





# PUDUCHERRY ENVIS HUB

PUDUCHERRY POLLUTION CONTROL COMMITTEE

Funded by Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change Government of India, New Delhi



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BIRDS OF **PUDUCHERRY** 

**VOLUME II** 











"I suppose I've done my bit, it's now up to you younger people "

- Dr. Salim Ali, The Birdman of India





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**VOLUME II** 



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## PREFACE

The ENVIS HUB Puducherry has brought out the second volume of 'Birds of Puducherry'. The first volume was published on 08.03.2019. The other publications from the ENVIS hub include 'Butterflies of Puducherry' and 'An Illustrative Guide Book for Ban on Single Use Plastic Items'. Birds, as we know are an integral and prominent part of the natural ecosystem. They perform an essential role in the functioning of the ecosystem by pollinating plants, controlling pests, cleaning up nature, spreading seeds, changing landscapes and acting as a prominent link in the food chain of mammalian predators. Birds are a visual treat with their myriad colors and varied plumage.

Wetlands in Puducherry provide habitat for many kinds of flora and fauna that supports economic benefits to local communities like food, drinking water, irrigation for agriculture, ground water recharge, erosion control, water sports, ecotourism, cultural & heritage tourism. Besides these invaluable ecosystem services, the Puducherry wetlands have varied vegetation types which specially attracts a diversity of both native and migratory birds such as grebes, pelicans, cormorants, darters, herons, bitterns, storks, ibises, spoonbills, flamingos, ducks, raptors, cranes, sunbirds, rails, jacanas, waders, gulls, skimmers, terns and francolins.

We are losing our avifauna through different kinds of threats specifically due to anthropogenic activities, habitat destructions, invasive species, hunting & trapping and climate change. According to the Important Bird Area (IBA) one in eight bird species is in danger of extinction. Many bird species are already struggling to adapt to the changing climatic conditions and threats due to human activities hence, it is an urgent duty to protect and conserve our birds and its natural ecosystem.

In this book, the authors have recorded 65 bird species in and around Puducherry region. This book will be useful to wildlife managers, conservationists, researchers, school, college students and tourists as field guide and serve as scientific information on birds in Puducherry region. I congratulate all the team members on their efforts to prepare this book.

Place: Puducherry Date: 05.06.2021

## Dr. S. DINESH KANNAN, IFS

Director (DSTE) / Member Secretary (PPCC)



## FROM THE DESK OF MEMBER SECRETARY

I am happy to give my preface note for the book of 'Birds of Puducherry' Volume II. Birds perform several ecological roles for ecosystem functioning and generate great benefits for human population. Birds are important in an ecosystem because they keep systems in balance; they pollinate plants, disperse seeds, scavenge carcasses, recycle nutrients back into the earth and moreover, attracts tourists and beauty to the ecosystems. Birds also feed our spirits, marking for us the passage of the seasons, moving us to create art and poetry, inspiring us to flight and reminding us that we are not only on but of this earth. Birds are far better known than most other animals and they are powerful messengers for the natural world. They are telling us how climate change poses risks to nature and people worldwide. Birds are excellent indicators of ecosystem health.

Puducherry well known for wetlands has 82 major and minor wetlands in Puducherry, among them Oussudu and Bahour lakes attracts many migratory birds. These wetlands provide livelihood support for the local communities around the regions in the form of agricultural produce, fish, fuel, fiber, fodder and a host of other day-to-day necessities, the lake attracts numerous groups of birds, such as grebes, pelicans, storks and its allies along with waterfowl and shorebirds.

I envisage this book will be highly useful to wildlife managers, conservationists, researchers, school & college students and tourists to conceptualize ideas and develop their imagination on the available diversity of birds in Puducherry. I commend and congratulate to all the team members on their efforts to prepare this book.

Place: Puducherry

Date: 05.06.2021

(Dr. S. DINESH KANNAN, IFS)

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Sl.No.	Common Name	Scientific Name	Page No.
1	Asian openbill stork	Anastomus oscitans (Boddaert, 1783)	09
2	Black crowned night heron	Nycticorax nycticorax (Linnaeus, 1758)	10
3	Black-headed ibis	Threskiomis melanocephalus (Latham, 1790)	11
4	Cattle egret	Bubulcus ibis (Linnaeus, 1758)	12
5	Collarded pratincole	Glareola pratincola (Linnaeus, 1766)	13
6	Common greenshank	Tringa nebularia (Gunnerus, 1767)	14
7	Common Moorhen	Gallinula chloropus (Linnaeus, 1758)	15
8	Eurasian spoonbill	Platalea leucorodia (Linnaeus, 1758)	16
9	Glossy ibis	Plegadis falcinellus (Linnaeus, 1766)	17
10	Greater flamingo	Phoenicopterus roseus (Pallas, 1811)	18
11	Grey francolin	Francolinus pondicerianus (J.F.Gmelin, 1789)	19
12	Grey heron	Ardea cinerea (Linnaeus, 1758)	20
13	Indian roller	Coracias benghalensis (Linnaeus, 1758)	21
14	Indian spot-billed duck	Anas poecilorhyncha (Forster, 1781)	22
15	Intermediate egret	Ardea intermedia (Wagler, 1829)	23
16	Lesser whistling duck	Dendrocygna javanica (Horsfield, 1821)	24
17	Little egret	Egretta garzetta (Linnaeus, 1766)	25
18	Little ringed plover	Charadrius dubius (Scopoli, 1786)	26
19	Oriental darter	Anhinga melanogaster (Pennant, 1769)	27
20	Pheasant-tailed jacana	Hydrophasianus chirurgus (Scopoli, 1786)	28
21	Pied kingfisher	Ceryle rudis (Linnaeus, 1758)	29
22	Purple heron	Ardea purpurea (Linnaeus, 1766)	30
23	Red-wattled lapwing	Vanellus indicus (Boddaert, 1783)	31
24	Spot-billed pelican	Pelecanus philippensis (Gmelin, 1789)	32
25	Watercock	Gallicrex cinerea (J.F.Gmelin, 1789)	33
26	White-breasted waterhen	Amaurornis phoenicurus (Pennant, 1769)	34
27	Yellow bittern	Ixobrychus sinensis (J.F.Gmelin, 1789)	35
28	Yellow-wattled lapwing	Vanellus malabaricus (Boddaert, 1783)	36

## GRASSLAND BIRDS

SI.No.	Common Name	Scientific Name	Page No.
i	Ashy prinia	Prinia socialis (Sykes, 1832)	37
2	Ashy-crowned sparrow-lark	Eremopterix grisea (Scopoli, 1786)	38
3	Barn swallow	Hirundo rustica (Linnaeus, 1758)	39
4	Baya weaver	Ploceus philippinus (Linnaeus, 1766)	40

6	Black headed munia	Lonchura malacca (Linnaeus, 1766)	41
7	Common tailorbird	Orthotomus sutorius (Pennant, 1769)	42
8	Eurasian collared dove	Streptopelia decaocto (Frivaldszky, 1838)	43
9	Indian silverbill	Euodice malabarica (Linnaeus, 1758)	44
10	Loten's sunbird	Cinnyris lotenius (Linnaeus, 1766)	45
11	Paddyfield pipit	Anthus rufulus (Vieillot, 1818)	46
12	Paddyfield warbler	Acrocephalus agricola (Jerdon, 1845)	47
13	Plain prinia	Prinia inornata (Sykes, 1832)	48
14	White-browed wagtail	Motacilla maderaspatensis (J.F. Gmelin, 1789)	49
15	White-rumped munia	Lonchura striata (Linnaeus, 1766)	50
16	Wire-tailed swallow	Hirundo smithii (Leach, 1818)	51

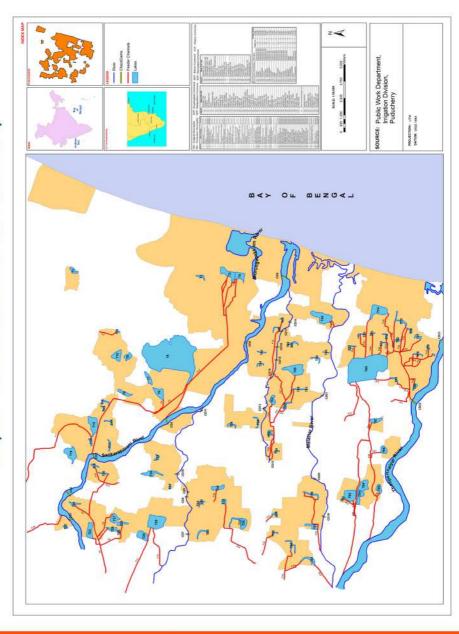
## PERCHING BIRDS

SI.No.	Common Name	Scientific Name	Page No.
1	Asian palm swift	Cypsiurus balasiensis (J.E.Gray, 1829)	52
2	Black kite	Milvus migrans (Boddaert, 1783)	53
3	Blue-faced malkoha	Phaenicophaeus viridirostris (Jerdon, 1840)	54
4	Brahminy kite	Haliastur indus (Boddgert, 1783)	55
5	Brown shrike	Lanius cristatus (Linnaeus, 1758)	56
6	Common hawk cuckoo	Hierococcyx varius (Vahl, 1797)	57
7	Eurasian golden oriole	Oriolus oriolus (Linnaeus, 1758)	58
8	Fork tailed drongo cuckoo	Surniculus lugubris (Horsfield, 1821)	59
9	Greater coucal	Centropus sinensis (Stephens, 1815)	60
10	Grey-bellied cuckoo	Cacomantis passerinus (Vahl. 1797)	61
11	Indian paradise flycatcher	Terpsiphone paradisi (Linnaeus, 1758)	62
12	Lesser golden-backed woodpecker	Dinopium benghalense (Linnaeus, 1758)	63
13	Malabar woodshrike	Tephrodornis sylvicola (Jerdon, 1839)	64
14	Pied crested cuckoo	Clamator jacobinus (Boddgert, 1783)	65
15	Rose-ringed Parakeet	Psittacula krameri (Scopoli, 1769)	66
16	Spotted owlet	Athene brama (Temminck, 1821)	67

## **HUMAN ASSOCIATED BIRDS**

SI.No.	Common Name	Scientific Name	Page No.
1	Brahminy starling	Sturnia pagodarum (J.F.Gmelin, 1789)	68
2	Large-billed crow	Corvus macrorhynchos (Wagler, 1827)	69
3	Rock pigeon	Columba livia (J.F.Gmelin, 1789)	70
4	Rosy starling	Pastor roseus (Linnaeus, 1758)	71

# Map of Water Resources of Puducherry



## INTRODUCTION

Puducherry, well known for wetlands, has 82 major and minor wetlands in and around the town; among them Oussudu, Bahour and Kaliveli Lake are the major ones. These wetlands provide livelihood support for the local communities around the regions in the form of agricultural produce, fishes, fuel, fibers, fodders and a host of other day-to-day necessities. Oussudu, the largest lake in Puducherry region, is home to hundreds of bird species including several migratory birds. It is also one of the largest breeding sites for the Common Coot in South India (Chari and Abbasi, 2003) a wide variety of fishes, mussels and crabs. During 2008, Oussudu wetland was declared as a bird sanctuary by the Government of Puducherry. It was also declared as the 15th Bird Sanctuary by the Government of Tamil Nadu in 2015. The Oussudu Lake (Oussudu Eri in Tamil) is the most important freshwater lake of the Puducherry region.

