

FANTAIL NEWSLETTER

Volume 5 | Issue No. 1 | July - September 2025



Kingfishers

The Jewels of the Waters

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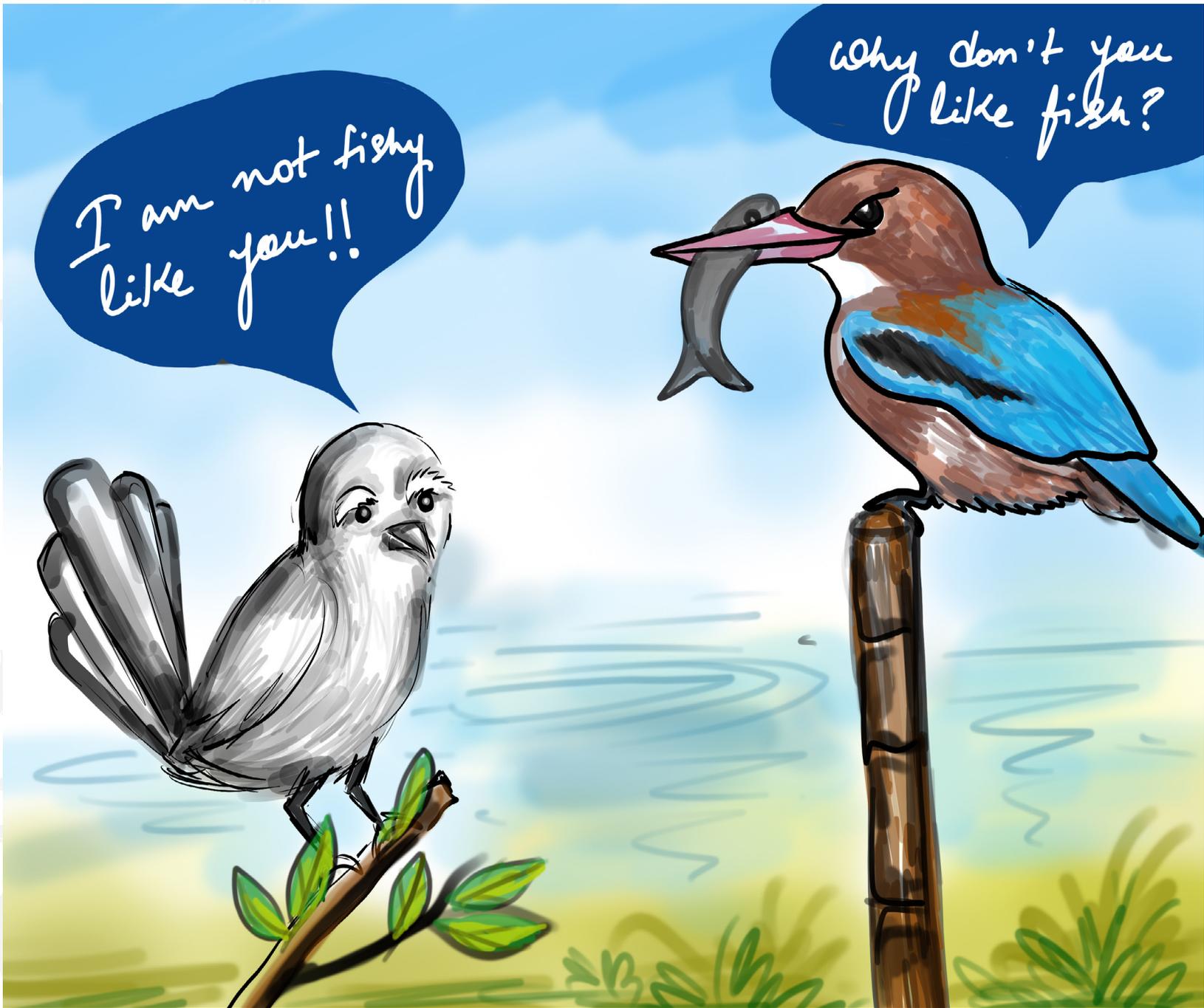


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www.ricohpentax.in

PERSPECTIVE



Courtesy: Aindrila Sarkar Deb



In order to see birds it is necessary to become a part of the
silence.

Robert Lynd



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

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Address: DB 75, Salt Lake,

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Email:

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EDITORIAL

Hello Birders,

Welcome to Volume 5 – marking the commencement of the fifth year of FANTAIL!

A fresh chapter begins, and what better way to mark this than with a tribute to one of the most dazzling avian families—the kingfishers. This first issue of the year also coincides with the **Bengal Birders' Meet 2025**, scheduled in Kolkata from **July 19–20**, a fitting convergence of celebration, reflection, and renewed purpose. On this special occasion, we dedicate our pages to **Kingfishers: The Jewels of the Waters**, a heartfelt salute to these stunning birds—and especially to the **White-throated Kingfisher (*Halcyon smyrnensis*)**, the proud state bird of West Bengal.

With **117 known species** of kingfishers across the world, each more striking than the last, how many have you encountered in the wild? From the jewel-toned pygmy kingfishers flitting through dense forests to the raucous, robust kookaburras echoing through Australian woodlands, kingfishers occupy a wide range of ecosystems—from tranquil riversides to remote tropical isles. While many are synonymous with shimmering waters and fish-laden dives, not all kingfishers are anglers; some are stealthy hunters of insects, crustaceans, and even small vertebrates.

Yet, this vibrant family faces growing peril.

A staggering **42 species (nearly 35%)** are now of conservation concern – **25 Near Threatened, 10 Vulnerable, 2 Endangered, 4 Critically Endangered, and 1 Extinct in the wild.**

Preserving kingfishers means protecting entire ecosystems. These birds are indicators of environmental health, where they thrive, biodiversity abounds. To champion them is to champion the wetlands, forests, rivers, and mangroves that we all depend upon. Let the kingfisher's sharp call and swift dive remind us: beauty is fleeting, unless we act.

This issue primarily focuses on the **Kingfisher species found in India.**

FEATURED ARTICLES

Dozen for a Dozen

A visual spread of twelve striking kingfisher photographs paired with twelve individual experiences—a delightful feast for the eyes and the curious mind.

Kingfishers: Myth, Legend and Artistic Representation

A captivating journey through folklore, mythology, and art, this piece explores how kingfishers have inspired human imagination.

Vanishing Perches

A sobering look at India's imperilled kingfishers, spotlighting threats, conservation status, and what must be done to protect these vibrant birds.

Common Kingfishers of South Bengal

A field-based overview of kingfisher species commonly found across South Bengal.

Kingfishers of Sundarbans

Delving deep into the tangled mangroves, this article presents the kingfisher diversity of the Sundarbans.

Chasing Jewels: A Delightful Journey with the Kingfishers of Southeast Asia

A photo-rich travelogue capturing the thrill of observing rare and vibrant kingfishers across Southeast Asia. The author shares personal encounters, and reflections.

Nature's Blueprint

How nature's design helped revolutionise high-speed travel and what it means for India's bullet train future.

CONSERVATION FOCUS

Manjeera: Crying for Help

Dr Asad Rahmani's article highlights the degradation of the Manjeera wetland ecosystem in Telangana and its impact on waterbirds. A call to action for restoration and awareness.

The Avian Wonders of Ranjit Sagar Wetland Situated in the Northwestern Himalayas

A detailed exploration of this Himalayan wetland's unique birdlife. The piece underscores its significance as a biodiversity hotspot and a haven for migratory birds.

Farakka Important Bird Area – Bird Survey 2025

Summary findings and highlights from the most recent bird survey at Farakka IBA.

SPOTLIGHTS

The Missing Kingfisher

A reflective poetry tracing the author's emotional quest for a missing kingfisher from their residential haunt.

ভিতরকণিকা ম্যানগ্রোভ বনের মাছরাঙা ও খাদ্য বিভাজন (Kingfishers and Food Partitioning in the Bhitarkanika Mangrove Forest)

A Bengali-language research note on how various kingfisher species coexist by dividing ecological niches and food resources within Odisha's mangrove ecosystem.

সব দেশ মাছরাঙার – An illustrated story by children of CWA, part of BWS's long-term School of Birds program.

Book Review: Birds of India – The New Synopsis by Praveen J

A critical and appreciative review of Praveen J's latest checklist, highlighting its structure, taxonomy updates, illustrations, and its relevance for modern Indian birders.

REGULAR SECTIONS

School of Birds – Round up 2024-25

Annual round up of learning initiative for children—featuring bird walks, drawing sessions, story-sharing, and a growing young community of conservation-minded kids.

BWS Activity Update

A quarterly recap of events, bird counts, awareness drives, and member contributions across the Birdwatchers' Society network.

Fresh & Rare Sightings (Arrivals)

Highlights of new or unusual avian sightings from across the region this quarter.

Crossword

A kingfisher-themed puzzle to test your bird knowledge—perfect for a rainy monsoon day!

Perspectives – FANNY

A sharp, witty take on conservation culture, birding ethics, and the changing landscape of birdwatching, from our resident pseudonymous columnist.

Perspectives – Juvenile Birder

Fresh eyes and fearless thoughts—a young birder reflects on the first kingfisher sighting, the thrill of discovery, and why birds should matter to their generation.

As you turn these pages, may you be inspired to look more closely, listen more intently, and act more boldly—for the kingfishers and all life forms they quietly represent.

Onward with wonder and purpose,

The Editorial Team

FANTAIL – Newsletter of the Birdwatchers' Society

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KINGFISHERS. TWELVE STORIES.

Twelve dazzling glimpses of colour, character, and charm – each a proud jewel in India's vibrant kingfisher tapestry.

FANTAIL SPECIAL FEATURE



DOZEN FOR A DOZEN
unveils the royal court of Indian kingfishers, captured through the keen eyes of twelve avian enthusiasts, one striking portrait at a time.



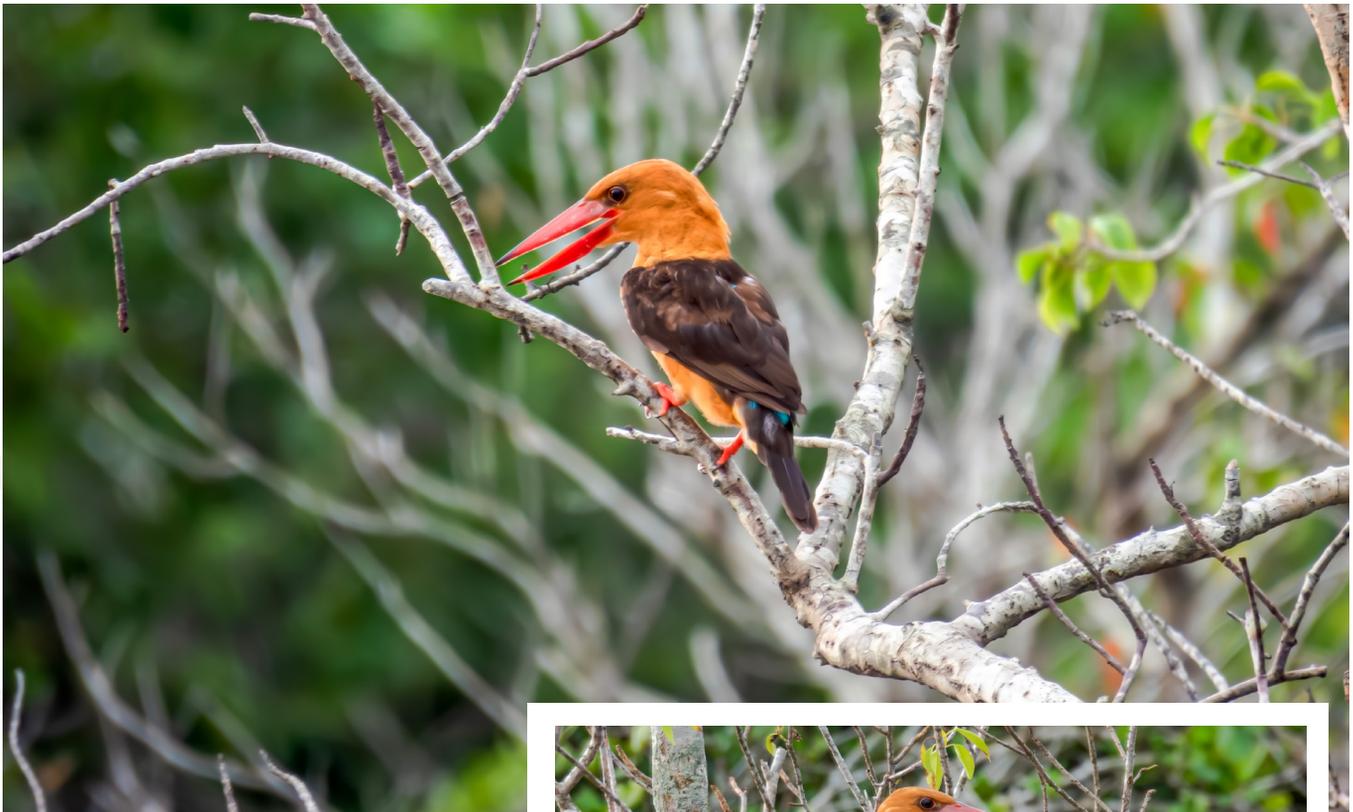
BLYTH'S KINGFISHER

On a cold January morning of 2025, during a trek through the dense rainforest of Namdapha National Park in Arunachal Pradesh, I was incredibly fortunate to spot the elusive Blyth's Kingfisher—one of the rarest found in Indian subcontinent. Perched quietly on a moss-covered rock near a fast-flowing stream, its deep indigo-blue plumage shimmered against the backdrop. Known for its secretive nature, Blyth's kingfisher had been high on my wishlist for years. The sighting lasted only seconds before it vanished into the undergrowth, but it left me deeply grateful for Namdapha's untouched wild magic.



ADHIRUP GHOSH

Adhirup, a birdwatcher from Santiniketan, has been captivated by rare birds and rich landscapes since childhood.



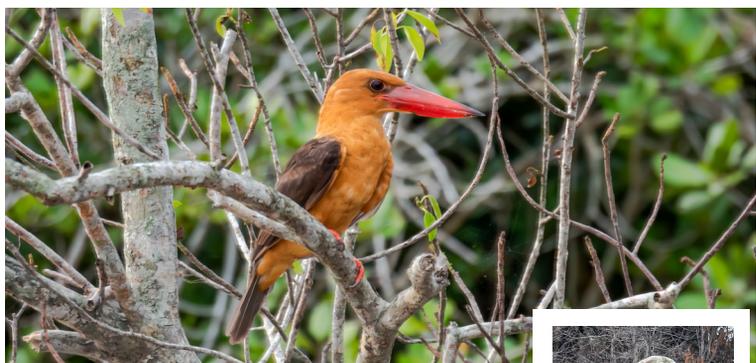
BROWN-WINGED KINGFISHER

We set out on a three-day journey to the Sundarban Tiger Reserve from 20th to 22nd September 2024, driven by the hope of encountering some of the region's most elusive avian gems. Among them, two kingfishers had long held a place on my dream list - still unseen, still waiting.

But as the days slipped by, so did my hope. The first two days were quiet... too quiet. Not a glimpse, not a call—just silence where I had expected magic. Disappointment began to creep in, and with it, the weight of unfulfilled anticipation. Then came the final morning - the last day and our last chance. Spirits low, I had all but surrendered to fate. And then - around noon - a sudden stir. Our guide halted, raised his hand, and pointed to a distant perch. "Brown-winged Kingfisher," he whispered.

I gazed ecstatic!

With trembling hands, I raised my Nikon P950, zoomed in, heart racing. There it was - majestic, alert, and real. The Brown-winged Kingfisher - a bird I had long searched for, finally framed in my viewfinder. That single moment made the entire trip worth it. Sometimes, the best stories wait for the very last chapter. September really came.



ARUNAVA DUTTA

Arunava is a technocrat turned award-winning farmer and a passionate birder

BLACK-CAPPED KINGFISHER

It was the Rainbow gave thee birth,
And left thee all her lovely hues;
And, as her mother's name was Tears,
So runs it in my blood to choose
For haunts the lonely pools, and keep
In company with trees that weep.....
.....I also love a quiet place
That's green, away from all mankind;
A lonely pool, and let a tree
Sigh with her bosom over me.

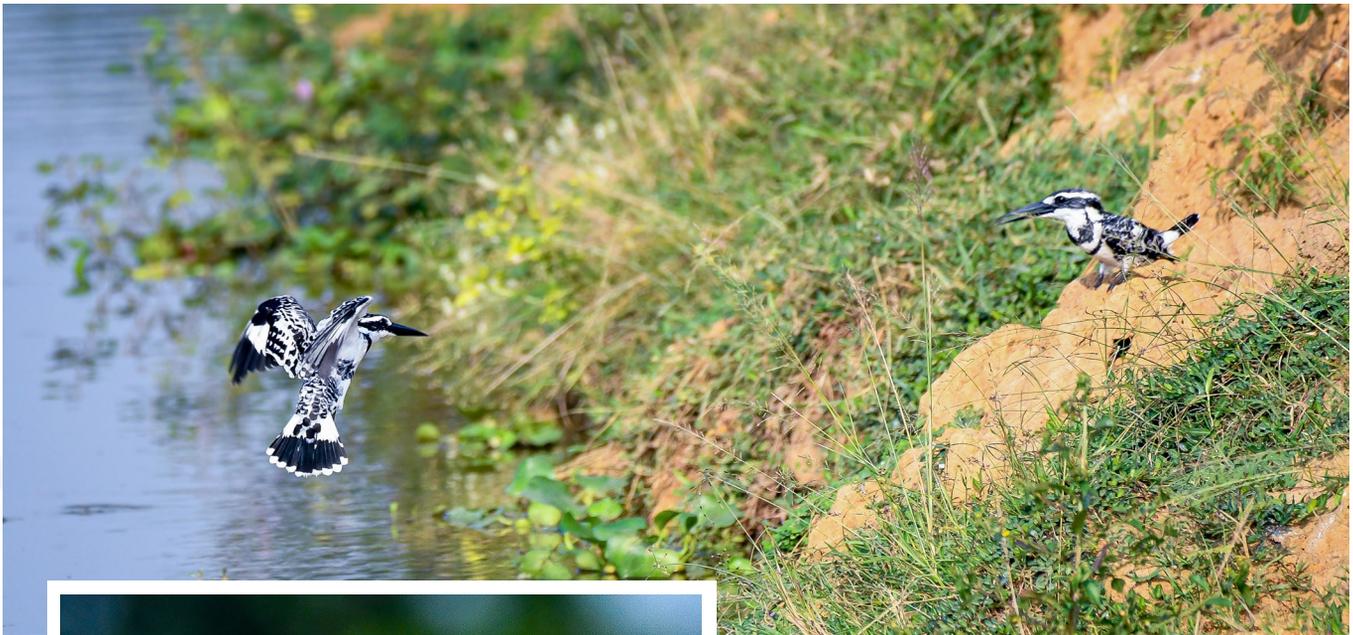
The Kingfisher, by William Henry Davies

From this sense of being in the green, comes our weekly endeavors of going somewhere in the wild - a grassland, a river bank, a not-too-dense forest nearby, natural or urban. It was on one such Sunday - the third of October, 2021 to be precise, that Kousheyo Bagchi, Samim Akhter, Swarup Sarkar and me planned our annual visit to Barshul on the banks of river Damodar in Purba Bardhaman, WB. October usually is rather hot and humid but because of the partly cloudy sky, occasional showers and a steady breeze, it was quite pleasant. Monsoons had left Bengal officially, but still we were getting some rain and water level of the Damodar was quite high. It was about 7 in the morning when I suddenly spotted a flash of blue very very far away in midst of the trees on the bank. Because of the distance binos were not helping so tried taking pics with my Coolpix 1000, got a few terrible pictures, but, lo and behold, it was quite unmistakably a Blue-capped Kingfisher!!! I called the others for Id confirmation, nobody could take a photo due to the distance, but seeing through their binos, concluded this was a great find. We all had seen the Black-capped Kingfisher - *Halcyon pileata* (কালোমাথা মাছরাঙা) - IUCN status Vulnerable, Population trend - Decreasing, but in coastal WB, as it usually frequents mangrove swamps and coastal wetlands, sometimes even hill streams as a winter migrant. But for Barshul, this was perhaps the first record and a pleasant surprise for us. Even though it was a distant sighting with no "good" photos, it gave us immense happiness and satisfaction which remains very dear to my heart even today.



**CHAITI
BANERJEE**

Chaiti is a biology teacher at a school in Salt Lake, Kolkata. When not teaching, her life revolves around three activities birding, cooking and household chores



DEBNAB SEN

Debnab is a birdwatcher, conservation leader, and school teacher based in Bishnupur, West Bengal

PIED KINGFISHER

Nature scripts its beauty effortlessly, transforming an unusually quiet day at Lalbandh, into a stunning spectacle. As I sat by the pond, the calm breeze, rippling water, and skimming dragonfly promised a perfect setting for a kingfisher sighting.

