

VIBRANT GANGA 

जमायि गंगे

wings of ganga

RIVER AND
WETLAND
BIRDS OF
GANGA RIVER



National Mission
for Clean Ganga



भारतीय वन्यजीव संस्थान
Wildlife Institute of India

हंसः पद्मवनं समिच्छति यथा नीलांबुदं चातकः
कोकः कोकनदप्रियं प्रतिदिनं चन्द्रं चकोरस्तथा
चेतो वाञ्छति मामकं पशुपते चिन्मार्गमृग्यं विभो
गौरीनाथ भवत्पदाब्जयुगलं कैवल्यसौख्यप्रदम्

..."O Lord of all beings! Consort of Gauri ! The All-pervading! Just like the Hans longs for the lotus forest, the Chataka bird longs for the dark clouds, the Koka longs for the lotus, and the Chakora bird longs for the Moon, my heart intensely longs for your lotus feet, sought by following the path of knowledge and leading to the bliss of kaivalya, the state of Absolute Unity of everything.."

Dedicated to
Dr. Sálim Moizuddin Abdul Ali



The Birdman of India

(12 November 1896 - 20 June 1987)



wings OF
ganga

PART 1

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The **“Wings of Ganga: Part I”** under the **“Vibrant Ganga: Book Series”** includes **“River & Wetland Birds of Ganga River”**. The representative species have been elucidated on the basis of four criteria;

International Union for Conservation of
Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) Red
List categories

Convention on International Trade in
Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and
Flora (CITES) Appendices

Convention on the Conservation of
Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS)
Appendices

Indian Wild Life (Protection) Act , 1972
(IWPA) Schedules

This book covers **19** families of riverine and wetland birds of Ganga River represented by **30** species. At least one representative species from each family is illustrated. The species are described through scientific and common names and are categorized according to their families. The book also provides information about the conservation status of species, taxonomy, key identifying features, habit and habitat, reproduction ecology and major threats.



PREFACE

Ganga River, India's National River, the lifeline of Indian civilization with deep rooted religious and cultural beliefs, is one of the largest river systems in the world. The river has been the cradle of Indian civilization from ancient times and witness to the changing history, culture and belief. She flows through 5 states, however her entire catchment provides water to 11 states, nurturing over 500 million people and supporting enormous biodiversity in the three ecologically diverse biogeographic zones, viz. Himalayan Zone, Gangetic Plain and Coastal Zone.

The faunal diversity of Ganga River is represented by the water and water associated birds, amphibians, turtles, gharial and mugger crocodiles and aquatic mammals including Otters and Gangetic River Dolphins.

Being a mega-biodiversity country, India harbours 1301 species of birds. The Gangetic basin supports 177 species of these birds including wetland, riverine and terrestrial species. Some iconic and globally threatened birds also breed along the Ganga. These species are indicators of healthy river ecosystems, as they are vulnerable to habitat alteration, habitat loss, climate change and pollution.

The National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) and Wildlife Institute of India (WII)'s project "Biodiversity Conservation and Ganga Rejuvenation" aims at aquatic species restoration plan through science-based research and knowledge sharing. "Vibrant Ganga" is one such attempt to share the science-based information to the various stakeholders with the aid of print and digital media. Under the "Vibrant Ganga" series a set of brochures and books are being published with the aim to provide information on faunal diversity, their conservation status, ecology and human threats.

All species belong to

Kingdom: Animalia,
Phylum : Chordata,
Class: Aves

Following colour coding
are adopted to describe
the conservation status
according to IUCN Red List.



Following codes were used
for describing migration
status of the species



Non breeding



Breeding



Resident



Possibly resident



Possibly extinct





Ruddy shelduck

Tadorna ferruginea

Vernacular name: [Surkhab \(Hindi\)](#),
[Chokha-chokhi \(Bengali\)](#)

Order: [Anseriformes](#)

Family: [Anatidae](#)

Genus: [Tadorna](#)

Species: [T. ferruginea](#)

IUCN Red List: [Least Concern](#)

CITES: [Not listed](#)

CMS: [Appendix II](#)

IWPA, 1972: [Schedule IV](#)

Population Trend: [Unknown](#)



LC



Distribution

Early winter migrant in India. Arrives by October and departs by April. Found in upper, middle and lower stretches of the Ganga River.

Habit & Habitat

Nocturnal, omnivorous and feeds on grasses, the young shoots of plants, grain and water plants as well as both aquatic and terrestrial invertebrates. Typical breeding habitat is large rivers and wetlands with mud flats and shingle banks.

Reproduction

Breeding Season: Late April and early June. It breeds in high altitude lakes and swamps in Jammu and Kashmir.

Nest site/ type: Nests in hole or cavity, from ground level upward into trees and cliffs (up to heights of 10 m). Lined with down and feathers and a little grass.

Clutch Size: 6-12.

Incubation period: 27-29 days

Key identifying features

Size 58 to 70 cm. The male has orange-brown body plumage and a paler, orange-brown head and neck. The rump, flight feathers, tail-coverts and tail feathers are black and inner surfaces of the wings have iridescent green speculum feathers. The bill is black and the legs are dark grey. Females are paler.

Major threats

Local population fluctuates in numbers and is vulnerable to climatic shifts, hydrology alteration and pollution.

Northern pintail

Anas acuta

Vernacular name:	<i>Seenkh-par battak</i> (Hindi), <i>Dig haans</i> (Bengali)
Order:	Anseriformes
Family:	Anatidae
Genus:	<i>Anas</i>
Species:	<i>A. acuta</i>
IUCN Red List:	Least Concern
CITES:	Not listed
CMS:	Appendix II
IWPA, 1972:	Schedule IV
Population Trend:	Decreasing



LC



Distribution

A winter migrant in India. Found in upper, middle and lower stretches of the Ganga River.

Habit & Habitat

Crepuscular and nocturnal feeding. Feeds on seeds of grasses, sedges, aquatic plants, and also mollusks, crustaceans, amphibians, small fish. Mostly found in rivers, shallow fresh-water lakes, marshes, open grasslands with cover available rather than wooded areas. Often found in coastal areas in winter.

Reproduction

Breeding Season: Late April to May.

Nest site/ type: On the ground, loosely concealed in vegetation, built from dry vegetation and lined with down and feathers.

Clutch Size: 6-12.

Incubation period: 22-24 days

Key identifying features

Size 51-74 cm. Male: head chocolate brown, hind neck darker; white lower foreneck makes stripes at sides of neck and merge to white central breast and abdomen. Female: head and neck pale brown with fine black spotting, breast and abdomen pale and spotted.

Major threats

The species is vulnerable to habitat loss, pollution, environmental toxicants and predation by feral animals at its breeding and wintering grounds.