Oussudu Birds Sanctuary (11°56′ – 11°58′ North and 79°44′ – 79°45′ East) is a large shallow wetland situated along the Western boundary of Puducherry. It is an inter-state lake with the water-spread area shared between the states of Puducherry and Tamil Nadu. The lake is situated at a distance of 10 km from Puducherry town in the Western side on Puducherry-Villupuram-Valuthavur main road. The lake covers an area of about 800 ha (spread across both Tamil Nadu and Puducherry) of which 390 ha is in Puducherry and the rest in Tamil Nadu (Alexander and Pushparaj, 2010). Much of the Oussudu bank along the Tamil Nadu side consists of rural settlements, while the Puducherry side of the lake is predominantly urban or suburban (Abbasi and Chari, 2008) causing several stresses on the lake.

The climate of Oussudu watershed is humid. The average annual rainfall of Puducherry region is 1200 mm, of which around 63% occurs during the monsoon season, i.e. from June to September, while the remaining is scattered sporadically throughout the year including during the Northeast monsoon (October – December). The 14-year average, rainfall for Puducherry is 1338 m. The mean number of annual rainy days is 55 and the mean monthly temperature ranges from 21.3°C to 30.2°C. 13-year record of several meteorological variables collected from the Public Works Department, Puducherry reveals that the annual mean temperature in Puducherry ranged between 23.6°C and 33.7°C.

Oussudu lake has been identified as a wetland of national importance under the National Wetland Conservation Programme of Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change (MoEF&CC), New Delhi; and an Important Bird Area (IBA) of India by the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS), a member of Birdlife International. Over 20,000 birds belonging to nearly 40 species used to inhabit or winter at the lake (Balachandran and Alagarrajan, 1995; Jhunjhunwala, 1998). The Asian Wetland Bureau declared Oussudu lake as one of the 93 significant wetlands in Asia (Alexander and Pushparaj, 2010). The lake has been identified as one of the heritage sites by International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) and ranked among the most important wetlands of Asia. It is one of the most important fresh water lakes in the Puducherry region. The structure of the lake is very complex, consisting of water, wetland/marsh and mudflats.

The area supports diverse flora rich in rare and endemic elements. It is a monsoonal lake and the Northeast monsoon flood the lake during the winter months and until recently goes partially dry during summer months. The vegetation of the area ranges from small herbs to very large trees including many aquatic plants. Large scale cultivation of paddy was seen around the wetland. Coconut farms are also very common around the lake.

## WHAT IS BIRD?

A Bird has been described as a 'Feathered Biped.' This description is apt and precise, and can apply to no other animal (Salim Ali, 1941). Birds are warm-blooded, egg-laying vertebrates characterized by many adaptations making them masters of the air. Birds are living flying machines along with the bats and insects. Birds belong to the class Aves which contain 28 orders which are broadly classified into Passerine and Non-Passerine groups. Passerines are the largest group of birds that perch on the tree branches and this group includes Bulbuls, Robins, Munias, Tailorbirds, Crows, Flycatchers etc. The feet of these birds have three toes directed forward and one backward that give them a grip while perching on tree branches and their leg arrangement helps them not to fall during their sleep. Passerines include song birds that communicate within their species and with other species through their unique calls and songs. Non-passerines are non-perching birds that include Owls, Pigeons, Doves, Kites, Hornbills, Barbets and Woodpeckers. Wetland birds like Herons and ground-nesting birds like Indian Peafowl and Francolin.

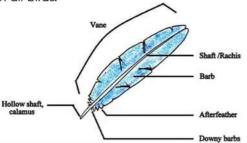
Birds are vertebrate animals adapted for flight. Many can also run, jump, swim and dive. Some like penguins have lost the ability to fly but retained their wings. Birds are found worldwide and in all habitats. The largest is the nine-foot-tall ostrich and the smallest is the two-inch-long bee hummingbird. Everything about the anatomy of a bird reflects its ability to fly. The wings for example are shaped to create lift. The leading edge is thicker than the back edge and they are covered in feathers that narrow to a point. Airplane wings are modeled after bird wings. The bones and muscles of the wing are also highly specialized. The main bone the humerus which is similar to the upper arm of a mammal is hollow instead of solid. It also connects to the bird's air sac system which in turn connects to its lungs. The powerful flight muscles of the shoulder attach to the keel a special ridge of bone that runs down the center of the wide sternum or breastbone. The tail feathers are used for steering.

Birds have a unique digestive system that allows them to eat when they can usually on the fly and digest later. They use their beaks to grab and swallow food. Even the way a bird reproduces is related to flight. Instead of carrying the extra weight of developing young inside their bodies, they lay eggs and incubate them in a nest. The fossil record shows that birds evolved alongside the dinosaurs during the Jurassic period 160 million years ago. The best known fossil is archaeopteryx, which was about the size of a crow.

## **FEATHERS**

Feathers have very light weight hollow-rachis and thin interlocked barbs. The middle thick lining is called rachis and it has interlocked barbs along the two sides. Each feather is fixed in the body of a bird with hollow shaft. The interlocked barbs can break the air, so that they can fly easily.

Feathers do many jobs for birds. There are six types of feathers such as tail feathers, flight feathers, semiplume feathers, filoplume feathers, bristle feathers and downy feathers present in all birds.

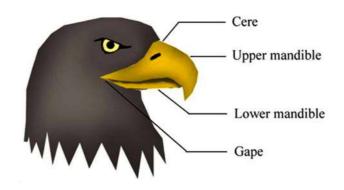


These feathers have different functions. Each type of feathers are located in different parts of the body of a bird. Flight feathers are present in primaries and secondaries and these are main structure of the wings which helps them to fly. Except flight feathers, all other feathers are broad in structure with equally sized barbs on both the sides of the rachis. Filoplumes have barbs on the tip of the rachis and it is very soft than any other feather type. These soft feathers such as semiplume feathers, filoplume feathers and downy feathers keeps them warm, wing feathers allow flight and tail feathers are used for steering. The color of the feathers is helpful to birds to hide or attract or find a breeding partner.

Camouflaging is common in wild birds and are sometimes essential to survive from their predators, e.g. Many waders have sandy coloured feather, so that they can easily camouflage with coastal, mudflat, etc. Some birds like Minivets and Orioles are very colourful. However, different feather colours are very important for mate attraction and escaping from predators.

## **BILL OR BEAK**

Bills/beaks are unique to birds and are modified form of mouth. Shape and size of the beak vary among bird species depending on their food and feeding behavior. The beaks are adapted to the kind of food they are eating such as nectar, fruits, meats, insects, larva and grains. Thus the beaks are modified in birds for crushing, pecking, drilling and tearing. It is possible to predict bird's food by observing their beak size, structure and shape. The beak has mainly four parts i.e., Cere, Gape, Upper and Lower mandible (SACON, 2014).



## STRUCTURE OF THE BEAK

Beak Adaptations



Drilling- e.g. Woodpecker



Tearing Meat- e.g. Eagle



Seed Crushing- e.g. Parakeet



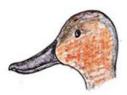
Filtering- e.g. Pelican



Insect eating- e.g. Oriole



Nectarine- e.g. Sunbird



Sweeping- e.g. Duck



Fishing- e.g. Kingfisher

SOURCE: (SACON, 2014)

## IMPORTANCE OF BIRDS

Birds perform several ecological roles for ecosystem functioning and generate great benefits for human population in some circumstances. Birds are important because they keep systems in balance: they pollinate plants, disperse seeds, scavenge carcasses and recycle nutrients back into the earth. But they also feed our spirits marking for us the passage of the seasons moving us to create art and poetry inspiring us to flight and reminding us that we are not only on but of this earth.

Birds are far better known than most other animals and they are powerful messengers for the natural world. They are telling us how climate change poses risks to nature and people worldwide. This synthesis of hundreds of scientific studies illustrates the many ways by which climate change threatens birds and other wildlife. It describes actions underway to help nature adapt and also shows for the first time how the bird life partnership is implementing nature-base solutions across the world to reduce climate risks and build people's resilience. Birds are excellent indicators of ecosystem health.

## THE KEY THREATS TO BIRDS

Many species are already struggling to adapt to the pace of warming. Rising temperatures are driving species distributions pole ward and toward higher ground. Migration and breeding cycles are changing, leading to disrupted relationships with prey, predators and competitors. However, environmental disturbances, mostly due to anthropogenic actions have caused a decrease of bird diversity and can lead to the loss of their functions in the remaining habitats. In many cases, these effects have driven population declines.

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF INDIAN CHECKLISTS

The Republic of India, with a geographical land area of 32,87,263 sq. km. (Anon, 2015) ranks among the top ten countries in the world in terms of most number of bird species (Lepage, 2016); covering 2.2% of the world's terrestrial landmass, India is known to harbour about 12.5% of its avifauna. This spectacular diversity is believed to have arisen from multiple factors that include its unique biogeographical, and ecological history, its heterogeneity of physical features and a high degree of eco-climatic variations ranging from tropical to temperate. Given this avifaunal richness and the fact that scientific Indian ornithology goes back three centuries, it may surprise many that the total number of bird species recorded from India is still a matter of conjecture, often drawn from regional ornithological literature. A definite number is still elusive in the absence of an authentic checklist of the country's avifauna.

The India Checklist acknowledges a total of 1263 species of birds for India, constituting about 12% of the world avifauna as recognized in H&M4 (The "Howard and Moore Complete Checklist of the Birds of the World", 4th edition) with Himalayan Forest Thrush Zoothera salimalii, being the newest species to be described (Alstrom et. al. 2016) and White-browed Crake Amaurornis cinerea, being the latest entrant to the country's bird list (Gogoi & Phukan, 2016). Taxonomically, it covers 23 orders, 107 families and 498 genera, representing the global avian diversity by about 64%, 45%, and 21% respectively. Predictably, passerines (Order Passeriformes) form the most predominant group (54%), followed by the orders Charadriiformes (10%), and Accipitriformes (5%).

Among the bird families, chats, robins and flycatchers (Muscicapidae) are the most diverse in Indian avifauna (97 species), closely followed by raptors (Accipitridae: 57 species) and typical babblers, laughing thrushes and allies (Leiothrichidae: 53 species). Other significant families include ducks and geese (Anatidae), galliforms (Phasianidae), waders (Scolopacidae), gulls & terns (Laridae), woodpeckers (Picidae), finches (Fringillidae) and leaf warblers (Phylloscopidae): each accounting for over 30 species among the Indian birds. Interestingly, some of the species rich bird families of the world are otherwise represented by only one or two species in India; these include Old World taxa like megapodes or scrubfowl (Megapodiidae; 22 species worldwide: One in India), whistlers and shrike thrushes (Pachycephalidae; 49 species Worldwide and 1 in India), wood swallows (Artamidae; 24 species Worldwide and 2 in India), fantails Rhipiduridae; 46 species Worldwide and 2 in India) and the New World family of wrens (Troglodytidae; 82 species Worldwide and 1 in India). Among the avian genera, the following are notably dominant, with each represented by over 15 species in India: Calidris (stints & sandpipers), Seicercus (leaf warblers), Garrulax (laughing thrushes) and Turdus (thrushes).



