and more than 10,000 bird species**—an extraordinary **10,047 species and counting**.

More than **40 birders from Kolkata and beyond** attended the pulsating session, eager to hear firsthand accounts from a man whose birding journey has spanned nearly **70 years**. A former U.S. diplomat, Peter acknowledged that his diplomatic assignments opened doors to distant lands and remote habitats. Yet, as his stories unfolded, it became evident that opportunity alone cannot explain

such an achievement. What truly distinguishes him is his unwavering passion, boundless curiosity, and the persistence to keep chasing birds with the enthusiasm of a teenager.

What impressed the audience even more than the numbers was Peter's humility. Despite being a Guinness World Record holder and arguably the most accomplished birder on the planet, he spoke with warmth, humour, and remarkable modesty.

**His message was simple yet powerful: every birder can make a meaningful contribution to conservation.**

The evening concluded with lively conversations, and what may well have been a **record attempt of a different kind—an endless queue of selfies with Peter!** By the end, cameras had clicked almost as frequently as binoculars are raised on a good birding morning. Followed by a rush to post the prized images on social media, a sought after finishing line!

The interaction was part of the Birdwatchers' Society's continuing effort to make birdwatching exciting, meaningful, and accessible to a wider audience. Encounters with inspiring individuals like Peter Kaestner remind us that birding is not merely about adding species to a list—it is about sustaining a lifelong sense of wonder, building friendships, and contributing to the conservation of the natural world.

*And if there was one takeaway from the evening, it was this: reaching 10,000 bird species may be difficult, but the rush to catch Peter between selfie requests proved almost impossible!*



# FRESH & RARE SIGHTINGS (ARRIVALS)

**PRIYAM CHATTOPADHYAY**

From March'26 till beginning of June'26, the avian world was abuzz with activity and so were our birders. Though extremely rare Spoon-billed Sandpiper was the centre of attraction in this vibrant season, the excitement of migration of many other breeding waders kept the eyes glued to binoculars, field scopes 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	Hodgson's Frogmouth	Latpanchar, Darjeeling	Latpanchar, Darjeeling	10th March 2026; 2nd May 2026
02	Asian Emerald Cuckoo	Latpanchar, Darjeeling	Mahananda WLS, Darjeeling	12th March 2026; 3rd June 2026
03	Brown-winged Kingfisher	Sundarban Tiger Reserve, South 24 Parganas	Sundarban Tiger Reserve, South 24 Parganas	13th March 2026; 5th April 2026
04	Buffy Fish-Owl	Sundarban Tiger Reserve, South 24 Parganas	Sundarban Tiger Reserve, South 24 Parganas	13th March 2026; 13th March 2026
05	Lanceolated Warble	Baruipur Marshes, South 24 Parganas		14th March 2026
06	Snowy-browed Flycatcher	Rongtong, Darjeeling	Adina Deer Park, Malda	11th December 2025; 16th February 2026
07	Fulvous Whistling-Duck	Ballabhpur WLS, Birbhum	Surul, Birbhum	15th March 2026; 16th March 2026
08	Tibetan Serin	Lava, Kalimpong	Rishop, Kalimpong	15th March 2026; 24th April 2026
09	Brown Wood-Owl	Kankrajhore, Jhargram	Sutan, Bankura	15th March 2026; 30th May, 2026
10	Rosy Starling	Rabindra Sarobar, Kolkata		16th March 2026
11	Gray-headed Parrotbill	Mangchu Forest, Kalimpong		18th March 2026
12	Himalayan Cuckoo	Kolakham, Kalimpong	Kurseong, Darjeeling	20th March 2026; 8th June 2026
13	White-throated Needletail	Mahananda WLS, Darjeeling	Rishop, Kalimpong	20th March 2026; 24th May 2026
14	Short-toed Snake-Eagle	Paharbera, Bankura	Khisma, Nadia	21st March 2026; 25th April 2026
15	Red-throated Pipit	Diara, Hooghly		22nd March 2026
16	Indian Cuckoo	Biharinath, Bankura	Dhupguri, Jalpaiguri	22nd March 2026; 8th June 2026
17	Sykes's Warbler	Baruipur Marshes, South 24 Parganas		28th March 2026
18	West Himalayan Bush Warbler	Baruipur Marshes, South 24 Parganas		28th March 2026
19	Isabelline Shrike	Baruipur Marshes, South 24 Parganas		28th March 2026
20	Chestnut-winged Cuckoo	Latpanchar, Darjeeling	Mahananda WLS, Darjeeling	28th March 2026; 9th June 2026