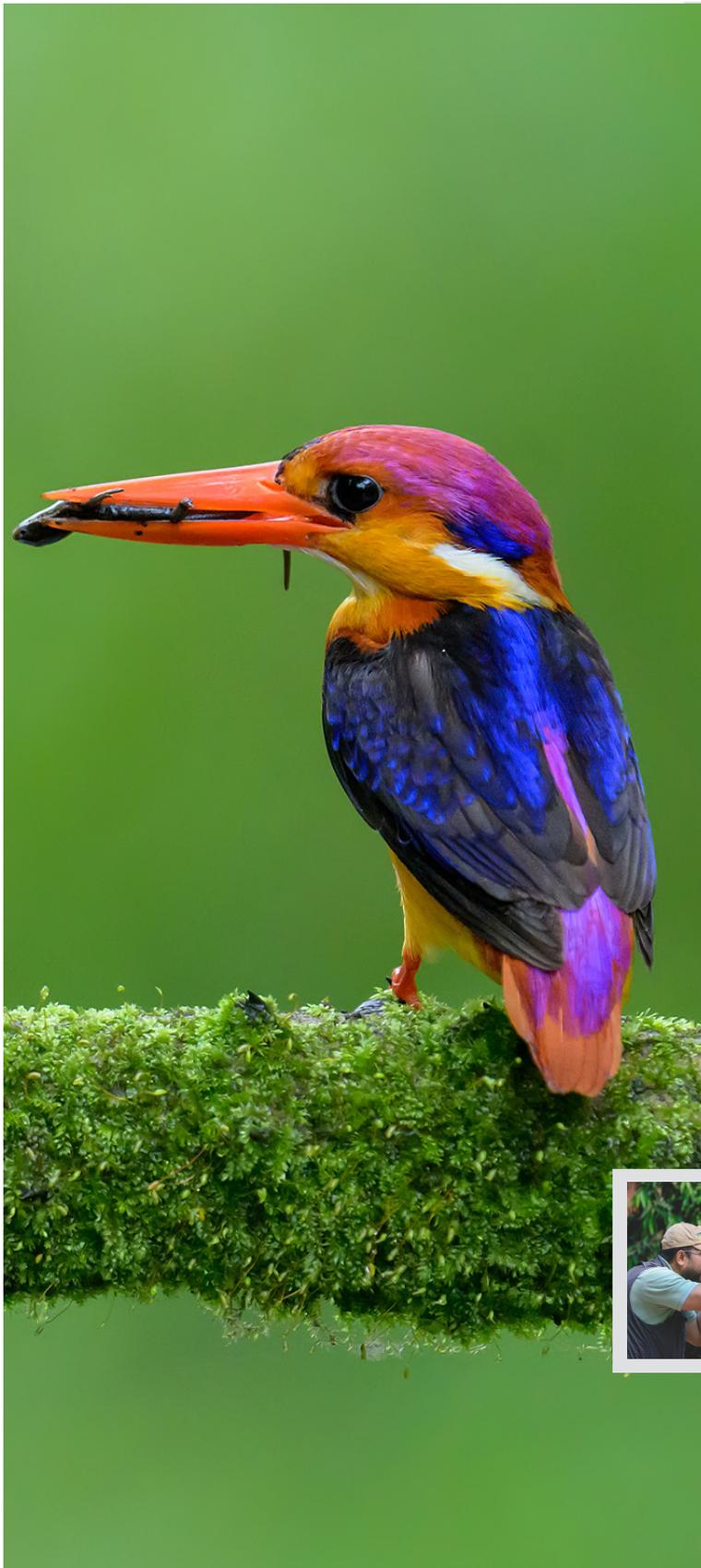
Breaking the stillness, came a sharp trill - piercing and urgent - followed by a rattling call. I froze. It was "Photka", the name we fondly call the Pied Kingfisher. Usually seen over wide rivers, masters of open current, never had I imagined them here - three of them! Two striking males and one graceful female, cutting through the sky like black & white arrows.

Without hesitation, one male chased the rival away in a swift tackle - claiming the pond as his own. What followed was a manoeuvre of precision and patience

to woo the female. He hovered mid-air like a whisper frozen in time, then dived, slicing into the water below. Once. Twice. A miss. Then again. On the fourth attempt, victorious! He emerged with a small, glimmering carp clutched in his beak. With pride only birds seem to possess, he flew to the female and offered her the prize. She accepted with grace!

With that simple gesture, they drew closer - no longer just visitors, but perhaps, settlers. Together, they began the search for the perfect cradle to start a family.

That quiet morning turned magical - Photka made my day - the beginning of a new chapter.



BLACK-BACKED DWARF KINGFISHER

In the heart of the forest, where raindrops pirouetted from leaf to leaf, the Black Dwarf Kingfisher (also known as Oriental Dwarf Kingfisher - ODKF) emerged—a fleeting apparition in muted hues. The drizzle painted its feathers with liquid silver, and the dim light cast a soft veil over its form. No grand entrance, no fanfare—just a delicate flutter of wings. The kingfisher perched on a moss-covered branch, its coral-red bill a beacon of defiance against the gray canvas. The forest held its breath, as if afraid to disturb this ethereal visitor.

Photographer and bird locked eyes—the seeker and the sought. The camera's shutter whispered secrets, capturing the bird's iridescence in a dance of slow exposure. Each droplet became a prism, refracting the forest's melancholy into something otherworldly. And there it was: the jewel of the Konkan, framed by mist and memory. Imperfect light, perhaps, but perfect in its imperfection. For in that drizzle-kissed moment, the kingfisher transcended pixels and became a poem—a stanza of longing etched on the photographer's heart. As the rain intensified, the bird spread its wings, ready to vanish. But the lens held tight, preserving the fragile magic. And in that quiet communion, the forest whispered its gratitude—for witnessing, for remembering, for honoring the flight of a jewel.



DR CHIRANJIB DUTTA

Dr Dutta, is a specialist gynaecologist, channels his sharp eye into bird photography, driven by a deep love for birds.



**DR PARTHA
PRATIM
CHAKRABORTY**

Dr Chakraborty, endocrinologist and faculty at Medical College Kolkata, nurtures a growing love for birding and photography.

BLUE-EARED KINGFISHER

The Blue Glimpse:

The morning sun crept lazily through the thick canopy of the forest of Thattekad, casting dappled light over its mossy floor. A soft breeze rustled the leaves, carrying the scent of wet earth and the murmur of a stream. We navigated quietly along a narrow trail. Hours passed—watchful, silent steps, hopeful glances, and the occasional distant call of a Malabar Grey Hornbill. Then, as we approached a bend in the stream, a sudden flash of blue caught my eyes. My heart raced. “Shh... over there!” I whispered pointing to a rock. The group froze. I got down to my belly and got this shot with nice bokeh balls in the background.

COMMON KINGFISHER

Unforgettable Moments With Kingfishers

Summers in Rajasthan are merciless, and embarking on a full-day safari in Ranthambore in 2019 was an arduous endeavour. In Ranthambore's zone 2, a subadult Tiger cub of Arrowhead languidly slumbered by a pond at the edge of a cliff, merely 20 feet from our vehicle. Every twitch and turn of the Tiger was a moment to capture. Suddenly, a familiar call redirected our attention to a Common Kingfisher perched on a fallen tree branch at the pond's edge. Abandoning the Tiger momentarily, I trained my focus on the Kingfisher. It was a vibrant male, clutching a small fish in its beak. Rather than consuming the fish, the male called persistently. Moments later, a female alighted, and the male graciously offered her the fish. She swallowed it and swiftly departed, leaving us awe-struck by this intimate display. Fortuitously, I managed to record the entire episode on video. The fish's head was pointed outward - a detail that indicated it was a gift for the partner, as elucidated by my good friend Mr. Arijit Banerjee.

Ranthambore has been a sanctuary, gifting me with unforgettable moments with these captivating birds.



DR SAURABH KALIA

Dr Kalia, a Jaipur-based gastro-surgeon, is a keen birder and skilled sculptor, blending science, nature, and art with remarkable harmony.

WHITE-THROATED KINGFISHER

A Nest of Hope

The White-throated Kingfisher (*Halcyon smyrnensis*), also known as the White-breasted Kingfisher, is a strikingly beautiful and familiar resident bird across Asia - and holds the honour of being the state bird of West Bengal.

For seven consecutive years, a pair of these charismatic birds had made their home in the vertical mud wall beside a small pond near a house in Dankuni, West Bengal (22.682° N, 88.289° E). This little waterbody, fringed with Mango (*Mangifera indica*) and Coconut (*Cocos nucifera*) trees, echoed with their sharp calls every spring, announcing the arrival of nesting season - usually beginning in early March.

But the joy of watching their annual ritual turned to concern. The mud wall had long been unstable, and finally, in April 2019, it collapsed - abruptly ending the kingfishers' nesting attempt that year. The birds, having already begun preparations, were forced to abandon their home. This disruption sparked an idea to help them in some way.

Determined not to let their story end in displacement, a man-made nest was rigged up using a 2 foot PVC pipe and an earthen pot, placed where their original nest had been. It was September by the time the setup was ready, well beyond the nesting window. So began a long and anxious wait for spring. Then came March 2021—and with it, hope!

The pair returned. One by one, they began entering the hole, inspecting it carefully, as if weighing their decision: Would this strange contraption suffice? Days passed, and then the most heartwarming sight - mating behaviour, followed by nesting activity. They had accepted the nest! The sight of them returning with food - lizards, frogs, small snakes, skinks, crabs, and earthworms - was a heartwarming confirmation of their trust. The parents were ever-alert, vocalizing in sharp calls before feeding and sounding alarms when threats like mongooses, rats, or cats loomed nearby—even in the dead of night.

Only one juvenile fledged that year—perhaps the cramped space of the artificial nest had limited their clutch size. Yet, despite its flaws, they chose to return. In 2022 and 2023, they raised two chicks each year from the same improvised home. After a dip in 2024, they surprised once again in 2025—feeding young chicks as early as 25th April.

What began as a desperate experiment became a story of resilience and adaptation. Watching these kingfishers return year after year, thriving despite the odds, has been among the most fulfilling experiences.

The nest is far from perfect—its plastic body and small size are compromises. So, once this breeding season ends, plans are in place to build a better, more natural, and spacious nesting site for them. Their trust has been a gift. The least I can do is to honour it.



SANDIP DAS

Sandip, a founder member of BWS, is a renowned birdwatcher known for his deep knowledge and lifelong dedication to birds and conservation.



THROUGH THE CANOPY: A COLLARED ENCOUNTER

In February 2018, I visited the Sundarbans with two friends from Delhi. It was their first time there, and they were eager to explore the mangroves. We stayed on our boat, “Mayer Ashirbad,” with Mahadeb Gayen as our guide. My friends were particularly excited to spot three types of kingfishers: the Black-capped, Brown-winged, and Collared Kingfisher. We were lucky to see all three, but my favorite moment was capturing a Collared Kingfisher at the Dobanki canopy walk. The wires from the fence created a beautiful bokeh effect, enhancing the photo. It remains a cherished memory.



SUDIP GHOSH

Sudip a technocrat, devoted birder and steadfast guardian of the birds of Rabindra Sarovar, is a familiar face to both feathered and human visitors at the Lions Safari Park in Kolkata



STORK-BILLED KINGFISHER

It was 2020, the unforgettable year - the year of COVID, lockdown, pure silence and blooming nature. We could even hear the frog calls at night! Our rooftop garden was a blissful spot where I spent most of my time that year. I was sitting in a corner, after a brief rain towards the end of July, when I heard an unusual and 'unheard before' loud sound. Who or what could it be? I started searching and there it was - under a light drizzle, sitting on the electric wire - heavy reddish beak, buffy underpart and collar, bluish wings and red legs - a kingfisher! But it was not one that I knew - White-throated or Common. I didn't have any binoculars then; only a Nikon P900 camera, which I used to carry with me, along with the Grimmitt's book. Hurriedly, I took 2-3 shots before it flew away, and then I opened the kingfisher page in the book

and - whoa, a LIFER!! It was a Stork-billed Kingfisher (*Pelargopsis capensis*). I got a lifer in lockdown with an unusually good, focused photo, contrary to my standard of photography with zero skill!! The cherry on the top of the Stork-billed Kingfisher memory was later when I could record a song of the bird in March 2025 ([Macaulay Library ML633705834](#))!



PAMPA MISTRİ

Pampa lives in Kolkata, an avid birdwatcher and a nature enthusiast committed to conservation.



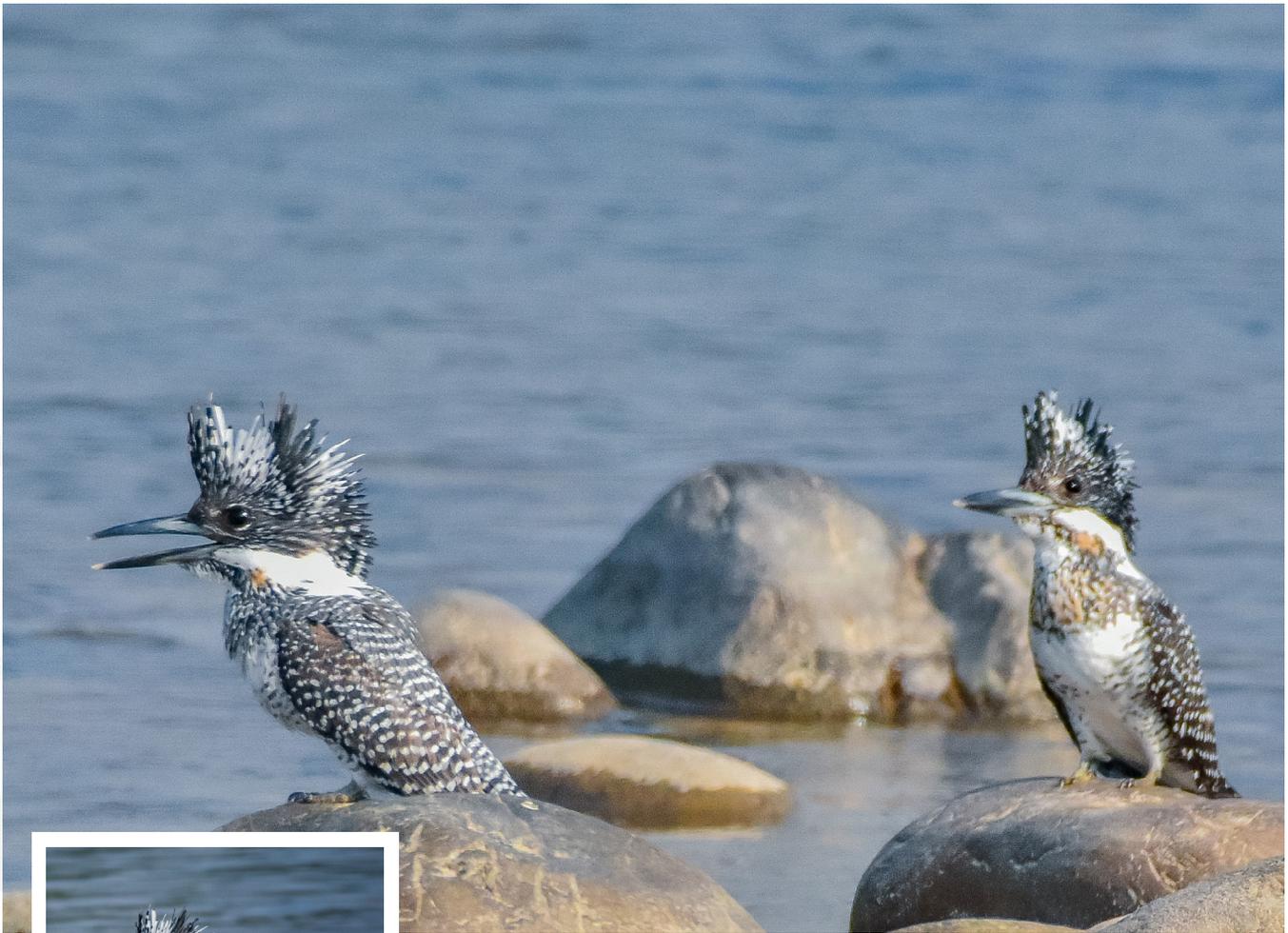
RUDDY KINGFISHER

A lot of things have changed in my life since I started birding - but I never imagined that a swear word would somehow transform into a kingfisher sparingly found in pockets of eastern India - a uniquely colored and quite fascinating bird! I remember jostling with a crowd of ten birders to get a glimpse of it in the dense clutter of Andaman mangroves, and struggling to fully process the beautiful colors of this shy bird at first sight - a striking combination of rusty orange, bright red, dullish purple, and a flash of azure blue on the rump. Though I saw it again from close quarters, the first sighting is a truly magnificent memory that will never fade away. Ruddy remarkable!"



SOUVIK GHOSH

Souvik is a classic corporate birder - crouched behind his laptop, planning his next trip, daydreaming about owls, and composing stories of his cherished lifers.



**UPMANYU
CHAKRABORTY**

Upmanyu, is a wildlife conservation biologist from Siliguri, studying population and movement ecology of wild animals across landscapes.

As a birdwatcher, he enjoys documenting natural history through the lens.

CRESTED KINGFISHER

Back in 2011, I was just a newbie to birdwatching, tagging along on birdwatching camps-not for the birds, but for the thrill of trekking and adventure. I used to make fun of the veterans for stopping by every second curve on the road while hiking on a trail or late-night obsessing over identifying warblers while I slid straight into my sleeping bag. One day, our group hiked endlessly along a dry riverbed in Buxa TR, chasing a “rare kingfisher.” I had no interest- I just packed everyone’s lunch and enjoyed the walk. I missed the bird! But one of my fellow campers showed me the photographs he took. It was beautiful!

Years later, as a professional researcher in Corbett, while walking to deploy camera traps for tiger population estimation, I spotted my first Crested Kingfisher by the Ramganga River. Since then, I have watched these snipers many times across many places, fiercely guarding river stretches as a couple, hovering over, diving with unmatched precision, and slamming fish against rocks before swallowing. But no matter how many I see, each one takes me back to that clueless boy on a trail who could not manage to see a bird after a 10-kilometre walk while every other team member got a very good glimpse of it.

KINGFISHERS: MYTH, LEGEND AND ARTISTIC REPRESENTATION



SOUMYOJIT TALUKDER

Watching a kingfisher dive to catch a fish is a testament to perfection and perseverance. For centuries, we have witnessed the marvel of this avian beast as how it perfectly cleaves the water surface with its beak and grabs the fish with similar swiftness.

The word kingfisher dates back to the 16th century CE. There is a fascinating story about King George III, who held a contest for clothiers across England to create a shade of colour representing royalty. The contest was won by a company called Scott's Bridge Factory in Rhodes, Somerset, which developed a sumptuous shade of blue named Royal Blue, matching the blue cloak of the Common Kingfisher. Interestingly, British kingfishers are also called "fishers" due to their finesse in catching fish and their remarkable hunting skills.



Richard Wilson's painting "Ceyx and Alcyone" (1768)

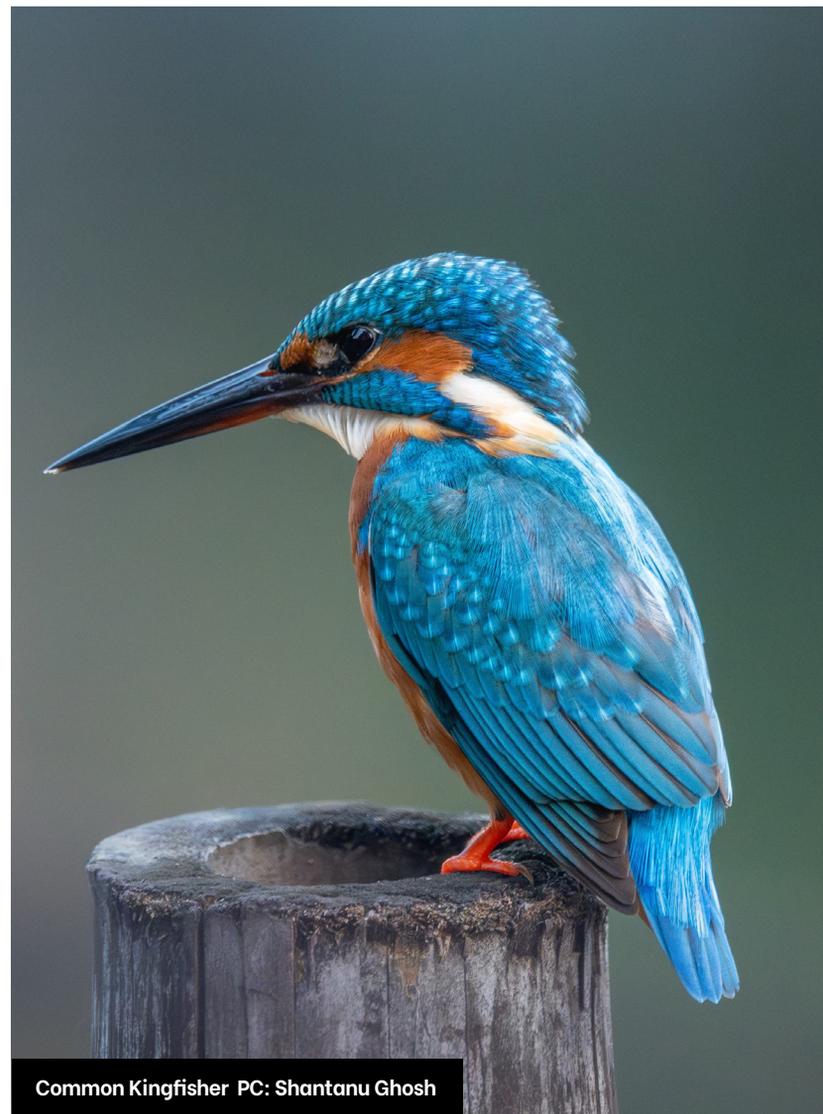
One interesting story about kingfishers involves the Swedish taxonomist Carl Linnaeus, who pioneered binomial nomenclature. He gave the genus name *Alcedo* to the Common Kingfisher, inspired by Queen Alcyone from Greek mythology. This story is mentioned in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, which recounts the tragic tale of King Ceyx and Queen Alcyone. Queen Alcyone and King Ceyx of Thessaly shared a deep love, but when Ceyx set sail despite Alcyone's warnings, his ship was caught in a storm, and he drowned. Unaware of his fate, Alcyone prayed for his safe return until the god Morpheus revealed the truth in a dream. Overcome with grief, she threw herself into the sea, but the gods took pity on their love and transformed them into kingfishers, allowing them to be together forever. Their story is the origin of the "Halcyon days," a period of calm seas in winter.