## STATE BIRD OF PUDUCHERRY

# ASIAN KOEL - Eudynamys scolopaceus (Linnaeus, 1758)

Size 43 cm.

Local Name Kuyil (Tamil).

Field characters An unmistakable, sexually dimorphic, long-tailed cuckoo. The male is glossy-black with a pale bill while the female is dark brown above with white bars and spots, barred underparts and a strongly speckled throat. Present in all types of habitats except dense forests. Mostly solitary, sometimes seen in pairs and is well known for parasitizing the nests of crows. Races differ mainly in the plumage of the females and the amount of gloss on the males.



Distribution They are found in India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Australia, from South Eastern Asia to New Guinea, and Salomon Islands. During winter they migrate to warmer areas. They are local residents throughout their range.

Habitat They prefer staying in a dense thick forest with thick trees and bamboos, light woodland and cultivation areas. They also occur in shrub forests with tall trees, woody areas adjoining villages and towns. They are also found in mangrove forests.

Food Fruits and berries but sometimes feed on caterpillars and insects.

Call Males call with a distinctive "kow-kow-kow-kow" while females call with a shrieking "kik-kik-kik-kik".

Nesting Season- mainly April to August, coincident with that of its normal hosts (House and Jungle crows).

Egg Similar but smaller to crows; pale greyish green or stone colour, speckled and blotched with reddish brown.

# ASIAN OPENBILL STORK Anastomus oscitans (Boddaert, 1783)

Order: Ciconiiformes
Family: Ciconiidae



## Local names:

Nathai kothi naarai (Tamil), Cherakokkan (Malayalam), Galu konga (Telugu), Gungla, Ghonghila, Ghungil (Hindi).

Size: 81 cm.

**Field characters:** A relatively small stork species with a greyish to white body and black wings; tail with a hint of gloss. The Asian Openbill gets its name from a distinctive gap in the dull greyish yellow bill and pinkish legs. Asian Openbills inhabit wetland habitats including shallow marshes, flooded agricultural fields and lakes. From a distance they could be confused with herons, but they can be clearly distinguished from herons by their feeding habits wading slowly through shallow water. Sexes alike. Found in twos and threes or flocks.

Distribution: Throughout the Indian Union. Resident and locally migratory.

Food: Large Ampullaria snails in marshes, frogs, crabs and large insects.

Call: Loud and hoarse.

Nesting: Season-mostly between July and September.

Egg: 2 to 4, white, close textured.

## BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON Nycticorax nycticorax (Linnaeus, 1758)

Order: Pelecaniformes

Family: Ardeidae



Local names: Raaw Kokku (Tamil).

Size: 46 cm. Field characters:

Adults are approximately 64 cm (25 in) long and weigh 800 g. They have a black crown and back with the remainder of the body white or grey. They have red eyes and short yellow legs. They have pale grey wings and white under parts. Two or three long white plumes, erected in greeting and courtship displays, extend from the back of the head. sexes are similar in appearance although the males are slightly larger. Black-crowned night herons do not fit the typical body form of the heron family. They are relatively stocky with shorter bills, legs and necks than their more familiar cousins, the egrets and

"day" herons. Their resting posture is normally somewhat hunched but when hunting they extend their necks and look more like other wading birds.

**Distribution:** Habitat is fresh and salt-water wetlands throughout much of the world.

**Food:** It is an opportunistic feeder taking fishes, frogs, tadpoles, turtles, snakes, lizards, adult and larval insects (e.g. beetles, bugs, grasshoppers, crickets, flies and dragonflies), spiders, crustaceans, molluscs, leeches, small rodents, bats and the eggs and chicks of other bird species.

Call: A harsh croak uttered when flying off.

**Nesting:** The nest is platform constructed with sticks and vegetation placed 2–50 m above water or on dry ground near water in trees, bushes, reed beds, on cliff ledges (overhanging rivers) and on the ground in protected sites. The species nests close together in single or mixed–species colonies with as many as 20–30 pairs in the same tree. Colony sites are dispersed throughout the landscape in relation to the distance from feeding areas.

**Egg:** 3 - 5 eggs.

# BLACK-HEADED IBIS Threskiornis melanocephalus (Latham, 1790)

Order: Pelecaniformes
Family: Threskiornithidae



**Local names :** Arivaal mookan (Tamil), Kashandi kokku (Malayalam), Bili kemberalu (Kannada), Munda (Hindi).

**Size:** 75 cm.

**Field characters:** A large wader with a white body and bare black head & neck. Males and females look similar and both have greyish tail feathers. It probes into mud and shallow water with its long, down curved black bill, sometimes submerging its entire head. Found primarily around wetlands including agricultural fields and occasionally around coastal areas, but also seen foraging in dry fields and human modified landscapes.

Distribution: Throughout the Indian Union.

Food: Insects, fish and crabs.

Call: A loud, nasal screaming cry.

Nesting: Season-November to February in South India.

**Egg:** 2 to 4, bluish or greenish white, sometimes with delicate spots of yellowish

brown.

## CATTLE EGRET Bubulcus ibis (Linnaeus, 1758)

Order: Pelecaniformes

Family: Ardeidae



## Local names:

Unnikokku (Tamil), Kalimundi (Malayalam), Samti konga (Telugu), Govakki (Kannada), Surkhia bagla (Hindi).

Size : 51 cm.

## Field characters:

Small, compact, white heron with stout yellow bill. Often seen on dry land. Legs red or yellow during the breeding season, black during nonbreeding season. Breeding birds have redder bills and creamy patches on body. Often feeds by following cattle or tractors in fields. Sexes alike. Found in parties, attending on grazing cattle.

## Distribution:

Throughout the Indian Union.

## Food:

Grasshoppers, bluebottle flies, cicadas and other insects, frogs, lizards, fishes. Banyan capsules avidly gulped down in season.

Call: A hoarse 'k'a-k'a'.

## Nesting:

Season- November to March in South India, varying according to monsoon conditions.

Egg: 3 to 5, pale skim-milk blue.

# COLLARED PRATINCOLE Glareola pratincola (Linnaeus, 1766)

Order: Charadriiformes Local names: Karuvalaya thol Kuruvi (Tamil).

Size: 65 cm. Family: Glareolidae



Field characters: Elegant, agile flier that looks like a cross between a plover and a swallow. Adult is warm grey-brown with an elegant "necklace" and red bill base. Juvenile is greyer, with white-fringed feathers. Very narrow (sometimes unnoticeable) white trailing edges to wings and dark rusty underwings distinguish this species from similar pratincoles.

Distribution: It is found in the warmer parts of Europe, Southwest Asia and Africa, It is migratory, wintering in tropical Africa and is rare North of the breeding range.

Food: Pratincoles are unusual among waders in that they typically hunt their insect prey on the wing like swallows, although they can also feed on the ground.

Call: Short and sharp "kiev" or "kip". Most diagnostic call is a two-part, rolling "kivik-kirrrrrr", with the latter part slightly descending.

Nesting: Season - April to November.

Egg: The species lays 2-4 eggs on the ground.

# COMMON GREENSHANK Tringa nebularia (Gunnerus, 1767)

Order: Charadriiformes

Family: Scolopacidae



## Local names:

Pachaikaal ullaan (Tamil). Pachakali (Malayalam), Tantana (Hindi).

Size: 36 cm.

#### Field characters:

Gentle-eyed large wader with a slightly upturned bill. Note overall greyish plumage with white belly and greenish legs. In flight it appears dark above with broad white stripe up middle of back. Usually seen as singles or small groups. Feeds mainly by striding in water, picking and sweeping with its bill, in wetland habitats.

## Distribution:

Winter visitor throughout India. On passage inland; seen on the margins of both freshwater and marine water spreads.

Food: Insects and other invertebrates, occasionally tadpoles, even frogs.

Call: A shrill piping "tiwee-tiwee-tiwee" or "tiu-tiu-tiu".

Nesting: Season - April to June.

Egg: It breeds on dry ground near marshy areas, laying about four eggs in a ground scrape.

# COMMON MOORHEN Gallinula chloropus (Linnaeus, 1758)

Order: Gruiformes

Family: Rallidae

Local names: Thaazhai kozhi (Tamil). Pattakozhi (Malayalam), Bolli kodi (Telugu), Kali jal murahi

(Hindi).



Size: 32 cm.

Field characters: Common in fresh and brackish marshes, in ponds, lakes and along slow moving watercourses with bordering vegetation. Swims with jerky motion and walks with stealthy gait, the tail often slightly cocked; does not usually dive. Big white oval patches under tail and white streaks along flanks. Adult has red bill with yellow tip; immature has duller bill and legs.

Distribution: Throughout the Indian Union.

Food: Vegetable materials, seeds, small aquatic crustaceans, small fishes, algae and insects.

Call: A sharp loud and abrupt "kirrik-crek-rek-rek".

Nesting: Season-June to September.

Egg: 5 to 12, pale yellowish to warm buff stone colour, blotched with dark reddish brown.

## EURASIAN SPOONBILL Platalea leucorodia (Linnaeus, 1758)

Order: Pelecaniformes Local names: Karandi vayan (Tamil).

Size: 70 cm. Family: Threskiornithidae



## Field characters:

Spoonbills are most easily distinguished from ibises through the shape of their bill, which is long and flat and wider at the end. The nostrils are located near the base of the bill so that the bird can breathe while the bill is submerged in water. The eyes are positioned to provide spoonbills with binocular vision, although, when foraging, tactile senses are important too. Like ibises, spoonbills have bare patches of skin around the bill and eyes.

Distribution: India, Europe to China, the Red Sea and Northwest Africa.

Food: Its diet consists of adult and larval insects (e.g. waterbeetles, dragonflies, caddisflies, locusts and flies), molluscs, crustaceans, worms, leeches, frogs, tadpoles and small fishes.

Call: Low grunting sounds when they are startled, while greeting their mates and while feeding their young.

Nesting: The species nests in colonies within which neighbouring nests are usually placed 1-2 m apart or touching (Hancock et al. 1992). Breeding colonies are located within 10-15 km of feeding areas although the species may also feed up to 35-40 km away.

Egg: 1 - 5 eggs.

# GLOSSY IBIS Plegadis falcinellus (Linnaeus, 1766)

Order: Pelecaniformes Local names: Arivaal mookan (Tamil).

Family: Threskiornithidae Size: 75 cm.



Field characters: This species is a mid-sized ibis. It is 48-66 cm long, averaging around 59.4 cm (23.4 in) with an 80-105 cm (31-41 in) wingspan. The culmen measures 9.7 to 14.4 cm (3.8 to 5.7 in) in length, each wing measures 24.8-30.6 cm (9.8-12.0 in), the tail is 9-11.2 cm (3.5-4.4 in) and the tarsus measures 6.8-11.3 cm(2.7-4.4 in). The body mass of this ibis can range from 485 to 970 g (1.069 to 2.138 lb).

Distribution: This is the most widespread ibis species, breeding in scattered sites in warm regions of Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia, Atlantic and Caribbean regions of the Americas.