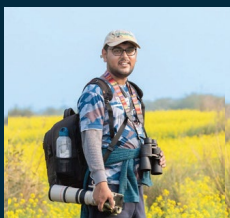
Sr No	BIRD SPECIES	LOCN - 1	LOCN - 2	SIGHTING DATES
21	Spoon-billed Sandpiper	Susni Island, South 24 Parganas	Susni Island, South 24 Parganas	29th March 2026; 29th May 2026
22	White-winged Tern	Meidinagar Beach, Purba Medinipur	Kargil Beach, South 24 Parganas	29th March 2026; 3rd May 2026
23	Indian Blue Robin	Rabindra Sarobar, Kolkata	Rabindra Sarobar, Kolkata	31st March 2026; 12th May 2026
24	Ruddy Kingfisher	Sundarban Tiger Reserve, South 24 Parganas	Buxa Tiger Reserve, Alipurduar	1st April 2026; 25th May 2026
25	White-throated Bushchat	Kamarpara, Birbhum		1st April 2026
26	Chestnut-eared Bunting	Kamarpara, Birbhum		1st April 2026
27	Common Cuckoo	Mahananda WLS, Darjeeling	Latpanchar, Darjeeling	3rd April 2026; 9th June 2026
28	Ferruginous Flycatcher	Lava, Kalimpong	Neora Valley NP, Kalimpong	5th April 2026; 1st June 2026
29	Great Parrotbill	Singalila NP, Darjeeling		5th April 2026
30	Rufous-necked Hornbill	Lava, Kalimpong	Mahananda WLS, Darjeeling	8th April 2026; 8th June 2026
31	Slaty-legged Crake	IISER Kolkata, Nadia		8th April 2026
32	Square-tailed Drongo Cuckoo	Mahananda WLS, Darjeeling	Mahananda WLS, Darjeeling	8th April 2026; 26th May 2026
33	Blyth's Swift	Mahananda WLS, Darjeeling	Sittong, Darjeeling	10th April 2026; 29th April 2026
34	Hodgson's Hawk-Cuckoo	Latpanchar, Darjeeling	Latpanchar, Darjeeling	10th April 2026; 18th April 2026
35	Short-eared Owl	Idilpur Ghat, Purba Bardhaman		11th April 2026
36	White-bellied Sea-Eagle	Arambagh, Hooghly	Bakkhali, South 24 Parganas	11th April 2026
37	Fork-tailed Drongo Cuckoo	Biharinath, Bankura	Mohishila Colony, Paschim Burdwan	12th April 2026; 5th June 2026
38	Mongolian Short-toed Lark	Susni Island, South 24 Parganas		12th April 2026
39	Great Thick-knee	Susni Island, South 24 Parganas		13th April 2026
40	Pale-headed Woodpecker	Mahananda WLS, Darjeeling	Mahananda WLS, Darjeeling	14th April 2026; 26th April 2026
41	Common Shelduck	Susni Island, South 24 Parganas		14th April 2026
42	Loten's Sunbird	Amirpur, Purba Bardhaman		15th April 2026
43	Pied Thrush	Mahananda WLS, Darjeeling	Mahananda WLS, Darjeeling	16th April 2026; 22nd April 2026
44	Green Cochoa	Mahananda WLS, Darjeeling	Rongtong, Darjeeling	18th April 2026; 29th May 2026
45	Black-tailed Gull	Kargil Beach, South 24 Parganas	Kargil Beach, South 24 Parganas	18th April 2026; 20th April 2026
46	Firethroat	Buxa TR, Alipurduar		19th April 2026
47	Slender-billed Gull	Susni Island, South 24 Parganas	Hijli Sea Beach, Purba Medinipur	20th April 2026; 3rd May 2026

