

VIBRANT GANGA



wings of ganga

RIVER AND
WETLAND
BIRDS OF
GANGA RIVER

PART III



भारतीय वन्यजीव संस्थान
Wildlife Institute of India



फलपुष्पैः किसलयैर्वृतां गुल्मैर्दिवजैस्तथा ।
विष्णुपादच्युतां दिव्यामपापां पापनाशिनीम् ।।

...the cluster of trees and shrubs are decorated with various fruits and flowers, and covered with young tender leaves, and also by various birds (playing over them),
The River (Ganga) has originated from the feet of Sri Vishnu; She is Divine and sinless, and the destroyer of sins... (VR 2.50.24)

Dedicated to
Dr. Sálim Moizuddin Abdul Ali



The Birdman of India
(12 November 1896 - 20 June 1987)



wings OF
ganga

PART III

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This publication is third part of the "Wings of Ganga" series under the "Vibrant Ganga: Book Series" and includes important river and wetland birds of the Ganga River. Previous two publications in the series covered 69 species, 25 families. The representative species were selected on the basis of the four criteria listed as follows-

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 16 families of riverine and wetland birds of the Ganga River represented by 29 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 on the conservation status of the species, taxonomy, key identifying features, habit and habitat, reproduction ecology and major threats.



PREFACE

The Ganga River has been the cradle of Indian civilization and enshrined in the culture, tradition and economy of the people living in its basin and beyond. Encompassing three ecologically diverse biogeographic zones, it harbours important aquatic faunal species including several terrestrial and water birds.

As a part of the Central Asian flyway, the Ganga River basin is an important habitat for migratory water birds and supports 177 species of birds including riverine, wetland and associated terrestrial species. Some iconic and globally threatened birds also breed along the river. These birds maintain the habitats they occur in and function as pollinators, scavengers, predators, seed dispersers and ecosystem engineers. Migratory birds link ecosystem processes and fluxes that are separated by great distances and times contributing to a myriad of functions. In effect, the occurrence of these birds are indicators of healthy riverine systems.

The Ministry of Jal Shakti, DoWR, RD, GR through its National Mission for Clean Ganga and the Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun has taken up the 'Biodiversity and Ganga Conservation' project as an integrative restoration approach incorporating ecological, biological as well as socio-economic processes. The project aims for a science-based aquatic species restoration plan for the Ganga River by involving multiple stakeholders. A comprehensive strategy to restore the biodiversity value of the Ganga River and associated wetlands in the basin is being developed.

To ensure active and sustained involvement of stakeholders, their sensitization on the importance of Ganga's biodiversity is essential. With this objective in mind, the present publication 'Wings of Ganga -Part III' under the series 'Vibrant Ganga' was conceptualised as an information booklet for a glance into the birds of the Ganga River. It is the third in its series, with the first two booklets covering Rare and Endangered birds of the Ganga River. For each species, information on their taxonomy, conservation status, distribution, description, habitat, reproduction and major threats are included. The information booklet is targeted for a wide range of audience and can be used by students, scientific community and local communities as a field guide to identify and study the species included in this booklet.

Editors

All species belong to

Kingdom: Animalia,
Phylum : Chordata,
Class: Aves

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



Endangered



Vulnerable



Near Threatened



Least Concern

Following codes were used
for describing migration
status of the species



Extant (Resident)



Extant (Breeding)



Extant (Non-Breeding)



Extant (Passage)



**Extant & Vagrant
(Seasonality uncertain)**



Little Grebe

Tachybaptus ruficollis

Vernacular Name:	Pandubi, Dubdubi (Hindi and Bengali)
Order:	Podicipediformes
Family:	Podicipedidae
Genus:	<i>Tachybaptus</i>
Species:	<i>T. ruficollis</i>
IUCN Red List:	Least Concern
CITES:	Not Listed
CMS:	Not Listed
IWPA, 1972:	Schedule IV
Population Trend:	Decreasing



LC



Distribution

A widespread resident in India. Found throughout the Ganga River.

Habit & Habitat

Feeds primarily on adult and larval insects as well as molluscs, crustaceans, adult and juvenile amphibians and occasionally on small fishes.

Reproduction

Breeding Season: May to August

Nest site/ type: The nest is a floating platform of aquatic plant matter anchored to emergent vegetation, submerged branches or bushes close to the edge of shallow wetlands.

Clutch Size: 3-6

Incubation Period: 19-23 days

Key Identifying Features

Small sized bird (25-29 cm). The breeding plumage has rufous cheeks and neck sides, and yellow patch at the base of the bill. The non-breeding plumage, has buff-cheeks, foreneck and flanks with puffed-up rear end. Juvenile is similar to non-breeding adults, but is characterized by brown stripes across the cheeks.

Major Threats

The species is vulnerable to habitat loss and degradation due to transformation of wetlands, canalization of streams, pollution and climatic shifts. It is also susceptible to avian influenza.



Shuchismita Das

Little Cormorant

Microcarbo niger

Vernacular Name:	Paan-kowwa, Jograbi (Hindi) Paankawri (Bengali)
Order:	Suliformes
Family:	Phalacrocoracidae
Genus:	<i>Microcarbo</i>
Species:	<i>M. niger</i>
IUCN Red List:	Least Concern
CITES:	Not Listed
CMS:	Not Listed
IWPA, 1972:	Schedule IV
Population Trend:	Unknown



LC



Distribution

A widespread resident, with local migration depending on water conditions. Found throughout the Ganga River.

Habit & Habitat

Feeds predominantly on fish and to a lesser extent on tadpoles, frogs and crustaceans. Prefers rivers, lakes, irrigation reservoirs and canals, village tanks, tidal estuaries.

Reproduction

Breeding Season: May to October

Nest Type: Cup-shaped nests on trees close to human habitations, however always near a waterbody.

Clutch Size: 2-6

Incubation Period: 14-21 days

Key Identifying Features

Size 51 cm. Breeding adult is black with white plumes on the sides of the head. Bill, eyes, facial skin and pouch are black. In non-breeding adults, plumage is browner with whitish chin, paler bill and pouch, and lacks white head plumes.

Major Threats

The species is vulnerable to habitat destruction, human disturbances and pesticide pollution.