Common pochard

Aythya ferina

Vernacular name: *Burar nar, Lal sir* (Hindi),
Ranga muri (Bengali)

Order: *Anseriformes*

Family: *Anatidae*

Genus: *Aythya*

Species: *A. ferina*

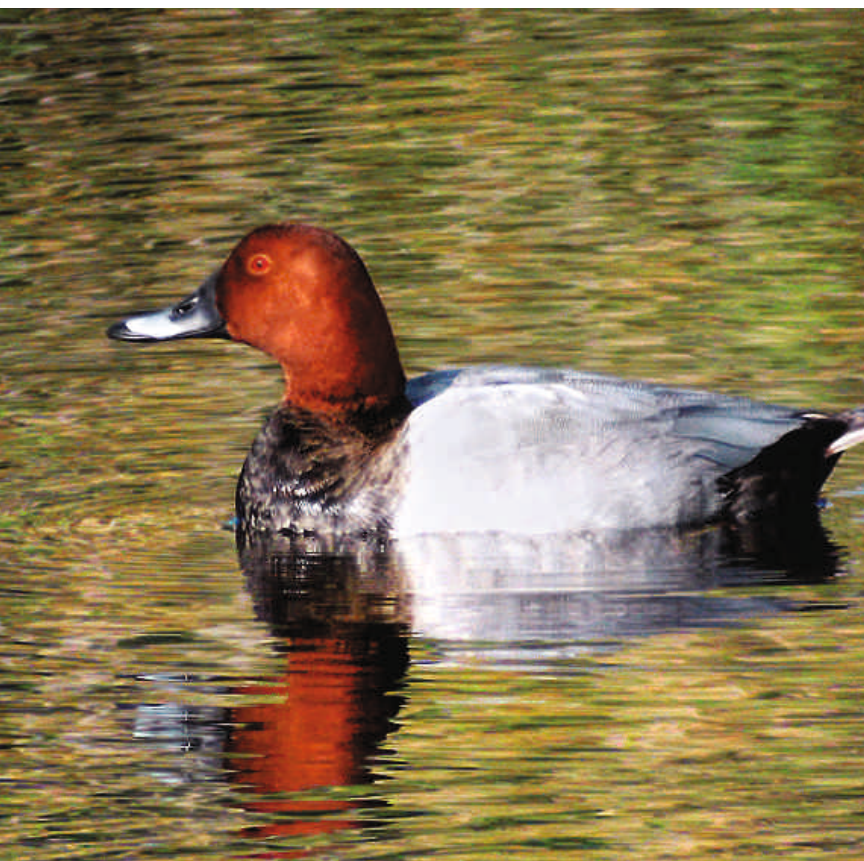
IUCN Red List: *Vulnerable*

CITES: *Not listed*

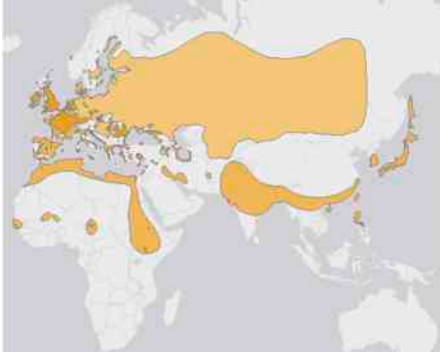
CMS: *Appendix II*

IWPA, 1972: *Schedule IV*

Population Trend: *Decreasing*



VU



Distribution

A winter migrant, common in western, central and southern India. Found in upper and lower stretches of the Ganga River.

Habit & Habitat

Gregarious outside nesting season. Feeds on seeds, vegetation, roots of aquatic plants, grasses, sedges, also small aquatic invertebrates, amphibians and fish. Mostly occur in slow flowing rivers, shallow to deep freshwater lakes with good fringe or emergent vegetation and also in swamps, marshes.

Reproduction

Breeding Season: April to May.

Nest site/type: Nest made of heap of grass, reeds and leaves, concealed in vegetation on ground or in water.

Clutch Size: 6-10.

Incubation period: 24-28 days

Key identifying features

Size 46-58 cm. Male: head with dark grey base, head and neck chestnut; chest, tail and rump black; underparts and upperparts vermiculated pale grey. Female: head dark grey/blackish, narrow pale grey sub-terminal band, poorly defined paler throat and facial stripes.

Major threats

The species is vulnerable to habitat loss, human interference, hunting, river and wetland pollution, and occasional drowning in fishing nets.

Falcated duck

Mareca falcata

Syn: *Anas falcata*

Vernacular name: [Kala sinkhur \(Hindi\)](#)

Order: [Anseriformes](#)

Family: [Anatidae](#)

Genus: [Anas](#)

Species: [M. falcata](#)

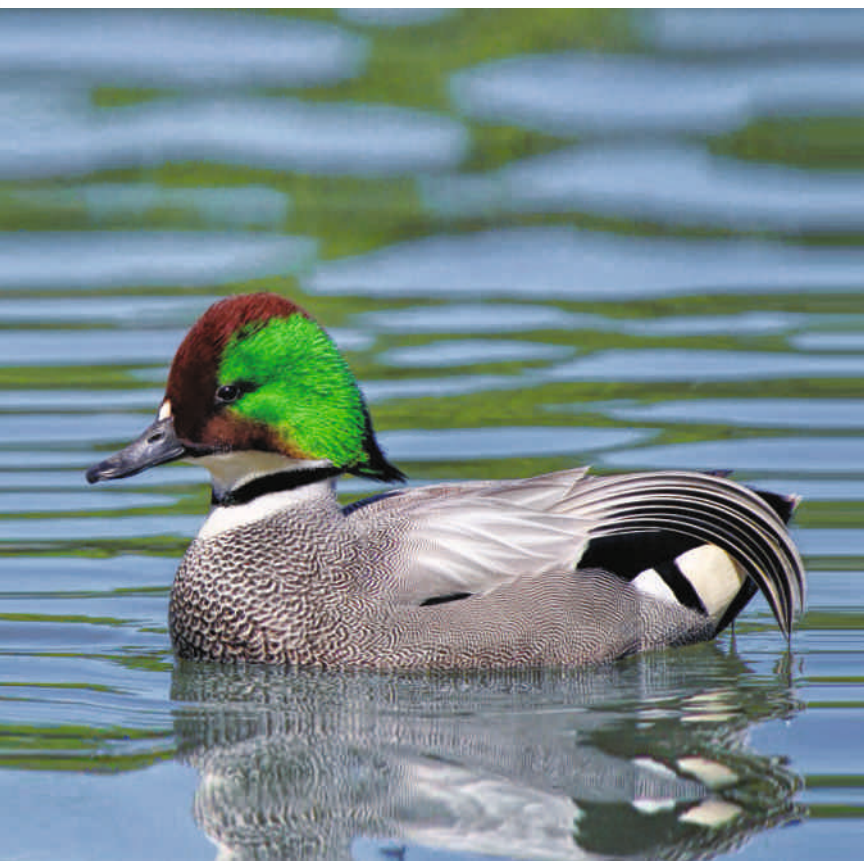
IUCN Red List: [Near Threatened](#)

CITES: [Not listed](#)

CMS: [Appendix II](#)

IWPA, 1972: [Schedule IV](#)

Population Trend: [Decreasing](#)



NT



Distribution

A winter migrant and rare in India. Found in upper and middle stretches of the Ganga River.