Food: Prey includes adult and larval insects such as aquatic beetles, dragonflies, damselflies, grasshoppers, crickets, flies and caddisflies, Annelida including leeches, molluscs (e.g. snails and mussels), crustaceans (e.g. crabs and crayfish) and occasionally fishes, amphibians, lizards, small snakes and nestling birds.

Call: A throaty murmuring sound.

Nesting: The nest is a platform of twigs and vegetation usually positioned less than one metre above water (occasionally up to seven metres) in tall dense stands of emergent vegetation (e.g. reeds or rushes), low trees or bushes over water.

Egg: The glossy ibis lays three or four eggs in a nest of twigs and sticks.

# **GREATER FLAMINGO** Phoenicopterus roseus (Pallas, 1811)

Local names: Poo narai, Urian (Tamil). Order: Phoenicopteriformes

Family: Phoenicopteridae Size: 150 cm.



Field characters: Very large, with long, "coat hanger" neck, big kinked bill and very long pinkish legs. Plumage at rest whitish with pale pink blush and some deep pink often visible on closed wings. Flies with long neck and legs extended, when deep pink-and-black wing pattern striking.

Distribution: Distributed from Africa and Southern Europe through West Asia to South Asia.

Food: The diet consists of crustaceans especially brine shrimp Artemia salina, molluscs, annelid worms, larval aquatic insects, small fishes, adult terrestrial insects (e.g. water beetles, ants), the seeds or stolons of marsh grasses, algae, diatoms and decaying leaves. It may also ingest mud in order to extract organic matter (e.g. bacteria).

Call: Loud and hoarse.

**Nesting:** Nests are made out of hardened mud with a shallow depression in the top.

Egg: The egg is usually chalky white, but may be pale blue immediately after it is laid. Females have been known to lay two eggs.

# GREY FRANCOLIN Francolinus pondicerianus (J.F.Gmelin, 1789)

Order: Galliformes
Family: Phasianidae



Local names: Kauthari (Tamil, Malayalam), Safed teetar (Hindi).

Size: 34 cm.

**Field characters:** A small gamebird with an orangish face and fine barring throughout. Males and females are similar. Occurs in open grassy areas such as dry grasslands, scrub and agricultural land. Often found in pairs or coveys.

**Distribution :** The drier portions of the entire Indian Union (except North East states).

**Food :** Coveys scratch the ground or cattle dung for food; grain, seeds, termites beetle larvae, etc.

Call: A ringing, high-pitched, musical "kateetar kateetar or pateela pateela".

**Nesting:** Season – practically all year, varying locally. Only the hen incubates the eggs, the incubation period is 18 to 19 days and the breeding season is April to June and the young ones will appear in April through October.

Egg: The normal clutch size is usually between 10 and 14 eggs

## GREY HERON Ardea cinerea (Linnaeus, 1758)

Order: Pelecaniformes

Family: Ardeidae



#### Local names:

Senneela kokku (Tamil), Perumundi, Chaayamundi (Malayalam), Kenneeli baka (Kannada), Lal anjan (Hindi).

Size: 100 cm.

## Field characters:

The body weight can range from 1.02–2.08 kg (2.2–4.6 lb). The plumage is largely ashy–grey above and greyish–white below with some black on the flanks. Adults have a white head and neck with a broad black supercilium that terminates in the slender, dangling crest and bluish–black streaks on the front of the neck.

**Distribution:** The grey heron has an extensive range throughout most of the Palearctic realm. They are found throughout Eurasia and Africa.

**Food :** Fishes, amphibians, small mammals and insects are taken in shallow water with the heron's long bill. It has also been observed catching and killing juvenile birds such as ducklings and occasionally takes birds up to the size of a water rail. It may stand motionless in the shallows or on a rock or sandbank beside the water, waiting for prey to come within striking distance.

Call: Loud and hoarse.

**Nesting:** Season-June to March, depending on the locality.

Egg: 3 to 5, pale sea green or greenish blue.

# INDIAN ROLLER Coracias benghalensis (Linnaeus, 1758)

Order: Coraciiformes



#### Local names:

Panangaadai (Tamil), Pala pitta (Telugu), Panangaakka (Malayalam).

Size: 31 cm.

## Field characters:

A brightly colored bird with various shades of blue on the wings, tails and belly that are often more prominent in flight. The longitudinal white streaks on the throat and breast. Prefers open areas, including agricultural landscapes, exposed perches sitting on including electric wires. occasionally pumping its tail slowly. Sexes alike.

Distribution: Throughout the Indian Union.

Food: Insects, frogs, lizards, spiders, scorpions small snakes and amphibians.

Call: Generally silent, but more vocal in breeding season with harsh calls.

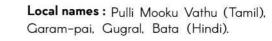
Nesting: Season-March to July.

**Egg:** 4 or 5, glossy white, roundish ovals.

# INDIAN SPOT-BILLED DUCK Anas poecilorhyncha (Forster, 1781)

Order: Anseriformes

Family: Anatidae



Size: 63 cm.



## Field characters:

A large greyish-brown duck with a diagnostic yellow-tipped black bill and a red spot at the base of the bill (missing in certain subspecies). In flight, note the green panel in the wing that is bordered in white. Often seen in small groups dabbling or tipping up in shallow water or walking on marshy land at the edge of freshwater lakes or in cultivated fields. Usually not seen associating with other species. Similar to Eastern Spot-billed Duck, but green wing panel, lack of a distinct dark "moustache" and overall warmer tan coloration.

## Distribution:

This duck is a resident throughout Pakistan and India in freshwater wetlands.

## Food:

Largely vegetarian shoots and grain but also eats small fishes and snails.

## Call:

"Quack "is the sound of Indian spot-billed duck.

## Nesting:

Marshy margins of freshwater bodies in a pad of grass and weeds.

# Egg:

6 - 12 eggs.

# INTERMEDIATE EGRET Ardea intermedia (Wagler, 1827)

Order: Pelecaniformes

Family: Ardeidae



## local names:

Ven kokku (Tamil), Cherumundi (Malayalam), Tella konga (Telugu), Karchia bagla (Hindi).

Size: 80 cm.

## Field characters:

A stocky egret that is larger than Cattle and Little Egrets, but smaller than the Great Egret. Often confusing and difficult to identify, this bird is truly intermediate between potential confusion species. Things to look for include a yellow bill that is shorter than Great Egret but longer than Cattle Egret, a relatively rounded head and shorter legs than Great Egret, approaching Cattle Egret. These birds can be distinguished from Little Egret by their completely black feet and shorter bills. Like most egret species, they occur in all types of water bodies including wet fields and usually flocks with other egrets.

**Distribution:** Resident throughout the plains of Indian subcontinent.

Food: Fishes, frogs, crustaceans and insects.

Call: Loud and hoarse.

**Nesting:** Season-July to February, depending on locality.

**Egg:** 3 to 4, pale green.

# LESSER WHISTLING DUCK Dendrocygna javanica (Horsfield, 1821)

Order: Anseriformes Family: Anatidae



## Local names:

Siru seezhkai siravi (Tamil), Yeranda (Malayalam), Sillaebaathu (kannada), Seelhi, Seelkahi (Hindi).

Size: 42 cm.

## Field characters:

A small, well proportioned, tree-nesting duck. Pale brown overall with a darker brown crown and nape, warmer chestnut underparts and chestnut fringed feathers on the back. The nearly indistinguishable orange yellow eye ring and dark grey bill and legs. Sexes similar; juveniles duller. A gregarious duck found in shallow water bodies with abundant vegetation. Flies with rapid wing beats on broad dark wings flashing chestnut shoulders and rump.

Distribution: Resident more or less throughout the Indian Union.

Food: Largely vegetarian shoots and grain but also eats small fishes and snails.

Call: A wheezy whistling "seasick-seasick."

**Nesting:** Season-June to October. Also December-January.

Eggs: 7-12, Ivory white.

# LITTLE EGRET Egretta garzetta (Linnaeus, 1766)

Order: Pelecaniformes

Family: Ardeidae



Local names: Chinna kokku (Tamil), Chinnamundi (Malayalam), Chinna tella konga (Telugu), Sanna bellakki (Kannada), Kilchia (Hindi),

Size: 63 cm.

Field characters: Small snow-white heron with slender dark bill, blackish legs and yellowish feet. Fairly common in wide variety of wetlands, at lakes, along rivers and in estuaries almost anywhere with small fish. Occurs as single or small loose groups; nests and roosts communally. Distinctive within its range, However, it is stockier than Great and Intermediate Egrets. Sexes alike.

**Distribution:** Throughout the Indian Union.

Food: Insects, fishes, frogs and small reptiles.

Call: Loud and hoarse.

Nesting: Season-November to February in South India.

Egg: 4, pale bluish green.

# LITTLE RINGED PLOVER Charadrius dubius (Scopoli, 1786)

Order: Charadriiformes

**Size:** 33 cm.

Family: Charadriidae



## Distribution:

Their breeding habitat is open gravel areas near freshwater, including gravel pits, islands and river edges across the Palearctic including Northwestern Africa.

Local names: Ullan (Tamil).

## Field characters:

Delicately built small plover with bright yellow eye rings. Dull pinkish legs and large white forehead patch (in adults). Plumage much like bulkier Ringed Plover, but white eyebrow continues unbroken across forehead. In flight shows narrow, indistinct whitish wing stripe. Breeds on stony substrates around lakes, gravel pits and along rivers:

migrants occur in wide variety of fresh and brackish wetland habitats, but rarely out on open tidal areas. Clipped "peu" call quite distinct from call of similar Common Ringed Plover.

Food: Small invertebrates, insects, spiders and snails.

Call: Warning or attention - seeking call a loud 'piuu' or 'cru' and insistent 'pip'.

Nesting: Season - December to June in India,

Egg: 3-4 eggs per clutch.

# ORIENTAL DARTER Anhinga melanogaster (Pennant, 1769)

Order: Suliformes
Family: Anhinaidae



#### Local names:

Paambuthaara (Tamil), Pamubatu (Telugu), Cherakozhi (Malayalam), Panwa (Hindi).

Size: 90 cm.

## Distribution:

Throughout the Indian Union.

#### Food:

Fishes, amphibians, insects, molluscs, aquatic crustaceans, leaves, seeds, arains and nuts.

## Field characters:

A waterbird with a very long, slender, snakelike neck and a long, pointed bill. Breeding adults have a shiny black body with silvery-white streaks along the wings, a brownish crown and neck and a white stripe running from the eye to the side of the neck. Non-breeding and immature plumage often dull and brown in colour. Frequently seen swimming with only its neck and head visible above the water. Impales fish underwater with its daggerlike bill. Like cormorants, often perches upright on a rock, drying itself with outstretched wings. Seen singly or in small groups in inland or coastal water bodies.

**Call:** The oriental darter birds produce grunting and croaking sound with a disyllabic 'chigi-chigi'.

Nesting: Season-November to February in South India.

Egg: 3 to 4, elongated, pale greenish blue.

# PHEASANT-TAILED JACANA Hydrophasianus chirurgus (Scopoli, 1786)

Order: Charadriiformes

Family: Jacanidae



#### Local names:

Neelavaal ilaikozhi (Tamil), Thaamarakozhi (Malayalam), Piho (Hindi).