Shuchismita Das

Little Egret

Egretta garzetta

Vernacular Name: [Kilchia or Karchiabagla \(Hindi\)](#)

[Chotokorchebak \(Bengali\)](#)

Order: [Pelecaniformes](#)

Family: [Ardeidae](#)

Genus: [Egretta](#)

Species: [E. garzetta](#)

IUCN Red List: [Least Concern](#)

CITES: [Not Listed](#)

CMS: [Not Listed](#)

IWPA, 1972: [Schedule IV](#)

Population Trend: [Increasing](#)



LC



Distribution

A widespread resident, shifts locally with water conditions. Found throughout the Ganga River.

Habit & Habitat

Highly opportunistic feeder. Feeds on fish, frogs, crustaceans, aquatic insects. Roosts communally. Prefer lakes, river marshes, flooded paddy fields, estuaries, tidal creeks and mangroves.

Reproduction

Breeding season: July to September in Northern India; November to February in Southern India.

Nest Type: Nest is a typical flimsy cupped structure of twigs, placed 2 to 6 m up on a tree most often near a waterbody.

Clutch Size: 3-5

Incubation Period: 21-25 days

Key Identifying Features

Size 55-65 cm. Body is slender with black bill and legs, yellow feet and greyish or yellowish lore. Breeding adults have elongated nape and mantle plumes. Lores and feet become reddish in courtship. Non-breeding and immature individuals have pinkish and greyish bill base and yellowish or greenish legs.

Major Threats

Wetland loss to agriculture and industrial operations. It is also susceptible to avian influenza.



P. Gangaiamaran

Purple Heron

Ardea purpurea

Vernacular Name:	Laal anjan (Hindi) Laal kank (Bengali)
Order:	Pelecaniformes
Family:	Ardeidae
Genus:	<i>Ardea</i>
Species:	<i>A. purpurea</i>
IUCN Red List:	Least Concern
CITES:	Not Listed
CMS:	Not Listed
IWPA, 1972:	Schedule IV
Population Trend:	Decreasing



LC



Distribution

A widespread resident and local migrant in India. Found throughout the Ganga River.

Habit & Habitat

Crepuscular, feeds on fish, frogs, molluscs, crustaceans, aquatic insects, small rodents and young birds among dense aquatic vegetation. Prefer inland swampy habitats with tall covers.

Reproduction

Breeding Season: June to October in Northern India, November to March in Southern India.

Nest Type: The nest is a platform of sticks and branches, or rush stems, built on trees, dense reed beds positioned over or beside water up to 3 m high.

Clutch Size: 3-5

Incubation Period: 24-26 days

Key Identifying Features

Size 78-90 cm. Rakish, with long thin neck. Adult has chestnut head, black stripes in the neck, grey mantle and upperwing coverts, with dark chestnut belly and underwing coverts.

Major Threats

The main threats to this species are loss of wetland habitat, loss of reed bed through reed cane harvesting, agricultural encroachment and pollution.



Shuchismita Das

Cattle Egret

Bubulcus ibis

Vernacular Name:	Gai bagla (Hindi) Go bak (Bengali)
Order:	Pelecaniformes
Family:	Ardeidae
Genus:	<i>Bubulcus</i>
Species:	<i>B. ibis</i>
IUCN Red List:	Least Concern
CITES:	Not Listed
CMS:	Not Listed
IWPA, 1972:	
Population Trend:	Increasing



LC



Distribution

A widespread resident in India. Found throughout the Ganga River.

Habit & Habitat

Gregarious when feeding and roosting; typically in flocks around domestic stock and wild buffalo, often riding on their backs, picking parasites and flies from their hides. Prefers damp grasslands, paddy fields, grass banks of village tanks, canals and lakes and also rubbish dumps and forest clearings.



Shuchismita Das

Reproduction

Breeding Season: June to August in Northern India; November to February in Southern India.

Nest Type: Nest comprises of twigs and vegetation and positioned up to 20 m high in reed beds, bushes, trees, mangroves or dense thickets, usually over or surrounded by water.

Clutch Size: 3-5

Incubation Period: Undetermined

Key Identifying Features

Size 48-53 cm. Stocky body with short yellow bill and short dark legs. Breeding plumage displays orange buff on head, neck and mantle, base of bill and legs are reddish. Non-breeding plumage is white.

Major Threats

The species is threatened by wetland degradation and destruction, pesticide poisoning and other human disturbances.

Indian Pond Heron

Ardeola grayii

Vernacular Name:	Kunch bagla (Hindi) Konch bak (Bengali)
Order:	Pelecaniformes
Family:	Ardeidae
Genus:	<i>Ardea</i>
Species:	<i>A. grayii</i>
IUCN Red List:	Least Concern
CITES:	Not Listed
CMS:	Not Listed
IWPA, 1972:	Schedule IV
Population Trend:	Unknown



LC



Distribution

A widespread resident; shifts locally with drought and flood conditions. Found throughout the Ganga River.

Habit & Habitat

Solitary when feeding, gregarious at roost. Feeds on frogs, fish, crustaceans, water beetles and other insects. Prefers streams, lakes, marshes, inundated paddy-fields, village tanks, stagnant roadside ditches, borrow-pits and puddles and tidal mudflats.



Shuchismita Das

Reproduction

Breeding Season: May to September in Northern India; November to February in Southern India.

Nest Type: Nest is an untidy structure of twigs, placed on isolated large trees or clumps growing near human habitations, not necessarily close to water.

Clutch Size: 3-5

Incubation Period: 24 days

Key Identifying Features

Size 42-45cm. Wings are white with dark saddles and earthy brown when at rest. Breeding adult has yellowish-buff head and neck, and maroon-brown mantle. The head, neck and breast are streaked in non-breeding plumage.

Major Threats

Wetland degradation, poisoning and other human disturbances.

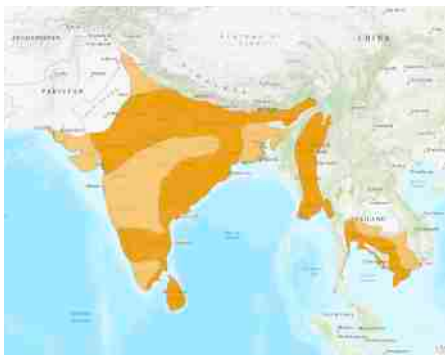
Asian Openbill

Anastomus oscitans

Vernacular Name:	Gungla (Hindi) Shamukh-khol (Bengali)
Order:	Ciconiiformes
Family:	Ciconiidae
Genus:	<i>Anastomus</i>
Species:	<i>A. oscitans</i>
IUCH Red List:	Least Concern
CITES:	Not Listed
CMS:	Not Listed
IWPA, 1972:	Schedule IV
Population Trend:	Unknown



LC



Distribution

A widespread resident; shifts locally with drought and flood condition. Found in the middle and lower Ganga River.