Habit & Habitat

Feeds on seeds, green parts of aquatic plants and aquatic invertebrates. Mostly found in freshwater lakes, pond, lagoons, rivers often with wooded areas and coasts.

Reproduction

Breeding Season: May to June.

Nest site/ type: Nests on the ground at banks with tall grass or in bushes near water.

Clutch Size: 6-9.

Incubation period: 24-26 days

Key identifying features

Size 46-53 cm. Male: head iridescent green and purple with long crest, white spot on forehead; chin, throat and fore-neck white with black collar. Breast grey with black scaling. Female: head and neck grey-brown with dark streaking and slight nape crest. Breast and underparts brown with darker markings.

Major threats

The species is vulnerable to habitat loss and hunting for food in the non-breeding regions.

African comb duck

Knob-billed duck

Sarkidiornis melanotos

Vernacular name: [Nakta \(Hindi & Bengali\)](#)

Order: [Anseriformes](#)

Family: [Anatidae](#)

Genus: [Sarkidiornis](#)

Species: [S. melanotos](#)

IUCN Red List: [Not listed](#)

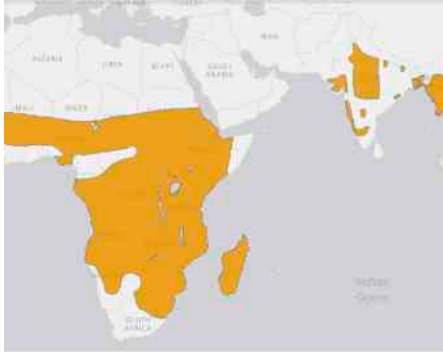
CITES: [Appendix II](#)

CMS: [Appendix II](#)

IWPA, 1972: [Schedule IV](#)

Population Trend: [Decreasing](#)





Distribution

Widespread resident bird throughout India, Found in upper, middle and lower stretches of the Ganga River.

Habit & Habitat

Crepascular, feeds on vegetation, seeds of grasses, sedges and aquatic plants by grazing or dabbling, occasionally small fish, terrestrial and aquatic insects. Mainly found in rivers, wetlands, swamps and lakes and forages in agricultural fields.

Reproduction

Breeding Season: July to September.

Nest site/ type: In tree hollows e.g. 20-30 feet above ground level, occasionally on the ground in tall grass or reeds or amongst stones.

Clutch Size: 6-20.

Incubation period: 28-30 days

Key identifying features

Size 56 to 76 cm. Male has a knob on upper-bill, white spot with back, yellow-tinge on back of head and neck in breeding season. Upperparts including flanks iridescent blue-green black, with stripe down side of breast. Wing metallic green/black. Female without knob and head has more spots.

Major threats

The species is vulnerable to hunting, deforestation and poisoning by pesticides used in paddy fields.

Red-crested pochard

Netta rufina

Vernacular name:	<i>Laal chonch</i> (Hindi), <i>Bada Rangamuri</i> (Bengali)
Order:	Anseriformes
Family:	Anatidae
Genus:	<i>Netta</i>
Species:	<i>N. rufina</i>
IUCN Red List:	Least Concern
CITES:	Not listed
CMS:	Appendix II
IWPA, 1972:	Schedule IV
Population Trend:	Unknown





Distribution

A winter migrant and common throughout India. Found in upper, middle and lower stretches of the Ganga River.

Habit & Habitat

Gregarious, feeds on the roots, seeds and vegetative parts of aquatic plants by means of dive, up-end, head-dip, and surface dabbling. Occurs in large rivers, deep freshwater lakes and lagoons with abundant bordering vegetation.

Reproduction

Breeding Season: April to May.

Nest site/ type: Nests constructed from roots, twigs, leaves with thick downy lining, on ground in thick vegetation near water's edge.

Clutch Size: 6-14.

Incubation period: 26-28 days

Key identifying features

Size 53-58 cm. Male: Head and throat rusty orange, hind-neck, lower neck, breast, underparts and upper tail coverts black. Wings brown with white leading edge. Beak red. Female: crown down to eye and hindneck brown, throat and upper neck very pale grey. Beak grey-brown with pink tip.

Major threats

The species is vulnerable to habitat degradation, pollution of inland freshwater ecosystems and hunting.

Goosander

Mergus merganser

Vernacular name: [Samanya Samndra Badak \(Hindi\)](#)

Order: [Anseriformes](#)

Family: [Anatidae](#)

Genus: [Mergus](#)

Species: [M. merganser](#)

IUCN Red List: [Least Concern](#)

CITES: [Not listed](#)

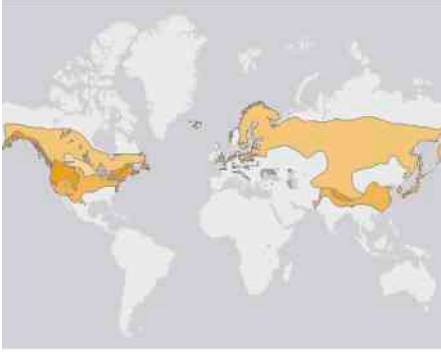
CMS: [Appendix II](#)

IWPA, 1972: [Schedule IV](#)

Population Trend: [Increasing](#)



LC



Distribution

A winter migrant in Northern and Eastern part of India. Found in upper and middle stretches of the Ganga River.

Habit & Habitat

Gregarious, crepuscular, dives from surface. Fish forms main part of diet, also feeds on aquatic invertebrates, amphibians and little plant material.

Reproduction

Breeding Season: March to May.

Nest site/ type: Holes excavated by large woodpeckers or natural cavities in mature hardwood trees.

Clutch Size: 6-17.

Incubation period: 30-32 days

Key identifying features

Size 51-68 cm. Male: head and upper neck glossy green-black with smooth 'puffy' crest. Lower neck, breast, flanks, underparts creamy. Female: head and upper neck, cinnamon, including slightly-ragged crest.

Major threats

The species is threatened due to habitat degradation, pollution, drowning in fishing nets.

Bar-headed goose

Anser indicus

Vernacular name: [Hans, Birwa \(Hindi\)](#)

Order: [Anseriformes](#)

Family: [Anatidae](#)

Genus: [Anser](#)

Species: [A. indicus](#)

IUCN Red List: [Least Concern](#)

CITES: [Not listed](#)

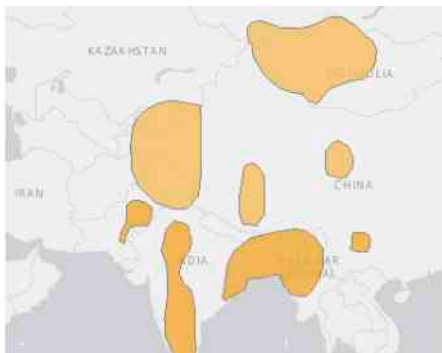
CMS: [Appendix II](#)

IWPA, 1972: [Schedule IV](#)

Population Trend: [Decreasing](#)



LC



Distribution

A winter migrant and locally common in India. Found in upper, middle and lower stretches of the Ganga River.