#### Field characters:

In breeding stages, it can be identified in flight by the large amount of white and chocolate-brown plumage and the pointed downcurved tail. Non-breeding birds are chiefly pale brown and white with a black 'necklace' on upper breast and sickle shaped 'pheasant' tail. Sexes alike. Found single or groups in vegetation covered jheels.

Size: 31 cm.

Distribution: Throughout the Indian Union.

Food: Vegetable matters, aquatic insects and molluscs.

Call: A peculiar nasal mewing "tewn-tewn".

**Nesting:** Season-June to September.

Egg: 4, pep-top shaped, glossy greenish bronze or rufous- brown, unmarked.

# PIED KINGFISHER Ceryle rudis (Linnaeus, 1758)

Order: Coraciiformes
Family: Alcedinidae



## Local names:

Karuppuvellai meenkothi (Tamil), Pulli meenkothi (Malayalam), Kaibili minchulli (Kannada), Koryala, Kilkila (Hindi).

Size: 31 cm.

## Distribution:

Throughout the plains of India.

## Food:

Fishes, frogs, tadpoles and aquatic insects.

## Call:

A sharp, cheery "chirruk chirruk".

#### Field characters:

A distinctive medium-sized kingfisher with black and white plumage and a speckled body. It has a black crown and crest, white underparts and black upperparts with white edgings giving a speckled appearance. It feeds exclusively by hovering over water and plunging down to catch its prey, making it easy to spot and identify. Males have two prominent breast bands while females have only one, which is less prominent. Juveniles look like females, but have brown fringes to its feathers. Inhabits all kinds of water bodies with patches of open water without floating vegetation, but avoids small streams and other smaller water bodies in the mountains.

Nesting: Season-between October and May.

Egg: 5 or 6, glossy white roundish ovals.

# PURPLE HERON Ardea purpurea (Linnaeus, 1766)

Order: Pelecaniformes

Family: Ardeidae



#### Local names:

Senneela kokku (Tamil), Perumundi, Chaayamundi (Malayalam), Kenneeli baka (Kannada), Lal anjan (Hindi).

Size: 97 cm.

#### Field characters :

Large heron with rusty head and streaky neck; juvenile is extensively rusty brown on upperparts. Bright purple in direct sunlight. Favors fresh marshes with tall reeds and other vegetation, rarely seen in open situations.

## Distribution:

Resident and local migratory throughout Indian subcontinent, Andaman and Nicobar.

Food: Fishes, frogs, snakes, lizards, crustaceans, water snails and insects.

Call: Loud and hoarse.

Nesting: Season-June to March, depending on locality.

Egg: 3 to 5, pale sea green or greenish blue.

# RED -WATTLED LAPWING Vanellus indicus (Boddaert, 1783)

Order: Charadriiformes

Family: Charadriidae



#### Local names :

(Tamil), Chenganni Aalkaatti (Malayalam), Kentittibha (Kannada), Yennapa chitawa (Telugu), Titori (Hindi).

Size: 33 cm.

Distribution:

Throughout the Indian Union.

Food:

Insects, grubs and molluscs.

Call:

A loud, penetrating "ti-ti-tweet".

## Field characters:

A distinctly marked lapwing with a black breast and throat and a red bill with a black tip. It also sports red wattles in front of the eyes & a white patch that runs down the cheeks to the underparts. In flight, the black flight feathers that contrast with the white wing patch. Usually found in small groups around water bodies, agricultural fields and dry land. They feed primarily on insects, catching them in a typical plover like manner, running a short distance and picking up food from ground. A bird known for its characteristics loud alarm call. Sexes alike.

Nesting: Season- March to August.

Egg: 4, Stone colour or greyish brown, blotched with blackish; peg-top shaped.

# SPOT-BILLED PELICAN Pelecanus philippensis (Gmelin, 1789)

Order: Pelecaniformes Local names: Kuzhai Kada (Tamil).

Family: Pelecanidae Size: 152 cm.



Field characters: A large pale waterbird with a hefty pinkish pouched bill marked with diagnostic dark spots on the upper mandible. The head is grizzled with a hint of a shaggy crest and the back of the neck is dark. Rings of bare skin around each eye that make this bird look like it's wearing glasses. In breeding the rump, sides and underwing coverts are salmon pink and the breast ochre yellow. Often seen in large lakes and estuaries fishing in groups. Nests in noisy colonies in trees bleached by droppings.

Distribution: Pelecanus philippensis was formerly common across much of Asia.

Food: Spot-billed pelicans mainly feed on a diet of fish. They usually dive from above to skim the water or simply dip their heads and necks below the water.

Call: Uttering grunting contact calls, barking, squeaking and bleating like sheep.

Nesting: The birds nest in colonies and the nest is a thick platform of twigs placed on a low tree. The breeding season varies from October to May. In Tamil Nadu, the breeding season follows the onset of the northeast monsoon.

Egg: Eggs between 1 and 3 eggs. Each egg is laid 2 to 3 days apart and the first chick born is always larger than its siblings.

# WATERCOCK Gallicrex cinerea (J.F.Gmelin, 1789)

Order: Gruiformes
Family: Rallidge



## Local names:

Thaneer kozhi (Tamil), Theeporikannan (Malayalam), Kora, Kangra (Hindi).

Size: 43 cm.

#### Field characters:

A rail-like swamp bird. In non-breeding plumage both sexes are dark brown, head crowned with orange-yellow, pale buffy brown with wavy darker bars below. Breeding male-black, with a bright red fleshy horn above crown and bright red legs and eyes.

**Distribution :** Northeast states, South India (to Kanyakumari), Andaman and Nicobar islands.

Food: Largely vegetarian-seeds, shoots of rice, sometimes insects and molluscs.

Call: A series of hollow metallic booming "utumb-utumb".

Nesting: Season-June to September.

Egg: 3 to 6, White or pinkish to brick red, spotted with reddish brown.

# WHITE-BREASTED WATERHEN Amaurornis phoenicurus (Pennant, 1769)

Order: Gruiformes

Family: Rallidae



#### Local names :

Venmarbu kaanangozhi, Sambukozhi (Tamil), Kula kozhi (Malayalam), Buda kodi (Telugu), Hundu koli (Kannada), Dauk (Hindi)

Size: 32 cm.

## Field characters:

A shy bird with long legs, a slaty-grey back, a white face and breast and a stubby tail, which is often jerked up, flashing a chestnut vent. Seen around the edges of ponds and lakes and in reeds and thickets in marshy areas, stalking prey or skulking in the undergrowth. Can be seen far from water. Sexes alike. Found in pairs or singles.

Distribution: Throughout the Indian Union.

Food: Insects, worms, molluscs, grain & shoot of paddy and marsh plants.

**Call:** Very noisy during its breeding season which coincides with the rains, emitting loud croaks & chuckles and a metallic "krr-kwak-kwak".

**Nesting:** The nesting season is mainly June to October but varies locally. They nest in a dry location on the ground in marsh vegetation.

Egg: 6 to 7, cream or pinkish white, streaked and blotched with reddish brown.

# YELLOW - BITTERN Ixobrychus sinensis (J.F.Gmelin, 1789)

Order: Pelecaniformes

Family: Ardeidae



## Local names:

Manjal kurugu (Tamil), Manjakokku (Malayalam), Jun bagla (Hindi).

Size: 38 cm.

Distribution:

Resident throughout India.

Food:

Fishes, frogs and molluscs.

Call:

Hoarse.

## Field characters:

A skulky reedbed dweller that rarely comes out of cover. Identified by yellowish buff upperparts that contrast with dark brown flight feathers. Both sexes have a black crown although females also have rufous streaking on the crown. Juveniles are buffy with brown streaking on the underparts and wing coverts. Generally solitary and more active at dawn and dusk. Often seen flying low over reedbeds with slow wingbeats. When in danger, they freeze and point their head and neck upwards, blending with their surroundings.

Nesting: Season- June to September.

Egg: 4 to 6, pale blue or greenish blue.

# YELLOW - WATTLED LAPWING Vanellus malabaricus (Boddaert, 1783)

Order: Charadriiformes

Family: Charadriidae



## Local names:

Aalkaatti (Tamil), Chenganni (Malayalam), Kentittibha (Kannada), Yennapa chitawa (Telugu), Titori (Hindi).

Size: 33 cm.

## Distribution:

Throughout the Indian Union.

## Food:

The food of the yellow-wattled lapwing is beetles, termites and other invertebrates, which are picked from the ground.

**Field characters:** These are conspicuous and unmistakable birds found in dry stony and open grassland or scrub habitats. They are medium-sized pale brown waders with a black crown which is separated from the brown on the neck by a narrow white band and large yellow facial wattles. The chin and throat are usually black. Upper breast is separated from the white belly by a narrow blackish line. The tail has a subterminal black band which does not extend into the outer tail-feathers. There is a white wingbar on the inner half of the wing. The bill is yellow at the base. They have tiny yellow carpal spurs.

Call: A loud, penetrating "ti-ti-tweet".

Nesting: Season - Peak in March to May.

Egg: They lay four eggs in a ground scrape.

# ASHY PRINIA Prinia socialis (Sykes, 1832)

Order: Passeriformes Family: Cisticolidae



## Local names:

Sambal kathirkuruvi (Tamil), Kathirvaalan kuruvi (Malayalam), Phutki (Hindi),

Size: 13 cm.

Distribution:

Entire Indian Union.

Food:

Insects.

Field characters:

A common prinia that is likely to occur in all habitats except for woodlands

with a thick canopy. All birds have a black bill, pale cinnamon underparts, a grey head, and a greyish-brown back. Non-breeding birds acquire a short eyebrow and a longer tail. There is a marked variation in plumage tones in various parts of its range. It usually sticks to the undergrowth and shrubbery, though individuals often sing from a higher perch such as wires. Usually occurring in ones & twos and it can be guite bold and fearless. Sexes alike.

Call: A plaintive "tee-tee-tee".

Nesting: Season-March to September, mainly after onset of monsoon.

Egg: 3 or 4, glossy brick-red with a dark ring around broad end.

## ASHY-CROWNED SPARROW-LARK Eremopterix griseus (Scopoli, 1786)

Order: Passeriformes Family: Alaudidae



#### Local names:

Sambal Thalai Vanambadi (Tamil)

Size: 14 cm.

## Distribution:

This species is restricted to below 1000 metres elevation and is found from south of the Himalayas to Sri Lanka extending to the Indus river system in the west and to Assam in the east. It is found in stubble, scrub, waste land, riverside sand and tidal flats on the coast

## Food:

Weevils and other small insects.

## Field characters:

Sparrow sized with a finch-like bill and short legs, these birds are usually seen sitting on the ground and although they will sometimes perch on wires they do not perch in trees or bushes. The male is sandy brown overall with a black belly, chin, lower lores and eye stripe. The top of the head is ashy (although the base of these crown feathers are dark) unlike the dark brown to black in the black-crowned sparrow-lark which partly overlaps with the range of this species in the arid zone of India and Pakistan. The female is pale brown and very similar to a female house sparrow, although the legs are much shorter & appearing stockier and shorter-necked.

Call: The song is often given in display flight and consists of monotone whistles interspersed with buzzy notes.

**Nesting:** Season - February to September.

Egg: The eggs hatch after about 13 or 14 days.