Another tale of the kingfisher comes from the distant islands of Australia, where kookaburras, a type of tree kingfisher, are woven into local legends. One popular story tells that the kookaburra's loud, distinctive laugh at dawn was a command from the Sky Father to wake the people and signal the arrival of the sun. Another legend describes them as clever pranksters, famed for their keen eyesight and remarkable ability to catch venomous snakes, outwitting their prey with precision and skill.

As we go further, we realize that kingfishers symbolize marital bliss and stability. Metaphorically, people associate the male kingfisher with Ceyx and the female with Alcyone, though distinguishing their gender based solely on physical traits like beak shape or plumage is challenging. The best way to identify the male is by observing its behavior—particularly when it offers a fish to impress its female counterpart. Once a pair is formed, they share responsibilities equally, from nest building to defending their territory against predators, embodying a true partnership in nature.

A folklore related to kingfishers comes from the remote islands of Andaman, where the bird played a significant role during a great flood. According to the legend, four friends—two men and two women—

set out to sea in a canoe to bring fortune to their land. However, while they were away, a devastating flood struck, destroying their homeland. When they returned, they found their land in ruins and mourned the loss of their loved ones. A deceased soul, who had transformed into a kingfisher, tried to help by flying to the palace of the Creator God, Pulunga. The bird stole a burning stick from the palace, attempting to carry it on its back, but the fiery stick fell and struck Pulunga. Enraged, Pulunga hurled the stick back to Earth, but fortunately, it landed near the four friends. This event marked the beginning of a new civilization. Because of this, kingfishers are revered in Andamanese folklore as harbingers of good fortune.



Common Kingfisher PC: Shantanu Ghosh

Many stories about kingfishers are mentioned in the Bible, including one related to Noah’s Ark. According to legend, the kingfisher was assigned the task of searching for land but forgot about it. When it finally remembered, it searched for Noah to report its findings, only to discover that Noah had already found land, and the ark had been deconstructed. To this day, kingfishers are said to be searching for their master to deliver the long-overdue message. A biblical tale explains the Common Kingfisher’s orange breast. It is said that when Noah released the bird, it flew straight toward the sky, where it was scorched by the sun, leaving burn marks on its chest, resulting in the bright orange hue seen in kingfishers today.

In the “Jicarilla Apache Nation” tribe there is a common folktale about the fox and the kingfisher. One day, the two friends decided to visit the kingfisher’s home, but the kingfisher had no food. To provide a meal, he skillfully dove into an icy river and caught fish. Later, when they visited the fox’s home, the fox attempted to do the same but, lacking the kingfisher’s ability, he crashed into the ice, fatally injuring himself. Miraculously, the kingfisher revived the fox and warned him never to try it again, as the ability to fish in such a way was unique to the kingfisher. In many Southwest Pacific island cultures, kingfishers are believed to be incarnations of war gods or other deities. This belief is reflected in the European naming of the sacred kingfisher, which honors these cultural traditions. One notable account comes from Captain James Cook’s voyage, where his crew member, Georg Forster, shot several sacred kingfishers on the island of Huahine. In response, the Tahitians warned Cook not to continue killing the birds, as they were considered Atua or supernatural beings.



Tian-tsui head dress

Now turning over to the importance of the kingfisher in art. One of the major examples is Tian-tsui, a traditional Chinese decorative technique that uses the bird’s vibrant blue feathers to create exquisite jewelry and ornaments. This practice, which dates back over a thousand years, symbolizes elegance, wealth, and high social status. The iridescent quality of the kingfisher’s feathers made Tian-tsui pieces highly prized, particularly among Chinese royalty and aristocracy. However, due to conservation concerns, the use of real kingfisher feathers has largely been replaced by

synthetic materials or enamel techniques that mimic the original aesthetic. Social status was also influenced by this art form, as having fewer hairpins indicated a lower social standing. Fun fact: this art form eventually contributed to the construction of Angkor Wat, as a significant portion of income during the Khmer Empire’s rule in Cambodia came from it.

The Chinese blue-green landscape painting style, refined by Zhan Ziqian, influenced the art form of Tian-tsui and eventually led to the creation of landscape panels using kingfisher feathers. The rich blue and

green pigments, reminiscent of the bird's iridescence, brought a dreamlike quality to landscapes, symbolizing nature's beauty and harmony.

Another notable artwork dedicated to kingfishers is an oil painting by Vincent van Gogh, which features a kingfisher as its subject. Van Gogh, known for his bold brushstrokes and vibrant use of color, captured the bird's striking appearance with expressive detail. His depiction reflects both his deep appreciation for nature and his ability to infuse life and movement into his paintings. This piece stands as a testament to his fascination with wildlife and his unique artistic style.



Vincent Van Gogh – The Kingfisher (1886)

Many other artworks have been influenced by the kingfisher. Some notable examples are presented here, but there is still much more to explore and discover.

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2. Picture credit to Wiki commons and Shantanu Ghosh (common kingfisher)



About Author

SOUMYAJIT TALUKDER

Soumyajit is currently pursuing a Master's degree in Zoology and has a deep fascination for the avian world. His passion for birdwatching stems from a wider appreciation of wildlife and its cultural connections. He is dedicated to deepening his understanding of nature and expressing his insights through thoughtful writing and observation.



VANISHING PERCHES: RISING PERIL OF INDIA'S KINGFISHER SPECIES



SHUVENDU DAS

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ot far from the beaten track, where the old pond settles in its muddy silence and the river hums in slow, winding turns, the kingfishers wait. Bright flashes of turquoise, white, and chestnut dart like forgotten jewels in the morning sun, watchful, alert, and entirely at home. But the banks they call home are beginning to vanish.

Somewhere along a mossy slope, a Common Kingfisher has dug its burrow. It took days of chiselling into the damp earth with its beak, just the right depth so the eggs inside would stay cool and safe. Not far away, a White-throated Kingfisher scans the muddy edge for a flicker of movement, perhaps a careless froglet or a silvery fish shimmering just beneath the surface. These birds are more than just fishers. They are hunters of frogs, chasers of lizards, and guardians of quiet wetlands.

But these homes, nestled into clay and silt, are no match for the cement mixers and bulldozers. A new road, a

levee wall, or an expanding farm can undo in hours what nature shaped over seasons. Where once there were muddy banks layered with soft reeds and trailing roots, there are now stones, drains, and dust. The kingfishers don't complain. They shift and search and try again. But not all can. Some simply disappear, their bright colours fading from the margins of our maps.



A Pied Kingfisher rests on sandy ledge, wildflowers dancing in soft background breeze. PC: Souvick Mukherjee

The nests are lost when the monsoon floods come early, and the burrows collapse under rising water. When dams or their banks choke the river's flow, straightened and dressed in concrete, there's nowhere to dig. In many ponds, the fish have thinned. The frogs are gone, too, chased away by pesticide-slick water.

A Pied Kingfisher, hovering like a dragonfly above a shrinking wetland, seems unsure of where to drop. The silt has covered the shoals; even the minnows have moved on.

Yet, there is still time still mornings when a call rings out across the water and a kingfisher breaks into flight, like a living streak of the river itself. If we listen closely, we'll know what they need: not grand gestures, just muddy banks, clean water, and the right to stay.

Introduction: The Twelve Watchers of the Waters

India hosts a diverse assemblage of twelve kingfisher species, each occupying distinct ecological niches across a wide range of habitats from coastal mangroves and estuaries to inland wetlands, forest streams, and urban peripheries. Habitat specialists such as the Brown-winged Kingfisher (*Pelargopsis amauroptera*) and Black-capped Kingfisher (*Halcyon pileata*) are confined to tidal creeks and mangrove ecosystems in eastern India, while forest-interior species like Blyth's Kingfisher (*Alcedo hercules*) and Black-backed Dwarf Kingfisher (Oriental Dwarf Kingfisher) (*Ceyx erithaca*) remain confined to shaded hill streams and undisturbed evergreen forests. These species are acutely sensitive to habitat fragmentation, changes in stream hydrology, and loss of riparian vegetation.

In contrast, ecological generalists, including the White-throated Kingfisher (*Halcyon smyrnensis*), Pied Kingfisher (*Ceryle rudis*), and Common Kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*), exhibit broader habitat plasticity. They are often observed in a range of aquatic environments such as ponds, canals, and

rivers, and some, particularly *H. smyrnensis*, thrive in anthropogenic habitats including agricultural fields, city outskirts, and elevations up to 1500 m in the Himalayan foothills.

Species such as the Ruddy Kingfisher (*Halcyon coromanda*), Collared Kingfisher (*Todiramphus chloris*), and Stork-billed Kingfisher (*Pelargopsis capensis*) occupy structurally complex coastal and freshwater mosaics, requiring habitat heterogeneity that supports both prey diversity and suitable nesting substrates. Despite being more adaptable than forest specialists, these taxa remain vulnerable to landscape-level alteration and hydrological disruption.

The varied ecological strategies of these twelve species underscore a critical conservation dichotomy: while generalists persist or expand in modified landscapes, specialists are experiencing alarming population declines, particularly in biodiversity hotspots like the Western Ghats, Northeast India, and the Sundarbans. The State of India's Birds (2023) report identifies several species, notably Blyth's Kingfisher (*Alcedo hercules*) and Brown-winged Kingfisher (*P. amauroptera*), as high conservation priorities due to restricted ranges and declining trends.



A vibrant Common Kingfisher perches on rustic fence.
PC: Souvick Mukherjee

Profiles in Peril: A Review of Priority Species

Blyth's Kingfisher (*Alcedo hercules*)



Status:

Near Threatened (IUCN), High Priority (SoIB), rare and patchily distributed in the Eastern Himalayas and Northeast India.



Habitat:

Fast-flowing forest streams with high water quality, usually below 1000m elevation.



Key Threats:

- Riverine deforestation and stream degradation.
- Hydrological modifications: water diversion for agriculture and hydropower.
- Disturbance from eco-tourism and increased human access in lowland forest areas.
- Erosion of stream banks due to cattle trampling or vegetation loss.



Conservation & Habitat Management:

- Secure riparian forest corridors, especially along undisturbed foothill streams.
- Prevent alteration of water flow regimes and maintain stream sediment profiles.
- Create buffer zones to reduce siltation and agrochemical runoff.
- Implement community-based river catchment management.

Brown-winged Kingfisher (*Pelargopsis amauroptera*)



Status:

Near Threatened (IUCN), Schedule I (WLPA), High Priority (SoIB); found in mangroves and tidal estuaries of the Sundarbans and coastal Odisha.



Habitat:

Mangrove forests, estuarine mudflats, tidal creeks.



Key Threats:

- Loss of mangroves due to aquaculture and port expansion.
- Sea-level rise and increased salinity fluctuations due to climate change.
- Coastal pollution, especially plastic and petrochemical discharge.



Conservation & Habitat Management:

- Strict protection and afforestation of tidal mangroves.
- Ban on intensive aquaculture and waste discharge within estuarine zones.
- Promotion of blue carbon conservation initiatives.
- Community education in Sundarbans to prevent mangrove cutting.



A Brown-winged Kingfisher with vivid red bill holding prey, perched among dense branches. PC: Souvick Mukherjee

Oriental Dwarf Kingfisher (*Ceyx erithaca*)



Status:

Near Threatened (IUCN), High Priority (SoIB); breeds in Western Ghats, Eastern Ghats, and northeast India.



Habitat:

Dense, moist, evergreen and semi-evergreen forests with shaded streamlets.



Key Threats:

- Forest degradation and plantation expansion (coffee, rubber).
- Habitat fragmentation disrupting microhabitat continuity.
- Road expansion near forest streams.



Conservation & Habitat Management:

- Preserve undisturbed forest patches with seasonal stream systems.
- Protect ephemeral stream corridors from road construction.
- Encourage shade-grown agroforestry buffers.
- Monitor with camera traps during breeding to estimate site fidelity.

Ruddy Kingfisher (*Halcyon coromanda*)



Status:

Least Concern (IUCN), High Priority (SoIB), Decreasing population.



Habitat:

Subtropical and tropical moist forests, usually near slow-moving streams and mangroves.



Key Threats:

- Degradation of moist forest canopies in Northeast and Southeast India.
- Hunting and nest disturbance during monsoon breeding season.
- Encroachment into lowland forest tracts.



Conservation & Habitat Management:

- Protect mature forest tracts with minimal disturbance during breeding.
- Ban logging in known breeding hotspots during May–August.
- Engage indigenous communities for participatory monitoring.

Black-capped Kingfisher (*Halcyon pileata*)



Status:

Vulnerable (IUCN), Moderate Priority (SoIB), Decreasing.



Habitat:

Coastal and inland wetlands, mangroves, estuaries, and paddy-flooded plains.



Key Threats:

- Drainage of wetlands for agriculture and real estate.
- Pollution of brackish water habitats.
- Loss of perching and nesting sites in estuarine woodlands.



Conservation & Habitat Management:

- Map and protect estuarine and coastal freshwater marshes.
- Restore mangroves and tidal creeks in major deltas.
- Create microhabitat mosaics with elevated nesting banks.
- Incorporate species into Ramsar site-level management plans.

White-throated Kingfisher (*Halcyon smyrnensis*)



Status:

Least Concern (IUCN), Population Increasing; Low Conservation Priority (SolB).



Habitat:

Broad niche tolerance—seen in wetlands, fields, towns, and forests.



Drivers of Success:

- High behavioral plasticity and generalist diet (fish, skinks, lizards, amphibians, insects etc.).
- Thrives in altered landscapes such as reservoirs, agricultural canals, sewage ponds.
- Benefits from artificial waterbodies created during irrigation or construction.



Conservation Outlook:

- It can serve as an “umbrella indicator” of basic aquatic connectivity in peri-urban systems.
- Highlights that not all kingfishers are equally sensitive to habitat changes.



Management Implications:

- While not a current concern, monitoring this species can help flag rapid ecosystem shifts (e.g., insect loss or water pollution).
- Promote as a flagship for citizen-science-based monitoring of semi-natural wetlands.



A Crested Kingfisher perched alertly on mossy rock, surrounded by rugged forest stones PC: Souvick Mukherjee

Habitat Loss and Modification: The Crisis in Action

1. Urbanisation and Infrastructure Development

Encroachment of natural wetlands and riverside areas for housing, roads, and agriculture has led to the direct loss of kingfisher habitats. Concrete embankments replace muddy nesting sites, rendering the banks unsuitable for burrowing.

2. Water Pollution and Eutrophication

Runoff containing pesticides, industrial waste, and sewage degrades water quality, impacting both the kingfishers and their prey species. Fish kills and amphibian decline are now common in once-thriving habitats.

3. Hydrological Alterations

Dams, weirs, and channelization disrupt the natural flow of rivers and modify sediment deposition patterns. As a result, the muddy banks either erode completely or turn into stagnant vegetation-choked areas unsuitable for kingfisher nesting and hunting.

4. Agricultural Expansion

Conversion of pond edges and river fringes into agricultural land involves draining wetlands and removing riparian vegetation. This leads to habitat fragmentation and increases vulnerability to predators.

5. Climate Change and Seasonal Variability

Irregular rainfall and flash floods can destroy burrows mid-breeding season. Conversely, prolonged droughts can dry up foraging grounds, leading to food scarcity.



A Pied Kingfisher perched on a rock, PC: Souvick Mukherjee

Threat Status & Population Matrix

Species	IUCN Status	WPA Status	SolB Priority Status	Population Trend	Estimated Mature Individuals (Global)
Common Kingfisher (<i>Alcedo atthis</i>)	Least Concern	Schedule IV	Low Priority	Decreasing	716,000–1,760,000
Pied Kingfisher (<i>Ceryle rudis</i>)	Least Concern	Schedule IV	Low Priority	Stable	Not specified
Stork-billed Kingfisher (<i>Pelargopsis capensis</i>)	Least Concern	Schedule IV	Low Priority	Decreasing	Not specified
White-throated Kingfisher (<i>Halcyon smyrnensis</i>)	Least Concern	Schedule IV	Low Priority	Increasing	Not specified
Ruddy Kingfisher (<i>Halcyon coromanda</i>)	Least Concern	Not Listed	High Priority (Declining)	Decreasing	Not specified
Crested Kingfisher (<i>Megaceryle lugubris</i>)	Least Concern	Not Listed	Data Deficient / Low Priority	Decreasing	Not specified
Black-capped Kingfisher (<i>Halcyon pileata</i>)	Vulnerable	Not Listed	Moderate Priority	Decreasing	Not specified
Brown-winged Kingfisher (<i>Pelargopsis amauroptera</i>)	Near Threatened	Schedule I	High Priority (Rare Habitat Specialist)	Decreasing	25,000–35,000
Blue-eared Kingfisher (<i>Alcedo meninting</i>)	Least Concern	Not Listed	High Priority (Declining)	Decreasing	Not specified
Collared Kingfisher (<i>Todiramphus chloris</i>)	Least Concern	Schedule IV	Moderate Priority	Decreasing	Not specified
Oriental Dwarf Kingfisher (<i>Ceyx erithaca</i>)	Near Threatened	Schedule IV	High Priority (Declining)	Decreasing	Not specified
Blyth's Kingfisher (<i>Alcedo hercules</i>)	Near Threatened	Schedule I	High Priority (Rare, Decreasing Population)	Decreasing	2,500–9,999

Threat Assessment and Conservation Implications

Threat	Impact on Habitat	Impact on Species
Urban development	Destruction of nesting banks	Reduced breeding success, local extinctions
Water pollution	Prey base collapse	Starvation, bioaccumulation of toxins
Agricultural intensification	Loss of foraging grounds, pesticide exposure	Direct mortality, reduced prey availability
Hydrological changes	Loss of vertical banks, habitat fragmentation	Nest abandonment, decreased reproductive output
Climate change	Extreme flood/drought affecting nesting/fishing	Unpredictable breeding, population fluctuations



A Collared Kingfisher regurgitate indigestible parts like bones, scales, and skin as small, pellet-like structures mid-air, perched on branch against soft green forest backdrop. PC: Souvick Mukherjee

Conservation Strategies

1. Habitat Protection and Restoration

Restoration of muddy banks and riparian vegetation must be prioritized. Artificial nesting banks can be a short-term solution in heavily modified landscapes.

2. Sustainable River Management

Implementing environmentally sensitive river engineering and maintaining buffer zones around freshwater bodies can aid kingfisher conservation.

3. Monitoring and Research

Regular population monitoring and habitat quality assessments are crucial. More ecological data on diet, breeding success, and site fidelity will help in adaptive management.

4. Community Engagement and Awareness

Educating local communities about the ecological roles of kingfishers and involving them in habitat protection can ensure long-term success.

5. Policy Interventions

Integrating kingfisher habitat conservation into broader wetland and riverine management policies can improve landscape-level planning.



Two vibrant Common Kingfishers perch together, alert and poised against. PC: Souvick Mukherjee

Conclusion: When the Banks Disappear, So Do the Birds

Kingfishers are more than just vibrant flashes of blue and red near water bodies—they are critical indicators of freshwater ecosystem health. Species that rely on muddy ponds and riverbanks are uniquely adapted and yet they face mounting threats from habitat loss and degradation. Targeted conservation efforts rooted in ecological understanding and community involvement are essential to secure their future in a rapidly changing world.

