

# MISTNET

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Brings people for birds ●



INDIAN BIRD CONSERVATION NETWORK

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Bombay Natural History Society

**Mission Statement**

‘Conservation of nature, primarily biological  
diversity through action, based on research,  
education and public awareness.’

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*Harpactes fasciatus* by Clement Francis M.

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# Common platform for lost bird data

## From the Editor...

**MUCH INFORMATION ON BIRD** numbers and distribution is published in the form of technical reports, site guides, scientific papers and articles. However, large quantities of information are 'lost' for example in birdwatcher's personal notebooks, unpublished trip reports or data sheets that have not been computerized. There are probably millions of bird records that fall into this category. India has a very high bird diversity but no common system of monitoring their numbers. If it were possible to pool all these records together, from both local and visiting birdwatchers, they would provide a tremendous database that could be used by amateur birdwatchers and professional conservationists alike.

IBCN provides a common platform to assimilate and disseminate bird information. For example, the IBA book, which was completed in five years using a large network of people to share the bird information. These days everyone, particularly conservation bodies, realise the importance of networking. Conservation work is a daunting task that a single

organization, no matter how influential or large it may be, cannot do everything. To be effective, we have to involve a large number of people and organizations.

IBCN is planning to launch another programme - Project Kagu: Online birding, which will require lot of communication and networking to share bird information through a website. Project Kagu is an initiative to develop a global web-based data entry and management system to capture 'lost' data and add them to the published data. Birdwatchers prepared to share their personal observations through a user-friendly Web page will help to produce a vast database of bird sightings around the country, and participate in the conservation of birds at different levels.

For more information on Project Kagu, see 'Bird with purpose' on page 10.

*Zafar ul Islam*



PIC: IBCN PHOTO LIBRARY



PIC: CLEMENT FRANCIS M.

Nilgiri Flycatcher *Eumyias albicaudata* is one of the 16 endemic birds of the Western Ghats.

# Bird Conservation in Tamil Nadu

— beyond the Red Data Book and IBAs



**Dr. V. Santharam**

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**T**amil Nadu is one of the few states in the country blessed with a diversity of habitats. From the high altitude shola-grasslands to the arid plains, the state has a good range of habitats and consequently a rich and varied birdlife. With an area of over 130,000 sq. kms, it is among the large states of India. Of this, 22,845 sq. km (17.56%) is forest land, of which 2917 sq. km. (12.8%) comes under protected area network (Anon - Policy Note on Forest Department 2001-2). The state has 19 wildlife sanctuaries, 5 national parks, two biosphere reserves (the

Nilgiri and the Gulf of Mannar), and a Project Tiger Reserve (Kutty and Kothari, 2001). The Important Bird Areas identified in the state so far are 25 and eight of them fall in protected areas. (Islam & Rahmani 2004).

The physiography of the state includes a good part of the southern Western Ghats along its western border. The Eastern Ghats is another hill range that runs along the western and northern portions. A few outlying hills such as the Sirumalai (Dindigul) and Palni Hills also occur in the south-western part. The plain areas, most of



them have been cleared for agriculture or have been rendered fallow with very little natural vegetation left, are relatively of lesser ornithological interest when compared to the uplands.

Tamil Nadu is drained by several seasonal rivers originating chiefly in the Western Ghats. Lying in the shadow of the Western Ghats, the state does not receive much rain from the Southwest monsoon and the rains come later in October/November from the depressions and cyclones originating in the Bay of Bengal. This late rain phenomenon has led to the formation of “coastal dry evergreen forests” (the *Albizia amara* community) along the coastal region, said to have been derived from the dry deciduous forests (Champion and Seth, 1968; Meher-Homji, 1973; 1974). This is popularly referred to as scrub forests.

Tamil Nadu is endowed with rich wetland habitats. Nearly 39,000 artificial wetlands (agricultural tanks) exist in the state (Palanisami, 1982) apart from several coastal creeks, lagoons, salt swamps, mangroves and estuaries as

well natural fresh water bodies. The importance of these habitats as bird refuges have been amply documented in the waterfowl counts conducted in the state since 1987 (see AWB Count Reports 1987-). These wetlands serve as staging posts as well wintering grounds for thousands of waders and waterfowl that migrate along the eastern coast to Sri Lanka and back (Perennou and Santharam, 1990).

The oldest documented protected area in the country is located in the state – at Vedanthangal, an important breeding ground for waterbirds including the Spotbilled Pelicans *Pelecanus philippensis*. According the records, the place has been protected from hunters by the local villagers and the administration from sometime between 1796-98 (Bates, 1931).