Sr No	BIRD SPECIES	LOCN - 1	LOCN - 2	SIGHTING DATES
48	Fulvous Parrotbill	Singalila NP, Darjeeling	Singalila NP, Darjeeling	21st April 2026; 21st April 2026
49	Long-billed Wren-Babbler	Kolakham, Kalimpong		21st April 2026
50	Caspian Tern	Susni Island, South 24 Parganas	Sutan, Bankura	21st April 2026
51	Western Crowned Warbler	Neora Valley NP, Kalimpong	Neora Valley NP, Kalimpong	22nd April 2026; 22nd April 2026
52	Himalayan White-browed Rosefinch	Singalila NP, Darjeeling	Singalila NP, Darjeeling	24th April 2026; 24th April 2026
53	White-throated Redstart	Singalila NP, Darjeeling		24th April 2026
54	Brown-rumped Minivet	Kamduni, North 24 Parganas	Rishop, Kalimpong	24th April 2026
55	Rosy Minivet	Khisma, Nadia		25th April 2026
56	Gray Nightjar	Burmaik Mongchu Forest, Kalimpong		25th April 2026
57	Violet Cuckoo	Mahananda WLS, Darjeeling	Mahananda WLS, Darjeeling	25th April 2026; 7th May 2026
58	Eurasian Hobby	Mahananda WLS, Darjeeling	Mahananda WLS, Darjeeling	25th April 2026; 25th April 2026
59	Spot-winged Starling	Baruipur Marshes, South 24 Parganas	Mahananda WLS, Darjeeling	26th April 2026
60	Black-throated Thrush	Lava, Kalimpong		28th April 2026
61	Eurasian Woodcock	Khoppi, Kalimpong		29th April 2026
62	Gull-billed Tern	Kargil Beach, South 24 Parganas		1st May 2026
63	Black-tailed Crake	Sepoy Dhura Tea Garden, Darjeeling		1st May 2026
64	Red-necked Stint	Susni Island, South 24 Parganas		3rd May 2026
65	Osprey	Susni Island, South 24 Parganas		9th May 2026
66	Wreathed Hornbill	Raimatang, Alipurduar		9th May 2026
67	Curlew Sandpiper	Susni Island, South 24 Parganas		9th May 2026
68	Tickell's Blue Flycatcher	Lahadungri, Puruliya		9th May 2026
69	Amur Falcon	Baruipur Marshes, South 24 Parganas		10th May 2026
70	Great Knot	Susni Island, South 24 Parganas		11th May 2026

71	Red Knot	Susni Island, South 25 Parganas		12th May 2026
72	Broad-billed Sandpiper	Susni Island, South 26 Parganas		12th May 2026
73	Crimson-naped Woodpecker	Lava, Kalimpong		16th May 2026
74	Abbott's Babbler	Bibhutibhushan WLS, North 24 Parganas	Bakkhali, South 24 Parganas	17th May 2026
75	Western Hooded Pitta	Dhengasol, Bankura	Bibhutibhushan WLS, North 24 Parganas	17th May 2026; 5th June 2026
76	Pied Cuckoo	Susni Island, South 24 Parganas	Barasat, North 24 Parganas	19th May 2026; 8th June 2026
77	Red-faced Liocichla	Lava, Kalimpong		25th May 2026
78	Blue-naped Pitta	Latpanchar, Darjeeling		27th May 2026
79	Himalayan Griffon	Jorpokhari, Darjeeling		27th May 2026
80	Himalayan Prinia	Mahananda WLS, Darjeeling		28th May 2026
81	Rufous-bellied Eagle	Latpanchar, Darjeeling		29th May 2026
82	Besra	Latpanchar, Darjeeling		30th May 2026
83	Tawny-bellied Babbler	Susunia, Bankura		31st May 2026
84	Lesser Coucal	Mahuli, Birbhum		1st June 2026
85	Green Sandpiper	Mahuli, Birbhum		1st June 2026
86	Short-tailed Shearwater	Sundarban Tiger Reserve, South 24 Parganas		3rd June 2026
87	Brown Parrotbill	Senchal WLS, Darjeeling	Sukhia Pokhri, Darjeeling	5th June 2026; 6th June 2026
88	Jungle Prinia	Dhalla, Birbhum		7th June 2026
89	Chestnut Munia	Baruipur Marshes, South 24 Parganas		7th June 2026
90	Indian Pitta	Dhalla, Birbhum		7th June 2026
91	Hume's Bush Warbler	Pussimbing, Darjeeling		7th June 2026
92	Yellow-breasted Bunting #			

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

# Data-deficient for the time period of this Report



## About Author

### PRIYAM CHATTOPADHYAY

Priyam 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.