So let us walk more slowly by the old pond, let the reeds grow tall again, and speak for the birds that speak only in flashes and flickers. The kingfishers are still watching. ***The question is - are we?***

Acknowledgement

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to Amitava Dutta and Souvick Mukherjee for their unwavering encouragement and support in helping me complete this article. A special thanks to Souvick for the breath-taking photographs that have added immense value and visual depth to the work.

To my fellow Birdwatchers' Society friends, with heartfelt gratitude, I wrote this piece back during the 2020 lockdown; born from a broader perspective and intended for a different purpose. But like many things, it was set aside as the world came to a standstill during the COVID-19 crisis.

Today, it finds new life. And that's because of **you**.

I am extending my heartfelt thanks to Odonutter-Doctor Dattaprasad (Bhau) Sawant, Birder - Doctor duo - Dr Kanad (Da) Baidya and Dr. Soumya (Da) Sengupta, for keeping me alive - both literally and metaphorically - for the Dragonflies & Damselflies and the Birds. It is your unwavering support, your quiet encouragement, and your belief in this journey that brought it back into the light. For that and for all of you I am breathing a little easier again. The author is grateful to Utsa Saha for reviewing the article prior to its final submission.

Thank you, from the depths of my heart.

Walk on, with hope in your heart!

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About Author

SHUVENDU DAS

An odonatologist and ecologist, Shuvendu focuses on the exploration and conservation of dragonflies and damselflies, especially in the Indian Himalayas. His research spans biodiversity assessments, habitat restoration, and the use of Odonates as bio-indicators of freshwater health. Beyond insect conservation, Shuvendu is deep into conservation of threatened birds & their habitats across India. He is also engaged in bird acoustic research to monitor avian diversity through soundscapes.



About Photographer

SOUVICK MUKHERJEE

Souvick is a passionate wildlife photographer with a keen eye for detail. He specialises in capturing the subtle beauty and intricate behaviours of India's lesser-known fauna. His photographic journey focuses on revealing the marvels of biodiversity through visual storytelling, with a special emphasis on dragonflies, damselflies, and amphibians.

KINGFISHERS OF SOUTH BENGAL- FEW FASCINATING FACTS



DEBOJYOTI CHAKRABORTY

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outh Bengal has a rich history of bird species, including five common species of kingfishers that call this region home. While Brown-winged, Black-capped, Ruddy, and Blue-eared Kingfishers also exist in the area, they are less frequently observed and thus not considered common.

The commonly observed kingfishers include the White-throated Kingfisher, Pied Kingfisher, Stork-billed Kingfisher and Common Kingfisher. In my backyard, I frequently observe both Stork-billed and White-throated Kingfishers. The White-throated Kingfisher, abundant throughout the Indian subcontinent, is particularly fascinating. This tree kingfisher has adapted remarkably well to urban environments.

I've watched one build its nest in a cement wall hole near my pond—a sight I find quite amusing. It has successfully raised chicks there for two consecutive years. This versatile hunter feeds on various prey, including crabs, geckos, and bird chicks. One interesting behaviour I've observed commonly in all kingfishers is their habit of hammering on wood or stone wherever they perch.

The Stork-billed Kingfisher is another remarkable bird that I enjoy watching. The one in my backyard is particularly photogenic - I always manage to capture good photographs of it. Its namesake comes from its distinctively large bill, which is reflected in its genus name "pelargopsis" ("pelargos" meaning stork and "opsis" meaning appearance). Fascinating variations exist among its 13 subspecies. The subspecies *P.c.gigantea*, found in the Central and South Philippines, stands out with its green and white colouring, while the Andaman and Nicobar Islands host distinct subspecies.



White-throated Kingfisher
photographed at Singur, Feb 2025



Pelargopsis capensis intermedia
March 22, 2019, from Great Nicobar, near Saroop Nallah



Stork-billed Kingfisher *Pelargopsis capensis*
Dominic Rollinson - Birding Ecotours
14 Feb 2025
South Andaman, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, India



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eBird 5213165311

Pelargopsis capensis osmastoni

The next interesting species I observed is the Pied Kingfisher, a water kingfisher from the Ceryle family. It is the only black and white kingfisher found in South Bengal. Its most fascinating behaviour is hovering over water bodies before diving to hunt. It can dive up to 50 feet, which is remarkable. At a large pond, I once witnessed another intriguing behaviour – their aerial courtship display. There were about five kingfishers present, likely two males and three females. All three Kingfishers flew up together and the trio started hovering at the same time. This synchronous hovering was pretty unique.

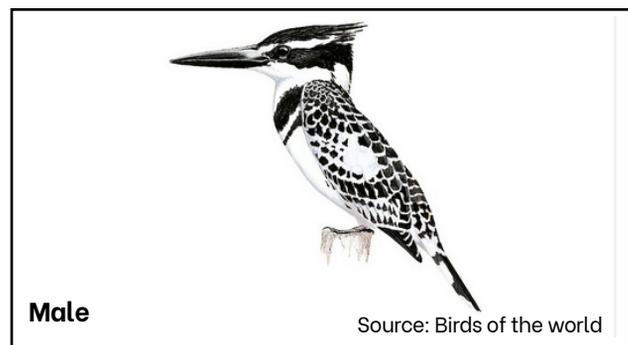
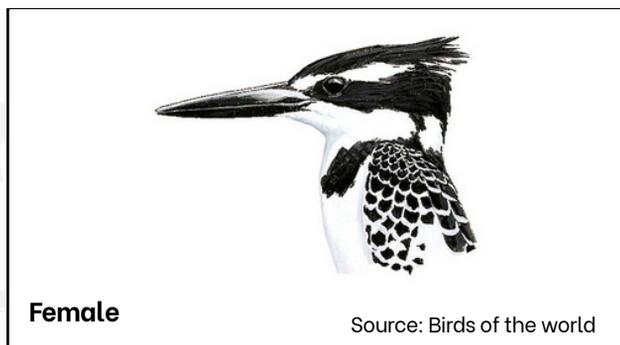
The image in the inset is of a Pied Kingfisher female. How do I know this is a female? The Female has a broken band, while the male has an entirely black band on his chest.



Pied Kingfisher (*Ceryle rudis*)
11 July 2024, from Hooghly

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Below is an illustration that depicts the difference.





Common Kingfisher (*A.a.bengalensis*)

The Pied Kingfisher's relative, the Crested Kingfisher, can be seen in Himalayan river streams, but that's a discussion for another day.

Let's turn to our tiny friend: the Common Kingfisher - which, ironically, has become somewhat uncommon these days. In South Bengal we find the *bengalensis* subspecies, while other subspecies inhabit the rest of India. The *bengalensis* subspecies is widely distributed across northern and eastern India, including South Bengal. In southern India, the *taprobana* subspecies is prevalent, characterized by its more vibrant blue

colouring than the greenish-blue of *bengalensis*. These subspecies generally occupy distinct geographical ranges, though they overlap in Odisha where both subspecies can be found.



Common Kingfisher (*A.a.taprobana*)
Source - Birds of the World



Common Kingfisher nominate race (*Alcedo atthis atthis*)
Source - Birds of the World

Like *taprobana*, the nominate race (*Alcedo atthis atthis*) is found in north-west India, so one can get them in Gujarat. In the insets above, you can clearly see the difference in colour it's very much bright blue .

A subspecies which is not found in our country, I thought to highlight here, *A.a.floresiana*, *A.a.hispidooides* and *A.a.salomonensis* these subspecies have cobalt ear compared to our other subspecies which has rufous ear.



Common Kingfisher (Cobalt-eared)
Source - Birds of the World

The Common Kingfisher frequents small streams and ponds, patiently waiting before striking its prey. Its diet consists mainly of fish and other aquatic creatures. One fascinating behaviour is how it holds captured fish by the tail and beats them several times before eating. While these kingfishers typically hunt throughout the day, your local ones follow their own unique schedules. Similar to Pied Kingfishers, the Common Kingfishers male and female can be identified by certain features. In this case, the bill colour. Males have black bill while females have an orange-red lower mandible with a black tip, the upper mandible is black.



The difference in bill colours of a male & female Common Kingfisher

These are some of my observations and facts about common Kingfishers found in South Bengal. I am sure there are many other facts that I need to learn about our colourful friends.

Let's discover their secrets together - one bird at a time, right out in the wild!

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Note: Pics with date and location are taken by the author



About Author

DEBOJYOTI CHAKRABORTY

Debojyoti is a software engineer by profession. His bird watching and photography journey commenced in 2022. Driven by curiosity and wonder, he now enjoys learning from nature and exploring avian life. His lifelong aspiration is to observe every species of birds - one bird at a time.

SUNDARBANS, A HAVEN FOR KINGFISHERS



SOUMYA KUNDU

People visiting Sundarbans for the first time will inevitably throw the question, “What can I expect to see in Sundarbans?” My spontaneous answer will always be, “Kingfishers, what else !!” Somewhat disappointed, they enquire about tigers and other charismatic creatures of the mangrove forests. I tell them that the Indian Sundarbans has a huge diversity of flora and fauna. If luck favours, they may see a tiger, but at the end of the trip, what will create a lasting impression on their mind will be the kingfishers. Unlike other fauna, kingfishers are abundant in the brackish waters of Sundarbans, and their diversity is unmatched by any other landscape. Eight species of kingfishers have been recorded from the Indian Sundarbans, out of India’s total of twelve kingfisher species. Henceforth in this article, “Sundarbans” will refer to the Indian Sundarbans. Perhaps, the most abundant kingfisher(as per my observations) in the Sundarbans is the Collared Kingfisher



Black-capped Kingfisher by Soumya Kundu

Todiramphus chloris. The unusual bluish-green Kingfisher with a prominent white collar, white breasts, and white belly will likely be the first kingfisher you will spot in Sundarbans, irrespective of the season. They can be found in the mangrove patches girdling the village islands and the forests. Small crabs picked up from the mangrove mudflats is their favourite food, followed by shrimps and mudskippers. Collared Kingfishers will inevitably have some mud stuck to their beak. They become vocal and active from the end of February to March when courtship begins. During this period, they are often found in pairs and perch on the higher branches, calling out to their mate. I once had the privilege to witness the courtship of a Collared Kingfisher pair from a close distance. The male offered a small fish as a nuptial gift (common behaviour), but the female made a great fuss, flitting from one branch to another, with the male in its pursuit. Phew !! Passing on genes takes a lot of effort for the males of most species.

The Black-capped Kingfisher *Halcyon pileata* is the only migratory kingfisher of the Indian Sundarbans. The species migrates to the Indian Sundarbans from South-east Asia. They enter around late September and remain in Sundarbans till March. During this period, this handsome kingfisher with its jet-black head, red beak, white collar, and deep blue-black wings dominate the landscape, possibly chasing away the Collared Kingfishers from their immediate vicinity. Their vibrant, eye-catching colours beautifully stand out against the drab mangrove mudflats. While looking for crabs, they perch quite close to the ground, often sitting on twigs just a few inches above the mudflats. Despite their easy sightings in winters and apparent high density in Sundarbans, this species is in the vulnerable category of the IUCN Red List with a rapidly declining population. Individuals tend to get disturbed very easily by human presence.

The Brown-winged Kingfisher *Pelargopsis amauroptera* is a resident of Sundarbans and is not known to migrate. However, its movement and feeding activity are rarely recorded except for the winters when it can be seen perched inside the foliage of large mangroves, situated mostly at the entrance of the creeks and sometimes on river banks. Belonging to the *Pelargopsis* (bill like a stork) genus, their massive size, enormous red bill, and habits resemble those of the Stork-billed Kingfisher. They track fish while remaining concealed within the foliage, much like the Stork-billed Kingfishers, finally diving into the river water. It also takes crabs. When perched, the orange head, deep brown wings, and the massive red bill and red feet are all you can see. As soon as it takes off, it reveals a beautiful blue colour at the rump. Most individuals are extremely bold, often ignoring humans and large motorized boats.



Brown-winged Kingfisher by Soumya Kundu

The most coveted kingfisher of the Sundarbans is undoubtedly the Ruddy Kingfisher *Halcyon coromanda*, another resident species. It strictly follows the principle of “less the sighting, more the charisma”, making only brief appearances during the monsoon months of July and August, when it breeds. Driven by the need to find a mate and to drive away the competitors, it emerges from the deep woods and can be seen perched on very tall trees, often calling repetitively early in the morning. It vanishes back into the forest even before the monsoon retreats. Those fortunate enough to catch a glimpse, remember its red bill, orange head, and the unusual rufous-chestnut upperparts, which look almost reddish from a distance. This kingfisher can in no way be confused with the Brown-winged Kingfisher.



Ruddy Kingfisher by Soumya Kundu

The Pied Kingfisher *Ceryle rudis* is a handsome resident kingfisher dressed up in a tuxedo. Like most other kingfishers, it builds meter-long tunnels on the banks of the rivers to lay its eggs. The male and female of this species are easily distinguishable, and the pair can often be spotted together, flying or perching on dry twigs. It has the unique ability among the kingfishers to hover for prolonged periods above the prey before diving vertically into the water. While most other kingfishers would need a perch to track its prey, it pulls out its chair out of the thin air. It is common both in villages and inside the forest.

As winter approaches, all low-height perches above the surface of the river water are bedecked with tiny blobs of vibrant blue with shimmering dots. These are the Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*, another resident species and the smallest among the kingfishers. It prefers the village ponds for most of the year but moves in large numbers into the forest channels with the onset of winter. This may be due to the calm rivers and better visibility to greater depths (due to less mud in waters) during the cold months. The species exhibits sexual dimorphism (hint: the beak). It catches mostly small fish.

The Stork-billed Kingfisher *Pelargopsis capensis* is not a typical kingfisher of the Sundarbans. Though sighted at times inside the forest, it probably feels more at ease inside the villages of Sundarbans. Sighting of the species

inside the forests and mangroves is not very common, though the species is widespread in Bengal.

The ubiquitous kingfisher of Bengal and its state bird, the White-throated Kingfisher *Halcyon smyrnensis*, maintains its dominance in Sundarbans. It is common both in the villages and in the forest.

You may visit Sundarbans for the tiger, but you are bound to fall in love with its kingfishers, and if you love kingfishers, then there is no other landscape that can be more rewarding than the Sundarbans.



About Author

SOUMYA KUNDU

Soumya is a nature enthusiast with special interest in birds and plants. He has led several tours to Sundarbans. By profession, Soumya is a tour operator.

email: soumyakundu@gmail.com

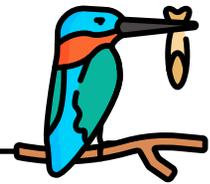


Biplab Banerjee
BIRD PHOTOGRAPHY



Banded Kingfisher (male)
PC: Biplab Banerjee

CHASING JEWELS : A DELIGHTFUL JOURNEY WITH THE KINGFISHERS OF SOUTHEAST ASIA



BIPLAB BANERJEE

Even before I started my amateurish journey to pursue my passion for bird photography, one bird that evoked a lot of interest in me was the Kingfisher. Fortunately, it stayed that way forever. And therefore, when I could gather enough financial resources to buy my first DSLR, I wasted no time visiting nearby places like Purbasthali or Mangalajodi and Bhitarkanika to photograph the members of this bird family with its striking plumage and dynamic movements. Their fascinating behaviour, hunting skills and stunning beauty kept me engrossed in pursuing my desire to photograph as many kingfisher birds as possible.

As luck would have it, during the last quarter of 2018, I got an exciting job opportunity to pursue and had to relocate to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, and this brought about an unforgettable experience of photographing beauties of the Kingfisher family from South East Asia.

Let me share a brief update on their distribution across SE Asian countries :

- Malaysia has 14 species of Kingfishers with 1 vagrant (Pied Kingfisher reported in 2016). Most are residents, and a few are migratory as well.
- The Philippines has 16 species plus 1 vagrant.
- Indonesia has a significantly higher population of 53 species spread across its many islands.
- Singapore has 8 species and 2 vagrants.
- Vietnam and Cambodia have 12 and 11 species, respectively.

For this article, I will focus on species that I could photograph across Malaysia and Indonesia which are not found in India.

Kingfishers of Malaysia:

Birding in Malaysia is relatively easier given the smaller size of the country (compared to India). It has an excellent road network that enabled us to travel to several birding hotspots. Also, the local birding fraternity follows a very robust information-sharing culture and thereby helped me to execute my travel plans over the weekends quite seamlessly.

Malayan Blue-banded Kingfisher
(*Alcedo peninsulae*):

This was a star bird amongst the river kingfishers of Malaysia. However, sighting and photographing this avian beauty was a challenge. Around March 2022, this species started to show up near a river stream in the Sungai Congkak area in the vicinity of Kuala Lumpur city and all local photographers started to throng to this location and in no time news spread to fellow birders in Singapore and it soon became an experience of a life time.



Rufous-backed Dwarf Kingfisher
(*Ceyx rufidorsa*)

And to our pleasant surprise, in a few weeks' time, Rufous-backed Dwarf Kingfisher started to show up near the same water stream to display its hunting prowess. It was like a double bonanza.

Rufous-collared Kingfisher
(*Actenoides concretus*)

First tree Kingfisher of Malaysia that I could photograph - also the first time I sighted this kingfisher near the forest area of the river Sungai Chongkak. However, my pursuit of a better-quality image made me travel to another state called Perak, and there at the foothills of a hill called Bukit Larut, I could manage to capture this image.



Banded Kingfisher (*Lacedo Pulchella*)

Here is a breathtaking beauty of the forest land of Malaysia and also found in Thailand. The male and female look quite different and I could photograph them with the best possible background and clarity while pursuing them in a durian orchard.

For all my birding related travel inside Malaysia, I was fortunate to have been guided by Cheong Weng Chun - renowned bird guide from Malaysia.



Kingfishers of Indonesia

After covid period, I could resume my travelling and was fiercely focussed on photographing as many kingfishers as possible from this archipelago. And therefore, my first port of call was an Island called North Sulawesi, I worked with my local guide Irawan Halir and focussed on the Tangoko Forest area. Walking almost 10 km each day over 3 days, I managed to photograph the following species:



Sulawesi Lilac Kingfisher
(*Cittura cyanotis*)

1. **Sulawesi Lilac Kingfisher** (*Cittura cyanotis*)
2. **Green-backed Kingfisher** (*Actenoides monachus*)
3. **Great-billed Kingfisher** (*Pelargopsis melanorhyncha*)
4. **Sulawesi Dwarf Kingfisher** (*Ceyx fallax*)
5. **Scaly-breasted Kingfisher** (*Actenoides princeps*)

For kingfisher enthusiasts, I would recommend the island of North Sulawesi as a must- visit destination, with several daily flights from Singapore and Jakarta. I could also photograph Ruddy Kingfisher there with great ease in the same area. Amongst all the above kingfishers, the Great-billed Kingfisher proved to be the most challenging since it required travelling in a boat in the choppy sea.



Green-backed Kingfisher
(*Actenoides monachus*)



Scaly-breasted Kingfisher
(*Actenoides princeps*)



Great-billed Kingfisher
(*Pelargopsis melanorhyncha*)



Sulawesi Dwarf Kingfisher
(*Ceyx fallax*)

After a satisfactory maiden trip to Sulawesi, my next objective was visiting the island of Bali - a truly enriching experience from a bird photography perspective. Here I worked with a local guide called Hery Kusumanegara. It was a short trip over two full days, and I could photograph the following kingfishers:

1. Cerulean Kingfisher (*Alcedo coerulescens*)
2. Javan Kingfisher (*Halcyon cyanoventris*):



Cerulean Kingfisher
(*Alcedo coerulescens*)



Javan Kingfisher
(*Halcyon cyanoventris*)

Kingfishers of Papua

Finally, I decided to explore the Papuan side of Indonesia. I took a flight to Jakarta from KL and then travelled to Jayapura Island. I was fortunate enough to come across Ahmed Kho as my guide here and he helped me over the next three days to photograph the following kingfishers, which involved long distance travelling in car and then walking through the dense forests.

1. **Common Paradise Kingfisher** (*Tanysiptera galatea*):
2. **Rufous-bellied Kookaburra** (*Dacelo gaudichaud*)
3. **Yellow-billed Kingfisher** (*Syma torotoro*)
4. **Sacred Kingfisher** (*Todiramphus sanctus*)



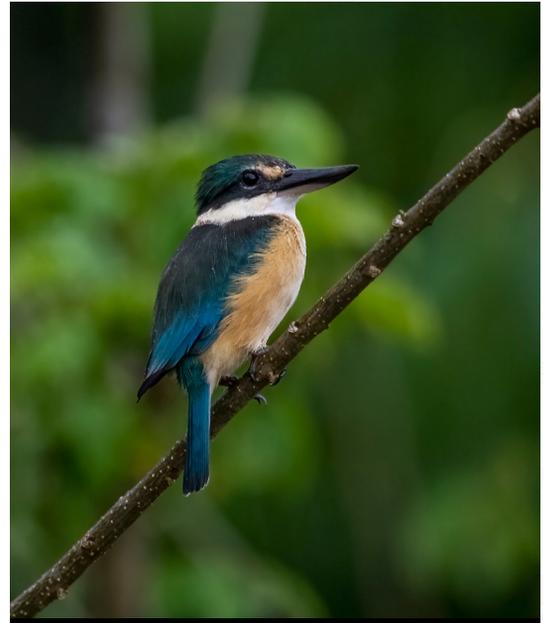
Rufous-bellied Kookaburra
(*Dacelo gaudichaud*)



Common Paradise Kingfisher
(*Tanysiptera galatea*)



Yellow-billed Kingfisher
(*Syma torotoro*)



Sacred Kingfisher
(*Todiramphus sanctus*)

As I reflect on my island-hopping journey through South Asia, it surely left an indelible mark on my evolution as a keen bird enthusiast. Through this article, I hope to have shared the magic of these encounters, inspiring others to explore and appreciate the beauty of South Asia's kingfishers and the diverse landscapes they inhabit.