The total bird species occurring in the state is just below 500 (Santharam & Kannan, in preparation). Of the 79 threatened birds identified in the country (BirdLife International, 2001), 17 species are known to occur in Tamil Nadu (Table 1). However, of these, five

are scarce winter visitors, three are rare and possibly no longer occur in the state (their inclusion in the state list is based on old records) and two are scarce or patchy in their distribution for conservation measures to be effective. Only seven species have the populations that can be effectively conserved though a lot more needs to be done in terms of understanding their current status and distribution.

While the Western Ghats region is better represented in terms of the number of protected areas (eight), there are still a few more that could form part of the protected area network to effectively conserve the remaining forests and wildlife. Some of these areas include the Meghamalai forest area and the Kodaikanal region. The Eastern Ghats in the state are poorly known and are sadly neglected by birdwatchers and conservationists. These areas support interesting bird species in common with the Western Ghats. For instance, Yellow-browed Bulbul *Iole indica*, Blue-winged Parakeet *Psittacula columboides*, Malabar



PIC: M. ZAFAR-UL ISLAM

Painted Storks *Mycteria leucocephala* congregates in large number in many IBAs of Tamil Nadu.

Whistling Thrush *Myophonus horsfieldii* and White-cheeked Barbet *Megalaima viridis* were all recorded at Kolli Hills (Daniels and Saravanan, 1998). These forest areas also are badly degraded and are being ‘developed’ with little thought to the valuable flora and fauna they harbour.

Twelve wetlands are included in the protected area network in the state but only five find their place in the proposed IBA list (Islam & Rahmani 2004). This is rather a low figure given the diversity of the wetland habitats in the state and the rich birdlife supported by them. Of course, it may be argued that some these wetlands are already in the protected list or that they do not support adequate number of globally threatened species.

Conservation planning needs to be done with a greater emphasis on regional needs, keeping in mind not only the greater picture of globally threatened species but also locally vulnerable species and habitat types. Several species may be occurring at low population densities and may be in danger of local extirpation due to various factors and it is crucial that such species are given due protection. A suggestive but not exhaustive list of such birds is provided in Table 2.

The same may be applicable to

habitat types which may be threatened by destruction. One of the more critically endangered of the forest habitats is the coastal evergreen scrub forest of which very few pockets are left. This forest type is now found in less than 1% of the potential area (Meher-Homji, 1986). These may not have any charismatic or endangered species that attract conservationists’ attention but certainly are among the most critical habitats needed for the migratory passerine/terrestrial species that use it on their migration (eg., Indian Blue Robin *Luscinia brunnea*, Forest Wagtail *Dendronanthus indicus*, Indian Pitta *Pitta brachyura*, Cuckoo spp.) as well as for the typical scrub-inhabiting birds such as the Quails, Small Green-billed Malkoha *Phaenicophaeus tristis*, Babbler species etc. Agriculture, raising of commercial plantations (usually monocultures), quarrying, cattle grazing and urbanisation are the major factors responsible for the disappearance of this habitat (Santharam 1990).

The wetlands in Tamil Nadu are also threatened by developmental activities such as roads, urbanisation, etc. The Kaliveli tank in the Cuddalore district is one such wetland threatened by roads and housing. The southern end of the Pulicat lake faces threat from the thermal

power plants, extension of the harbour and aquaculture. Several inland wetlands (artificial included) are facing threats by poor management and neglect by farmers and village communities who had been managing them over the last several decades (or even centuries) and have now access to underground water supplies thanks to free electricity and other subsidies offered by the Government. One of the major threats is the proposed Sethu Samudram Project in the Gulf of Mannar region that will destroy the coral and sea grass beds of the Rameshwaram area and threaten the Marine National Park. Hunting and trapping of birds on a commercial scale adds to the woes of the waterbirds that migrate down the coast each season.

One of the major problems in the state is the lack of public support to the conservation movement and the indifferent attitude of the people, including the educated, to support conservation activities. This is largely due to the fact that the state has poor educational literature in the vernacular language that promotes conservation or the love for wildlife and wilderness. Though stalwarts like M. Krishnan had written in the past in the local language, these writings have remained obscure and only in recent few years there have