# THE JUVENILE BIRDER

TITASH CHAKRABARTI



The Juvenile Birder meets a Scaly-breasted Paradise Flycatcher



**The best doctor in the world is a veterinarian.  
They can't ask their patients what's the  
matter— they just know**  **Will Rogers**

*A nod to the intuition, experience, and deep understanding that defines vet med.*

REGISTRATIONS ARE OPEN  
<https://forms.gle/FVGcQBNIbqYHrqr7>



# Bengal Birders' Meet

## JOIN US

FOR A UNIQUE GATHERING OF RESEARCHERS,  
BIRDERS, CONSERVATIONISTS

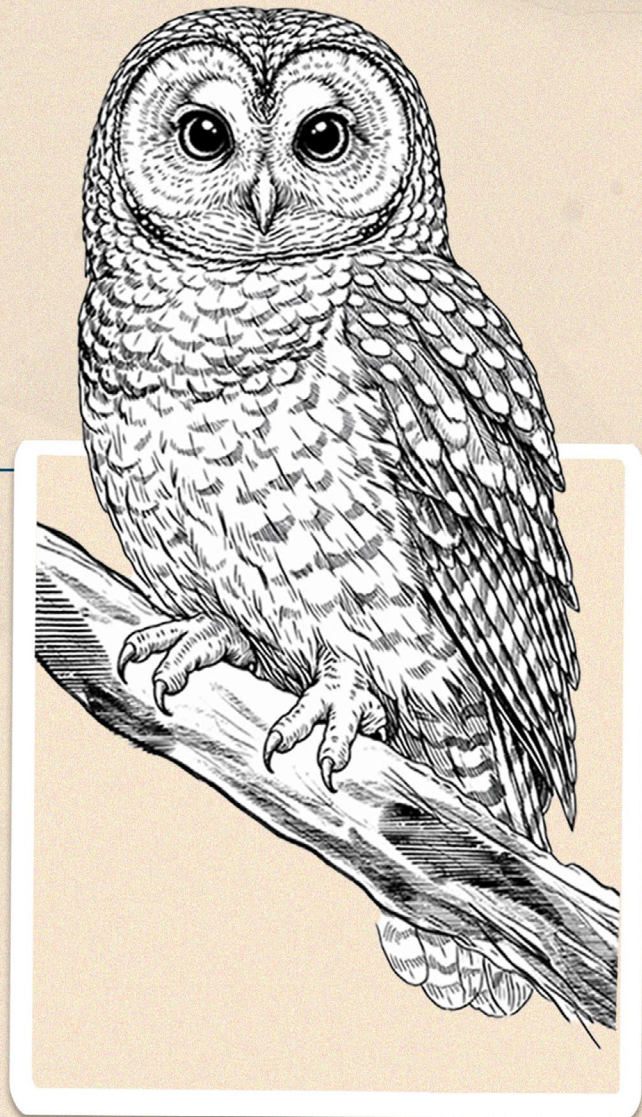
and nature enthusiasts from across Bengal and beyond  
to Engage, Learn, Inspire and Act together for the avian  
world we all cherish.

BBM 2026 will also seek to deepen our understanding of  
the rich yet often overlooked fascinating nocturnal world  
of owls through discussions, citizen science initiatives  
and Bengal's first state-wide owl survey.

Venue:  
Biswa Bangla  
Convention  
Centre  
Hall No. -7

18 -19 July  
**2026**  
KOLKATA  
INDIA

From 10:00 am onwards



in collaboration with  
**PENTAX**  
BINOCULAR  
Since 1938

**Birdwatchers' Society**

DB 75, Salt Lake, Kolkata-700064, INDIA

Email: [birdwatcherssocietywb@gmail.com](mailto:birdwatcherssocietywb@gmail.com)

Website: [www.birdwatcherssociety.org](http://www.birdwatcherssociety.org)