Habit & Habitat

One of the world's highest-flying birds peaking at an altitude of around 6,400 m. Highly gregarious, herbivorous, graze on grassland and agricultural fields. Feed mainly on leaves of aquatic plants and sedges, occasionally on insect larvae. Mostly occurs in large rivers, natural wetlands, lakes and freshwater marshes.

Reproduction

Breeding Season: Late May to June.

Nest site/ type: Mainly in the marshes and wetlands of the Tibetan Plateau.

Clutch Size: 2-8.

Incubation period: 27-30 days

Key identifying features

Size 71–76 cm. Head and sides of neck white, with two horizontal black bars. Body generally silvery grey, tail grey with white border.

Major threats

The species is vulnerable to hunting, lower reproductive success due to egg collection and habitat loss.



Indian Sarus crane

Antigone antigone

Vernacular name: [Saras \(Hindi & Bengali\)](#)

Order: [Gruiformes](#)

Family: [Gruidae](#)

Genus: [Antigone](#)

Species: [A. antigone](#)

IUCN Red List: [Vulnerable](#)

CITES: [Appendix II](#)

CMS: [Appendix II](#)

IWPA, 1972: [Schedule IV](#)

Population Trend: [Decreasing](#)





A residential bird of northern and central India. Found in upper and middle stretches of the Ganga River.

Omnivorous and feeds on aquatic plants, sedges, invertebrates and small vertebrates. Occurs in large rivers, natural wetlands, small seasonal marshes, floodplains, fallow and cultivated lands and paddy fields.

Breeding Season: June to September.

Nest site/ type: Nests in agriculture land, dry grassland. Nests are built with reeds and grasses and can reach roughly two meters above the water surface.

Clutch Size: 2-3.

Incubation period: 28-31 days

The largest Indian Crane with naked red head and upper neck, grey plumage, greenish horny bill, and red legs. Sexes alike, female slightly smaller than male.

Loss and degradation of wetlands, as a result of drainage and conversion to agriculture, ingestion of pesticides and in some occasion hunting of adults and collection of eggs and chicks for trade, food and medicinal purposes.

Eurasian coot

Fulica atra

Vernacular name: *Dasari, Aari, Thekari* (Hindi);
Jal kukkut, Karandab (Bengali)

Order: *Gruiformes*

Family: *Rallidae*

Genus: *Fulica*

Species: *F. atra*

IUCN Red List: *Least Concern*

CITES: *Not listed*

CMS: *Not listed*

IWPA, 1972: *Schedule IV*

Population Trend: *Increasing*



LC



Distribution

Common resident and winter migrant and widely distributed all over India. Found in upper, middle and lower stretches of the Ganga River.

Habit & Habitat

Gregarious, gathers in very large flocks during winter. Diurnal, forages on aquatic vegetation, mollusks and aquatic insects in open waters. Occurs in large rivers, ponds, lakes and other wetlands.

Reproduction

Breeding Season: May to December

Nest site/ type: Nest of dead reeds or grasses beside river bank.

Clutch Size: 10.

Key identifying features

Slaty-black waterbird with stout pointed ivory-white bill, white frontal shield and green legs; head, neck and throat black; upper plumage slaty-black with steel-blue sheen; under plumage slaty grey with dark vent and under tail-coverts.

Major threats

Loss of wetland habitats, loss of nesting sites and water pollution.

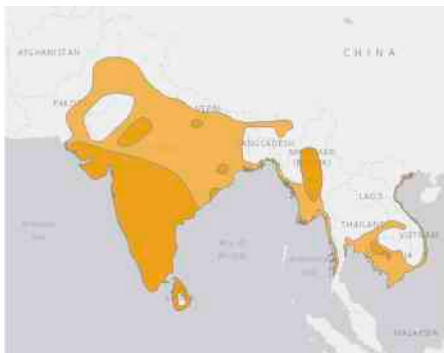
Painted stork

Mycteria leucocephala

Vernacular name:	<i>Kanth saras, Janghil, Kankri</i> (Hindi), <i>Ranga manik-jor</i> (Bengali)
Order:	Ciconiiformes
Family:	Ciconiidae
Genus:	<i>Mycteria</i>
Species:	<i>M. leucocephala</i>
IUCN Red List:	Near Threatened
CITES:	Not listed
CMS:	Not listed
IWPA, 1972:	Schedule IV
Population Trend:	Decreasing



NT



Distribution

A residential bird widespread throughout India. Found in middle and lower stretches of the Ganga River.

Habit & Habitat

Forages in day, feeds on small fish, frogs, occasionally snake. Occurs in freshwater marshes, lakes and reservoirs, river banks and wetlands areas.

Reproduction

Breeding Season: August to October.

Nest site/ type: Colonial tree nester often with other species.

Clutch Size: 3-4.

Incubation period: 30 days

Key identifying features

Pure white body, coverts of the wings are black, the tail are pink. Head of the adult is bare and orange or reddish. Bill long, yellow-orange, broad at base. Long legs, semi-palmated feet.

Major threats

Habitat loss and degradation, pollution, disturbance to breeding colonies resulting from hunting of adults and collection of eggs and nestlings from colonies.

Asian Woolly-necked stork

Ciconia episcopus

Vernacular name:	<i>Haji laq laq</i> (Hindi), <i>Manik jor</i> (Bengali)
Order:	Ciconiiformes
Family:	Ciconiidae
Genus:	<i>Ciconia</i>
Species:	<i>C. episcopus</i>
IUCN Red List:	Vulnerable
CITES:	Not listed
CMS:	Appendix II
IWPA, 1972:	Schedule IV
Population Trend:	Decreasing



VU



Distribution

It is a resident breeder in India. Found in upper, middle and lower stretches of the Ganga River.

Habit & Habitat

Carnivorous, feeds on fish, frogs, toads, snakes, lizards, large insects and larvae, crabs, mollusks and marine invertebrates. Occurs in rivers, seasonal and perennial reservoirs and marshes, crop lands, and irrigation canals.

Reproduction

Breeding Season: July to October.

Nest site/ type: A large stick platform built about 10-30 m (and sometimes up to 50 m) above the ground or over water.

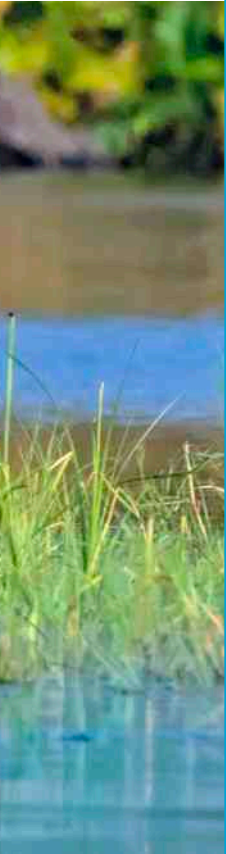
Clutch Size: 3-4.

Key identifying features

Size 75–92 cm. The stork is glistening black overall with a black "skull cap", a downy white neck. The lower belly and under-tail coverts are white, fore-neck are iridescent with a coppery-purple tinge, long red legs and a heavy, blackish bill.

Major threats

Habitat loss and degradation, hunting, disturbance and possibly the use of agro-chemicals.