Habit & Habitat

Gregarious during foraging and nesting. Feeds chiefly on molluscs; also eat crabs, frogs and other small animals. Prefers inland waters such as lake, marsh, paddy-field, village tank.



Shuchismita Das

Reproduction

Breeding season: July to September in Northern India; November to March in Southern India.

Nest Type: Nest is a rough circular pad of twigs with a central depression lined with leaves. Usually built on trees standing partially submerged in a lake or monsoon-filled land depression.

Cultch Size: 2-4

Incubation Period: 24-25 days

Key Identifying Features

Size 68 cm. Stout dull-coloured and open bill. White plumage (breeding) or greyish-white plumage (non-breeding) with black flight feathers. Legs dull pink, which become brighter in breeding adults. Juvenile has brownish-grey head, neck, breast and mantle.

Major Threats

Wetland degradation, poisoning and other forms of human disturbances.

Red-naped Ibis

Pseudibis papillosa

Vernacular Name:	Kala baza (Hindi) Kalo dochara (Bengali)
Order:	Pelecaniformes
Family:	Threskiornithidae
Genus:	<i>Pseudibis</i>
Species:	<i>P. papillosa</i>
IUCN Red List:	Least Concern
CITES:	Not Listed
CMS:	Not Listed
IWPA, 1972:	Schedule IV
Population Trend:	Decreasing



LC



Distribution

A widespread resident in India. Found in the middle and lower Ganga River.

Habit & Habitat

Less dependent on water, forages on the drier margins of lakes, riverbanks and in stubble fields; occasionally wades into puddles. Feeds on small fishes, frogs, earthworms, beetles and other insects and occasionally on grains.



Charles J. Sharp

Reproduction

Breeding Season: March to October in Northern India; later in Southern India.

Nest Type: Nest is a large, deep, stick platform, loosely lined with straw. Built on large trees. Old nests are also utilized.

Clutch Size: 2-4

Incubation Period: Unrecorded

Key Identifying Features

Size 68 cm. Stocky, dark ibis with relatively stout downcurved bill, small white shoulder patches and reddish legs. A triangular patch of red warts covers top of naked black head. Adult is dark-brown with green-and-purple gloss.

Major Threats

The species is vulnerable to habitat loss and degradation, invasion of exotic plants, aquaculture, pollution and hunting.



Lesser Whistling Duck

Dendrocygna javanica

Vernacular name:	Seelhi (Hindi) Saral (Bengali)
Order:	Anseriformes
Family:	Anatidae
Genus:	<i>Dendrocygna</i>
Species:	<i>D. javanica</i>
IUCN Red list:	Least Concern
CITES:	Not Listed
CMS:	Not Listed
IWPA, 1972:	Schedule IV
Population Trend:	Decreasing



LC



Distribution

A widespread resident in India, moves locally with drought and flood conditions. Found throughout the Ganga River.

Habit & Habitat

Social; occasionally sighted around urban tanks and inundated paddy-fields. Avoids open water and large rivers. Mainly a nocturnal feeder and herbivorous; feeds largely on aquatic weeds, tender shoots and sedges.



Shuchismita Das

Reproduction

Breeding season: June to October, varying locally with early or late monsoon and water conditions.

Nest Type: The nest is made of twigs and grasses placed in natural hollows in tree-trunks, or built at moderate heights in the fork of large branches, sometimes well away from water. Old nests of kites, herons and crows are also utilized.

Clutch Size: 7-12

Incubation Period: 22-24 days

Key Identifying Features

Size 42 cm. A small pale-brown and maroon-chestnut coloured duck with uniformly chestnut upper tail coverts.

Major Threats

The species is vulnerable to habitat loss, river and wetland pollution and hunting.

Greylag Goose

Anser anser

Vernacular Name:	Raj hans (Hindi and Bengali)
Order:	Anseriformes
Family:	Anatidae
Genus:	<i>Anser</i>
Species:	<i>A. anser</i>
IUCN Red List:	Least Concern
CITES:	Not Listed
CMS:	Not Listed
IWPA, 1972:	Schedule IV
Population Trend:	Increasing



LC



Distribution

A winter visitor in India; arrives in large skeins from Central Asia in October-November and leaves by mid-March. Found throughout the Ganga River.

Habit & Habitat

Highly gregarious. Congregates in large flocks near large rivers and wetlands with abundance of aquatic vegetation, grasses and sedges and less human disturbance. Exclusively herbivorous, feeds on grass, shoots of new growth vegetation, aquatic weeds and tubers.



Aftab A. Usmani

Reproduction

Breeding Season: April to May

Nest Type: The nest is a shallow construction of plant matters, placed among reed beds, on the ground, in or at the base of trees and under bushes.

Clutch Size: 2-11

Incubation Period: 28-29 days

Key Identifying Features

Size 75-90 cm. Large grey goose with stout pink bill and pink legs and feet. Juvenile has less prominent pale fringes in upper parts, flanks and belly.

Major Threats

The species is threatened by degradation and destruction of wetland habitats and poisoning. It is also susceptible to avian influenza.

Cotton Pygmy-goose

Nettapus coromandelianus

Vernacular Name:	Girria, Girja (Hindi) Bali hans (Bengali)
Order:	Anseriformes
Family:	Anatidae
Genus:	<i>Nettapus</i>
Species:	<i>N. coromandelianus</i>
IUCN Red List:	Least Concern
CITES:	Not Listed
CMS:	Not Listed
IWPA, 1972:	Schedule IV
Population Trend:	Stable



LC



Distribution

A widespread resident in India. Found throughout the Ganga River.

Habit & Habitat

Solitary, however move in pairs in breeding season. Prefers wetlands with vegetation cover, reservoirs and rivers. Feeds on surface, dive occasionally to get submerged vegetation. Mainly herbivorous, feeds on aquatic vegetation, shoots, corms and seeds of aquatic plants.



Shuchismita Das

Reproduction

Breeding Season: July to August

Nest Type: Nest in natural hollow in a tree-trunk standing in or near water.

Clutch Size: 6-14

Incubation Period: 15-16 days

Key Identifying Features

Size 30-37 cm. Sexually dimorphic. Male has broad white band across wing, white head and neck, black cap, greenish-black upper parts, and black breast band. The female has white trailing edge to wing and have dark stripe through eye. Both the sexes have a red iris and black legs. Breeding males have greenish black legs.