# BARN SWALLOW Hirundo rustica (Linnaeus, 1758)

Order: Passeriformes Family: Hirundinidae



## Local names:

Vayal Kathirkuruvi (Tamil), Paadakuruvi (Malayalam), Yerra-kumpa-jitta (Telugu).

Size: 13 cm.

## Distribution:

Widespread winter visitor to India from October to March. It is found in Europe, Asia, Africa and the America.

## Food:

Insects.

#### Field characters:

Warm brown above and pale below; strong dark eyestripe contrasts with white eyebrow. Smallish reed warbler, with long and strongly rounded tail, short bill with dark tip and short primary projection. Adults have a pale eye. Breeds in extensive reed beds; in nonbreeding season found in marshes, but also more scrubby areas.

Call: A harsh "chr..chuck" constantly uttered.

Nesting: Season-March to September.

Egg: Length of the eggs are 0.6 - 0.8 in (1.6-2.1 cm). Creamy or pinkish white, spot, Width of the eggs are 0.5 - 0.6 in (1.2-1.5 cm), Incubation Period 12-17 days.

# BAYA WEAVER Ploceus philippinus (Linnaeus, 1766)

Order: Passeriformes

Family: Ploceidae



#### Local names:

Thookananauruvi (Tamil), Aatrakuruvi (Malayalam), Parsupu pita (Telugu), Baya (Hindi).

Size: 15 cm.

## Distribution:

Throughout the Indian Union.

## Food:

Paddy grains and insects.

## Field characters:

A widespread weaver that is known for its nest-a long hanging nest with a bulbous chamber and a narrow tubular

entrance. Breeding males have yellow forehead and crown, a dark throat that contrasts with yellow underparts. Non-breeding males and females are similar except they have buffy colors where breeding males are yellow; also note the dark streaks on the back and the broad buffy eyebrow on females. Juvenile resembles female, but lack the female's obvious eyebrow. Regional variation in plumage exist mainly in the amount of yellow and black in breeding plumage. Occur as flocks, particularly in breeding season. Advertising calls of males are an easy way to detect the species as several males in the flock call together creating a cacophony of a series of rasping chatters followed by a buzzing whistle interspersed with long chatters.

Call: A long joyous "chee-ee".

Nesting: Season - May to September, coincident with paddy cultivation.

Egg: 2 or 4, pure white.

# BLACK HEADED MUNIA Lonchura Malacca (Linnaeus, 1766)

Order: Passeriformes Family: Estrildidae



## Local names:

Karunthalai sillai, Thinai kuruvi (Tamil), Aattachemban (Malayalam), Nalla jinuwayi (Telugu), Telia munia (Hindi).

Size: 10 cm

## Distribution:

Peninsular India to the South of Madhya Pradesh.

#### Food:

Grass seeds and grains.

## Field characters:

Small, finch like bird of weedy and grassy areas in tropical lowlands. Often in small flocks, which associate readily with seedeaters. Adult is handsome and striking with rusty upperparts. Black head and underparts are cut by a broad white swath from flanks across the lower breast, Pointed tail, Stout gray bill. Juvenile notably plain, buffy brown overall with stout bluish-gray bill. Sexes alike. Found in flocks.

Call: A low pitched "wee-wi-wi".

Nesting: Season- principally the monsoon, June to October, varying with local

conditions.

Egg: 5 to 7, pure white.

# COMMON TAILORBIRD Orthotomus sutorius (Pennant, 1769)

Order: Passeriformes Family: Cisticolidae



#### I ocal names :

Thaiyal kuruvi (Tamil), Adaikkaapakshi (Malayalam), Likka jitta (Telugu), Piddi (Hindi).

Size: 13 cm

## Distribution:

The entire Indian Union.

## Food:

Tiny insects, their eggs and grubs; flower nectar of salmania, Erythrina and other trees.

## Field characters:

A common warbler-like olive green colored bird with whitish underparts. It has a long bill, rust colored crown and two elongated pinpointed feathers in tail. It gets its name from the way in which it builds its nest by stitching leaves together. A ubiquitous inhabitant of parks, gardens and wooded areas. Sexes alike. Found in pairs or singles.

Call: A loud cheerful "towit-towit" or "Ptti-ptti".

**Nesting:** Season-April to September, varying locally.

Egg: 3 or 4, reddish or bluish white, spotted with brownish red.

GRASSLAND BIRD

# EURASIAN COLLARED DOVE Streptopelia decaocto (Frivaldszky, 1838)

Order: Columbiformes

Family: Columbidae



## Local names:

Saambal pura (Tamil), Pottan chengali (Malayalam), Pedda bella guwa (Telugu), Dhor fakhta (Hindi).

Size: 32 cm.

## Field characters:

Smaller than Rock Pigeon. Body is uniformly chalky-beige. Black crescent on nape. Paler overall with a square-tipped tail. Favors farms and suburbs; avoids areas with extensive forests. Sexes alike. Found in pairs or loose flocks.

## Distribution:

Throughout the drier portions of the Indian Union.

## Food:

Seeds, grains and insects.

## Call:

A deep trysyllabic "kuk-koo-kook".

## Nesting:

Season- practically all year.

Egg: 2 white eggs.

# INDIAN SILVERBILL Euodice malabarica (Linnaeus, 1758)

Order: Passeriformes
Family: Estrildidae



#### Local names:

Venthondai sillai (Tamil), Vayalaarru (Malayalam).

Size: 10 cm.

## Distribution:

Throughout Indian subcontinent. Found in semidesert, scrub and dry woodland but also proliferates in urban areas. Distribution is centered on the Indian subcontinent, it is a popular cage bird and feral populations are widespread.

## Food:

Grains, but also takes insects and has been known to visit nectar bearing flowers.

## Field characters:

Small, long-tailed finch with a chunky body and short, stout bill. Gray-brown above and pale below with a whitish rump and black-pointed tail. Highly sociable throughout the year.

Call: Sharp "kli-kli-kli-kli".

**Nesting:** Principally during monsoon.

**Egg:** The clutch varies from 4 to 8 white eggs and these are incubated by both parents for about 11 days.

# LOTEN'S SUNBIRD Cinnyris lotenius (Linnaeus, 1766)

Order: Passeriformes
Family: Nectariniidae



## Local names:

Oodha thaensittu (Tamil), Thaenkili (Malayalam).

Size: 13 cm.

#### Distribution:

Fairly common resident in the Peninsula south of a line from Nasik in Maharashtra to West Bengal.

## Food:

Nectar, also spiders and insects.

## Field characters:

Male: Black above with metallic green and purple sheen. Below throat metallic green, metallic purple on breast with a dark crimson or maroon band across breast and bright yellow tufts on sides of breast with are conspicuous even from the rear when erected while displaying. The long, slender, deeply arched bill distinctive. Female: Dull olive. Tail is blue-black with white tips, dully yellow below.

Call: A sharp metallic "chit" or "cheewit cheewit".

Nesting: Season-March to May.

Egg: 2, greyish-white, with streak-like spots of greyish brown.

# PADDYFIELD PIPIT Anthus rufulus (Vieillot, 1818)

Order: Passeriformes
Family: Motacillidae



#### Local names:

Nettai kaali (Tamil), Vayal varamban (Malayalam), Gurapa-modi-pitta (Telugu), Charchari (Hindi).

Size: 15 cm.

## Distribution:

Throughout the Indian Union.

#### Food:

Weevils and other small insects.

## Field characters:

A sparrow-sized, resident pipit with brown plumage that varies in tones in different parts of its range. All birds have a bicolored bill with a curve to the tip of the upper bill. The breast is streaked and the upperparts have variable amounts of streaking. Juveniles show distinct and dark mottling on the upperparts. It is common in open habitats such as wetlands, farms, fields and even large parks. Distinct eyebrow, fainter or no streaking on the back of the neck. Sexes alike. Found in pairs or loose parties.

Call: Short "tsip" and "tissip" notes.

Nesting: Season-February to October, principally March to June.

**Egg:** 3 or 4, yellowish or greyish white, blotched and spotted with brown, more densely at the broad end.

GRASSLAND BIRD

# PADDYFIELD WARBLER Acrocephalus agricola (Jerdon, 1845)

Order: Passeriformes
Family: Acrocephalidae



## Local names:

Vayal Kathirkuruvi (Tamil), Paadakuruvi (Malayalam), Yerra-kumpa-jitta (Telugu).

#### Size:

13 cm

#### Distribution:

Widespread winter visitor to India from October to March.

#### Food:

Insects.

## Field characters:

Warm brown above and pale below; strong dark eyestripe contrasts with white eyebrow. Smallish reed warbler, with long and strongly rounded tail, short bill with dark tip and short primary projection. Adults have a pale eye. Breeds in extensive reed beds; in nonbreeding season found in marshes, but also more scrubby areas.

Call: A harsh "chr..chuck" constantly uttered.

Nesting: Season-Mid April - early May; End May - Mid June.

Egg: 4-5 eggs are laid in a nest in grass.

# PLAIN PRINIA Prinia inornata (Sykes, 1832)

Order: Passeriformes
Family: Cisticolidae



#### Local names:

Kathirkuruvi (Tamil), Vayal kuruvi (Malayalam), Lota-kun-jitta (Telugu), Phutki (Hindi).

Size: 13 cm.

#### Distribution:

Entire Indian Union, including south of the Himalayas.

## Food:

Insects, caterpillars, ants and small beetles.

## Field characters:

A common prinia with drab gray-brown plumage that varies in tone across its range. The pale, wide eyebrow and the long tail that appears as if it is loosely attached to the body. Breeding birds have a black bill and a shorter tail. Common in various habitats, especially farms and wetlands, but avoids woodlands with a canopy. A somewhat bold species, it often skulks in the undergrowth but sings from exposed perches. Sexes alike.

**Call:** The song is a repeated series of insect-like trills. Calls include various buzzing and clinking notes. A plaintive "tee-tee-tee", "kink-kink" or "chi-up".

Nesting: Season- March to September, chiefly Southwest monsoon.

**Egg:** 3 to 5, glossy greenish blue, speckled, blotched and penciled with reddish brown.

# WHITE-BROWED WAGTAIL Motacilla maderaspatensis (J.F. Gmelin, 1789)

Order: Passeriformes
Family: Motacillidae



#### Local names:

Venpuruva vaalaatti (Tamil), Valiya vaalukuruvi (Malayalam), Sakala sarela gadu (Telugu), khanjan (Hindi),

Size: 21 cm.

## Distribution:

Resident throughout the Indian Union, excepting the Northeast states.

#### Food:

Insects, spiders and other invertebrates.

## Field characters:

A rather largish wagtail and the only resident amongst this group. It has

black head, back and upper tail, however it has white underparts. The broad white eyebrow that extends from the base of the bill to the back of its head is a characteristic. A broad white bar on the wing is visible when sitting and in flight. Female is usually dull black than the male, while immatures have a shorter eyebrow with black areas replaced by grey-brown and have dirty white underparts. Mostly seen in pairs or family parties, near wet areas of any kind including small pools in lawns and buildings, running around wagging its tail and flying with a characteristic

Call: Very vocal; gives a loud 3-4 noted whistle and a "psi-sit" flight call.

Nesting: Season-elastic, chiefly March to September.