Black-necked stork

Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus

Vernacular name: [Loharjang, Loha sarang \(Hindi\)](#)

Order: [Ciconiiformes](#)

Family: [Ciconiidae](#)

Genus: [Ephippiorhynchus](#)

Species: [E. asiaticus](#)

IUCN Red List: [Near Threatened](#)

CITES: [Appendix I](#)

CMS: [Not listed](#)

IWPA, 1972: [Schedule IV](#)

Population Trend: [Decreasing](#)



NT



Distribution

It is a resident breeder in north, north-east and north-west India. Found in upper and middle stretches of the Ganga River.

Habit & Habitat

Feeds on fish, reptiles and frogs, turtle eggs, crabs, mollusks, insects, arthropods sometimes waterfowl, using tactile feeding methods. Inhabits large rivers, freshwater marshes and lakes, pools in open forest and flooded grassland, and occasionally uses mangroves and coastal habitats.

Reproduction

Breeding Season: September to October.

Nest site/ type: Nests on large isolated trees, made up of sticks, branches and lined with rushes, water-plants and sometimes with a mud plaster on the edges.

Clutch Size: 1-4.

Incubation period: 30 days

Key identifying features

Size 129–150 cm. A glossy bluish-black iridescent head, neck, secondary flight feathers and tail; a coppery-brown crown; a bright white back and belly; bill black with a slightly concave upper edge; and bright red legs. The adult female has a yellow iris while the adult male has it brown.

Major threats

Drainage of wetlands for development, encroachment for agriculture or aquaculture, overfishing, overgrazing, hunting, felling of nest trees and consecutive years of drought.

Lesser adjutant stork

Leptoptilos javanicus

Vernacular name:	<i>Chinjara, Chhota Garud</i> (Hindi), <i>Madanchur, Madantak</i> (Bengali)
Order:	Ciconiiformes
Family:	Ciconiidae
Genus:	<i>Leptoptilos</i>
Species:	<i>L. javanicus</i>
IUCN Red List:	Vulnerable
CITES:	Not listed
CMS:	Not listed
IWPA, 1972:	Schedule IV
Population Trend:	Decreasing



VU



Distribution

It is a resident breeder in central, north-east and eastern India. Found in middle and lower stretches of the Ganga River.

Habit & Habitat

Carnivorous, feeds on frogs, fish, small reptiles and aquatic crustaceans by walking in shallow puddles. Occurs mostly in large rivers and lakes inside well wooded regions, in freshwater wetlands in agricultural areas, and coastal wetlands including mudflats and mangroves.

Reproduction

Breeding Season: November to January, beginning as early as July.

Nest site/ type: A large, flat platform of sticks lodged between thick branches of a tall tree.

Clutch Size: 1-4.

Incubation period: 29-30 days

Key identifying features

Size 87-93 cm. Large bird with upright stance, a bare head and neck without a pendant pouch. The skullcap is paler and the upper plumage appearing black. The nearly naked head and neck have a few scattered hair-like feathers, yellow but red in breeding male. The belly and undertail are white. Bill is broad at base and tapering to the end.

Major threats

Hunting, loss of nesting trees, conversion and degradation of wetlands and agricultural intensification.

Grey heron

Ardea cinerea

Vernacular name: *Nari, Sain* (Hindi),
Sada Kaak (Bengali)

Order: *Pelecaniformes*

Family: *Ardeidae*

Genus: *Ardea*

Species: *A. cinerea*

IUCN Red List: *Least Concern*

CITES: *Not listed*

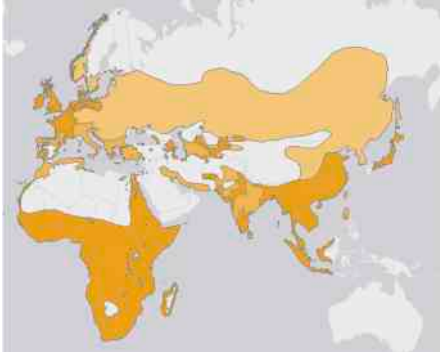
CMS: *Not listed*

IWPA, 1972: *Schedule IV*

Population Trend: *Unknown*



LC



Distribution

Widespread resident bird throughout India. Found in upper, middle and lower stretches of the Ganga River.

Habit & Habitat

Solitary, crepuscular, carnivorous, feeds mostly on fishes. Generalist in its habitat and occurs in estuaries, rivers, streams, lakes, or marshes.

Reproduction

Breeding Season: Late February to early June.

Nest site/ type: Found in branches of tall trees and also have been reported in dense undergrowth and occasionally on bare ground.

Clutch Size: 3-5.

Incubation period: 25-26 days

Key identifying features

Size 90 to 98 cm. Head is white, long black feathers that extend from the eyes to the beginning of the neck, yellow bill, and has a large, impressive crest.

Major threats

The species is vulnerable to persistent pollutants and habitat loss.

Black-headed ibis

Threskiornis melanocephalus

Vernacular name: *Munda, Safed baza (Hindi), Sada Kastechura (Bengali)*

Order: *Pelecaniformes*

Family: *Threskiornithidae*

Genus: *Threskiornis*

Species: *T. melanocephalus*

IUCN Red List: *Near Threatened*

CITES: *Not listed*

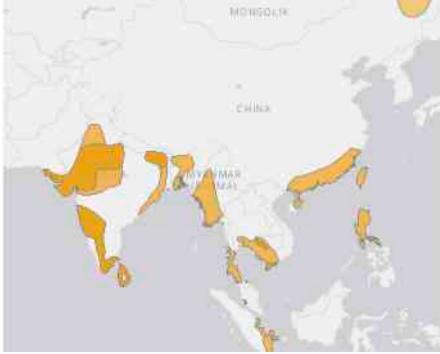
CMS: *Not listed*

IWPA, 1972: *Schedule IV*

Population Trend: *Decreasing*



NT



Distribution

It is resident, widespread and locally common in central and western India. Found in upper, middle and lower stretches of the Ganga River.

Habit & Habitat

Gregarious, carnivorous, feeds on fish, frogs, mollusks and aquatic insects. Inhabits rivers, freshwater marshes, lakes, flooded grasslands, paddy fields, tidal creeks, intertidal mudflats, mangroves, salt-marshes and coastal lagoons.

Reproduction

Breeding Season: February to June.

Nest site/ type: Platform of stick nest on a tree

Clutch Size: 2-4.

Key identifying features

Size 75 cm. plumage white, with some greyer areas on the wings. The bald head, the neck and legs are black. The thick down curved bill is dusky yellow.

Major threats

It is vulnerable to wetland drainage, agricultural conversion, human disturbance, pollution, destruction of roosting and nesting sites, hunting and collection of eggs and nestlings from colonies.