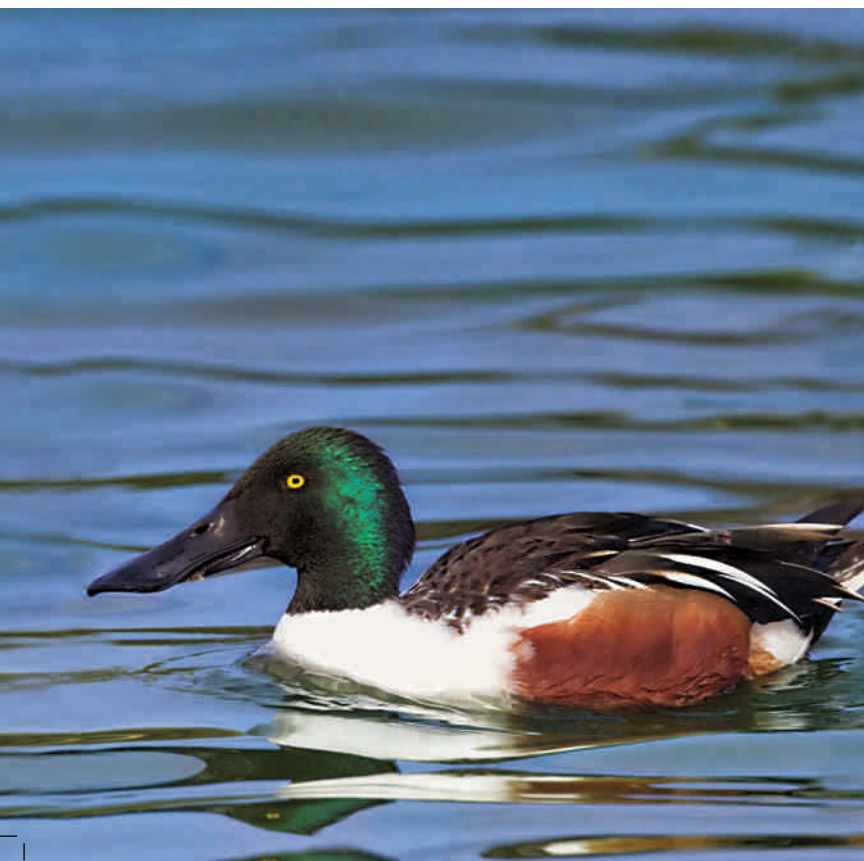
Major Threats

The species is threatened by degradation and loss of wetland habitats, changing wetland management practices and poisoning.

Northern Shoveler

Spatula clypeata

Vernacular Name:	Tidari, Ghirah (Hindi) Khunte hans (Bengali)
Order:	Anseriformes
Family:	Anatidae
Genus:	<i>Spatula</i>
Species:	<i>S. clypeata</i>
IUCN Red List:	Least Concern
CITES:	Not listed
CMS:	Not Listed
IWPA, 1972:	Schedule IV
Population Trend:	Decreasing



LC



Distribution

A widespread winter visitor in India, arrives during October and leaves in mid-June. Widespread in middle and lower Ganga River.

Habit & Habitat

Diurnal, moves in small flocks. Prefers all types of inland waters. When feeding, swims slowly with neck and broad shovel-bill stretched stiffly in front. Feeds on crustaceans, molluscs, aquatic insects and their larvae, fish spawn, worms and occasionally on aquatic weeds.



Rick Bowers

Reproduction

Breeding Season: Mid-April to June

Nest Type: Nest is a hollow or depression in the ground in a meadow, amongst herbage, lined with grasses.

Clutch Size: 7-16

Incubation Period: 23-25 days

Key Identifying Features

Size 44-52 cm. Long spatulate bill and bluish forewing. Male has dark green head, white breast, chestnut flanks, and blue forewing. Female is mottled dark brown and buff, with greyish-blue shoulder patch and bright orange bill.

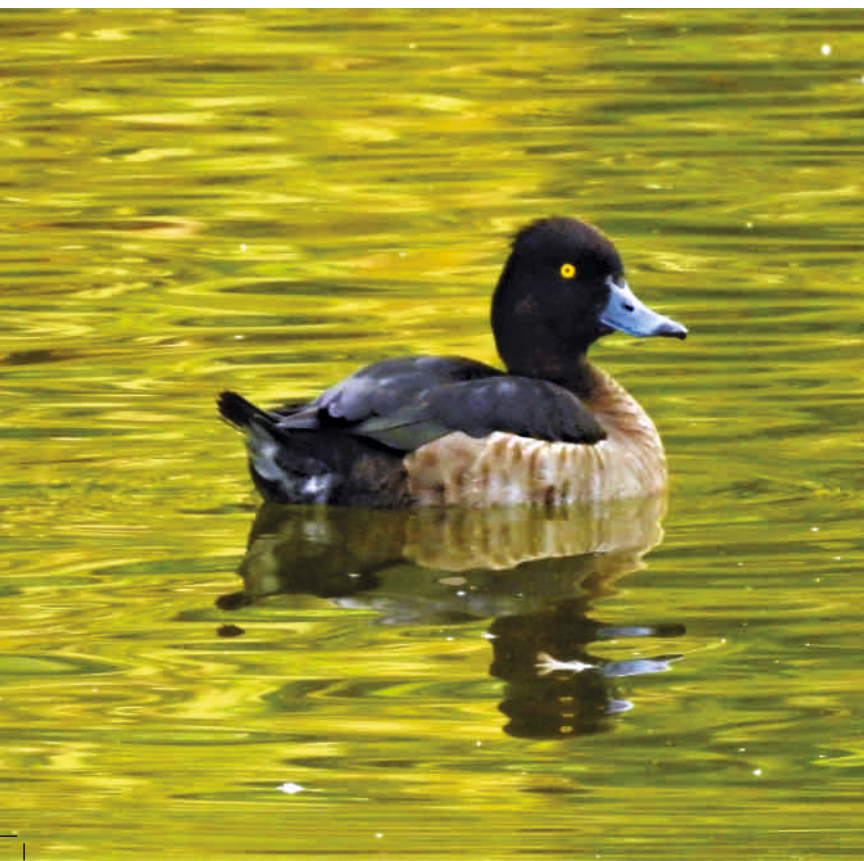
Major Threats

Habitat loss and degradation, nest predation, pollution from agricultural run-off and collision with power lines. Susceptible to avian influenza and avian botulism.