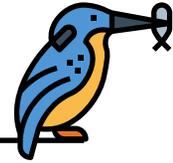


About Author

BIPLAB BANERJEE

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

NATURE'S BLUEPRINT: THE KINGFISHER'S BEAK AND THE FUTURE OF HIGH-SPEED TRAVEL



UPAMANYU CHAKRABORTY

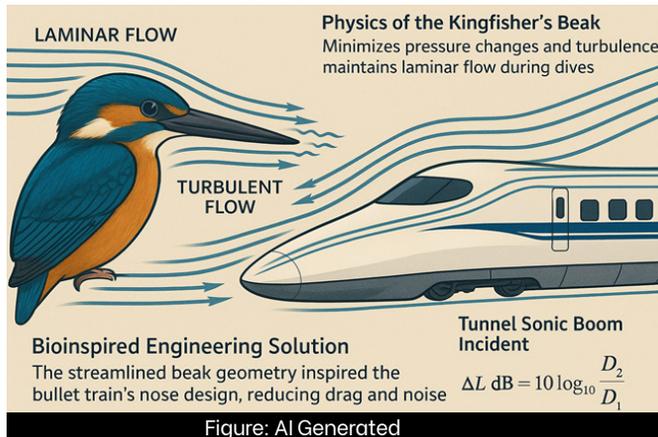
When I took biology as my main subject in Plus 2, I received some serious banter from my friends who opted for physics and mathematics. They look down upon biology, the subject that is often misperceived as a memorisation machine rather than an analytical, thought-provoking discipline. As I went through my degree levels, spanning the five years of my bachelor's and master's programs, I experienced syllabus and teaching techniques that supported the general perception of the subject's dimensions. Later, during my professional studies, thanks to the Wildlife Institute of India, and the sheer brilliance of its faculty, I not only overcame the fear of mathematics but also, surprisingly, developed a keen interest in physics. Unravelling the mystery of the universe seemed to go well with my subject- solving the mystery of nature.

The higher one advances in any realm of academic pursuit, it becomes apparent that all branches of knowledge are deeply interconnected. My fifteen-year-old version never thought of using the Brownian motion of gas and Bayesian statistics to develop a study on the population of ungulates in Jim Corbett National Park or cautiously walking a transect just after dawn through the grasslands of Bandhavgarh, so that the assumptions of distance sampling are not violated which can lead to a bias. Especially, wildlife conservation has so many aspects. Starting from core biology to data science, from physics to social studies, from mathematics to management, and from literature to law, one must go through all genres before one can specialise in any combination. Not claiming superiority though!

This seemingly elaborate introduction serves but one purpose: to underscore the profound truth that all disciplines are inherently interconnected, and that nature often holds the blueprint for solutions to even our most complex problems. Can a kingfisher lay claim saving gallons of fuel and precious minutes daily contributing silently to a nation's economy? That was exactly the inspiration behind the Shinkansen Bullet Train in Japan.

Meanwhile, India is gearing up to enter a new era of high-speed transportation as the country's first bullet trains prepare to glide onto the tracks by 2027. And leading the charge, quite literally, is a marvel of engineering and biomimicry, born not just in labs and blueprints, but inspired by the natural world. Japan, the pioneer of the bullet train revolution, has announced to gift India the E5 and E3 series of its world-renowned Shinkansen trains. These high-speed trains, known for their sleek design and whisper-quiet operation, are set to arrive in India by early 2026 for testing on the upcoming Mumbai-Ahmedabad high-speed rail corridor.

But these advancements were not that fast, smooth, and quiet as they are now.



In the 1990s, Japanese engineers faced a peculiar challenge. The Shinkansen trains, while efficient and fast, produced a loud sonic boom each time they exited tunnels at high speed. This “tunnel boom” was caused by rapid air compression in the tunnel—essentially a mini shockwave that disturbed communities nearby and posed an acoustic engineering problem. Eiji Nakatsu, an engineer and avid birdwatcher, while observing how kingfishers dive from the air into water with barely a splash, had a breakthrough. The kingfisher’s long, slender, and tapered beak allows

it to shift from low-density air into high-density water with minimal disturbance, maintaining laminar flow and avoiding turbulent splashes. Nakatsu’s team reimagined the bullet train’s nose to mimic the geometry of the kingfisher’s beak, creating a 30-meter-long tapered nose cone that smoothly displaced air rather than compressing it abruptly. This results in 15% less electricity usage and an elevated speed that can reach up to 320 km/hr.

Japan’s bullet train project is being built with not just speed in mind, but sustainability, safety, and science at its core. While the E5 series will form the backbone of this network, Japan’s upcoming E10 series (Alfa-X)—capable of speeds up to 400 km/h—is in the pipeline for future use, expected to debut around 2030.

For now, India stands at the threshold of transforming its rail infrastructure, where innovation is not just about machines but about learning from nature. The kingfisher’s dive into water has become a symbol of quiet power, guiding one of humanity’s fastest land transports. No matter how advanced humankind becomes, the root will always be engraved deep into the nature where it belongs. The day we cut the unconscious umbilical cord brutally will be the day when the development of the human race will start collapsing gradually.



About Author

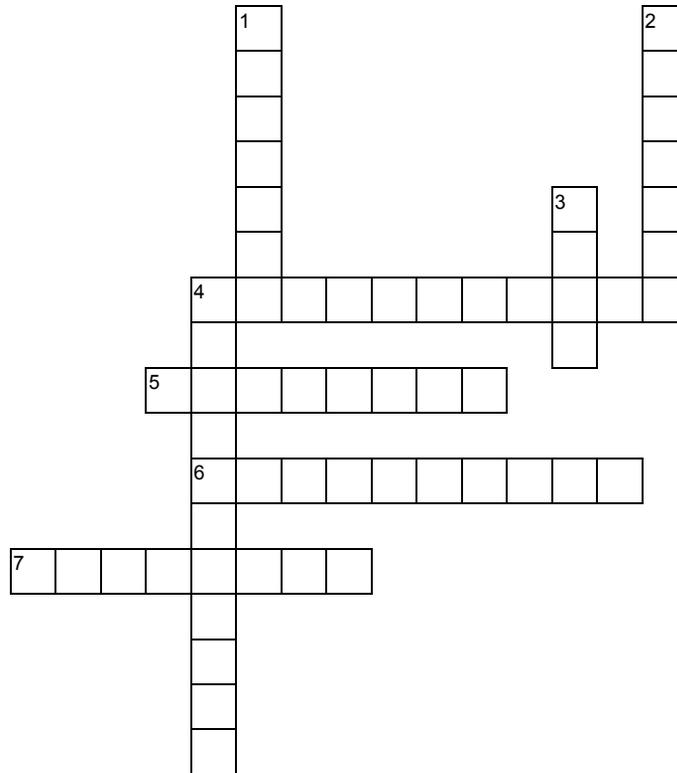
UPAMANYU CHAKRABORTY

Upamanyu, is a wildlife conservation biologist from Siliguri. Studying population and movement ecology of wild animals across landscapes as a profession and amateur birdwatcher by passion. He enjoys documenting natural history through the lens.



CROSSWORD

Kingfishers



Across

4. The genus name of many Kingfishers is derived from this Greek word meaning a period of happy days in the past
5. This ornithologist worked extensively on Kingfishers and his book is called "A Monograph of the Alcedinidae: or, family of kingfishers"
6. The ____ kingfisher, after being captive-bred, has been successfully reintroduced and is breeding in the wild in Cooper Island as of 2025.
7. The _____ dwarf kingfisher is known as the Jewel of the Western Ghats.

Down

1. The _____ kingfisher has an uncharacteristically long tail for the species.
2. The diving style of this kingfisher is known to have inspired the _____
3. Though this bird belongs to the kingfisher species, it is not closely associated with water.
4. This is the rarest kingfisher found only in the Niau archipelago of French Polynesia.

MANJEERA: CRYING FOR HELP



DR ASAD RAHMANI

Thirty-eight years is a significant gap between visits to a wildlife sanctuary, yet that is precisely the span between my trips—first in 1986 and now in 2025. My initial visit was with members of the Birdwatchers' Society of Andhra Pradesh (BSAP, now Deccan Birders), whose esteemed patron, Mr. Pushp Kumar, remains a revered figure even two decades after his passing. That trip included luminaries such as BC Choudhury, Aasheesh Pittie, Siraj Taher, Rangareddy, Vira Prasad, and several enthusiastic young birders. At the crack of dawn, we embarked on a 70 km drive to “wake the birds,” as one cheeky participant quipped. The late Siraj Taher, the most seasoned among us, was an expert in avian species, but the real thrill came when we spotted enormous mugger crocodiles (*Crocodylus palustris*) basking on the lake's shores, their mouths agape in typical fashion. Some found them fearsome, while others deemed them endearing. Cute as they might seem from a distance, approaching them would be sheer folly. Mr. Pushp Kumar prudently instructed the boatman to maintain a safe distance, to the disappointment of photographers wielding their modest Agfa Click-III cameras—these were pre-digital days when only a fortunate few had access to 200–300 mm lenses. Today's ubiquitous long telephoto lenses were still a distant dream for Indian wildlife enthusiasts.



Birdwatching machan in Manjeera,
Pic by Asad Rahmani

Interestingly, the Manjeera reservoir was originally built to supply drinking water to Hyderabad and Secunderabad, ensuring a consistent water level even during the dry season. When a small population of mugger crocodiles was discovered in the area, the government designated a 2,800-hectare stretch between Singur and Manjeera Barrage as a crocodile sanctuary in June 1978. Following the river's course for 36 km, the sanctuary became part of India's broader Crocodile Conservation Project, an initiative supported by the Government of India, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). The reservoir, with its stable water levels, provided an ideal refuge for these ancient reptiles.

As with many wetlands, Manjeera soon became a magnet for birds. By the mid-1980s, it was well-known among birdwatchers, leading to the initiation of annual waterfowl counts in 1987. The reservoir's nine islands, fringed with extensive marshes, provide prime nesting sites for waterbirds and support submerged and emergent vegetation. The heronry here boasts species like the oriental darter (*Anhinga melanogaster*), Asian openbill (*Anastomus oscitans*), painted stork (*Mycteria leucocephala*), black-crowned night-heron (*Nycticorax nycticorax*), along with various egret and cormorant species. In March 2018, over 7,500 painted storks were recorded nesting on Puttigadda Island, making it one of the largest breeding sites for this species in South India.



Manjeera Barrage, Pic by Asad Rahmani



Fish caught in illegal nets in Manjeera Barrage, pic by Asad Rahmani

A 2021 study published in the *Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society (JBNHS)* by Sivakumar, S., Ramesh Kumar Selvaraj, Ponnusamy Sathiyaselvam & Ganesh Pallela, titled *Bird Ringing Programme in Manjeera Wildlife Sanctuary, Telangana, India: Findings and Conservation Issues* documented significant migratory bird activity. The researchers ringed 26 individuals from seven duck species, two of which—northern shovelers (*Spatula clypeata*)—were ringed on March 8, 2019, and later recovered in Russia, 4,361 km away. Another shoveler with the ring number F-48872, was found in the Yakutia province of Russia, approximately 6,000 km from Manjeera. From 2018 to 2020, the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) team ringed 66 waterbirds across 19 species.

When BirdLife International and BNHS launched India's Important Bird Area (IBA) program in 2000, Manjeera was included in the IBA list. In 2008, Zafarul Islam and I recommended its designation as a Ramsar Site (Wetland of International Importance), as it met three crucial Ramsar criteria: supporting threatened ecological communities (Criteria 2), regularly hosting over 20,000 waterbirds (Criteria 5), and sustaining at least 1% of a globally threatened species' population (Criteria 6). According to Ramsar classification, Manjeera qualifies as Type 6—a water storage reservoir.

The reservoir nurtures a variety of aquatic and terrestrial vegetation, with Typha, Ipomoea, and Acacia along the waterline, while surrounding agricultural fields create a buffer zone. The dry savannah-like landscape is dotted with *Acacia*, *Prosopis*, Tamarind (*Tamarindus indica*), and Neem (*Azadirachta indica*).

Manjeera appears to have seen better days. In the 1980s, Dr. Vijaya Kumar, Director of GUIDE, estimated that nearly 30,000 waterfowl visited the wetland during winter. While species diversity has remained stable, individual populations have fluctuated. Large congregations of common teal (*Anas crecca*) and cotton pygmy-geese (*Nettapus coromandelianus*) were once common, with over 1,500 ruddy shelducks (*Tadorna ferruginea*) observed at times. In 1986–87, a greater flamingo (*Phoenicopterus roseus*) ringed in Azerbaijan, Iran, during 1971–1974 was recovered here. A 2014 study by K.K. Prasad and colleagues, based on surveys from 2010 to 2012, listed 164 bird species, with 14 species known to breed in Manjeera.



Nesting colony in Manjeera Barrage, pic by Asad Rahmani

During my recent visit, I spotted a pair of Black-necked Storks on a nest, but the distance prevented me from confirming the presence of chicks. Reports suggest that up to 500 bar-headed geese (*Anser indicus*) visit Manjeera, yet I saw none. Similarly, while 1,500 Ruddy Shelducks were reported in the 1980s, I found barely a handful of ducks—just 40–50 lesser whistling ducks (*Dendrocygna javanica*), 40–45 pygmy cotton geese, and three Indian spot-billed ducks (*Anas poecilorhyncha*). Given the clean water, abundant submerged vegetation, minimal disturbance, and diverse water depths, the absence of large duck flocks was perplexing.

After my return, I consulted local birdwatchers, but no definitive answers emerged. Some attributed the decline to climate change—an all-too-common scapegoat—while others suggested I had simply visited at the wrong time. But if late January—peak



Releasing the illegally caught fish back to water, pic by Asad Rahmani

winter—is not the right season for migratory birds, then when is? Others pointed to boat disturbances, though ours was the only boat on the reservoir that day. In my experience, birds thrive even in far more disturbed wetlands. Fortunately, no one questioned my ability to identify birds!

A more plausible explanation for the dearth of ducks and geese is rampant illegal fishing and possible nocturnal trapping. We encountered two fishermen hastily paddling away upon sighting us and noticed extensive illegal nets, marked by bobbing buoys. District Forest Officer (DFO) Mr. Sridhar Rao, a courteous and proactive official, acknowledged the issue and promptly ordered his staff to remove the nets, releasing the entangled fish (except the invasive Tilapia) and confiscating the gear.

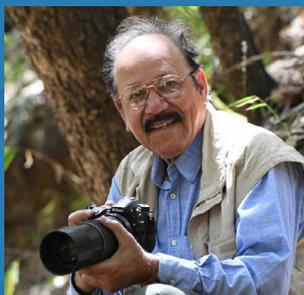
Illegal fishing in protected areas is a complex socio-political issue that understaffed authorities struggle to control. Beyond this, the wetland faces additional threats—fluctuating water levels in low-rainfall years, agricultural encroachment, excessive pesticide use, and invasive species like *Prosopis juliflora* and *Ipomoea carnea*. Manjeera requires urgent conservation measures and further research to understand its role in supporting migratory waterbirds along the Central Asian Flyway.



Mr. Sridhar Rao, DFO, at the well designed Interpretation centre in Manjeera Sanctuary, pic by Asad Rahmani

About Author

DR ASAD RAHMANI



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

THE AVIAN WONDERS OF RANJIT SAGAR WETLAND SITUATED IN THE NORTHWESTERN HIMALAYAS



HEMANT KUMAR & DR GURPARTAP SINGH

Ranjit Sagar Dam (32.442°N and 75.725°E, c.540 m asl) is a key part of the hydroelectricity project of the Punjab government. Completed in 2001, this dam sits on the river Ravi and is surrounded by lush greenery. The wetland falls in Punjab, Himachal Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir, with major part in Jammu & Kashmir. The total water spread area is about 87.60 km² with a catchment area spread over 6,086 km² (Brraich et al. 2023). In and around this wetland, different habitats exist, including the deep water, shallow water, marshy areas, large trees, riparian vegetation, and fallow land near the banks. This facilitates roosting and breeding of different birds and also provides food for them in the form of grass seeds, wild berries, aquatic plants, phytoplankton, zooplankton, fishes, amphibians, reptiles and insects. During visit in the winter of 2019, Hemant Kumar (HK) was able to spot Ruddy Shelducks (*Tadorna ferruginea*), which made him curious about the existence of other water birds in the area. Despite searching at a couple of specific spots, he was not successful. In 2020, he inquired with local fishermen and they informed about a particular spot where birds could be found. Accordingly, he planned another trip. This time he saw hundreds of Bar-headed Geese (*Anser indicus*) and various other water birds at that spot. Since then, many birders have flocked to the area around Ranjit Sagar Dam to explore its diverse bird population. During his visits over the last few years, HK has been able to find a total of 189 bird species around the lake. The peaceful and serene environment of

the wetland provides the perfect habitat for these beautiful creatures to thrive. It is truly a haven for bird enthusiasts and a testament to the importance of preserving natural habitats for wildlife. This wetland has undoubtedly become one of the top destinations for birdwatchers.

The Kothi area near Basholi, Jammu and Kashmir, is a birding hotspot where one can spot a variety of birds. Similarly, Phangota and Dunera in Pathankot, Punjab serve as a natural habitat for numerous birds. These have become popular birding spots, attracting bird enthusiasts from all over the country. Both locations offer a peaceful and tranquil environment for birdwatching, away from the hustle and bustle of city life. With its diverse range of feathered creatures and breathtaking scenic beauty, Ranjit Sagar Dam and its surrounding areas are must-visit destinations for nature lovers and bird enthusiasts. In this article, we report the sighting of some important bird species seen scarcely in the region. These species have also been indicated in the recently published checklist of the birds of Jammu & Kashmir, India (Kichloo et al. 2024). For status of each species included in this article, we referred to Ali & Ripley (1987) and Rasmussen and Anderton (2012).



1. Eared Grebe in non-breeding plumage at Ranjit Sagar Wetland on 29 January 2023

EARED GREBE (*Podiceps Nigricollis*)

This species was observed by HK and other birders in Ranjit Sagar Dam Lake (32.453°N, 75.778°E), Kathua District, Jammu & Kashmir on 29 January 2023 [1]. HK saw one more Eared Grebe at a nearby location on 01 December 2024. This species is a scarce non-breeding winter visitor to northwest India.



2. Common Shelduck at Ranjit Sagar Wetland on 02 January 2025

COMMON SHELDUCK (*Tadorna Tadorna*)

A pair of this species was observed by HK at Kothi (32.478°N, 75.761°E), on Kathua side of the reservoir on 02 January 2025 [2]. Previously, a pair has also been seen by Baldeep Singh near Phangota on 18 February 2023, when two birds were seen. It is a scarce to rare winter visitor across northern India.



3. Common Merganser at Ranjit Sagar Wetland on 27 January 2023

COMMON MERGANSER (*Mergus Merganser*)

This bird was seen by HK at Phangota (32.453°N, 75.778°E), Pathankot District, Punjab, on 27 January 2023 [3]. On 29 January 2023, HK and other birders saw a pair of Common Merganser on Kathua side of the reservoir. In northwest India, this species is chiefly a rare winter visitor though it is known to be partly resident in Lahaul (Himachal Pradesh) and Ladakh.



4. An immature White-tailed Eagle at Ranjit Sagar Wetland on 13 January 2020

WHITE-TAILED EAGLE (*Haliaeetus Albicilla*)

On 13 January 2020, Parmil Kumar observed an immature White-tailed Eagle [4] on Kathua side of the reservoir (32.474°N, 75.762°E). An adult White-tailed Eagle was observed by HK on Kathua side on 26 January 2023 and again at Phangota, Pathankot District, Punjab, on 27 January 2023. It is a rare winter visitor to the region.



5. An immature Pallas's Fish Eagle at Ranjit Sagar Wetland on 27 January 2023

PALLAS'S FISH EAGLE (*Haliaeetus Leucoryphus*)

An immature Pallas's Fish Eagle [5] was observed by HK at Phangota (32.453°N, 75.778°E), on 27 January 2023. On the Kathua side, one bird was seen by HK with other birders on 29 January 2023 and again on 04 February 2023. This globally vulnerable species, though resident, is rarely seen.