Eurasian spoonbill

Platalea leucorodia

Vernacular name: [Chamach baza \(Hindi\)](#),
[Khunte bak \(Bengali\)](#)

Order: [Pelecaniiformes](#)

Family: [Threskiornithidae](#)

Genus: [Platalea](#)

Species: [P. leucorodia](#)

IUCN Red List: [Least Concern](#)

CITES: [Appendix II](#)

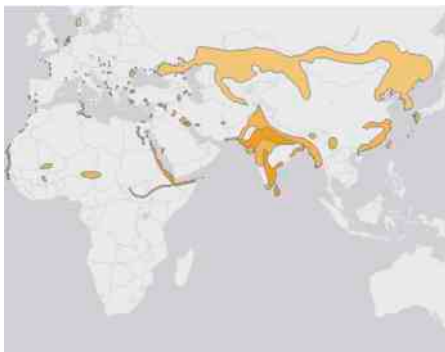
CMS: [Appendix II](#)

IWPA, 1972: [Schedule I](#)

Population Trend: [Unknown](#)



LC



Distribution

A widespread winter visitor and resident in India. Found in upper and middle stretches of the Ganga River.

Habit & Habitat

Forages singly or in small flocks, feeds on aquatic insects, mollusks, newts, crustaceans, frogs, tadpoles and small fish. Prefers extensive shallow wetlands with muddy, clay or fine sandy beds.

Reproduction

Breeding Season: Monsoon.

Nest site/ type: Nest is a platform of sticks and vegetation, constructed on the ground, on islands in lakes and rivers, or in dense stands of reeds, bushes, mangroves or deciduous trees.

Clutch Size: 3-4.

Incubation period: 24-25 days

Key identifying features

Size 80-90 cm. A white heron-like bird with spoon-shaped bill. Breeding bird is all white except for its dark legs, black bill with a yellow tip, and a yellow breast patch.

Major threats

Habitat degradation through drainage and pollution, disappearance of wetlands due to agricultural and hydroelectric development, over-fishing and human disturbance.

Dalmatian pelican

Pelecanus crispus

Vernacular name:	<i>Hawasil</i> (Hindi), <i>Gaganber</i> (Bengali)
Order:	Pelecaniformes
Family:	Pelecanidae
Genus:	<i>Pelecanus</i>
Species:	<i>P. crispus</i>
IUCN Red List:	Vulnerable
CITES:	Appendix I
CMS:	Appendix I & II
IWPA, 1972:	Schedule IV
Population Trend:	Decreasing





Distribution

A winter migrant to India. Found in upper, middle and lower stretches of the Ganga River.

Habit & Habitat

Gregarious, migratory bird seen in dense colonies. Feeds almost entirely on fish. Occurs mainly in large rivers, inland freshwater wetlands, coastal lagoons, river deltas and estuaries.

Reproduction

Essentially migratory in Asia and breeds in Russia.

Key identifying features

Size 160 to 183 cm. It has curly nape feathers, grey legs and silvery-white plumage. In winter brownish-grey cream colour, orange-red lower mandible and pouch against a yellow upper mandible.

Major threats

Wetland drainage, water pollution, shooting and persecution by fishermen and over-exploitation of fish stocks.

Oriental darter

Anhinga melanogaster

Vernacular name:	<i>Pandubbi</i> (Hindi), <i>Goyar</i> (Bengali)
Order:	Suliformes
Family:	Anhingidae
Genus:	<i>Anhinga</i>
Species:	<i>A. melanogaster</i>
IUCN Red List:	Near Threatened
CITES:	Not listed
CMS:	Not listed
IWPA, 1972:	Schedule IV
Population Trend:	Decreasing



NT



Distribution

A resident species almost throughout India. Found in upper, middle and lower stretches of the Ganga River.

Habit & Habitat

Occurs singly, in twos or small flocks. Feeds chiefly on fish. Preferred habitats are large rivers, deepwater lakes, marshes and mangroves.

Reproduction

Breeding Season: July to December.

Nest site/ type: Nests of dry and green twigs are built at the forking of big branches or closer to the main trunks of large trees.

Clutch Size: 3-6.

Key identifying features

Size 28-32 cm. Long slender snake-like neck; narrow head; pointed and small daggershaped bill and fan-shaped stiff tail. A white streak from eye to sides of the neck; white chin and throat, back and wings longitudinally streaked and speckled with silver-grey below, including legs.

Major threats

Vulnerable to degradation of foraging wetlands and rivers, felling of nesting trees, water pollution, hunting and egg collection.

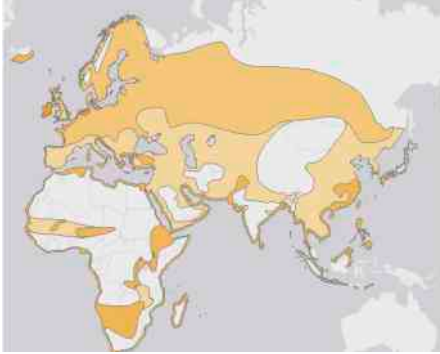
Eurasian curlew

Numenius arquata

Vernacular name:	<i>Goar, Goungh, Bada Gulinda</i> (Hindi), <i>Kastechura</i> (Bengali)
Order:	Charadriiformes
Family:	Scolopacidae
Genus:	<i>Numenius</i>
Species:	<i>N. arquata</i>
IUCN Red List:	Near Threatened
CITES:	Not listed
CMS:	Appendix II
IWPA, 1972:	Schedule IV
Population Trend:	Decreasing



NT



Distribution

A winter migrant to the whole of the subcontinent, migrates mainly from large rivers to the coastal areas. Mostly found in middle and lower stretches of the Ganga River.

Habit & Habitat

Carnivorous, feeds on fiddler and sand crabs, crustaceans and insects. Prefers large sandy river banks, marshes and wet grasslands.

Reproduction

Breeds in West, Central & East Siberia.

Key identifying features

Size 50–60 cm. Long, slender and strongly down-curved dark brown bill, bluish-grey legs and feet, plumage, streaked buff and brown, abdomen whitish and streaked with black, white lower back and rump.

Major threats

Vulnerable to habitat fragmentation and habitat loss. Egg loss and chick mortalities due to higher predation rates and human disturbance.

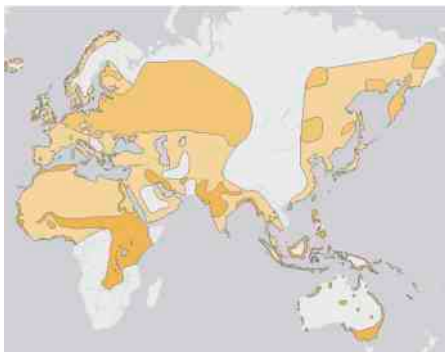
Black-tailed godwit

Limosa limosa

Vernacular name:	<i>Kalidum ka Gudera, Gairiya, Jangral</i> (Hindi), <i>Jaurali</i> (Bengali)
Order:	Charadriiformes
Family:	Scolopacidae
Genus:	<i>Limosa</i>
Species:	<i>L. limosa</i>
IUCN Red List:	Near Threatened
CITES:	Not listed
CMS:	Appendix II
IWPA, 1972:	Schedule IV
Population Trend:	Decreasing



NT



Distribution

A locally common and widespread winter migrant to India extending eastward up to West Bengal. Found in upper, middle and lower stretches of the Ganga River.