Tufted Duck

Aythya fuligula

Vernacular Name:	Dubaru (Hindi) Bamuniya hans (Bengali)
Order:	Anseriformes
Family:	Anatidae
Genus:	<i>Aythya</i>
Species:	<i>A. fuligula</i>
IUCN Red List:	Least Concern
CITES:	Not Listed
CMS:	Not Listed
IWPA, 1972:	Schedule IV
Population Trend:	Stable



LC



Distribution

A winter visitor in India; arrives in mid-October and leaves by end of March. Found throughout the Ganga River.

Habit & Habitat

Gregarious; sometimes in flocks of several hundreds. Prefers water bodies with large open areas. Omnivorous, feeds on molluscs, crustaceans, aquatic insects, as well as grains and seeds of aquatic plants.



Shuchismita Das

Reproduction

Breeding Season: Late April to June.

Nest Type: The nest is constructed of vegetation and is placed in water on floating mats or islets, or on the ground on islands in rush or grass tussocks, or under bushes.

Clutch Size: 6-12

Incubation Period: 25-27 days

Key Identifying Features

Size 43-47 cm. Breeding male is glossy black, with prominent crest and white flanks. Eclipse and immature males are duller with greyish flanks, and less pronounced crest. Females are dusky brown, with paler flanks and yellow iris.

Major Threats

Habitat loss and degradation, changing land management practices, agricultural intensification and human disturbances, predation and hunting. It is also susceptible to avian influenza.

Black-winged Kite

Elanus caeruleus

Vernacular Name:	Kapassi (Hindi and Bengali)
Order:	Accipitriformes
Family:	Accipitridae
Genus:	<i>Elanus</i>
Species:	<i>E. caeruleus</i>
IUCN Red List:	Least Concern
CITES:	Not Listed
CMS:	Appendix II
IWPA, 1972:	Schedule IV
Population Trend:	Stable



LC



Distribution

A widespread resident in India. Found in the middle and lower Ganga River.

Habit & Habitat

Solitary or in widely scattered pairs. Prefers grassland interspersed with cultivation or with scattered trees, and scrub desert. Somewhat crepuscular, feeds on small grassland mammals, reptiles, birds and insect; hunts from both a perch and hovering vantage, quartering the ground and hawking insects in flight.

Reproduction

Breeding Season: Varies locally to cover the entire year, with a marked recession in April and May.

Nest Type: Nest is made of small twigs, lined with roots and grass, placed on tree branch 3-20 m above the ground, usually in open area.

Clutch Size: 3-6

Incubation Period: 26-33 days

Key Identifying features

Size 31-35 cm. Small, dainty gray and white hawk. A black line from lores to behind the blood-red eyes, and black patches on wing shoulders. Juvenile has brownish-grey upper parts with pale fringes and less distinct shoulder patch.

Major Threats

Loss of wetland habitat, human disturbances and use of rodenticides and pesticides.



www.birding-in-portugal.com

Western Marsh Harrier

Circus aeruginosus

Vernacular Name:	Kutar, Kulesir (Hindi) Pan cheel (Bengali)
Order:	Accipitriformes
Family:	Accipitridae
Genus:	<i>Circus</i>
Species:	<i>C. aeruginosus</i>
IUCN Red List:	Least Concern
CITES:	Appendix II
CMS:	Appendix II
IWPA, 1972:	Schedule IV
Population Trend:	Increasing



LC



Distribution

A winter visitor in India; arrives in September and leaves by April. It is widespread in the middle and lower Ganga River.

Habit & Habitat

Inhabits extensive areas of dense marsh vegetation, in fresh or brackish water, generally in lowlands. It is a generalist predator, taking a variety of prey types, from small birds to small mammals.

Reproduction

Breeding Season: April to June

Nest Type: The nest is a mass of reeds and rushes lined with grass; placed on the ground near a marsh.

Clutch Size: 4-6

Incubation Period: 33-38 days

Key Identifying Features

Size 42-45 cm. Broad-winged, stout-bodied harrier. Adult male is distinguished by chestnut-brown mantle and upperwing coverts contrasting with grey secondaries, black outer primaries, pale head and brown streaking on breasts and belly. Adult female and immature individuals are dark chocolate-brown with a creamy-buff cap on head.

Major Threats

Wetland degradation, pollution, heavy metal poisoning and hunting.



Dr. Raju Kasambe



Common Crane

Grus grus

Vernacular Name:	Kronch (Hindi)
Order:	Gruiformes
Family:	Gruidae
Genus:	<i>Grus</i>
Species:	<i>G. grus</i>
IUCN Red List:	Least Concern
CITES:	Appendix II
CMS:	Appendix II
IWPA, 1972:	Schedule IV
Population Trend:	Increasing



LC



Distribution

A winter visitor to Northern India; arrives in late September/October and stays until March. Found in the middle and lower Ganga River.

Habit & Habitat

Found in flocks, near rivers, reservoirs, large wetlands and sometimes in agricultural fields. Omnivorous in both breeding and non-breeding season.



Jorge Sierra

Reproduction

Breeding Season: May to June.

Nest Type: The nest is a large untidy heap of vegetable matter placed on the ground in open or thinly-wooded swamps and marshy clearings in forest.

Clutch Size: 2

Incubation Period: 30 days

Key Identifying Features

Size 110-120 cm. Adult has black head and foreneck, white stripe behind eye extending downside of neck with red patch on the crown. Immature individual has brown marking on upper parts with buff or grey head and neck.

Major Threats

The species is threatened by habitat loss and degradation through dam construction, urbanization, agricultural expansion, nest disturbance from tourism and recreation, nest predation and hunting.

White-breasted Waterhen

Amaurornis phoenicurus

Vernacular Name:	Dauk, Jalmurghi (Hindi) Dahuk (Bengali)
Order:	Gruiformes
Family:	Rallidae
Genus:	<i>Amaurornis</i>
Species:	<i>A. phoenicurus</i>
IUCN Red List:	Least Concern
CITES:	Not Listed
CMS:	Not Listed
IWPA, 1972:	Schedule IV
Population Trend:	Unknown



LC



Distribution

A widespread resident in India. Found throughout the Ganga River.