Table 1: List of Globally Threatened Birds found in Tamil Nadu

Common Name	Scientific Name	Status IUCN Category	Comments
Spot-billed Pelican	<i>Pelecanus philippensis</i>	VU	Resident
Lesser Adjutant	<i>Leptoptilos javanicus</i>	VU	Scarce Resident
Oriental White-backed Vulture	<i>Gyps bengalensis</i>	CR	Resident; current status to be assessed
Long-billed Vulture	<i>Gyps indicus</i>	CR	Resident? Scarce
Greater Spotted Eagle	<i>Aquila clanga</i>	VU	Uncommon winter visitor
Great Indian Bustard	<i>Ardeotis nigriceps</i>	EN	Based on old records; unlikely to be found now
Lesser Florican	<i>Sypheotides indica</i>	EN	Based on old records; unlikely to be found now
Wood Snipe	<i>Gallinago nemoricola</i>	VU	Rare winter visitor
Spotted Greenshank	<i>Tringa guttifer</i>	EN	Rare winter visitor
Spoonbill Sandpiper	<i>Calidris pygmeus</i>	VU	Rare winter visitor
Indian Skimmer	<i>Rynchops albicollis</i>	VU	Stray records
Nilgiri Wood-pigeon	<i>Columba elphinstonii</i>	VU	Resident; Current status to be assessed
Yellow-throated Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus xantholaemus</i>	VU	Resident
White-bellied Shortwing	<i>Brachypteryx major</i>	VU	Resident
Nilgiri Laughingthrush	<i>Garrulax cachinnans</i>	EN	Resident; restricted to Nilgiris
Broad-tailed Grass-Warbler	<i>Schoenicola platyura</i>	VU	Resident
Kashmir Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula subrubra</i>	VU	Rare winter visitor

CR = Critically endangered; VU = Vulnerable; EN = Endangered.



been some efforts in popularising this among the masses and lay public. The environmental societies and NGOs have been working in isolation, in small pockets and there have been very few attempts to work in a concerted fashion and take up conservation issues in a serious manner. The press, barring the English dailies like *The Hindu* have no space for environmental and conservation matters in their periodicals. The greatest need of the hour is to get all the NGOs and institutions together and work out a strategy to educate the public in conservation-related matters and garner their support.

The state has enough of local resources in terms of organisations devoted to study of wildlife biology and conservation – Salim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History in Coimbatore, AVC College at Mayiladuturai, Madurai-Kamaraj University at Madurai, MS Swaminathan Research Foundation in Chennai, Salim Ali School of Ecology and Environmental Sciences in the adjacent Pondicherry,



PIC: S. BALACHANDRAN

The salt pans and mudflats of Point Calimere attract thousands of waders. Here, repair of salt pans bund is going on

to name a few, besides the NGOs such as Madras Naturalists' Society in Chennai, Nilgiri Wildlife and Environment Association, Ooty, the Palni Hills Conservation Council, Kodaikanal, the WWF – TNSO, Chennai and the CPR Environmental Education Centre, Chennai. A network comprising representatives of these organisations as well as individuals drawn from other walks of life like the press, education department, forest and

tourism departments could effectively plan and execute a strategy to effectively educate the public in conservation movement to make it more effective in the state.

The state is rapidly developing and in the process is losing valuable habitats and species they support at an alarming rate. If the conservation movement fails to take off now, it will be too late for some birds and their habitats Tamil Nadu.

**Table 2 : A suggestive list of locally threatened birds of Tamilnadu that need to be given priority in conservation efforts**

Common Name	Scientific Name
Darter	<i>Anhinga melanogaster</i>
Jerdon's Baza	<i>Aviceda jerdoni</i>
Black Baza	<i>Aviceda leuphotes</i>
Red-headed Vulture	<i>Sarcogyps calvus</i>
Rufous-bellied Eagle	<i>Hieraaetus kienerii</i>
Mountain Hawk-Eagle	<i>Spizaetus nipalensis</i>
Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>
Painted Francolin	<i>Francolinus pictus</i>
Indian Courser	<i>Cursorius coromandelicus</i>
Black-bellied Tern	<i>Sterna acuticauda</i>
Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse	<i>Pterocles exustus</i>
Grass Owl	<i>Tyto capensis</i>
Oriental Bay-Owl	<i>Phodilus badius</i>
Ceylon Frogmouth	<i>Batrachostomus moniliger</i>
Great Eared-Nightjar	<i>Eurostopodus macrotis</i>
Oriental Broad-billed Roller	<i>Eurystomus orientalis</i>
Malabar Pied Hornbill	<i>Anthracoceros coronatus</i>
Great Pied Hornbill	<i>Buceros bicornis</i>
Great Black Woodpecker	<i>Dryocopus javensis</i>
Nilgiri Pipit	<i>Anthus nilghiriensis</i>
Wynaad Laughingthrush	<i>Garrulax delesserti</i>
Grey-breasted Laughingthrush	<i>Garrulax jerdoni</i>
Nilgiri Flycatcher	<i>Eumyias albicaudata</i>

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## IUCN Resolution on Great Indian Bustard *Ardeotis nigriceps*

The resolution adopted by the World Conservation Congress at its 3rd Session in Bangkok, Thailand, 17-25 November 2004, put forward by the Bombay Natural History Society