Habit & Habitat

Gregarious, carnivorous, feeds on mollusks, crustaceans and seeds of aquatic plants. Occurs in large flocks in wetlands, marshes and river banks.

Reproduction

Breeds in Central Asia, disjunct areas in Central & East Siberia. Winters in South & South-East Asia, Philippines to Australia.

Key identifying features

Size 42 cm. Sexes alike but female slightly larger, bill long, slender and straight with red base and dusky tip; upperparts grey-brown, with white upper tail-coverts; underparts white; legs and feet greyish-green.

Major threats

Vulnerable to loss of nesting habitat, hydrological alteration in wintering wetlands and human disturbance.

Great stone-curlew

Great thick-knee

Esacus recurvirostris

Vernacular name: *Chamach baza* (Hindi),
Khunte bak (Bengali)

Order: *Charadriiformes*

Family: *Burhinidae*

Genus: *Esacus*

Species: *E. recurvirostris*

IUCN Red List: *Near Threatened*

CITES: *Not listed*

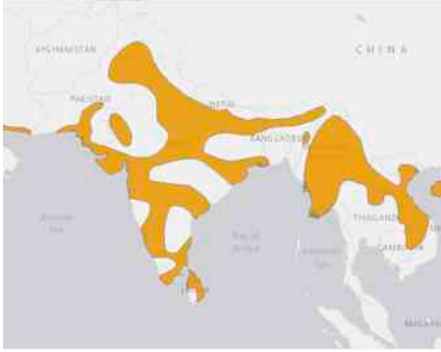
CMS: *Not listed*

IWPA, 1972: *Schedule IV*

Population Trend: *Decreasing*



NT



Distribution

A resident species widespread throughout India. Found in upper, middle and lower stretches of the Ganga River.

Habit & Habitat

Crepuscular and nocturnal. Feeds on crabs and mollusks. Mainly found in sandy river bank, mid-river islands, rocky out-crops in large rivers. Sometimes ventures into agricultural fields for foraging.

Reproduction

Breeding Season: February to June.

Nest site/ type: Nests on exposed sandbank on riverbeds.

Clutch Size: 2.

Key identifying features

Size 49–55 cm. Large, thick-headed long-legged plover, heavy upturned yellow and black beak, big yellow eyes and peculiar black and white facial pattern.

Major threats

Habitat destruction, habitat loss, alteration in river hydrology, nest predation by dogs, disturbance by fishermen and cattle.

Little pratincole

Glareola lactea

Vernacular name:	<i>Bauni titahri</i> (Hindi), <i>Choto babuibatan</i> (Bengali)
Order:	Charadriiformes
Family:	Glareolidae
Genus:	<i>Glareola</i>
Species:	<i>G. lactea</i>
IUCN Red List:	Least Concern
CITES:	Not listed
CMS:	Not listed
IWPA, 1972:	Not listed
Population Trend:	Unknown



LC



Distribution

A resident species widespread throughout India. Found in upper, middle and lower stretches of the Ganga River.

Habit & Habitat

Gregarious, crepuscular, insectivorous. Its short bill is an adaptation to aerial feeding. Mostly found at large river banks, natural wetlands and coastal marshes.

Reproduction

Breeding Season: March to May/
February to April.

Nest site/ type: Colonial nester, nests on the sandy river bank, mid-river sandy islands.

Clutch Size: 2-3.

Key identifying features

Size 16.5-18.5 cm. Sandy grey body, very shallow forked tail, short legs. The tail is white with a black terminal triangle.

Major threats

Habitat destruction, habitat loss, river hydrology alteration, nest predation by feral dogs, disturbance by fishermen and cattle.

River lapwing

Vanellus duvaucelii

Vernacular name:	<i>Titeeri</i> (Hindi), <i>Kata titi</i> (Bengali)
Order:	Charadriiformes
Family:	Charadriidae
Genus:	<i>Vanellus</i>
Species:	<i>V. duvaucelii</i>
IUCN Red List:	Near Threatened
CITES:	Not listed
CMS:	Appendix II
IWPA, 1972:	Schedule IV
Population Trend:	Decreasing



NT



Distribution

A resident species widespread in Northern, East and Central India. Found in upper, middle and lower stretches of the Ganga River.

Habit & Habitat

Primarily feeds on crustaceans, insects and small frogs. Feeds at the banks of large rivers and lakes with sand banks or gravel bars and islands.

Reproduction

Breeding Season: March to June.

Nest site/ type: Small depressions in shingle and sand banks of the riverside.

Clutch Size: 2.

Incubation period: 28-30 days

Key identifying features

Size 29–32 cm. Bill, head and occipital crest black; underparts sandy grey-brown; upper tail coverts and tail white. Legs and feet reddish black.

Major threats

Alteration of river hydrology by dams, habitat degradation due to encroachment and excessive disturbance, incidental nest drowning and disturbance caused by human, livestock and dogs.

Indian skimmer

Rynchops albicollis

Vernacular name: *Panchhira* (Hindi),
Gang chasha (Bengali)

Order: *Charadriiformes*

Family: *Laridae*

Genus: *Rynchops*

Species: *R. albicollis*

IUCN Red List: *Vulnerable*

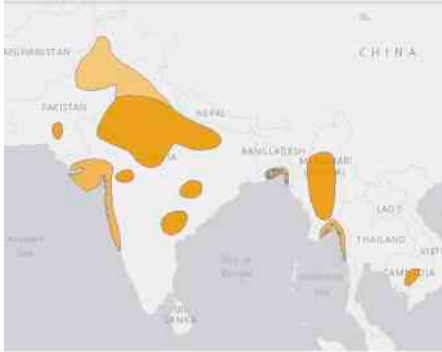
CITES: *Not listed*

CMS: *Not listed*

IWPA, 1972: *Not listed*

Population Trend: *Decreasing*





Distribution

A resident species found in large rivers of western and eastern India, coastal estuaries. Found in middle and lower stretches of the Ganga River.

Habit & Habitat

Skims over water surface, feeds on surface-dwelling fish, small crustaceans and insect larvae. Preferred habitats are sandy mid-river islands, sandy banks of large rivers and lakes, swamps and coastal wetlands such as estuaries.

Reproduction

Breeding Season: February to May.

Nest site/ type: Colonial, island nester on sandy beaches of mid-river islands.

Clutch Size: 3-4.

Key identifying features

Unique bill with much longer lower mandible, deep orange with yellow tip. Black and white plumage, black upper body, white underpart and bright red legs.

Major threats

Alteration and degradation of habitats through dam constructions, fishing, sand mining, agriculture, grazing and pollution from agricultural and industrial chemicals. Nest destruction by unpredicted water release from dams, predation by corvids and stray dogs.

River tern

Sterna aurantia

Vernacular name:	<i>Dariyai tehri</i> (Hindi), <i>Pan paira</i> (Bengali)
Order:	Charadriiformes
Family:	Laridae
Genus:	<i>Sterna</i>
Species:	<i>S. aurantia</i>
IUCN Red List:	Near Threatened
CITES:	Not listed
CMS:	Not listed
IWPA, 1972:	Not listed
Population Trend:	Decreasing



NT



Distribution

A resident species widespread throughout India. Found in upper, middle and lower stretches of the Ganga River.