Habit & Habitat

Solitary, diurnal, found in small to larger wetlands and rivers with thick cover of weeds or rushes. Feeds largely on vegetable matter, but also on small molluscs, aquatic insects and larvae.



Shuchismita Das

Reproduction

Breeding Season: July to September in plains, but in the hills it starts earlier in May.

Nest Type: The nest is a mass of sedges and other vegetation heaped up to form a hollow for the eggs; placed either on the water amongst vegetation or in tufts of grass, or even sometimes a foot or two above ground.

Clutch Size: 6-9

Incubation Period: 19-21 days

Key Identifying Features

Size 32 cm. Adult has grey upper parts and white face, foreneck and breast. The undertail coverts are rufous-cinnamon, bill and legs are greenish or yellowish, with swollen reddish base to upper mandible.

Major Threats

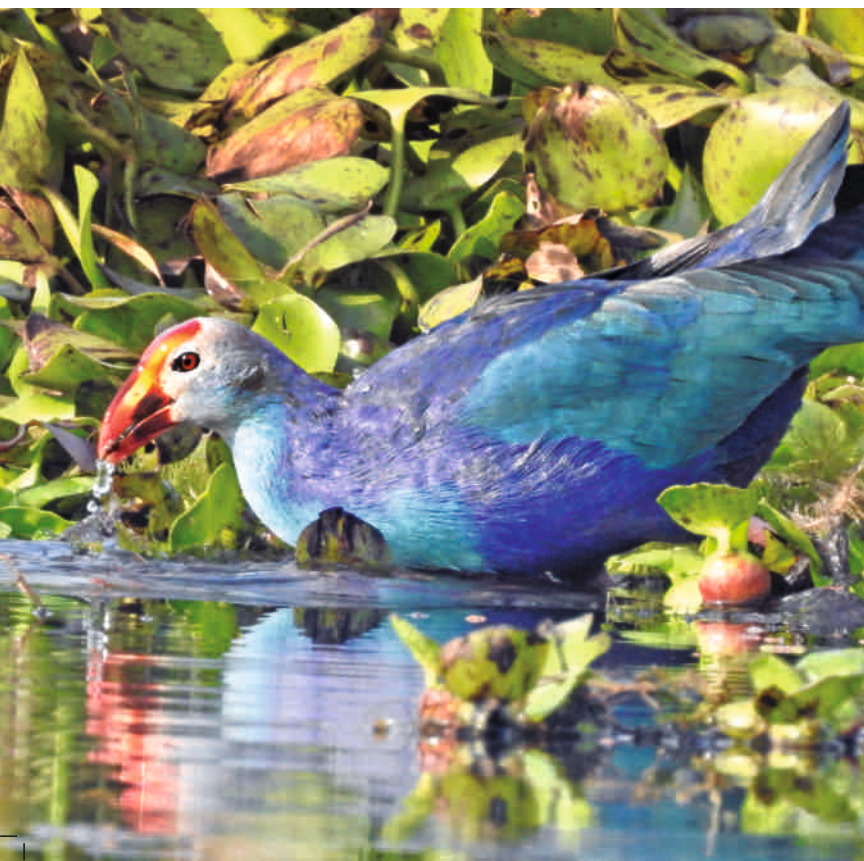
The species is threatened by wetland degradation and destruction, pesticide poisoning and human disturbances.



Grey-headed Swamphen

Porphyrio porphyrio

Vernacular Name:	Kalim (Hindi) Kampakhi (Bengali)
Order:	Gruiformes
Family:	Rallidae
Genus:	<i>Porphyrio</i>
Species:	<i>P. porphyrio</i>
IUCN Red List:	Least Concern
CITES:	Not Listed
CMS:	Not Listed
IWPA, 1972:	Schedule IV
Population Trend:	Unknown



LC



Distribution

A widespread resident in the plains of India. Found in the middle and lower Ganga River.

Habit & Habitat

Mainly crepuscular. Prefers large swamp or lakes with plenty of rushes, bushes and weeds. Feeds predominantly on plants and seeds; also takes molluscs, leeches, small crustaceans, spiders, fish and fish eggs and frogs.



Shuchismita Das

Reproduction

Breeding Season: June to September

Nest Type: Nest is a massive heap of sedges and rushes firmly put together with a depression on the top for the eggs; placed amongst rushes, tufts of grass, or in bushes.

Clutch Size: 3-7

Incubation Period: 23-27 days

Key Identifying Features

Size 45-50 cm. Purplish-blue body with variable greyish head, huge red bill and frontal shield. Sexes alike, but females are smaller than male.

Major Threats

Wetland drainage, pesticide contamination, poisoning by cyanobacterial toxin and hunting. It is also susceptible to avian influenza and avian botulism.



Bronze-winged Jacana

Metopidius indicus

Vernacular Name:	Jal pipi (Hindi and Bengali)
Order:	Charadriiformes
Family:	Jacanidae
Genus:	<i>Metopidius</i>
Species:	<i>M. indicus</i>
IUCN Red List:	Least Concern
CITES:	Not Listed
CMS:	Not Listed
IWPA, 1972:	Schedule IV
Population Trend:	Unknown



LC



Distribution

A widespread resident in the plains of India. Found in the middle and lower Ganga River.

Habit & Habitat

Solitary, however often move in flocks and can be seen walking on plants on the surface of water. Prefers marshy areas with extensive vegetation. Feeds mainly on plants but also on insects, molluscs and crustaceans.



Shuchismita Das

Reproduction

Breeding Season: June to September

Nest Type: Nest is composed of rushes and water-weed twisted to form a circular pad, with a depression for the eggs in the centre, placed amongst thickly growing lotus leaves, either on the water surface or on the edge of an island.

Clutch Size: 4

Incubation Period: 29 days

Key Identifying Features

Size 28-31 cm. A rail-like bird with long toes and claws. Adults have white supercilium, bronze-green upperparts and blackish underparts; greenish-yellow bill with reddish base, and a broad lappet at its base.

Major Threats

The species is threatened by wetland degradation and destruction, pesticide poisoning and other human disturbances.

Kentish Plover

Charadrius alexandrinus

Vernacular Name:	Kentish jiria (Bengali)
Order:	Charadriiformes
Family:	Charadriidae
Genus:	<i>Charadrius</i>
Species:	<i>C. alexandrinus</i>
IUCN Red List:	Least Concern
CITES:	Not Listed
CMS:	Appendix II
IWPA, 1972:	Schedule IV
Population Trend:	Decreasing



LC



Distribution

A winter visitor throughout India, arrives in September and leaves by March. Found in the middle and lower Ganga River.