PICTURE: ASAD R. RAHMANI

- RECOGNIZING that the Great Indian Bustard *Ardeotis nigriceps* is perhaps the most endangered member of the bustard family in the world;
- NOTING that historically, the Great Indian Bustard was widely distributed in arid and semi-arid grasslands of India and Pakistan;
- FURTHER NOTING that presently the total number could be as low as 500 individuals;
- RECALLING that if effective conservation measures are not taken urgently, the Great Indian Bustard will be extinct in another 5-10 years time;
- FURTHER RECALLING that poaching and habitat deterioration are the two main causes for the drastic decline of the Great Indian Bustard;
- ACKNOWLEDGING that Great Indian Bustard is legally protected in India and Pakistan;
- FURTHER ACKNOWLEDGING that the BirdLife International has included the Great Indian Bustard in the "Endangered" category in its Red Data Book, mainly because of drastic and continuing decline in its population;
- NOTING that the Government of India has taken some measures to protect Bustard habitat by establishing sanctuaries but these measures are not adequate;
- FURTHER NOTING that the Great Indian Bustard lives at low density and depends on a wider landscape, with short-grass plains, low-intensity agriculture and traditional livestock grazing, hence it can not be conserved effectively in few small sanctuaries;
- AWARE of the fact that movement patterns and ecology of the Great Indian Bustard are not fully known and unless movement patterns and landscape use are studied, planning effective long-term conservation measures is not possible; and
- ALSO AWARE that, along with the Great Indian Bustard, the Lesser Florican (*Sypheotides indicus*) and the Bengal Florican (*Houbaropsis bengalensis*) are also endangered, and the migratory population of the Houbara Bustard (*Chlamydotis macqueeni*) is threatened by poaching and habitat destruction;

### The World Conservation Congress:

- CALLS on the Governments of India and Pakistan to take all measures necessary to protect the Great Indian Bustard, including establishment of large sanctuaries/community conservation areas at the landscape level and effectively curtailing poaching;
- REQUESTS the Government of India to start *Project Bustard*, following the pattern employed with *Project Tiger* and *Project Elephant*, to protect all species of Indian Bustards and their habitats;
- URGES the Governments of India and Pakistan to give special attention to the protection and sustainable utilization of grasslands by curtailing conversion of grasslands for agricultural use and preventing over-grazing; and
- PROPOSES that movement patterns and ecology of the Great Indian Bustard, and other Indian Bustards, should be studied urgently by using modern methods such as telemetry and radio tracking.

### Sponsors

Bombay Natural History Society, India  
BirdLife International, United Kingdom, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, United Kingdom



## IUCN Resolution on *Gyps* species of Vultures

The resolution adopted by the World Conservation Congress at its 3rd Session in Bangkok, Thailand, 17-25 November 2004, put forward by the Bombay Natural History Society.



PIC: ASAD R. RAHMANI

- RECOGNIZING that vultures are specialized scavengers that play a crucial role in ridding the environment of dead animals that would otherwise rot and cause disease, despair and death to both humans and livestock;
- RECOGNISING that the Long-billed (*Gyps indicus*), Slender-billed (*Gyps tenuirostris*) and White-rumped (*Gyps bengalensis*) vultures, endemic to South East Asia, have declined by more than 97 percent during the last 10 years in South Asia and that populations are also at very low levels in Southeast Asia;
- NOTING that IUCN-The World Conservation Union has listed the three species as Critically Endangered in the IUCN Red List, the highest category of endangerment;
- NOTING that historically, these *Gyps* species of Vultures were common to very common in their range countries (Pakistan, India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos and Malaysia);
- FURTHER NOTING that these massive declines of Vultures are caused by human activities and could be reversed;
- RECALLING that sufficient habitat is present in most of the range countries for the vulture populations to re-colonize and allow them recover;
- FURTHER RECALLING that vultures are an integral part of the cultures in all South Asian countries and play an important ecological role by cleaning up livestock carcasses;
- ACKNOWLEDGING that many range countries have taken measures to protect vultures by including them in protected species list;
- FURTHER ACKNOWLEDGING that the Bombay Natural History Society, with the financial support of the Darwin Initiative for the Survival of Species (Government of the United Kingdom), the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, the Zoological Society of London and the Haryana Forest Department (India) has established a Vulture Rescue Centre;
- NOTING that the BirdLife International has determined that all three species in "Critical Endangered" in the *Bird Red Data Book for Asia*, and that IUCN also lists these species as Critically Endangered in the IUCN Red List 2004, mainly based on the continuing precipitous population declines in all populations;
- FURTHER NOTING that recent studies, published in the journal *Nature* prove that massive decline in the population of vultures in South Asia is mainly due to the exposure to the Non Steroid Anti Inflammatory Drug (NSAID) *Diclofenac* in livestock carcasses (*Nature* 427, 630-633 (12 Feb 2004));
- ACKNOWLEDGING THAT *Diclofenac* is the principal cause for catastrophic decline during the last decade but recognizing that

other secondary factors like the loss of nesting sites, indiscriminate use of pesticides, and other factors may be important on a local scale;