**Egg:** 3 or 4, grey, brownish, or greenish white, blotched and streaked with various shades of brown.

# WHITE-RUMPED MUNIA Lonchura striata (Linnaeus, 1766)

Order: Passeriformes
Family: Estrildidae



#### Local names:

Venmudhugu Munia (Tamil).

Size: 10 cm.

#### Distribution:

Peninsular India to the South of Madhya Pradesh.

#### Food:

Grass seeds and grains.

## Field characters:

The white-rumped munia is a stubby grey bill and a long black pointed tail. The adults are brown above and on the breast, and lighter below; the rump is white. There is some variation between subspecies, but the sexes are almost impossible to distinguish in all subspecies; males have bulky head and bill.

Call: A low pitched "wee-wi-wi".

**Nesting:** Season – May and July to August. The nest is a large domed grass structure in a tree, bush or grass.

Egg: 3 to 8 white eggs are laid.

GRASSLAND BIRD

PERCHING BIRD

# WIRE-TAILED SWALLOW Hirundo smithii (Leach, 1818)

Order: Passeriformes
Family: Hirundinidae



## Local names:

Kambivaal thagaivilaan (Tamil), Kambivaalan (Malayalam), Wana kovela (Telugu), Ababil (Hindi).

Size: 14 cm.

## Distribution:

All over India, Mainly resident but also locally migratory.

Food:

Insects.

## Field characters:

A very distinctive swallow with two long, thin feathers on its outer tail from which it gets its name. It has brilliant glossy blue upperparts and a chestnut forehead and crown that contrasts with clean white underparts. Females and juveniles have shorter tails. Found in grasslands, wetlands, open scrublands, cultivated areas. Typically seen in singles, pairs, or sometimes small flocks. Sexes alike, but tail wires of female shorter.

Call: A lively "chit-chit".

Nesting: Season-practically all year; principally March to September.

Egg: 3 to 5, white, minutely speckled and spotted with reddish brown.

# ASIAN PALM SWIFT Cypsiurus balasiensis (J.E.Gray, 1829)

Order: Caprimulgiformes

Family: Apodidae



## Local names :

Panai uzhavaaran (Tamil). Panampakshi (Malayalam). Panahakki (Kannada), Tadi ababeel (Hindi).

**Size:** 13 cm.

#### Field characters:

A small grey-brown swift with long thin wings and a long heavily-forked tail. It has medium grey upperparts and pale grey underparts without any trace of white. Can be seen in rapid fluttering flight. Mostly a bird of the plains, but partial to areas with palms on which they breed. Sexes alike. Seen in pairs or loose flocks.

## Distribution:

Practically throughout the Indian Union, coincident with the range of the palmyra palm (Borassus flabellifer)

Food: Insects.

Call: A shrill joyous triple note "ti-ti-tee".

Nesting: Season-Undefined, varying locally.

Egg: 2-3, pure white, long pointed ovals.

PERCHING BIRD PERCHING BIRD

# BLACK KITE Milvus migrans (Boddaert, 1783)

Order: Accipitriformes

Family: Accipitridae



#### Local names:

(Tamil). Karumparundhu Chakki parundhu (Malayalam), Haddu. Giduga (Kannada), Cheel (Hindi).

Size : 61 cm.

#### Distribution:

Throughout the Indian Union.

#### Food:

Offal and garbage, earthworms, termites. lizards. disabled or young birds and almost anything else that can be procured.

## Field characters:

Medium-sized, rather nondescript raptor with overall dark plumage. Slightly forked tail less, the fork disappearing when the tail is fully open. Head and neck are short. The juvenile is paler with a pale panel on upperwings and a dark mask around the eyes. Flight style buoyant, gliding and changing direction with ease. Commonly found in urban areas, rubbish dumps, aquatic habitats, grassland, but usually avoids heavily forested areas. May be found solitarily but also in large flocks on migration and at good feeding areas. Sexes alike.

Call: A shrill almost musical whistling "ewe-wir-wir".

**Nesting:** Season-December to February.

Egg: 2 or 4, dirty pinkish white, lightly spotted and blotched with reddish brown.

## BLUE-FACED MALKOHA Phaenicophaeus viridirostris (Jerdon, 1840)

Order: Cuculiformes Family: Cuculidae



#### Local names:

Neelamuaa poonguyil (Tamil). Neelakannan. Pacha chundan (Malayalam), Wamana kaki (Telugu).

#### Size:

39 cm.

#### Field characters:

A greenish ashy grey non-parasitic cuckoo with rufous suffused underparts. Bright green bill; naked blue patch round eye; long, broad, graduated, white-tipped tail. Sexes alike. Found single or in pairs skulking in dry thorn jungle.

## Distribution:

Peninsular India from Gujarat to Orissa to Kanyakumari.

## Food:

Caterpillars, insects, lizards, other small animals, also some berries.

## Call:

Call a low croak, "kraa".

## Nesting:

Season- chiefly March to May, but also other months.

## Egg:

Normally 2, chalky white, roundish.

PERCHING BIRD

# BRAHMINY KITE Haliastur indus (Boddaert, 1783)

Order: Accipitriformes
Family: Accipitridae



#### Local names:

Semparundhu (Tamil), Krishna Parundhu (Malayalam), Garuda mantaru (Telugu), Bili Garuda (Kannada), Brahmani cheel (Hindi).

#### Field characters:

A medium-sized raptor with a rounded tail unlike other kites. Adults are unmistakable with a white head and breast contrasting with otherwise brick brown plumage. Juveniles are a darker brownish-black with paler head and prominent white patches under the wings. Usually associated with both inland and coastal wetlands in tropical Asia. Sexes alike.

**Size:** 33 cm.

Distribution: Throughout Indian Union. Resident and locally migratory.

Food: Offals, fishes, frogs, small snakes, bats, etc.

Call: Distinctive nasal, drawn out, "Kyeeerrh."

Nesting: Season-principally December to April.

Egg: 2 greyish white, speckled and blotched with dingy reddish brown.

## BROWN SHRIKE Lanius cristatus (Linnaeus, 1758)

Order: Passeriformes

Family: Laniidae



#### Local names:

Keechaan (Tamil), Batte kiritti gadu (Telugu), kerkheta (Hindi).

Size: 19 cm.

## Distribution:

Winter visitor throughout the Indian subcontinent.

## Food:

Large insects, small birds, mammals and lizards.

## Field characters:

Reddish brown above except for white forehead and supercilium. A black line through eye to ear-coverts. Tail rufous-brown. Wings brownish black, chin, cheek and throat white rest pale fulvous. Some adults with crescentic bars on breast and belly. Easily confused with the Redbacked and pale brown shrikes in the western limits of the distribution.

Call: A harsh "chr-r-r".

Nesting: They build a nest in a tree or bush.

Egg: It builds its nest in a tree or bush, laying 2-6 eggs.

PERCHING BIRD
PERCHING BIRD

# COMMON HAWK - CUCKOO Hierococcyx varius (Vahl, 1797)

Order: Cuculiformes

Family: Cuculidae



## Local names:

Akka kuyil (Tamil), Pekkuyil (Malayalam), Kutti pitta (Telugu), Papeeha (Hindi).

#### Field characters:

A medium-sized bird that resembles a Shikra in plumage. Males have ashy-grey upperparts, white underparts with rufous streaking and barring, a broadly barred tail, and a distinct yellow eye rim. Females and juveniles are browner with bolder streaking below. The species is arboreal and rarely descends to the ground. Found in gardens, groves and deciduous and semi-evergreen forests.

Size: 34 cm.

Distribution: Throughout Indian Union. Resident and Locally migratory.

Food: Hairy caterpillars, insects, berries, wild figs, etc.

## Call:

During their breeding season in summer males produce loud, repetitive three note calls that are well-rendered as 'brain-fever' (popularly known as the brainfever bird) and "Kee-kee" call to beg for food.

## Nesting:

Season-March to June, coinciding with that of Turdoides babblers on whose nest it is parasitic.

## Egg:

Usually a single in each nest, blue, like that of the host. Hatchling reared to maturity by foster parents.

# **EURASIAN GOLDEN ORIOLE Oriolus oriolus (Linnaeus, 1758)**

Order: Passeriformes

Family: Oriolidae



#### Local names:

Maanguyil (Tamil), Mangnakkili (Malayalam), Vanga pandu (Telugu), Peelak (Hindi).

Size: 25 cm.

## Distribution:

Practically all the Indian Union except Northeast states.

#### Food:

Insects, banyan fruits, peepal fruits, berries and nectar.

## Field characters:

Favors deciduous and mixed woodland and parks, especially with tall leafy trees. Shy and difficult to spot, despite bright colors. Tends to remain well hidden in foliage and flies quickly and easily over long distances. Male unmistakable: golden-yellow with black wings and tail; female and immature greenish yellow overall with variable, fine dark streaking below; note rather stout, reddish-pink bill. Found as single or pair.

Call: A harsh cheah and clear fluty whistles something like "peelolo".

**Nesting:** Season-April to July.

Egg: 2 or 3, white spotted with black or reddish brown.

BIRDS OF PUDUCHERRY VOLUME II 58

PERCHING BIRD

# FORK TAILED DRONGO CUCKOO Surniculus dicruroides (Horsfield, 1821)

Order: Cuculiformes

Family: Cuculidae



#### Local names:

Karichaan kuyil (Tamil), Kakkatampuratti kuyil (Malayalam).

Size: 25 cm.

## Field characters:

Closely resembles the Black Drongo. Separated only by the white undertail coverts and the outermost tail feathers being barred with white near their base.

Distribution: Throughout the Indian peninsula with well-wooded regions.

Food: Caterpillars, insects and occasionally fruit.

Call: A high-pitched whistling "pip-pip-pip". Heard only during monsoons.

**Nesting:** Season-March to October. Brood parasites on drongos, minivets, babblers, etc.

Egg: The egg is white with fine purple splotches.

# GREATER COUCAL Centropus sinensis (Stephens, 1815)

Order: Cuculiformes
Family: Cuculidae



## Local names:

Sembagam (Tamil), Chemboth (Malayalam), Chemara kaki (Telugu), Mahoka (Hindi).

**Size:** 48 cm.

#### Field characters:

A large bird that resembles a cross between a crow and a pheasant. Largely black with distinctive rusty wings, glossy underparts, a long and heavy black tail and deep red eyes. Juveniles are much duller with white bars on the tail & underparts and variable amounts of black streaks on the wings and upperparts. Similar to Lesser Coucal, but Greater Coucal is larger with a longer bill and red eyes. Adult Greater Coucals also lack the white streaks on the wings seen on Lesser Coucal. Sexes alike. Found single or pair.

**Distribution:** Throughout Indian Union. Common across a range of habitats except very dense forests.

Food: Caterpillars, insects, snails, lizards, young mices and bird's eggs.

Call: A deep resonant "coop-coop-coop".

**Nesting:** Season-February to September, varying locally.

Egg: 3-4, chalky glossless white.

PERCHING BIRD PERCHING BIRD

# GREY-BELLIED CUCKOO Cacomantis passerinus (Vahl, 1797)

Order: Cuculiformes Family: Cuculidae



#### Local names:

kuyil (Tamil), Saambal vayitru Cherukuyil (Malayalam), Chinna katte pitta (Telugu), Chote papeeha (Hindi).