Habit & Habitat

Typical plover gait and feeding behaviour. Common in the seashore and the sandy margins of rivers, wetlands and urban tanks. Feeds on insects, crabs, brine shrimps, molluscs, worms, spiders and sea-weeds.



Shuchismita Das

Reproduction

Breeding Season: March to June

Nest Type: Nest is a shallow scrape placed near water on bare earth or in a sparse vegetation, often on slightly raised ground partly sheltered by plants.

Clutch Size: 3

Incubation Period: 27-29 days

Key Identifying Features

Size 15-17 cm. Small body with white hind collar and usually small, well-defined patches on the sides of the breasts. Male has rufous cap, black eye-stripe and fore crown.

Major Threats

The species is threatened by the disturbance of coastal habitats, degradation and loss of wetland habitat through pollution, land reclamation, and urbanization. It is also susceptible to avian botulism.

Grey-headed Lapwing

Vanellus cinereus

Vernacular Name:	Titeeri (Hindi) Dhusortiti (Bengali)
Order:	Charadriiformes
Family:	Charadriidae
Genus:	<i>Vanellus</i>
Species:	<i>V. cinereus</i>
IUCN Red list:	Least Concern
CITES:	Not Listed
CMS:	Not Listed
IWPA, 1972:	Schedule IV
Population Trend:	Decreasing



LC



Distribution

A winter visitor in India, arrives in October and leaves by late-February/ early-March. Found in the middle and lower Ganga River.

Habit & Habitat

Keeps in pairs or in small flocks. Prefers riverbanks, marsh and wet fields. Crepuscular, feeds on insects, small fishes, shrimps, worms and molluscs.



Shuchismita Das

Reproduction

Breeding Season: March to August

Nest Type: The nest is a shallow depression in the ground lined with stems and blades of grass collected from the surrounding areas.

Clutch Size: 4

Incubation Period: 28 days

Key Identifying Features

Size 34-37 cm. The bird has yellow bill with black tip and yellow legs. Head, neck and breasts are grey and tail-band is black.

Major Threats

The species is threatened by habitat degradation and fragmentation, and reclamation of wetland.

Red-wattled Lapwing

Vanellus indicus

Vernacular Name:	Titeeri (Hindi) Hattiti (Bengali)
Order:	Charadriiformes
Family:	Charadriidae
Genus:	<i>Vanellus</i>
Species:	<i>V. indicus</i>
IUCN Red List:	Least Concern
CITES:	Not Listed
CMS:	Not Listed
IWPA, 1972:	Schedule IV
Population Trend:	Unknown



LC



Distribution

A widespread resident in India. Found throughout the Ganga River.

Habit & Habitat

Usually keeps in pairs or in small flocks. Crepuscular, feeds on insects, small fish, shrimp, worms and molluscs. Prefers riverbanks, marsh and wet fields.

Reproduction

Breeding Season: March to August

Nest Type: Nest is a circular depression scraped in the soil, and it is sometimes encircled with small stones or pieces of hard clay.

Clutch Size: 3-4

Incubation Period: 28-30 days

Key Identifying Features

Size 32-35 cm. The cap and breast is black, red bill with black tip, and yellow legs. In flight, shows white greater-covert wing-bar and black tail-band. Juvenile is duller than adult, with whitish throat.

Major Threats

The species is threatened by habitat degradation and fragmentation and draining of wetland.



P. Gangaiamaran

Common Snipe

Gallinago gallinago

Vernacular Name:	Kadakhocha (Bengali)
Order:	Charadriiformes
Family:	Scolopacidae
Genus:	<i>Gallinago</i>
Species:	<i>G. gallinago</i>
IUCN Red List:	Least Concern
CITES:	Not Listed
CMS:	Appendix II
IWPA, 1972:	Schedule IV
Population Trend:	Decreasing



LC



Distribution

A widespread resident in India, arrives in August and leaves by mid-May. Found throughout the Ganga River.

Habit & Habitat

The bird moves in smaller flocks and can be sighted in river banks, wetlands with islands and vegetation. It feeds on insects and their larvae, earthworms, small crustaceans, spiders and aquatic plants.



Rajiv Lather

Reproduction

Breeding Season: May to June

Nest Type: Nest is a shallow cup of dried grass placed in the centre of a clump of thick grass in marshy ground.

Clutch Size: 3-4

Incubation period: 19-21 days

Key Identifying Features

Size 25-27 cm. Plumage is dark brown, streaked and variegated with black, rufous and buff. In flight, shows prominent white trailing edge to wing, white banding on underwing-coverts. During rest, shows noticeable projection of tail beyond wings, buff supercilium contrasts with white cheek-stripe.

Major Threats

Changes in wetland and riverine habitats, pollution, loss of reed vegetation and increased nestling predation.

Common Greenshank

Tringa nebularia

Vernacular Name:	Timtima batan (Hindi) Gotra (Bengali)
Order:	Charadriiformes
Family:	Scolopacidae
Genus:	<i>Tringa</i>
Species:	<i>T. nebularia</i>
IUCN Red List:	Least Concern
CITES:	Not Listed
CMS:	Appendix II
IWPA, 1972:	Schedule IV
Population Trend:	Stable



LC



Distribution

A widespread winter visitor in India, arrives in August and leaves by April-May. Found throughout the Ganga River.

Habit & Habitat

Chiefly carnivorous, feeds on insects and their larvae, crustaceans, annelids, molluscs, amphibians, small fish and occasionally rodents. Prefers wide range of fresh and salt-water wetlands and large rivers.

Reproduction

Breeding Season: May onwards

Nest Type: The nest is a depression in the ground lined with a few leaves and bents.

Clutch Size: 3-4

Incubation Period: 22-25 days

Key Identifying Features

Size 30-34 cm. Stocky body, with long, stout bill and greenish legs. Upper parts grey, and foreneck and underparts white in non-breeding plumage. In breeding plumage, foreneck and breast streaked, upper parts untidily streaked.

Major Threats

The species is threatened by degradation and loss of wetland habitats through pollution, reduced river flow and human disturbances.



Shuchismita Das

Ruff

Calidris pugnax

Vernacular Name:	Gehwala (Hindi) Geowala (Bengali)
Order:	Charadriiformes
Family:	Scolopacidae
Genus:	<i>Calidris</i>
Species:	<i>C. pugnax</i>
IUCN Red List:	Least Concern
CITES:	Not Listed
CMS:	Appendix II
IWPA, 1972:	Schedule IV
Population Trend:	Decreasing



LC



Distribution

A winter visitor to the plains of India. Found in the middle and lower Ganga River.