6. Eurasian Curlew at Ranjit Sagar Wetland on 22 January 2023

EURASIAN CURLEW (*Numenius Arquata*)

One Eurasian Curlew [6] was observed by HK on Kathua side (32.480°N, 75.748°E) on 22 October 2023. Though a widespread winter visitor, it mainly prefers the coasts. It can be seen on large lakes and rivers; mainly on migration, but sometimes also throughout the cold season.



7. Pin-tailed Snipe at Ranjit Sagar Wetland on 29 January 2023

PIN-TAILED SNIPE (*Gallinago Stenura*)

This bird was seen by HK and other birders on Kathua side (32.474°N, 75.762°N) on 29 January 2023. Sachin Kumar Bhagat clicked a photograph [7]. This winter visitor is not very numerous in northwestern parts of the country where it is mostly a passage migrant.



8. Jack Snipe at Ranjit Sagar Wetland on 29 January 2023

JACK SNIPE (*Lymnocyptes Minimus*)

HK and other birders first saw this bird on the Kathua side (32.474°N, 75.762°N) on 29 January 2023. They reported another sighting from a nearby location on 04 February 2023. It has been photographed by Pankaj Chibber [8]. This species is a scarce and irregular winter visitor in the region.



9. Dunlin
at Ranjit Sagar Wetland on 27 November 2022

DUNLIN (*Calidris Alpina*)

HK first saw this species on Kathua side (32.480°N, 75.748°E) on 27 November 2022 [9]. He again observed one bird 29 January 2023 while birding with a group of other birders at a nearby location. It is mainly a winter visitor to the coasts. It is sparsely seen at inland locations, and like many parts of the country, it is a passage migrant for Jammu & Kashmir.



10. Great Grey Shrike
at Ranjit Sagar Wetland on 11 February 2024

GREAT GREY SHRIKE (*Lanius Excubitor*)

HK and other birders observed a Great Grey Shrike [10] on Kathua side (32.474°N, 75.762°E) on 11 February 2024. This species was again observed on 11 January 2025 at a nearby location on the Kathua side. More an inhabitant of dry country, semi-desert and open thorn scrub to the south of Himalayas, it is rare to see this species around a wetland in the foothills.



11. Desert Wheatear
at Ranjit Sagar Wetland on 18 January 2025

DESERT WHEATEAR (*Oenanthe Deserti*)

A non-breeding male Desert Wheatear [11] was seen by KH on Kathua side at Kothi Farnata (32.495°N, 75.778°E) on 18 January 2025. Known to breed in northwest Himalayas, it is a winter visitor arid northwest India (especially Rajasthan and Gujarat). The present location falls in a belt where this species can be rarely seen on migration.



12. Red-throated Pipit
at Ranjit Sagar Wetland on 12 October 2023

RED-THROATED PIPIT (*Anthus Cervinus*)

A non-breeding Red-throated Pipit was observed by HK on Kathua side (32.480°N, 75.748°E) on 12 October 2023 [12]. This species was again observed on 25 March 2024 by other birders at a nearby location on Kathua side. This species is a very scarce passage migrant.

These observations shed new light on the richness of the avian species at Ranjit Sagar Wetland. Additionally, they highlight the need to conserve the varied habitats which many birds rely on. These areas run the risk of exploitation by way of development, deforestation, and the reclamation for conversion to agricultural land. Urgent conservation efforts are needed to protect the wetland's ecosystems so that the birds and other life forms continue to thrive.

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About Author

HEMANT KUMAR



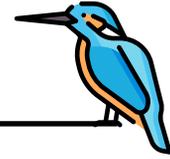
Hemant Kumar is a teacher by profession. For the past seven years, he has been actively involved in birdwatching and has developed a deep understanding and appreciation for the winged creatures. Through this hobby, he has also become a dedicated wildlife conservator, working towards protecting and preserving our natural world. Combining his passion for teaching and wildlife conservation, he has made it his mission to educate the masses about the importance of preserving the environment and the role each of us plays in it. His bird photographs have also been published in international newspapers.

About Author

DR GURPARTAP SINGH



Dr. Gurpartap Singh, a retired college Principal, though from business management and academic background, is an active bird watcher, eBirder, nature lover and photographer. His interest in all things natural began during the college days when he studied Biology. He is presently on the editorial board of 'Sanrakshan', a monthly eMagazine. He is Administrator and/or moderator of Facebook groups like Punjab Bird Club, Natural Biodiversity, Butterflies of Punjab and a few others. He volunteers in diverse activities like bird photography exhibitions, bird surveys, wildlife rescue, nature conservation, cleanliness drives, tree plantation, nature walks, online educative sessions, etc. He has published several research articles and helps, encourages and collaborates with fellow birders to get their observations published.



THE MISSING KINGFISHER

BATUL PIPEWALA

At quiet ponds, a cheerful sound,
In still waters, wings swift rebound,
Beneath the sun's glistening hue,
A flash of sapphire, bright and blue
Perched low on a jheel-side tree,

Watching patiently as hours flee,
Eyes keen, the kingfisher seeks,
The one that makes it shout n shriek.
Elsewhere a lonely birder roves,
Through boughs of trees, in silent groves
Seeking sounds and sights of grace
Near quiet ponds where stillness embrace.

Bee-eaters dart from top of mast trees,
The shy cuckoo sings among the coral leaves,
Perhaps she too will find
A bird conspicuous in her mind,
Or perhaps, will this wilderness conceal,
Whose absence she strongly feels?

Separated, her heart is a nervous flutter,
Fervently she longs for the song of the flirter
Thirsty eyes in earnest seek,
Near quiet ponds, by waters meek,
For the missing whispers and warmth of thee,
If only he reappears,
Triumphant, she will embrace him with
ecstatic glee!



About Author Batul Pipewala

Batul is a mentor with CUBE (Collaboratively Understanding Biology Education) under Kishore Bharati founded by Prof. Anil Sadgopal. A birding enthusiast, she has completed a basic course in Ornithology. A member of BWS, BNHS and HEAL. She lives in Kolkata.

THE JUVENILE BIRDER

TITASH CHAKRABARTI



JB gets his kicks from the backyard and Netflix



ভিতরকণিকা ম্যানগ্রোভ বনের মাছরাঙা ও খাদ্য বিভাজন



বিশ্ব রঞ্জন গোস্বামী

ভা

রতের পূর্ব উপকূল বরাবর উড়িষ্যার ভিতরকণিকার ম্যানগ্রোভ বনে মাছরাঙা পাখি দেখার এক দারুন জায়গা। মাছরাঙা পাখিদের এক স্বর্গরাজ্য বলা যেতে পারে। ভিতরকণিকা ম্যানগ্রোভ বনাঞ্চলে প্রচুর সংখ্যায় ও নানা জাতের মাছরাঙা বাস করে। মোট আট প্রজাতির মাছরাঙা এই অঞ্চলে বেশি দেখা যায় যেমন সাধারণ বা ছোট মাছরাঙা, (Common Kingfisher - *Alcedo atthis*), কণ্ঠী মাছরাঙা (Collared Kingfisher - *Todiramphus-chloris*), কড়িকাটা বা ফটকা মাছরাঙা (Pied Kingfisher-*Ceryle rudis*), সাদাবুক মাছরাঙা (White-throated Kingfisher-*Halcyon smyrnensis*), কালো-মাথা মাছরাঙা (Black-caped Kingfisher-*Halcyon pileate*), গুড়িয়াল বা চৌসা (Stork-billed Kingfisher-*Pelargopsis capensis*), বাদামী-ডানা মাছরাঙা (Brown-winged Kingfisher-*Pelargopsis amauroptera*) ও লাল মাছরাঙা (Ruddy Kingfisher-*Halcyon coromanda*)। এই মাছরাঙাগুলির মধ্যে বাদামী-ডানা মাছরাঙা (Brown-winged Kingfisher) IUCN লাল তালিকায় প্রায় বিপদাপন্ন এবং বাকিগুলিকে ন্যূনতম উদ্বেগের বিভাগে রাখা আছে।

তবে সারা বিশ্বজুড়ে ৯৩টি মাছরাঙার প্রজাতি রয়েছে। ভারতে মোট ১২টি বাসিন্দা। এই পাখিদের সবচেয়ে বেশি ২৬টি প্রজাতি নিউগিনি ও সংলগ্ন দ্বীপপুঞ্জ দেখা যায়। মাছরাঙাদের উৎপত্তি দক্ষিণ-পূর্ব এশিয়ার রেইন ফরেস্ট ও নিউগিনিকে কেন্দ্র করে নিকটবর্তী প্রশান্ত মহাসাগরীয় দ্বীপপুঞ্জে। এরা রেইন ফরেস্ট, পর্ণমোচী বনভূমি, সাভানা, ম্যানগ্রোভ জলাভূমি, মিষ্টি জলের জলাভূমি, হ্রদ, সমুদ্র উপকূল, নদীর উপত্যকা ও মোহনায় বাস করে।



ফটকা মাছরাঙা



কণ্ঠী মাছরাঙা



বাদামী-ডানা মাছরাঙা

মাছরাঙা পাখি হল Alcedinidae বর্গের ও Coraciiformes বংশের সদস্য। এদের গঠনবৈশিষ্ট্য হল লম্বা চঞ্চু, তবে সোজা, মোটা ও সূচালো ছোরার মত। এদের পা দুর্বল, ঘাড় বেশ ছোট। মাছরাঙা হল দারুন সুন্দর উজ্জ্বল রঙিন পাখি, তাই কিছু দেশে এদের উড়ন্ত রত্ন বলা হয়। মাছরাঙা পাখিরা দেখতে মোটামুটি একই রকম, কিন্তু আকারে ভিন্ন। এদের নাম থেকেই বোঝা যায় তারা মাছ ধরে, আর এই কাজে বেশ পটু। শিকার ধরার জন্য এরা জলে ঘন্টায় পঁচিশ মাইল বেগে ঝাঁপ দেয়। জলের ভিতর এরা এত মসৃণ ও নিঃশব্দে ডাইভ দেয় যে এদের শিকার সতর্ক হওয়ার কোন সুযোগই পায় না। ভিতরকণিকা জাতীয় উদ্যান উড়িষ্যার কেন্দ্রপাড়া জেলার ব্রাহ্মণী ও বৈতরণী নদীর ব-দ্বীপ অঞ্চলে অবস্থিত (২০০ ৩০/ - ২০০ ৪৮/ উত্তর অক্ষাংশ এবং ৮৬০ ৪৫/ - ৮৭০ ০৩/ দ্রাঘিমাংশের মধ্যে)। ১৯৭৫ সালে ভিতরকণিকার ম্যানগ্রোভ বন এবং সংলগ্ন বন এলাকাকে বন্যপ্রাণী অভয়ারণ্য হিসাবে ঘোষণা করা হয়। এলাকাটির মোট আয়তন ৬৭২ বর্গকিমি, তবে মূল এলাকা ১৪৫ বর্গকিমি। আবার ১৯৯৮ সালের ১৬ই সেপ্টেম্বর মূল অঞ্চলটিকে জাতীয় উদ্যান হিসাবে ঘোষণা করা হয়। উপকূলরেখাটি পূর্ব দিকে ৩৫ কিমি পর্যন্ত বিস্তৃত যা গহিরমাথা সামুদ্রিক অভয়ারণ্যও গঠন করে। ভিতরকণিকা জাতীয় উদ্যান, ভিতরকণিকা বন্যপ্রাণী অভয়ারণ্য ও গহিরমাথা সামুদ্রিক অভয়ারণ্যের কিছু অংশ যার মধ্যে ৩৩৬টি গ্রাম এবং সংলগ্ন কৃষিজমি নিয়ে ভিতরকণিকা সংরক্ষিত এলাকা মোট ৩০০০ বর্গ কিমি নিয়ে বিস্তীর্ণ অঞ্চল। জলচর পাখির আবাসস্থল হিসাবে আন্তর্জাতিকভাবে গুরুত্বপূর্ণ হওয়ায় ২০০২ সালে ভিতরকণিকাকে রামসার সাইট হিসাবে ঘোষণা করা হয়। বর্তমানে ভিতরকণিকা ভারতের দ্বিতীয় বৃহত্তম ম্যানগ্রোভ বাস্তুতন্ত্র। অভয়ারণ্যটি উত্তরে ধামরা নদী, দক্ষিণে মাইপুরা, পশ্চিমে ব্রাহ্মণী ও পূর্বে বঙ্গোপসাগর দ্বারা পরিবেষ্টিত। বার্ষিক বৃষ্টিপাতের পরিমাণ ৯২০ থেকে ৩০০০ মিমি পর্যন্ত। এই এলাকায় প্রায় ৬৩টি প্রজাতির ম্যানগ্রোভ ও অন্যান্য গাছপালা, লবনাক্ত জলের কুমির (*Crocodylus porosus*), পাইথন (*Python molurus*), কিং কোবরা (*Ophiophagus hannah*), অলিভ রিডলি সামুদ্রিক কচ্ছপ (*Lepidochelys olivacea*) সহ বিভিন্ন বিপন্ন প্রজাতির সরীসৃপ এবং নানা পরিযায়ী জলচর পাখিদের এক গুরুত্বপূর্ণ আশ্রয়স্থল (গোপি ও পাণ্ডব, ২০১১)।

মাছরাঙাদের বেশ কয়েকটি প্রজাতি ভিতরকণিকায় সহাবস্থান করে বাস করে। তাই এটি এদের খাদ্য সম্পদ বিভাজন গবেষণার একটা ভালো জায়গা। জলজ পাখির সংখ্যা বাসস্থানের পরিবর্তনের একটি ভালো সূচক। শিকারী জলচর প্রজাতি ব্যবহারের কিছু সুবিধাও আছে। মাছের তুলনায় মাছরাঙাদের পর্যবেক্ষণ করা সহজ ও শিকারদের সনাক্ত করতেও সাহায্য করে। স্থল ও সমুদ্রের সঙ্গমস্থলে অবস্থিত ম্যানগ্রোভ এলাকা অত্যন্ত জটিল ও ভঙ্গুর বাস্তুতন্ত্র। এখানে তুলনামূলকভাবে ছোট মাছের সংখ্যা বেশি। সাধারণতঃ ম্যানগ্রোভগুলি দূষিত পদার্থ ফিল্টার করে, পলি আটকে রেখে উপকূলীয় ভূমিকে স্থিতিশীল করে। ম্যানগ্রোভগুলি ঝড়ের ক্ষতি থেকে রক্ষা করে সমগ্র বাস্তুতন্ত্রের কার্যকরী ভূমিকা পালন করে। গত পঞ্চাশ বছরে সারা বিশ্বের প্রায় এক-তৃতীয়াংশ ম্যানগ্রোভ বন হারিয়ে গেছে।

এখনও পর্যন্ত এই ভিতরকণিকার ভঙ্গুর আবাসস্থলে মাছরাঙা প্রজাতির

বাস্তুতন্ত্র সম্পর্কে খুব কমই জানা গেছে। কয়েকটি গবেষণায় এই বিষয়ে অনুসন্ধান করার চেষ্টা করা হয়েছে। তাতে এই প্রজাতিগুলি কিভাবে আবাসস্থল এবং খাদ্য সংগ্রহের জায়গাকে আলাদা করে তা জানা যায়। তার মধ্যে বিজ্ঞানী জলি ভোরা, ডঃ বিভাস পাণ্ডে ও ডঃ গোপীন্দ্র নেতৃত্বে পরিচালিত গবেষণাটি উল্লেখযোগ্য। তাদের গবেষণা পত্রটি ২০১১ সালে Wild life Institute of India র জার্নালে প্রকাশিত হয়।

গবেষকেরা ২০১১ সালের জানুয়ারী থেকে মে মাস পর্যন্ত সমীক্ষার কাজটি করেন। গবেষণায় গাছের শাখা - প্রশাখার ধরন অনুসারে খালগুলিকে তিনটি ভাগে ভাগ করা হয়। গবেষণা এলাকায় মোট ১৬টি এক কিলোমিটারের পথ নির্বাচন করা হয়। একই রকম খাবারের চাহিদা অনুযায়ী মাছরাঙার প্রজাতির একসাথে সহবস্থান করে। তাই খাবারের জন্য প্রতিযোগিতা এড়াতে কৌশল হিসাবে এদের ভিতর খাদ্য বিভাজন থাকা দরকার। এই গবেষণায় অনুসন্ধান করার চেষ্টা করা হয়েছে কিভাবে মাছরাঙার প্রজাতিগুলি আবাসস্থল ও খাদ্য সংগ্রহের জায়গা ভাগ করে নেয়। প্রত্যেকটি পাখিকে আলাদাভাবে শিকার না ধরা পর্যন্ত অনুসরণ করে খাদ্য সংগ্রহের আচরণ রেকর্ড করা হয়। এভাবে ৫৬টি পাখির আলাদাভাবে শিকার ধরা রেকর্ড করেন বিজ্ঞানীরা। গবেষণায় এখানে পাওয়া মাছরাঙার আটটি প্রজাতিগুলি মধ্যে যেসব তুলনামূলকভাবে সাধারণ যেমন ছোট মাছরাঙা (Common Kingfisher), কণ্ঠী মাছরাঙা (Collared Kingfisher), কালো-মাথা মাছরাঙা (Black-caped Kingfisher) ও বাদামী-ডানা মাছরাঙা (Brown-winged Kingfisher) প্রতি দৃষ্টি নিবন্ধ করা হয়েছে। গবেষকেরা ভিতরকণিকায় এই চারটি মাছরাঙা প্রজাতির এলাকা ও খাবারের দখলের ধরন-ধরন পরীক্ষা করেন। সমীক্ষায় দেখা গেছে কণ্ঠী মাছরাঙা গ্রীষ্মকালে ও কালো-মাথা মাছরাঙা শীতকালে বেশি দেখা যায়। এলাকায় জলের গভীরতা বাড়ার সাথে সাথে ছোট মাছরাঙা ও কালো-মাথা মাছরাঙার কম দেখা গেছে। যদিও কণ্ঠী মাছরাঙা ও বাদামী-ডানা মাছরাঙার বেলায় তা হয়নি। চারটি মাছরাঙা প্রজাতির মধ্যে শিকার ধরার জন্য গাছপালার উচ্চতা ও খাদ্য সংগ্রহের দূরত্ব উল্লেখযোগ্যভাবে আলাদা ছিল। তাছাড়া এদের ভিতর সমস্ত শিকারের বৈশিষ্ট্য যেমন শিকারের ধরন, আকার ও খাদ্য সংগ্রহের স্তর ছিল পৃথক। ছোট, কণ্ঠী ও কালো-মাথা মাছরাঙা ছোট ও মাঝারি শিকার এবং বাদামী-ডানা মাছরাঙার তুলনায় বড় শিকার ধরে। চারটি প্রজাতির মধ্যে বিভিন্ন খাদ্য সংগ্রহের স্তরের ব্যবহারের মধ্যেও আলাদা আচরণ দেখা যায়। সবচেয়ে ছোট সাধারণ মাছরাঙা ও বড় প্রজাতি বাদামী-ডানা মাছরাঙা সম্পূর্ণরূপে জল থেকে খাদ্য সংগ্রহ করে। কণ্ঠী মাছরাঙা বরং জলের কাছাকাছি কাদা থেকে খাদ্য খুঁজে নেয়। তবে কালো-মাথা মাছরাঙা জলের বা কাদায় মাছ ছাড়াও বাতাসে শূণ্যে উড়ে অথবা গাছের গর্ত থেকেও পোকা মাকড় ধরে খায়। প্রতিটি প্রজাতির খাদ্য সংগ্রহের জায়গা তাদের শরীরের আকারের সাথে সঙ্গতিপূর্ণ। ছোট ও কণ্ঠী মাছরাঙা গাছের নীচু ডালে, বাদামী-ডানা ও কালো-মাথা মাছরাঙা অপেক্ষাকৃত গাছের উঁচু ডালে বসে শিকারের অপেক্ষায় থাকে। এই গবেষণা থেকে জানা যায় শিকার ও মাছরাঙাদের আকার প্রয়োজনের সাথে সম্পর্কিত। তাই খাবার সংগ্রহের জায়গার বিভাজন মাছরাঙার প্রজাতিদের সহবস্থান করতে দেয়।

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About Author

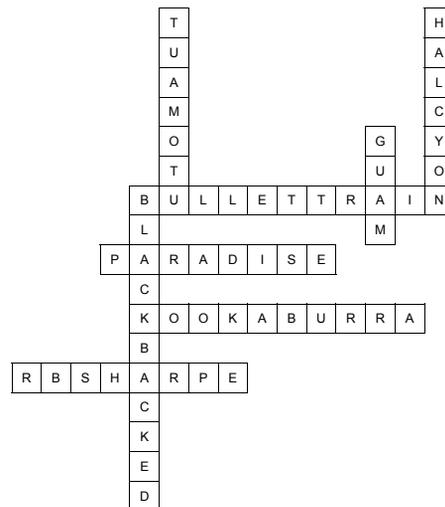
BISWA RANJAN GOSWAMI



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

CROSSWORD ANSWERS

Kingfishers



Across

- 4 The diving style of the kingfisher is known to have inspired the _____
- 5 The kingfisher has an uncharacteristically long tail for the species
- 6 Though this bird belongs to the kingfisher species, it is not closely associated with _____
- 7 This ornithologist worked extensively on Kingfishers and his book is called 'A Monograph of the Alcedinidae: or, family of kingfishers'

Down

- 1 This is the rarest kingfisher found only in the Niau archipelago of French Polynesia
- 2 The genus name of many Kingfishers is derived from this Greek word meaning a period of happy days in the past
- 3 This kingfisher, after being captive-bred, has been successfully reintroduced and is breeding in the wild in Cooper Island as of 2025.
- 4 This dwarf kingfisher is known as the Jewel of the Western Ghats

সব দোষ মাছরাঙার

AN ORIGINAL STORY BY THE BIRD CLUB OF
CHILDREN'S WELFARE ASSOCIATION HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS,
SARSUNA (BEHALA, KOLKATA)
BWS SCHOOL OF BIRDS





CONTRIBUTED BY:

The members of the Bird Club (CWA) who brought this story to life are:

ANWESHA PAUL, SAMPRITI SINGHA, SOUDIPA NATH, RAJOSI MAJUMDER, KRITIKA JOYDHAR, PALLABI DHARA, SASTHI KHAMARU, SHREEJA CHAKRABORTY, KHUSBU KHATUN, PRIYA DAS, SAHIBA KHATUN, MAITREYEE BANIK, SANGITA DEY, NASRIN KHATUN, KANKANA DAS, SANGIDA YASMIN AND DIYA DAS.