Habit & Habitat

Predominantly feeds on fish, small crustaceans and insects. Resident breeder, prefers sandy beaches and mid-river islands of large perennial rivers.

Reproduction

Breeding Season: March to June.

Nest site/ type: Sand banks, sandy mid-river islands.

Clutch Size: 2-3.

Key identifying features

Size 38–43 cm. Fluvatile pale grey and white bird with pointed bright yellow bill, deeply forked swallow tail and short red legs.

Major threats

Alteration and degradation of habitats through dams, fishing, sand mining, agriculture, grazing and pollution from agricultural and industrial chemicals. Nest destruction by unpredicted water release from dams, predation by corvids, stray and domestic dogs.

Black-bellied tern

Sterna acuticauda

Vernacular name:	<i>Kali tohri</i> (Hindi), <i>Kalopet Panpaira</i> (Bengali)
Order:	Charadriiformes
Family:	Laridae
Genus:	<i>Sterna</i>
Species:	<i>S. acuticauda</i>
IUCN Red List:	Endangered
CITES:	Not listed
CMS:	Not listed
IWPA, 1972:	Not listed
Population Trend:	Decreasing





Distribution

A resident species found in major rivers systems in India. Found in middle and lower stretches of the Ganga River.

Habit & Habitat

Skims over the surface of water and ground to pick up insects and plunges at an angle into the water to feed on crustaceans, tadpoles and fish. Occurs in sandy banks and mid-river sandy islands of lowland rivers and marshes.

Reproduction

Breeding Season: February to April.

Nest site/ type: Colonial island nester on sandy beaches of mid-river islands.

Clutch Size: 2-3.

Key identifying features

Adults have orange bill, black cap and nape, dark grey breast and blackish belly and vent. Breeding birds show a whitish belly and lack tail streamers.

Major threats

Alteration of breeding habitats, river bank and river island agriculture, sudden release of water from dams, water pollution, nest predation by cats, dogs and corvids.

Brown-headed gull

Larus brunnicephalus

Vernacular name:	<i>Bhuri ganga chilli</i> (Hindi), <i>Gang chil</i> (Bengali)
Order:	Charadriiformes
Family:	Laridae
Genus:	<i>Larus</i>
Species:	<i>L. brunnicephalus</i>
IUCN Red List:	Least Concern
CITES:	Not listed
CMS:	Not listed
IWPA, 1972:	Schedule IV
Population Trend:	Stable



LC



Distribution

It is a winter migrant at large rivers, inland lakes and on the coasts in India. Found in upper, middle and lower stretches of the Ganga River.

Habit & Habitat

Highly gregarious, mainly piscivorous. Found in coastal or inland water bodies like large rivers, lakes and estuaries.

Reproduction

Breeds in the high plateaus of central Asia from Tajikistan to Ordos in Inner Mongolia

Key identifying features

Size 42 cm. A pale brown head, a pale grey body, and red bill and legs. The black tips to the primary wing feathers have conspicuous white "mirrors". The under wing is grey with black flight feathers.

Major threats

Habitat loss and fragmentation, human disturbances and pollution.



Pied avocet

Recurvirostra avosetta

Vernacular name: [Kusya chaha \(Hindi\)](#)

Order: [Charadriiformes](#)

Family: [Recurvirostridae](#)

Genus: [Recurvirostra](#)

Species: [R. avosetta](#)

IUCN Red List: [Least Concern](#)

CITES: [Not listed](#)

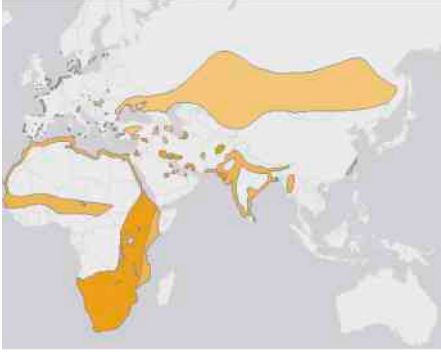
CMS: [Appendix II](#)

IWPA, 1972: [Schedule IV](#)

Population Trend: [Unknown](#)



LC



Distribution

A locally common winter and passage migrant to NW India. Found in upper, middle and lower stretches of the Ganga River.

Habit & Habitat

Carnivorous, feeds on aquatic insects by sweeping bill from side to side on water surface or mud. Generally found in shallow water of large river, islands and mudflats.

Reproduction

Breeds in Central Asia

Key identifying features

Size 41.9–45.1 cm. Up-curved long black bill; dark red iris, glistening white body, black head, hind neck and two wing-bands, and bluish-grey legs.

Major threats

Habitat alterations and loss due to development activities, pollution, human disturbances and reduced river flow.

Osprey

Pandion haliaetus

Vernacular name: *Chota Machhlimaar* (Hindi),
Machhmarol (Bengali)

Order: *Accipitriformes*

Family: *Pandionidae*

Genus: *Pandion*

Species: *P. haliaetus*

IUCN Red List: *Least Concern*

CITES: *Appendix II*

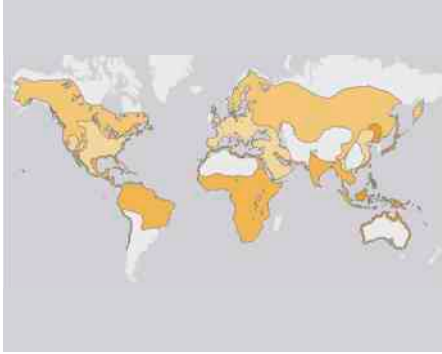
CMS: *Appendix II*

IWPA, 1972: *Schedule I*

Population Trend: *Increasing*



LC



Distribution

A widespread winter visitor and resident in India. Found in upper, middle and lower stretches of the Ganga River.

Habit & Habitat

Carnivorous, solitary and monogamous. Fish makes upto 99% of the Osprey's diet. It prefers shallow, fresh, brackish or marine habitats. It is found fishing in ponds, lakes, marshes, lagoons and creeks.

Reproduction

Breeding Season: Varies with region.

Nest site/ type: The nests is a platform of twigs, sticks and plant material.

Clutch Size: 2-4.

Key identifying features

Size 50–66 cm . The upperparts are a deep, glossy brown, while the breast is white and sometimes streaked with brown, and the underparts are pure white. The head is white with a dark mask across the eyes, reaching to the sides of the neck.

Major threats

Hunting of adult birds, collection of eggs, poisoning by agricultural pesticides, disturbance in breeding habitats and felling of tall trees.

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miscellaneous sources.

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Conservation Monitoring Centre (GACMC)- Wildlife
Institute of India, Dehradun.

Notes

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Notes

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NMCG

National Mission
for Clean Ganga,
Ministry of Water
Resources, River
Development &
Ganga Rejuvenation

GACMC

Ganga Aqualife
Conservation
Monitoring
Centre

Wildlife Institute of India

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www.wii.gov.in/national_mission_for_clean_ganga