Habit & Habitat

Inhabits freshwater lakes, pools, marshes, flooded fields, grasslands and intertidal mudflats. During breeding season, it feeds almost entirely on adult and larval terrestrial and aquatic insects. Rest of the time, it takes insects, small crustaceans, molluscs, annelid worms, frogs, small fish and aquatic plants.

Reproduction

Breeding Season: May to August

Nest Type: Nest is a shallow scrape concealed in marsh vegetation or meadow grass on damp ground.

Clutch size: 3-4

Incubation Period: 20-23 days

Key Identifying Features

Males are considerably larger (male 26-32 cm; female 20-25 cm). Distinctive shape with long neck, small head, short and slightly downcurved bill, and long yellowish or orangish legs. Breeding male has a striking ruff.

Major Threats

Wetland and floodplain drainage, scrub and reed overgrowth and pollution. It is also susceptible to avian influenza, avian botulism and avian malaria.



R. Shankar Raman

Little Tern

Sternula albifrons

Vernacular Name:	Choti Tehari (Hindi)
Order:	Charadriiformes
Family:	Laridae
Genus:	<i>Sternula</i>
Species:	<i>S. albifrons</i>
IUCN Red List:	Least Concern
CITES:	Not Listed
CMS:	Appendix II
IWPA, 1972:	Schedule IV
Population Trend:	Decreasing



LC



Distribution

The species occurs widely but rather locally in coastal regions and Northern India. Found in the middle and lower Ganga River.

Habit & Habitat

Solitary or move in small flocks. Diurnal, feeds predominantly on small fish and crustaceans, as well as insects, annelid worms and molluscs. Prefers rivers, also found in wetlands, tidal creeks, coastal lagoons and salt pans.



P. Gangaiamaran

Reproduction

Breeding Season: May to June

Nest Type: The nest is a bare scrape positioned on the ground in less than 15% vegetation cover on beaches of sand, pebbles, shingle, or rock above the high tide-line.

Clutch Size: 2-3

Incubation Period: 19-21 days

Key Identifying Features

Size 24 cm. Adult in breeding plumage has white forehead and black lores, black-tipped yellow bill, orange legs and feet and black outer primaries. Non-breeding adults have blackish bill, black mask and nape band, dark lesser-covert bar and dark legs.

Major Threats

The species is vulnerable to habitat loss, agriculture in river bank and islands, reduction in river flow and nest predation.

Crested Kingfisher

Megaceryle lugubris

Vernacular Name:	Machhi bag (Hindi) Jhutiya machranga (Bengali)
Order:	Coraciiformes
Family:	Alcedinidae
Genus:	<i>Megaceryle</i>
Species:	<i>M. lugubris</i>
IUCN Red List:	Least Concern
CITES:	Not Listed
CMS:	Not Listed
IWPA, 1972:	Schedule IV
Population Trend:	Decreasing



LC



Distribution

Resident in the Himalayas and North-eastern India. Found in the upper and middle Ganga River.

Habit & Habitat

The bird often move in pairs. Diurnal, chiefly piscivorous. Prefers rocky, fast-flowing mountain rivers and large rivers in foothills.

Reproduction

Breeding Season: March to April

Nest Type: The nest is a horizontal tunnel dug into a vertical stream-bank, with a widened egg-chamber.

Clutch Size: 4-5

Incubation Period: Unknown

Key Identifying Features

Size 41-43 cm. Head with prominent crest, often held open. The bird has a complete white neck-collar, finely spotted breast-band, dark grey wings and tail finely barred with white.

Major Threats

The species is vulnerable to habitat loss and degradation, climatic shifts, river pollution and inadequate food due to canalization of streams.



Shuchismita Das

Wire-tailed Swallow

Hirundo smithii

Vernacular Name:	Tarduma babil (Hindi)
Order:	Passeriformes
Family:	Hirundinidae
Genus:	<i>Hirundo</i>
Species:	<i>H. smithii</i>
IUCN Red List:	Least Concern
CITES:	Not Listed
CMS:	Not Listed
IWPA, 1972:	Schedule IV
Population Trend:	Increasing



LC



Distribution

A widespread resident in India. Found throughout the Ganga River.

Habit & Habitat

Sociable and perch in groups. Chiefly insectivorous. Prefers habitat near lakes, rivers and canals.

Reproduction

Breeding Season: March to August

Nest Type: The nest is a shallow cup composed of mud pellets, fastened at one side to a slanting or perpendicular surface of wall or rock, lined with feathers.

Clutch Size: 3-4

Incubation Period: 12-17 days

Key Identifying Features

Size 14 cm. A dark steel-blue swallow, with chestnut cap, glistening white underparts and fine filamentous projections to outer tail feathers.

Major Threats

The species is vulnerable to habitat loss, intensification of agriculture and climatic shift.



Shuchismita Das

White Wagtail

Motacilla alba

Vernacular Name:	Dhoban (Hindi) Khanjana (Bengali)
Order:	Passeriformes
Family:	Motacillidae
Genus:	<i>Motacilla</i>
Species:	<i>M. alba</i>
IUCN Red List:	Least Concern
CITES:	Not Listed
CMS:	Not Listed
IWPA, 1972:	Schedule IV
Population Trend:	Stable



LC



Distribution

Breeds in the Himalayas and becomes widespread in winter. Found throughout the Ganga River.

Habit & Habitat

Feeds on a wide range of small terrestrial and aquatic invertebrates, and fish. Prefers non-forested wet and dry habitats, rocky or sandy upland rivers and slow-moving lowland rivers and lake shores.

Reproduction

Breeding Season: April to August

Nest Type: Nest is a rough cup of twigs, grass stems, leaves, rootlets and mosses, lined with hair, wool or feathers and placed in a hole or crevice in a river bank.

Clutch Size: 3-8

Incubation Period: 12-16 days

Key Identifying Features

Size 19 cm. Small bird with extremely variable plumage often with black and white head pattern, grey or black mantle, and largely white to largely black wing-coverts.

Major Threats

The species is threatened by climatic shifts that may affect its timing of migration. It is also vulnerable to habitat loss due to river bank agriculture, sand mining and nest predation.



Shuchismita Das

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