- AWARE of the fact that veterinary use of *Diclofenac* started in India in 1993 and in Pakistan in 1998 and within a very short time, massive deaths of vultures were noted in both countries;
- CONCERNED that widespread use of veterinary *Diclofenac* raises significant fear throughout the world about environmental contamination by lethal drugs that will further reduce the *Gyps* vultures to unsustainable levels inevitably leading to their extinction;
- AWARE of the need to restore vulture population through captive breeding and release at appropriate times, withdrawal of veterinary *Diclofenac*, and its replacement with an appropriate risk-free substitute;
- FURTHER NOTING the *South Asian Vulture Recovery Plan* and its recommendations;
- CONGRATULATING the Haryana Forest Department for providing free land and other support for the establishment of the Vulture Rescue Centre;
- NOTING the work already under way in support of the programme by the governments of Pakistan, India and Nepal; and
- CONGRATULATING the Darwin Initiative, the Peregrine Fund, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, BirdLife International, Zoological Society of London, National Bird of Prey Trust for continuing to support and fund Vulture recovery initiatives in India, Nepal, Pakistan and other countries;

### *The World Conservation Congress:*

- CALLS on *Gyps* vulture range states to begin action immediately to prevent all uses of diclofenac in veterinary applications that allow diclofenac to be present in carcasses of domestic livestock available as food for vultures;
- CALLS for the establishment, with the utmost urgency, of an IUCN South Asian Task Force under the auspices of IUCN, to review, update and facilitate implementation of the recommendations of the South Asian Vulture Recovery Plan;
- REQUESTS *Gyps* Vulture range states to develop and implement national vulture recovery plans, including conservation breeding and release;
- URGES the *Gyps* range states, along with national and international NGOs, especially BirdLife International, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), Bombay Natural History Society, Bird Conservation Nepal, the Ornithological Society of Pakistan, the Peregrine Fund, the Zoological Society of London (ZSL), the National Bird of Prey Trust (NBPT), the Wildlife Conservation Society and others, and governments to give special support, technical and financial, to enable the implementation of the South Asian Vulture Recovery Plan; and
- URGES the Director General and the Species Survival Commission to make:  
a strategic commitment in developing an effective program for restoration of Vulture populations through international cooperation; and a long term commitment including to seek transfer of technical expertise and financial support to the range states from international donor organizations and governments.

**Sponsors:** Bombay Natural History Society, India, Ministry of Environment and Forests, India; BirdLife International, United Kingdom, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, United Kingdom, Zoological Society of London, United Kingdom

Birding with a purpose...

## An online data collection system for bird observations in India



**Rachel Roberts**

Kagu Project Officer  
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds

Do you keep records of the birds you see throughout the year? A new Internet-based system is being developed for capturing observations made by individuals birding throughout the Indian subcontinent. Whether you are a professional or recreational birdwatcher, this new initiative will enable you to store and manage your own observations, extract reports and view, print or download maps and checklists of your choice.

Many people interested in viewing birds are competent in identifying most or all species in their locality. These observations are routinely recorded in notebooks or trip reports that remain unseen or are rarely published. Many of these are complete checklists and some include data on rare or threatened bird species. The objective of this new online database is to capture these records which will yield valuable information on distribution and population trends, and hence make an important contribution to Indian bird conservation. You will be able to read about your contribution through regular analyses and reports that will be fed back to all contributors on a regular basis.

The Indian bird observation system will form part of a global family of databases being developed by the RSPB in conjunction with the BirdLife Secretariat and Audubon. Working with this Partnership, BNHS and the IBCN will help create a database that will allow you to explore different locations around India and find out what birds have been seen and when and where they were recorded. As well as contributing your own observations, you will be able to view other people's records, which may influence your next birding trip.

Exploratory meetings have already been held between the BNHS, RSPB and members of the IBCN including the Delhi Bird Group. One meeting was held at the BNHS headquarters in Mumbai 26 Oct. 2004, the other was held at WWF India in Delhi 3 Nov. 2004. The meetings were an integral part of the future development of the system, to pool ideas, gain feedback and ensure that a database is developed to support the individual preferences and requirements of the birding community of India.

For those of you who currently record your bird observations, we need

you to be a part of this exciting new development by answering two key questions:

1) If you use an electronic bird recording system and if you do, what kind of system it is and how often you use it? Whether you enter your observations in your own personally devised spreadsheets, or you use a professionally created database, the information you pass to us will allow us to understand what type of systems users prefer and how we can adapt our system to help birdwatchers in the future.