The team was ably guided by School of Birds mentors Sougata Hari, Santanu Kar and Titash Chakrabarti. We are thankful to Ms. Sarbari Sengupta, Headmistress at Children's Welfare Association High School for Girls (HS), Sarsuna (Behala, Kolkata) for her continued support at her reputed Institution.

BOOK REVIEW: “BIRDS OF INDIA – THE NEW SYNOPSIS” BY PRAVEEN J



SANTANU MANNA

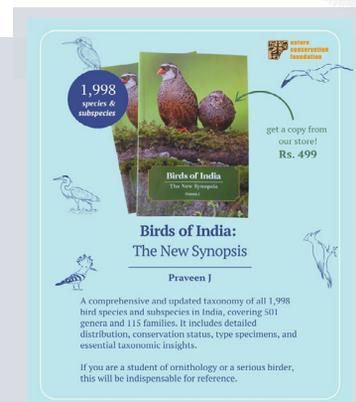
After a wait of over four decades since Ripley’s 1982 edition of ‘Synopsis of the Birds of India and Pakistan’, the Indian ornithological community finally has a monumental update – and it’s well worth the wait. *Birds of India – The New Synopsis*, authored by the widely respected scientist Praveen J, is nothing short of a landmark publication. Released in 2025, this book represents a huge leap forward in the scientific documentation of Indian avifauna.

What makes this book special?

- **Comprehensive coverage:** The book meticulously lists all **1,998 species and subspecies** of birds known from India, backed by the latest taxonomic consensus.
- **Scientific names** have been updated to reflect current global standards.
- **Original descriptions** and **taxonomic histories**, including all junior synonyms, are included for every name – a goldmine for taxonomists.
- **Distribution data** is based primarily on verified specimens and photographic evidence, ensuring reliability. Information on seasonal status (resident, breeding, wintering, etc.) is clearly laid out.
- **Museum specimen records**, especially **type specimens**, are detailed with precision – a rare and valuable resource.
- **Conservation status** is noted for each species as per IUCN Red List, the State of India’s Birds assessment, and India’s Wildlife Protection Act.

This isn’t just another bird book – it’s a definitive reference work, the product of years of painstaking research and dedication. The level of academic rigour, attention to historical detail, and scientific clarity makes this a must-read for every serious birder, researcher, and institution.

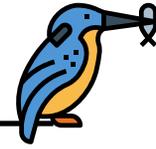
A huge congratulations to my mentor, Praveen J for this phenomenal achievement. This book truly raises the bar for ornithological studies in India.



About Author SANTANU MANNA

Santanu Manna a founder member of BWS, is a passionate birder, conservationist, and nature enthusiast deeply committed to spreading awareness about birdwatching and biodiversity. A teacher by profession, he is known for his engaging storytelling, extensive field knowledge. Santanu has been an active advocate for use of eBird, and is the leader of the West Bengal Bird Checklist group.

FARAKKA IMPORTANT BIRD AREA – BIRD SURVEY 2025



SUBHASISH SENGUPTA

Circa 2024. In one of our regular meet-ups with Mr Jiju Jasper J, IFS – DFO of Malda in November, he pointed out that the area of Farakka IBA as shown in eBird map represented only a fraction of the entire IBA, necessitating a study of the avifauna of the whole IBA as extremely necessary. We agreed instantly.

eBird being a citizen science initiative, we as common citizen, could only venture into the ‘chars’ (river islands or alluvial islands formed by the deposition of sediment carried by the river’s current) to the extent we were freely permitted or could afford. As a result, the data reported is limited by our ability to reach these remote islands. Our efforts in the past, were thus limited to the chars around Panchandapur which happens to be a small fraction in terms of size of Farakka IBA.

Consequent to this conversation, along with the Forest Dept., the idea of a thorough survey of bird species was brainstormed. The DFO sought an elaborate project plan.

On November 09, 2024 Sandip Das of the Birdwatchers’ Society visited Malda. We, from Green Peoples India, Malda & Birdwatchers’ Society approached the DFO for a recce to gather data for a detailed survey. Thus, a preliminary survey by boat (of about 35 Km stretch, from Panchandapur to Paschim Narayanpur, upstream through Ganges and back to Manikchak Ghat via Rajmahal) was conducted to make a resource and time estimate. Idea was to figure out the navigable routes, number of boats and other resources needed for an effective survey of the bird species. Initial proposal was to take 4 – 5 boats, set out on different routes and complete the survey in one day.

The DFO had a better vision of the task at hand. He highlighted the need to spread the survey over four trips with four boats each instead of one day and four boats. Thereby enabling collection of enough data over the winter season in all stretches. The objective was: – a) to observe the population fluctuation of different species; b) to identify those areas that require protection; and c) reducing the chances of missing out any bird species. While the idea was genuinely great, but it meant more resources to be mustered.

About Green Peoples India (GPI) –

Established in 1995, GPI focuses on wildlife study and conservation in central West Bengal. It has collaborated with SACON, BNHS, and the Birdwatchers’ Society on initiatives such as the inland Wetlands of India and Important Bird Area projects. GPI regularly conducts bird monitoring surveys and engages in conservation efforts, including wildlife rescue from poaching and trafficking. It has also supported the Malda Forest Department through capacity-building initiatives and, in recent years, jointly organized bird counts like the Ganges Bird Survey 2024–2025.

The Plan

The call to action was sounded and volunteers were sought. Based on resource availability, the dates were frozen for Sundays starting December 02, 2024 spread over four months. A 12 member team was drafted with detailed route map along the Ganges (upstream & downstream) marking points of interest i.e. chars and timings thereof. Even the process of how checklists would be recorded was discussed and briefed to the team members i.e. one checklist continuous would be created during the sailing time (travelling time); every time the boat made a stop, a new checklist at the point of stoppage would be created (stationary time). The travelling checklist would be limited to an hour, thereafter a fresh checklist was to be started. Four routes were mapped out covering up & down river and the numerous loops along the chars.

Route1 –	Manikchak Ghat to Nakkati Ghat along Fulahar River ~	32 Km
Route2 –	Manikchak Ghat to Katihadiara ~	34 Km
Route3 –	Panchanandapur Ghat to Manikchak ~	28 Km
Route4 –	Panchandapur to Farakka ~	23Km

(Distances mentioned here are not a straightline distance, it reflects the actual travel by boat)

The Team & Logistics

The team drafted included members from- WB Forest Dept, Green Peoples India, BWS, along with Forest Ranger and ably led by the DFO. The Forest Department led from the front and arranged all the logistics including travel (Ex Malda Town), food, drinking water, etc. as per plan.

Every day the team would set out at 05:30 hrs. and after completing the days run, typically around 18:00 hrs., all teams along with their members assembled at the DFOs office for a debriefing session and review the days checklists.



Leading a survey team Mr Jiju Jasper J, DFO - Malda (4th from right) also seen are Tanmay Bakshi - GPI (2nd from right), Supratim Deb - BWS (6th from right) along with other forest officials

Conclusion: Farakka IBA Bird Survey 2025: A Vital Call for Conservation

The survey came across 169 odd species. The exact tally and a detailed reports are being prepared by the WB Forest Department. This included the unique sighting of the Australasian Grass-Owl (*Tyto longimembris*), a record for the state of West Bengal.



Australasian Grass-Owl
a critical sighting for West Bengal, highlighting the importance of Farakka IBA



Recce Party November 2024

Following the 4 surveys another short survey was undertaken on March 11, 2025 to assess the conservation state of the 'char' of interest on which the Grass-owl was found. This visit was mainly staffed with WB Forest officials and District Administrative Officers.

The Farakka IBA stands as a crucial habitat for a diverse range of bird species as it comes within the Central Asian

Flyway as a stopover site, playing a pivotal role in the winter bird migration. The Farakka IBA Bird Survey 2025, conducted by the WB Forest dept., Birdwatchers' Society and Green People India, has once again underscored the significance of this landscape as a thriving refuge for resident and migratory birds.

The survey's findings reaffirm that Farakka IBA requires focused conservation attention, as the region continues to support key species that depend on its vast grassland, riverine islets, riverbanks, and associated ecosystems. The rich avian diversity observed during this survey strengthens the case for long-term monitoring, habitat protection, and community-driven conservation initiatives.

This assessment is not just a scientific exercise but a clear call to action for policymakers, conservationists, and local stakeholders. The results leave no doubt—Farakka IBA must remain a priority for conservation efforts to ensure the survival of its invaluable birdlife.



Saikat, Swarup and Sandip after the Grass-Owl sighting



About Author
SUBHASISH SENGUPTA

Subhasish Sengupta is a veteran ornithologist and an unwavering conservation crusader, widely respected for his grassroots leadership and scientific insight. A founder member of both Green Peoples India (Malda) and the Birdwatchers' Society, Subhasish has dedicated over three decades to the protection of avian habitats, community-led conservation, and citizen science outreach in eastern India. His deep field knowledge, tireless advocacy against illegal bird trade, and commitment to nurturing a new generation of bird lovers have made him a key figure in Bengal's conservation movement

SCHOOL OF BIRDS

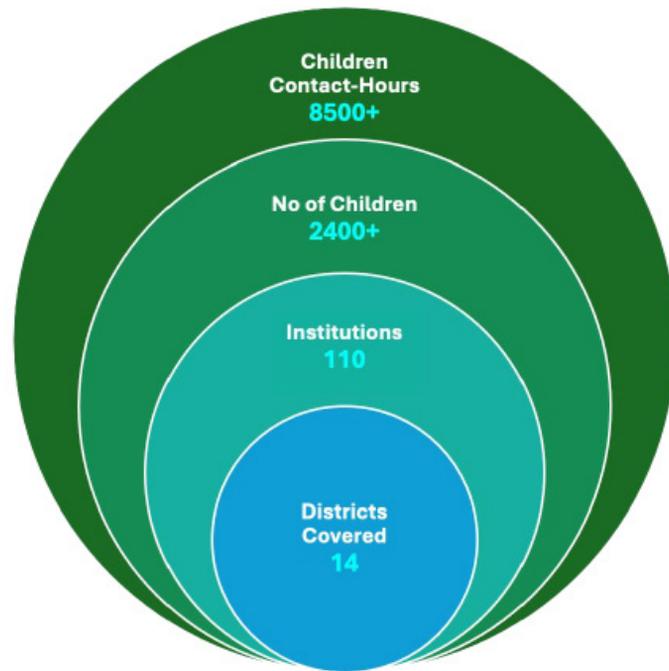
A YEAR IN FLIGHT: 2024-2025



ANANDARUP BHADRA, TITASH CHAKRABARTI & SANTANU KAR

Summary

School of Birds is a flagship initiative of Birdwatchers' Society for spreading nature awareness at the school level. We introduce children to the magical world of nature through the bird's eye. This idea conceived over many years of field experience has finally fully fledged in the year 2024-25 and is ready to soar ahead. Here is the summary of the previous year at a glance.



Flight Plan

Our programs are designed for children at school-level with the primary focus being **Empathy towards wildlife, Conservation as a way of life, Cultivation of science, Contribution to citizen science and Climate crisis sensitization.**

Our teaching method now stands on three pillars:

Nature Observation - Seasonal Bird & Nature walks with a focus on nature stories unfolding around us through the life and interactions of species all along the branches of the tree of life. We use intuitive and creative activities to serve our purpose.

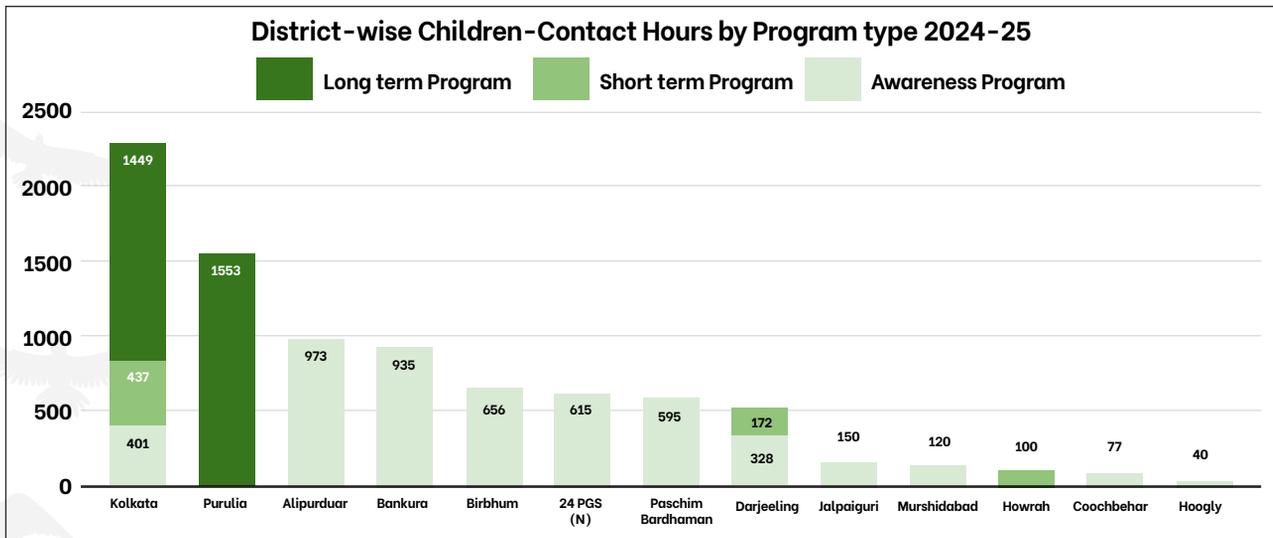
Creative Expression - The creative process involves an immersive understanding of the subject. By engaging the children in a journey of illustrations, storytelling using DIY puppets, song writing, exhibitions etc. we inculcate empathy towards Birds and Nature.

Scientific Approach - Our curriculum encourages critically engaging with problems and finding rational solutions to foster the development of environmental stewards in the future.

Programs

We have executed 3 different types of programs across 14 districts of West Bengal with the support of various partner organizations and Institutions.

Long term programs: Our long-term programs are designed to provide children with a consistent and thoughtfully curated educational experience, encouraging them to explore their natural curiosity about the living world. Those who demonstrate exceptional understanding of natural history – through assignments, assessments, and active engagement – are selected for the formation of Bird Clubs, where their intuitive instincts are further nurtured and guided.



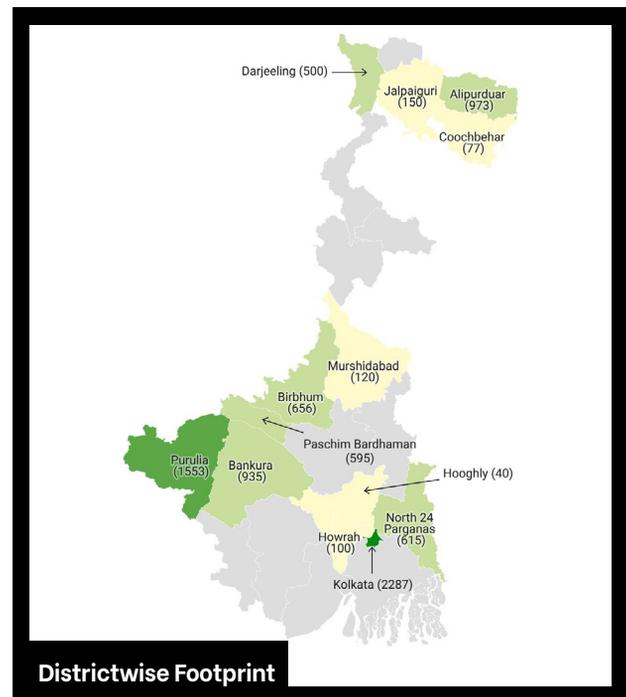
Short-term programs: In multiple institutions & organizations, our curriculum has been introduced in a modular approach over days. The success of these short-term programs have led to prolonged partnerships with accommodating organizations.

Awareness programs: One-day capacity building sessions setting up the pathway for full-fledged programs in future.



“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has”

- MARGARET MEAD



Classroom Without Walls

The essence of the work we do, in all its dimensions, has been captured eloquently through the brush strokes of our team member Santanu Kar



FIELD ACTIVITY:
Birdwatching with scope



FIELD ACTIVITY:
Smell the Leaf, Guess the Fruit



FIELD ACTIVITY:
Active Listening



CREATIVE EXPRESSION:
Bird Illustrations



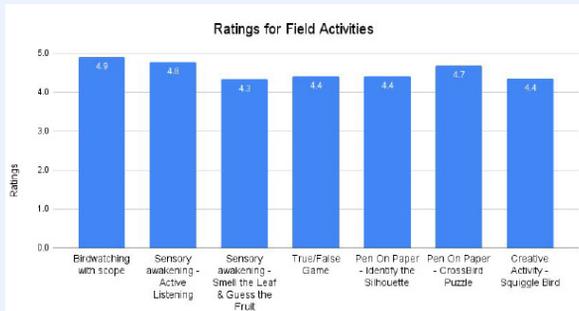
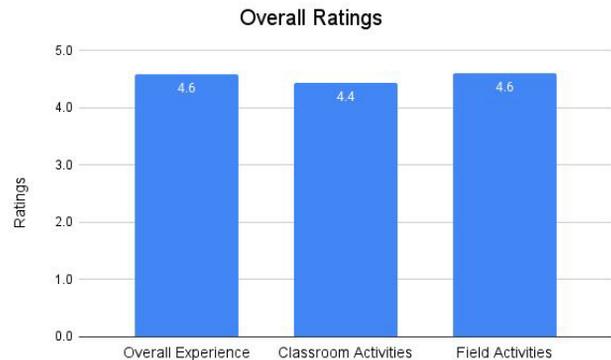
CREATIVE EXPRESSION
Bird songwriting & recording



EXHIBITION

Numerical Insights

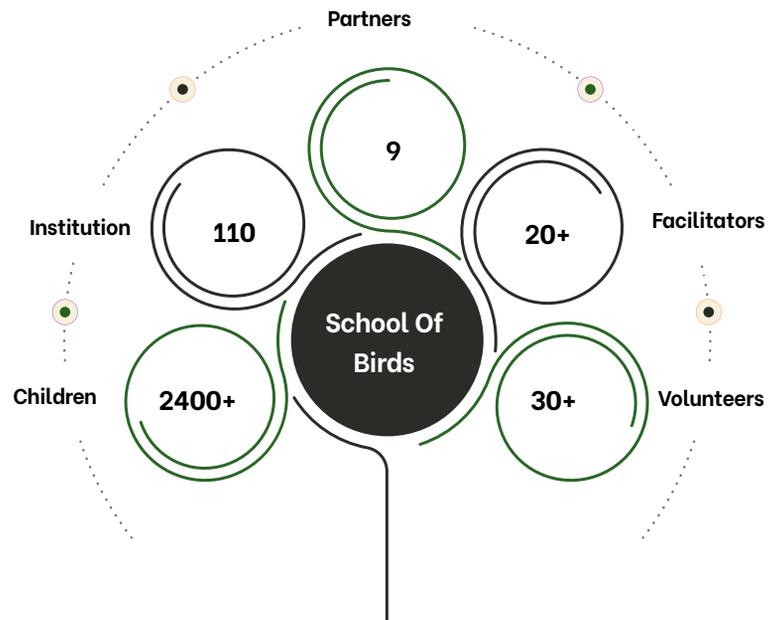
Over the course of the year, we asked 123 children to fill a survey on the program. The response was overwhelmingly positive. On a scale of 1 to 5, the children rated their overall experience as well as the various activities they participated in. To our pleasant surprise, the classroom activities such as DIY projects, Flash Card Games, Mind Mapping etc. were almost as well received as the outdoor activities.



Through the year, we have executed several engaging field activities - most of which were developed by us, while some were adapted from our partner organizations. Since we focus our programs on nature exposure, bird watching with scope was expected to be a favourite among children, yet, all other activities were also received equally well.

The Flock

Over the year, we worked with institutions like Government schools, Government-aided schools, NGOs and private schools. The locations have varied from urban to suburban and rural. As a result we have encountered a diverse group of children from a variety of backgrounds. Our work with them would not have been possible without our dedicated team of facilitators and volunteers. We are especially thankful to our partner organizations for all the support we have received throughout the year. Without their valuable effort, we would not have been able to leave our mark on so many districts of West Bengal over a relatively short duration. We hope our collaborations will continue into the future and that we look forward to building new ones.



Voices of Wisdom



My son loved today's session and me too. He is still engrossed in bird puppets and planning to create a few more, soon. It was a great learning opportunity for him.

” A Parent



The walk showcased and fostered a deep connection with the environment, love for nature and its conservation, paving a pathway for our future generation to value Mother Nature.

” A Teacher



The facilitation team demonstrated great dedication and adaptability, making the sessions interactive, inclusive, and impactful. Their efforts in creating a positive learning environment and addressing the diverse needs of the participants were highly appreciated.

” A Partner

BIRD TALKS ON eBIRD AND GBBC AT MALDA FOR FOREST DEPARTMENT OFFICIALS



SANDIP DAS & SUBHASISH SENGUPTA

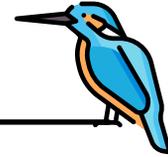
As part of the February 2025 awareness and outreach activities surrounding the Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC), a focused Bird Talk session was held at Malda for officials of the West Bengal Forest Department. The session was conducted by Sandip Das and Subhashis Sengupta, who shared insights into the role of citizen science in bird monitoring and conservation.

They introduced the audience to eBird, a global platform for bird observations, emphasizing its value in generating long-term data for research and policy-making. The discussion highlighted how forest staff could effectively contribute to and benefit from platforms like eBird, not only during the GBBC but as part of regular field duties. The interactive session was well received and marked an encouraging step toward greater involvement of frontline staff in collaborative bird documentation efforts.

Also assisting the speakers were BWS members Soumya Aon, Prasenjit Bhattacharjee, Santu Chowdhury & Kaustav Khan



3RD POILA BOISAKH BIRD COUNT REPORT



KAUSTAV BANERJEE

The *Poila Boisakh Bird Count* (PBBC), an annual flagship event held within West Bengal, was organised by the Birdwatchers' Society (BWS) in collaboration with Bird Count India (BCI) from 12th to 15th April 2025. The name derives from the Bengali words 'Poila' (first) and 'Boisakh' (the first month of the Bengali calendar), marking the Bengali New Year and the onset of summer in the region.

PBBC beautifully weaves together cultural celebration and citizen science. It offers bird enthusiasts across the state an opportunity to ring in the New Year not just with festivity, but with purpose—by documenting both migratory and resident birds across diverse habitats during a biologically significant time of the year.

April is a dynamic month in the birding calendar of West Bengal, with migratory species departing and resident birds entering breeding cycles. PBBC thus plays a crucial role in building long-term data on seasonal bird patterns, helping deepen our understanding of avian diversity while engaging people from all walks of life in the joy of birdwatching.

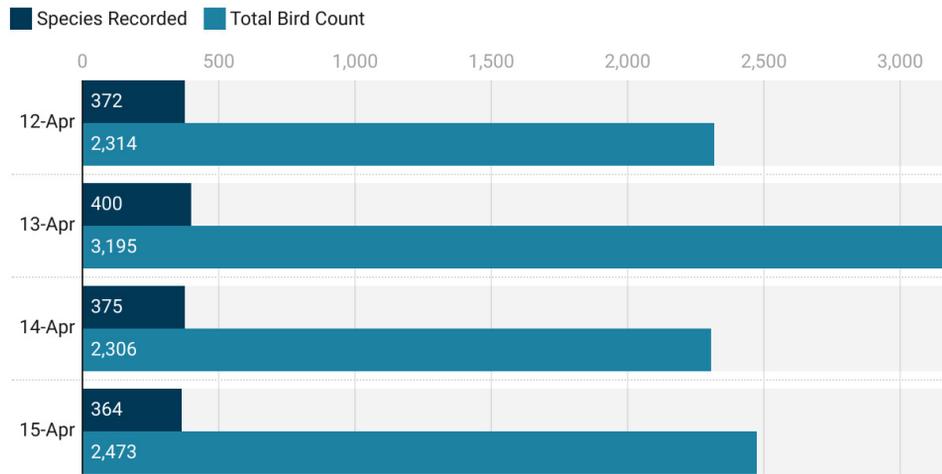
Overall Summary of PBBC 2025:



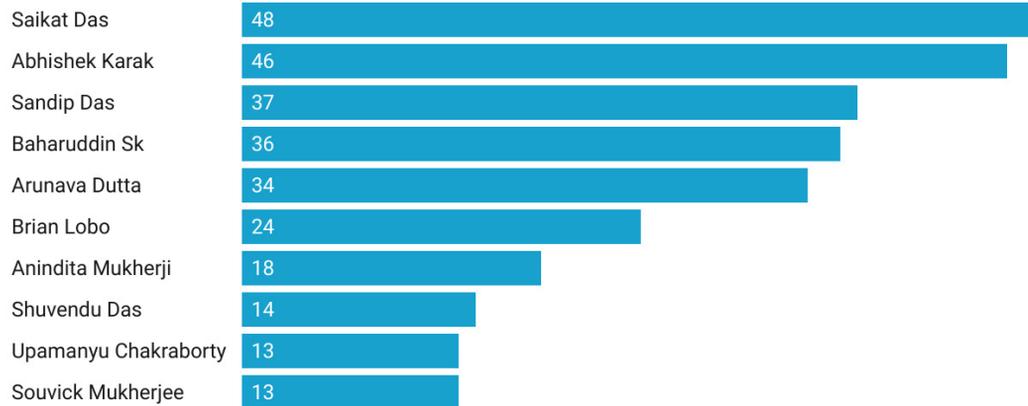
You can read more here: <https://birdwatcherssociety.org/pbbc/>

Based on available eBird data, here are some infographics which indicate the overall scenario of PBBC 2025.

Daywise Species and Total Birds recorded



Top 10 Uploaders



About Author

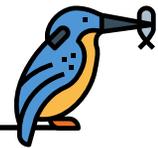
KAUSTAV BANERJEE

Kaustav, an IT professional based in Kolkata, is a nature enthusiast and budding birdwatcher. Passionate about the outdoors, he also actively engages in social work and community causes in his free time.

BWS ACTIVITIES



DAWN CHORUS DAY 2025 REPORT



KAUSTAV BANNERJEE

2025 marked the third edition of Dawn Chorus, organised by BWS, and was held on 23rd March. This time, participation came from a wider range of locations across India, with noticeably higher enthusiasm. Participants also recorded bird calls with greater confidence and ease.”. The message of awareness towards surrounding environment and bird activities, that BWS intended to spread among people, has taken a step forward this year. Many new participants expressed their amazement after finding so many birds through calls just in their surroundings. Not only enthusiast birders, their “unknown-to-the-birds world” neighbours also joined and were amazed to know the presence of so many birds around them!

For those unaware about Dawn Chorus Day (DC) here is a brief introduction:

It is a celebration of collective sounds of birds in the morning. The dawn chorus of birds though not restricted to any specific season or place, it is most notable during the breeding season. that is spring and early summer, in Indian subcontinent. During breeding season, birds sing to establish their breeding territories, attract mates and communicate with other birds.

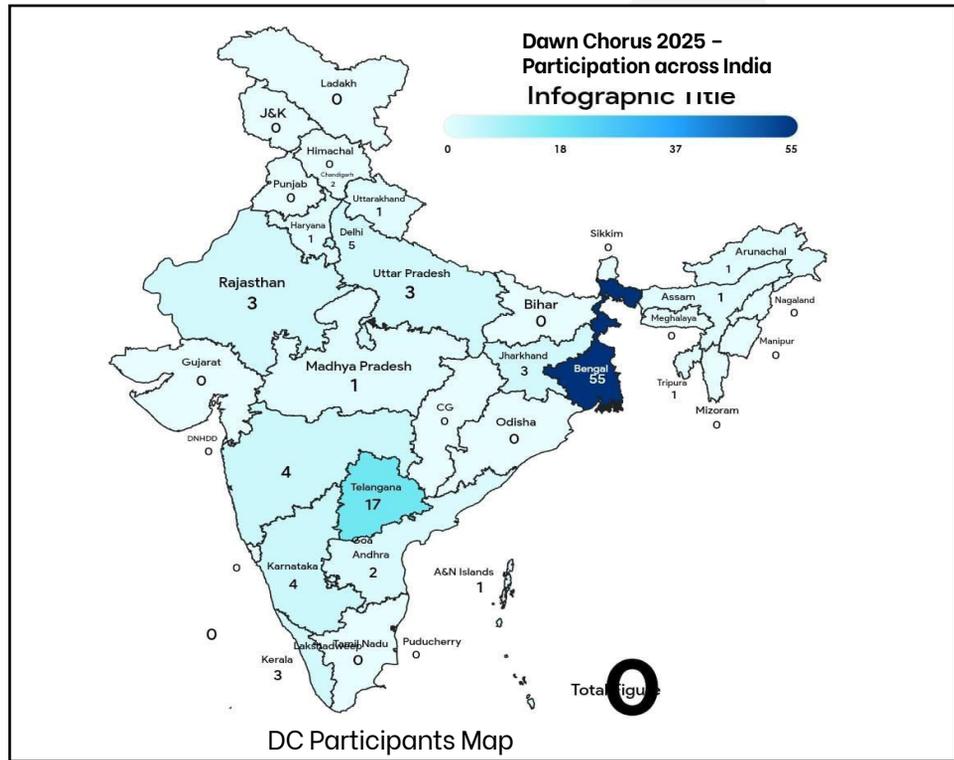
To know more about Dawn Chorus Day, you can read here;

<https://birdwatcherssociety.org/dawn-chorus-dc/>

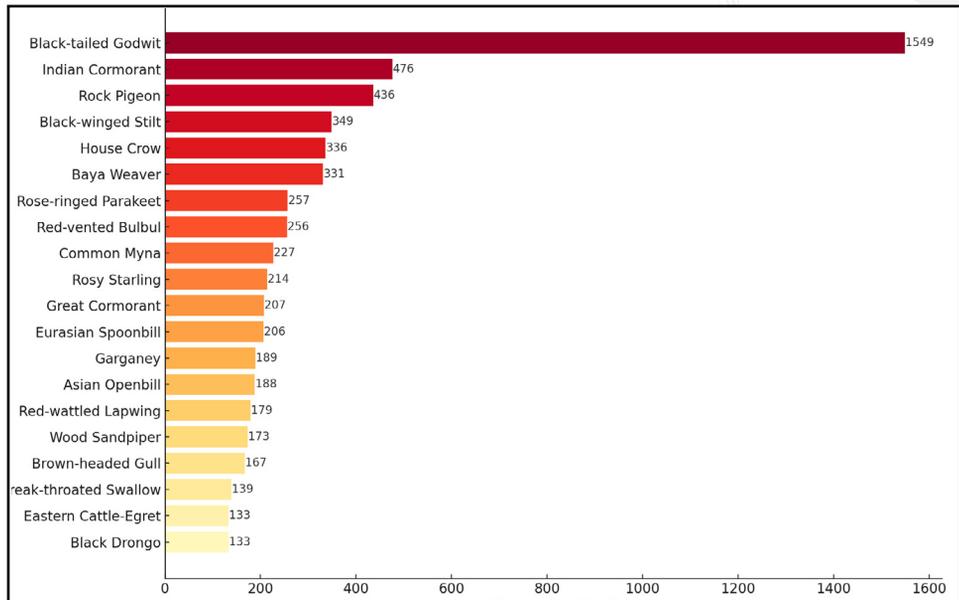
Bird Count India’s coverage of Dawn Chorus event is listed here

<https://birdcount.in/event/dawn-chorus-day-2025/>

Apart from the fun of experiencing the chorus of birds, participants report their observation on eBird, a citizen science platform. The following infographic represents DC data in eBird this year.



TOP 20 MOST REPORTED BIRD SPECIES



About Author

KAUSTAV BANERJEE

Kaustav, an IT professional based in Kolkata, is a nature enthusiast and budding birdwatcher. Passionate about the outdoors, he also actively engages in social work and community causes in his free time.

FRESH & RARE ARRIVALS



PRIYAM CHATTOPADHYAY

From March to June 2025, the avian world was abuzz with activity and so were our birders. This vibrant season brought the excitement of return migration and the first signs of breeding behavior, keeping eyes glued to binoculars and notebooks filled with observations. It was a thrilling time for both birds and birders, as the list below reveal.

2025-2026 Arrivals : Mar-Apr-May-Jun (March 09- June 06)

Sr No	BIRD SPECIES	LOCN - 1	LOCN - 2	SIGHTING DATES
01	Australasian Grass-Owl	Farakka Barrage, Malda		09 March 2025
02	Banded Bay Cuckoo	Kankrajhore, Jhargram	Mahananda WLS, Darjeeling	09 March 2025; 27 May 2025
03	Bristled Grassbird	Jhaubona, Malda	Baruipur, South 24 Parganas	09 March 2025; 01 June 2025
04	Brown Wood-Owl	Kankrajhore, Jhargram	Mahananda WLS, Darjeeling	09 March 2025; 28 May 2025
05	Grey-bellied Cuckoo	Senchal Wildlife Sanctuary, Darjeeling	Doorkhola, Kalimpong	09 March 2025; 06 June 2025
06	Grey-bellied Cuckoo	Handole, Paschim Medinipur	Garh Jungle, Paschim Burdwan	09 March 2025; 25 May 2025
07	Red-headed Trogon	Mahananda WLS, Darjeeling	Mahananda WLS, Darjeeling	09 March 2025; 24 May 2025
08	Spotted Elachura	Kolakham, Kalimpong	Raset Forest, Kalimpong	09 March 2025; 05 June 2025
09	Brown-winged Kingfisher	Sundarban Tiger Reserve, South 24 Parganas		10 March 2025
10	Himalayan Prinia	Gidda Pahar, Darjeeling	Gidda Pahar, Darjeeling	10 March 2025; 25 May 2025
11	Mangrove Pitta	Sundarban Tiger Reserve, South 24 Parganas	Sundarban Tiger Reserve, South 24 Parganas	10 March 2025; 18 May 2025
12	Satyr Tragopan	Neora Valley NP, Kalimpong	Singalila NP, Darjeeling	10 March 2025; 25 May 2025
13	Upland Pipit	Gidda Pahar, Darjeeling	Gidda Pahar, Darjeeling	10 March 2025; 11 May 2025
14	Baikal Bush Warbler	Sodepur, North 24 Parganas	Sodepur, North 24 Parganas	11 March 2025; 16 April 2025
15	Blue-naped Pitta	Latpanchar, Darjeeling	Buxa TR, Alipurduar	12 March 2025; 14 April 2025
16	Rufescent Prinia	Mahananda WLS, Darjeeling	Mahaldiram, Darjeeling	13 March 2025; 24 May 2025
17	Dunlin	Bolpur, Birbhum	Kargil Beach, South 24 Parganas	14 March 2025; 13 April 2025
18	Himalayan Shortwing	Mahananda WLS, Darjeeling	Singalila NP, Darjeeling	14 March 2025; 26 May 2025

Sr No	BIRD SPECIES	LOCN - 1	LOCN - 2	SIGHTING DATES
19	Large Hawk - Cuckoo	Dawaiyani, Darjeeling	Mangchu Forest, Kalimpong	14 March 2025; 06 June 2025
20	Jerdon's Nightjar	Gohalberya, Jhargram	Ghughimara, Bankura	16 March 2025; 15 April 2025
21	Slender-billed Gull	Kargil Beach, South 24 Parganas	Kargil Beach, South 24 Parganas	16 March 2025; 13 April 2025
22	White-gorgetted Flycatcher	Dawaiyani, Darjeeling	Sillerygaon, Kalimpong	16 March 2025; 02 June 2025
23	Yellow-breasted Bunting	Mahananda WLS, Darjeeling		17 April 2025
24	Rufous-necked Hornbill	Pashiting Khasmahal, Kalimpong	Mahananda WLS, Darjeeling	17 March 2025; 05 June 2025
25	Indian Cuckoo	Khisma Forest, Nadia	Garhbeta, Paschim Medinipur	23 March 2025; 05 June 2025
26	Ward's Trogon	Neora Valley NP, Kalimpong	Rachela Forest, Kalimpong	25 March 2025; 16 April 2025
27	Blood Pheasant	Singalila NP, Darjeeling	Singalila NP, Darjeeling	26 March 2025; 24 April 2025
28	Chestnut-winged Cuckoo	Nepalganj, South 24 Parganas	Mahananda WLS, Darjeeling	29 March 2025; 06 June 2025
29	Lesser Cuckoo	Sukhiapokhari, Darjeeling	Neora Valley NP, Kalimpong	30 March 2025; 05 June 2025
30	Red Knot	Kargil Beach, South 24 Parganas	Kargil Beach, South 24 Parganas	01 April 2025; 03 May 2025
31	Indian Pitta	Chaupahari, Birbhum	Raiganj, Uttar Dinajpur	05 April 2025; 22 April 2025
32	Square-tailed Drongo-Cuckoo	Mahananda WLS, Darjeeling	Mahananda WLS, Darjeeling	09 April 2025; 05 June 2025
33	Green Cochoa	Jhandi, Kalimpong	Mahananda WLS, Darjeeling	12 April 2025; 03 June 2025
34	Amur Falcon	Purusottampur, Hooghly	Baruipur, South 24 Parganas	13 April 2025; 28 May 2025
35	Fork-tailed Drongo Cuckoo	Ghugimura, Bankura	Matha, Puruliya	28 April 2025; 11 May 2025
36	Black-backed Dwarf Kingfisher	Mahananda WLS, Darjeeling	Mahananda WLS, Darjeeling	01 May 2025; 02 June 2025
37	Western Hooded Pitta	Mahananda WLS, Darjeeling	Bibhutibhusan WLS, North 24 Parganas	08 May 2025; 17 May 2025
38	Great Parrotbill #	Senchal Wildlife Sanctuary, Darjeeling		23 May 2025

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

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

data deficient for this period of reporting



About Author

PRIYAM CHATTOPADHYAY

Priyam, an eBird reviewer based in Kolkata, is a committed birdwatcher with a keen interest in diverse habitats and bird migration. He has been observing and photographing birds for the past nine years.

Bengal

Birders'

Meet 2025

19-20

JULY 2025

Saturday and Sunday

CONNECT, LEARN AND CONTRIBUTE
TO THE SHARED PASSION
FOR BIRD CONSERVATION AND BIODIVERSITY



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Bengal

Birders'

Meet 2025

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- Grassland Ecosystems
- Hornbill Conservation Stories
- Migratory Flyways & Global Connections
- Power of Citizen Science
- Conservation Through Photography
- Panel Discussion on Marshland Conservation

19-20

JULY 2025

Saturday and Sunday



Biswa Bangla Convention Centre,
Hall No 7, Kolkata

Guests of Honour

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| ✓ Dr. Asad Rahmani
Senior Ornithologist, former director of BNHS | ✓ Dr. Debal Ray
Principal Secretary, PCCF, HoFF, Forest Department, Govt of West Bengal | ✓ Mr. Arijit Banerjee
PCCF, HoFF, Forest Department, Rajasthan |
| ✓ Dr. Dipankar Ghose
Senior Director, Biodiversity Conservation, WWF | ✓ Dr. Yong Ding Li
Asian Migratory Birds Conservation Coordinator, Singapore, Birdlife International | ✓ Dr. Ashwin Viswanathan
Eminent birder, eBird reviewer and Research Associate. |
| ✓ Dr. Aparajita Dutta
Wildlife ecologist and Hornbill specialist, Nature Conservation Foundation | ✓ Mr Jones Justin
Deputy Field Director, Sundarban Tiger Reserve, Govt of West Bengal | ✓ Mr. Rajdeep Mitra
Research Scholar, Wildlife Institute of India |
| ✓ Mr. Tarun Menon
PhD Scholar, Centre for Ecological Sciences, Indian Institute of Science | ✓ Mr. Jiju Jasper
DFO, Malda, Govt of West Bengal | ✓ Mr. Milan Mandal
IFS, Joint Project Director, Wildlife and Biodiversity at JICA |

Birdwatchers' Society

DB 75, Salt Lake, Kolkata-700064, INDIA

Email: birdwatcherssocietywb@gmail.com

Website: www.birdwatcherssociety.org