2) Can you think of a good name for India's online bird record system? We would like you to come up with a unique name that will give a personality to the system. **Mistnet** is running a competition for the best and most innovative name which creates interest and encourages people to find out what the system does. We will publish the best and run a vote for the preferred one amongst you all!

Please contact Zafar-ul Islam regarding both of the above.

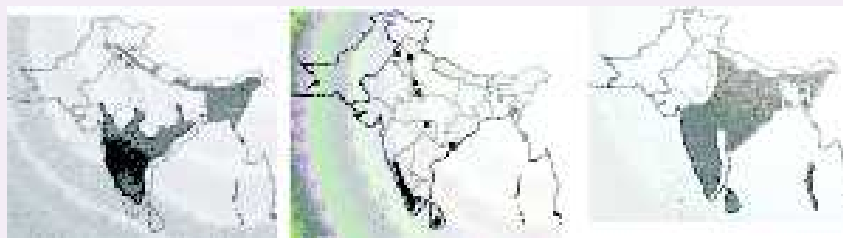


# BirdSpot

## A bird database software for India



Distribution maps of birds for the Indian region make their early appearance at a continental scale in the works of Dementieev and Gladkov (The Birds of the USSR). These maps often sought to indicate sympatry and allopatry for select species complexes. This tradition is continued in Dr Salim Ali and Dillon Ripley's Handbook at a subcontinental scale, often used to indicate biogeographical affinities. Today distribution maps are *de rigueur* for every field guide.



Rhipidura albicollis

Zosterops dauma

Dicrurus paradiseus

But how accurate are the maps that are currently available and how useful are these?

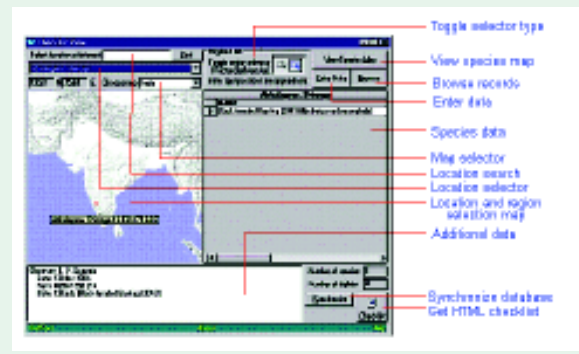
A careful look at any of these and a look at the available literature from India will show that in many cases the distributions are merely guides and often include interpretations that are not supported by real data. While these maps are good enough for the tourist birder or indicators of distribution at a continental level, they fail to be useful for most applications at a national or local scale. In some cases they weaken the case for conservation; with apparently large contiguous distribution areas being in reality, very small and highly fragmented pockets. These maps cannot be used for analyzing habitat associations or indeed to identify population densities. They also fail to show changes in population densities over time or season. These maps also obfuscate our ignorance of bird distributions by giving a false impression of knowledge and precision.

A quick look at a human population density map shows how much more information is available for our own populations. While humans can be counted by censuses, birds are notoriously tougher to quantify thanks in large part to their ability to fly and hide. However, over time, every birdwatcher develops an impression of how common a bird species is in his or her particular location of interest based on the frequency with which the species is detected. Based on longterm observation, they are also able to detect seasonal changes in their commonness. While such impressions are often accurate, they do not form a good basis for scientific analysis and are especially unsuitable

for comparisons cutting across observers or locations. Scientific analysis is however aided when people maintain lists of all species seen on each trip to in a particular location, during a particular time of the year. By collating such lists across time points, from multiple observers and from multiple locations over a span of years one can gain considerable information – including distributions, relative abundance, seasonal changes in relative abundance, long term trends (declines and increases), geographic trends, observer biases and perhaps even provide information on local movements. By maintaining the species observation data in association with their geographic locations, it also becomes possible to apply statistical analysis techniques to look for associations between habitat parameters and species occurrence, making it possible to make decisions of application to conservation.

Computers make it possible to apply statistical analysis techniques as well as to visualize data in intuitive ways. Such computational applications however require that data be collected, stored and compiled in standard formats. The Internet makes it possible for geographically distributed observers to share their information and to make their tiny contributions to a larger corpus of data in a standard manner.

BirdSpot puts together all the tools required to make this beginning at compiling actual observational records of birds and daily trip lists from observers in various locations. It also empowers contributors to apply simple analytical techniques and visualize their data and encourages them to contribute more data to the corpus and to help in filling the gaps in knowledge. Further enhancements would also make it possible to help in building better networks of



observers and to improve the quality of data by automated means to check for outliers and flag data that may be of doubtful quality. BirdSpot also comes with a pre-compiled collection of data extracted from journals, newsletters, museum collection catalogues and notes published on the Internet. The software allows users to enter their own observations and to submit these observations for subsequent compilations. It also allows users to compile checklists for any specific geographic region by marking the region of interest on a map. It can be used to extract checklists for specific locations and to generate distribution

maps for species of interest. BirdSpot currently uses an offline data access model keeping in view the poor Internet access, however it is currently possible to share and synchronize data using email. It can be customized to use maps of specific regions of interest.

BirdSpot is currently available for the Microsoft Windows platform and is distributed on CD ROM and is available on request from [necindia@vsnl.net](mailto:necindia@vsnl.net) at the cost of Rs 250 (shipping and courier costs extra). It is easy to install and comes with documentation and basic support by email.

## Distinguished Service Award to Mr. B. C. Choudhury (IBCN member)



PIC: IBCN PHOTO LIBRARY

Mr. B. C. Choudhury, teaching in the Wildlife Institute of India is an eminent scientist whose conservation efforts to safeguard species and habitats in India is recognized by the Society for Conservation Biology (SCB). This Society is based in the USA and has 6000 members in 90 countries. SCB has given 2005 Distinguished Service Award to Mr. B. C. Choudhury who is also an IBCN member and Executive Committee member of the Bombay Natural History Society board. SCB is a premier professional Society for those seeking to conserve biological diversity. The SCB awards are presented on an annual basis to organizations and individuals who have made outstanding contributions towards conservation. Earlier awardees include such personalities as E.O. Wilson, Al-Gore, George Schaller, Anil Agarwal, Bittu Sehgal, and A.J.T. Johnsingh. Congratulations to him for this prestigious award. IBCN members want to wish him all the very best for his continuous hard work in conservation of wildlife in India.

### ERRATA

In the MISTNET Vol.5 No.3 & 4 July-December 2004 on page 8, the following photograph, was mistakenly used in the article titled Bird Conservation in Nepal. The photograph is of Nandadevi Biosphere in Uttaranchal, India.

Mistake regretted.



PIC: S. SATYAKUMAR



# Working together, for birds and people



PIC: ASAD R. RAHMANI

Local communities care for birds around them

## Dr. Marco Lambertini

Director of Network and Programme  
BirdLife International

**B**irdLife is a truly global alliance of conservation organisations that share the same mission and work together combining actions at local, national and international levels. With around 10 million members and supporters worldwide, our network of over 100 national conservation organisations operates across a diverse range of situations and issues, from local communities helping to protect specific sites to co-ordinated work on global conventions. Partner-to-Partner support is increasingly spreading globally, across the continents and benefiting priority countries and developing NGOs part of the network.

BirdLife is organised in regional groups of Partners who develop common programmes, organise joint fundraising, share experience and support each other.

Many local communities have groups and individuals that care for the environment around them often without the capacity to fulfil their aspirations. By providing support and co-ordination, BirdLife Partner organisations nurture these local champions for conservation, and empower them to develop and join forces to access and influence the decision making processes at local and national levels. Over 5,00 local groups are part of the BirdLife worldwide network. A successful example of empowerment and involvement of local groups and individuals is the Indian Conservation Network co-ordinated by the Bombay Natural History Society (BirdLife in India) who has gathered over 1,300 individuals, 75 NGOs and government institutions across the country. The network has identified 465 internationally Important Bird areas (IBAs) and promoted many conservation projects. The directory of sites has been recently published and thanks to the solid scientific reliability of the work of the network, the IBA data will be included in the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan for India.

Environmental degradation is often linked to poverty in a cause and effect relationship. Many BirdLife Partners

develop conservation programmes that also address poverty issues and try to enhance people's livelihoods. While BirdLife Partners have all a strong bird conservation programme they also link birds to biodiversity, the wider environment and people. Research conducted in several pilot countries shows that IBAs can be confidently use for conservation planning and action for the wider biodiversity. This is especially useful because good information often exists for birds, but often lacking for other taxa.

The BirdLife Asian Partnership is made of 12 of the strongest conservation organisations in the continent, joined by 75,000 members and 3 million supporters. Birds have provided inspiration to Asian peoples for thousands of years, and feature in art, poetry, dance and fashion. Bird habitats are recognised as critical for the sustainability of Asian economies. Forests, for example, help conserve water resources, and prevent floods and soil erosion, and grasslands provide areas for grazing and fodder during drought. The conservation of birds and their habitats is therefore closely linked to the well being of the Asian people and, more globally, to mankind. One in eight (12%) of all bird species in the Asian region is globally threatened; a total of 323 bird species are at risk of extinction over the next 100 years. Forests are by far the most important of all the habitats, supporting around 80% of the total. The single most important forest type is tropical lowland moist forest and its destruction is the most significant threat to the region's birds and other biodiversity. Wetlands are also important, supporting c.20% of Asia's threatened birds. After habitat loss, human exploitation and bird trade are the second most common threat impacting threatened species.

Although a bleak future is often predicted for our planet's biodiversity, due to habitat loss, climate change and an array of other man-made threats, BirdLife believes in a wildlife-rich future where people and nature co-exist in harmony. BirdLife International worldwide community of organisations and individuals is pulling together to build a brighter future for the world's 6 billion people, 10,000 species of birds and all biodiversity, whose lives and futures are inextricably linked.

IBCNPartner's Name	:	<b>Foundation for Nature Exploration and Environmental Conservation (NEC)</b>
Founded	:	16th April 1992
Contact Person	:	Naveein O. C.I, Secretary Old No.32/3, New No 22, Spencer Frazer Town, Bangalore - 560 005 Karnataka
Telephone number	:	+91-80-51241275
Email address	:	necindia@vsnl.net
Website	:	www.necindia.org



### Objectives of the organisation:

Encourage and propagate Conservation of Environment for Sustainable Development

Facilitate and promote environmental information networks;

Promote Exploration of Nature to enhance nature awareness.

### Activities of the organisation:

- Organize seminars, workshops, camps, field-visits to propagate and stimulate conservation of nature among various stakeholders.
- Render professional services to other NGO' in organizing and conducting specific programmes.
- Provide assistance to various projects and in the publication of books and reports.
- Organize special programmes for exploring the nature.
- Conduct Waterfowl Census and Wetland Monitoring
- Carry out study on threatened birds.
- Emphasis on greenery has always been stressed and most of the activities included tree planting/nature walks as a part of the programme.
- Organizes programmes to propagate the necessity of understanding the nature and enhance ecological awareness among adventures and various sections of society.

### Achievements:

- NEC has a pool of professionals who have been involved since 1987, with the study and conservation of wetlands. Surveys and studies related to wetlands and its avifauna have been documented since then.
- NEC and its associates have provided technical assistance to the Forest Department in the formulation of Lake Restoration project proposals under the National Lake Conservation Plan.
- Over the years, it has built regular monitoring data on the lakes around Bangalore.
- As rural people are one of the main target groups for environmental programmes, NEC is proud to say that

the response to these programmes has been overwhelmingly positive and the interaction and involvement of the local people during the out-of-city programmes have been very encouraging.

- Conducts variety of activities to promote non-curriculum environmental education for students. Specific programmes were planned and implemented in various schools and colleges with a view to promote better understanding of the environmental issues and problems and to involve practical and feasible solutions to mitigate environmental problems.
- Participated in the Stakeholder interaction discussions held under the "City Development Strategy Programme for Bangalore City", organised jointly by the BMDC and World Bank.
- One of the most successful programmes has been the greening of the catchment area of the Nelligudda reservoir through planting of over ten thousand saplings in association with the Rotaract Club of Bangalore Cantonment South.
- Successfully organised two Ecological Mountaineering Expeditions to the Himalayas which included the documentation of the Ecological state of the areas visited, cleaning up the Mountains of the non-biodegradable garbage left behind by previous expeditions and working towards more ethical Man-Mountain relationship.
- With the help of Birdwatches field Club of Bangalore NEC has been collecting information on Birds of Bangalore and has been instrumental in bringing out the 'Annotated Checklist of the Birds of Bangalore'.
- It has also been associated with the publication of 'The Fauna of Bangalore'.
- Organized a Symposium on Restoration of Lakes and Wetlands', in association with the Centre for Ecological Sciences, Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, Karnataka Pollution Control Board and the Karnataka Forest Department.
- NEC has been awarded the "Leader Award", for the Status survey on the Broad-tailed Grass-Warbler *Schoenicola platyura* in Karnataka, by the Oriental Bird Club, London.



## IBCN STATE COORDINATORS

### IBCN MISSION STATEMENT

To promote conservation of birds and their habitats through the development of a national network of individuals, organisations and the government

1. **Andaman & Nicobar Islands**  
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## IBCN ORGANISATIONAL PARTNERS



*IBCN has 1,300 individual members and 75 organisational members.*

**What is the IBCN:** It is a Network of Indian organisations and individuals who have agreed to collaborate to promote the conservation of birds in India and through them, the conservation of biological diversity as a whole. IBCN is one of the leading membership networks of India, with more than 1,300 individuals and 75 organizations as members. It publishes a quarterly newsletter 'Mistnet' for its members.

**IBCN Membership:** Join and become important links in the IBCN. Annual membership fee is Rs. 150/- for individual and Rs.200/- for organisation, payable through Demand Draft/Money Order/cash in favour of 'Bombay Natural History Society'. In case of outstation cheque add Rs. 50/- towards bank charges.

Kindly contact for membership form

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