#### Size:

23 cm.

#### Field characters:

A slim arboreal bird, dark grey above, whitish below with grey chin and throat. White tipped black tail and a white patch on underside of black wings prominent in flight.

#### Distribution:

Throughout Indian Union.

## Food:

Plant bugs, caterpillars and insects.

#### Call:

Normally a high pitched p'teer p'teer p'teer. Also a pleasant, plaintive whistling song "pi-pi- pipeepeepi-pipeepee".

## Nesting:

Season-July to September. Parasitic chiefly on Tailorbirds and Ashy Prinias, its eggs matching theirs in coloration and markings in varying degree.

Egg: Its lays single egg and parasitic in nature.

## INDIAN PARADISE FLYCATCHER Terpsiphone paradisi (Linnaeus, 1758)

Order: Passeriformes Family: Monarchidae



#### Local names:

Arasavaal eepidippaan (Tamil). Vaalkuruvi (Malayalam), Toka pigili pitta (Telugu), Sultan bulbul (Hindi).

Size: 20 cm.

## Distribution:

Throughout the Indian Union, Resident in some localities and migratory in others.

## Food:

Flies, gnats and other dipterous insects.

## Field characters:

A graceful looking flycatcher, the adult male sport a long ribbon like tail. The males occur in two color morphs cinnamon and white. Both color morphs sport a glossy black head with blue ring around the eye, but white morph is entirely white below while the cinnamon morph has cinnamon upperparts, tail and dirty white underparts. The females are cinnamon above with a greyish throat, a shorter tail and they lack the male's blue eye ring. They make short aerial attacks on insects. Occasionally descends to ground to pull apart insects. Chiefly found in wooded habitats.

Call: Normally a harsh grating "che or che-chew".

**Nesting:** Season - February to July, varying locally.

Egg: 3 to 5, pale creamy pink, speckled and blotched with reddish brown.

PERCHING BIRD PERCHING BIRD

# LESSER GOLDEN-BACKED WOODPECKER Dinopium benghalense (Linnaeus, 1758)

Order: Piciformes Family: Picidae



#### Local names:

Ponmudhugu marangothi (Tamil). Vadrangi pitta (Telugu), Suvarna bennina marakutika (Kannada). Aatumarangothi (Malayalam).

Size: 29 cm.

## Distribution:

Indian Union

## Food:

Beetles, insects, black ants, pulp of ripe fruits and nectar.

## Field characters:

A common, "small-billed" golden-backed woodpecker with four toes. Endemic to the Indian subcontinent and Sri Lanka. Associated with every lowland wooded habitat except dense tropical forest, it often follows degradation into higher elevations. Only flameback where both sexes have red on the crown, but the red on females is restricted to the hind crown. A dark throat and the lack of a contrasting black horizontal stripe below the cheek allow easy separation from other flamebacks.

Call: loud "ki-ki-ki-ki-ki"

Nesting: Season-March to August.

Egg: 3, glossy white.

# MALABAR WOODSHRIKE Tephrodomis sylvicola (Jerdon, 1839)

Order: Passeriformes

Family: Vangidae



#### local names:

kaatukeechan Malabar (Tamil). Malabar asurattan (Malayalam).

Size: 18 cm

## Distribution:

It is endemic to Western ghats, visits the plains.

#### Food:

Insects and grubs

#### Call:

Slow paced "ker-ker-ker".

## Field characters:

Large, dark woodshrike with broad dark mask, no pale supercilium, white rump and dark tail; adult has dark grey-brown upperparts and browner remiges. Found in Edges and clearings within evergreen forests. Usually occurs in pairs or small groups of up to 5-10 individuals; often associates with mixed-species.

**Nesting:** Season-January to April (Kerala).

Egg: 3, white.

PERCHING BIRD PERCHING BIRD

# PIED CRESTED CUCKOO Clamator jacobinus (Boddaert, 1783)

Order: Cuculiformes
Family: Cuculidae



## Local names:

Sudalai kuyil, Kondai kuyil (Tamil), kombankuyil (Malayalam), Chataka pakshi (Telugu), Chataka (Kannada), Chatak (Hindi).

Size: 33 cm.

## Field characters:

Crested black and white cuckoo. White tips of tail feathers and a roundish patch on wings conspicuous in flight. Found single or in pairs in thorny bushes or trees.

Distribution: Indian Union.

Food: Insects and berries.

Call: Metallic "piu-piu-pee-pee-piu-pee-pee-piu".

**Nesting:** Season- chiefly June to August, coinciding locally with the breeding of its accustomed hosts. Parasitic chiefly on babblers of the Turdoides group.

Egg: 2 - 3 egs. Blue, similar to those of the fosterers.

# ROSE-RINGED PARAKEET Psittacula krameri (Scopoli, 1769)

Order: Psittaciformes
Family: Psittaculidae



#### Local names:

Sivappu aarakkili (Tamil), Tota (Hindi), Chiluka (Telugu), Naatuthaththa (Malayalam).

Size: 42 cm.

#### Distribution:

Practically the entire Indian Union.

## Food:

Fruits and grains.

## Call:

A loud, sharp screaming, "keeak keeak keeak".

## Field characters:

Vibrantly bright green parakeet, frequently found in woodland, parks, gardens, where feeds mainly in trees. Nests in cavities, including holes in buildings. Easily overlooked if quiet, as the bright green plumage blends easily with foliage. Very long slender tail, bright red bill; male has narrow black and rose neck ring. Like other parakeets, raucous and social, often appearing in noisy groups, found near cultivation areas.

Nesting: Season-February to April.

Egg: 4 to 6, pure white, roundish ovals.

# SPOTTED OWLET Athene brama (Temminck, 1821)

Order: Strigiformes
Family: Strigidae



## Local names:

Pulli chiru aandhai (Tamil), Pullinathu (Malayalam), Halakki, Goobe (Kannada), Chughad (Hindi).

## Field characters:

A small uncrested owl with a round head and a short tail. It is grayish-brown overall with white spots above while its underparts are white with brown bars. Distinctive white eyebrows and neck-band. Often active at dawn and dusk. Inhabits all kinds of open habitats but avoids dense forest and wetter regions. Sexes alike. Found in pairs or family parties.

Size: 21 cm.

Distribution: Throughout the Indian Union.

Food: Chiefly beetles and other insects; also young birds and mices and lizards, etc.

**Call:** Utters a loud "chirurr-chirurr" laugh in addition to a variety of high-pitched squeals and whistles.

Nesting: Season-November to April.

Egg: 3 or 4, white roundish ovals.

# BRAHMINY STARLING Sturnia pagodarum (J.F.Gmelin, 1789)

Order: Passeriformes
Family: Sturnidge



#### Local names:

Karungondai naaganavaai (Tamil), Karindhalachikkali (Malayalam), Papata gorinki (Telugu), Puhaia (Hindi).

**Size:** 22 cm.

#### Distribution:

All over India except most arid and humid evergreen parts. Mainly resident but also partial migrant.

## Food:

Berries, wild figs and insects.

## Field characters:

A small fawn-colored starling with a long wispy crest that usually lies limp over the back of its head, but the feathers on its cheek and upper breast stand up and away from its cheek. Its upperparts are gray and the dark tail is tipped in white. Notable yellow bill with a blue base. Often seen in small family groups. Sexes alike.

**Call:** They have a wide repertoire of calls and are also given to mimicking other species.

Nesting: Season-May to July.

Egg: 3 or 4, pale blue, unmarked.

**HUMAN ASSOCIATED BIRD** 

# LARGE-BILLED CROW Corvus macrorhynchos (Wagler, 1827)

Order: Passeriformes

Family: Corvidae



#### Local names:

Andangaakkai (Tamil), Veli kaakka (Malayalam), Mala kaki (Telugu), Kala kowwa (Hindi).

Size: 50 cm.

Distribution: Entire Indian Union.

Call: A deep hoarse "kaa-kaa-kaa".

## Food:

They are primarily scavengers that feed on carrion, leftover food from humans and also steal food from other birds.

## Field characters:

A crow that varies in size across its range, but is generally larger than the House Crow with a relatively long, daggerlike bill that is curved on the top. Entirely black with a variable amount of glossiness. Often gangs up to attack and chase other birds, especially raptors. They occur in wide range of habitat including woodlands, urban landscapes, agricultural fields and open scrub forests. Their call is more raucous and harsher than the House Crow. Sexes alike.

**Nesting:** Season- normally December to April in peninsular India, March to May in Northern India, Northeast.

Egg: 4 to 5, pale blue-green, speckled and streaked with brown.

# ROCK PIGEON Columba livia (J.F.Gmelin, 1789)

Order: Columbiformes
Family: Columbidae



## Local names:

Maadapura (Tamil), Maadapraavu (Malayalam), Gudi pavrai (Telugu), Paarivala (Kannada), Kabutar (Hindi).

Size: 33 cm. Field characters:

Large dove common in cities, farmland and on grain elevators around the world. Wild birds often nest on cliffs, while the feral variety has readily adapted to nest on tall structures including skyscrapers and bridges. Wide array of feral and domestic color varieties; most are gray but can be completely black, white or orangey-brown. Sexes look alike. Found in flocks and colonies.

**Distribution:** Throughout the Indian Union.

Food: Cereals, pulses, groundnuts, etc.

Call: A deep "gootr-goo gootr-goo".

Nesting: Season-undefined; practically all year in semi-feral birds.

Egg: 2, white, elliptical.

## ROSY STARLING Pastor roseus (Linnaeus, 1758)

Order: Passeriformes

Family: Sturnidge



## Local names:

Sooraikkuruvi (Tamil). Pandhikaali (Malayalam), Palisa (Telugu), Gulabi myna (Hindi).

Size: 23 cm.

#### Field characters:

A rose pink myna like bird with alistening black head, neck and upper breast, wings and tail. A long, leaning, pointed crest on crown and nape, sometimes erected. Sexes alike. Found in flocks near cultivated areas.

## Distribution:

In winter, all over India.

**Food:** Banyan and peepal figs, berries and nectars of some plants.

Call: A sharp and loud "ki-ki-kli-ki-ki-kli".

Nesting: Season-May and June (in western and central Asia). The male and female take turns to incubate the eggs for a period of two weeks and the chicks remain in the nest for about 24 days and are fed by both adults.

Egg: The rosy starling lays between three to six pale blue eggs.

## CONCLUSION

Freshwater wetlands are good breeding and foraging grounds for numerous resident and migratory water birds. Several lesser known species such as Greater flamingos Phoenicopterus ruber, Spot-billed pelicans (Pelecanus philippensis) and Painted storks (Mycteria leucocephala) were recorded in these wetlands. India is one of the global hotspots for birds, with over 1263 bird species (12% of world species) (Jayapal and Pittie, 2016). Aquatic ecosystems are critical components of our environment. In fact, long term monitoring of wetlands is essential to conserve flora and fauna of these wetlands. In addition to being essential contributors to biodiversity and ecological productivity, wetlands also provide a variety of ecosystem services to human populations (Poff et. al. 2002). In view of their environmental, ecological and conservation values, some of the wetlands in the world are protected as national parks and world heritage sites. Few wetlands are known to cater to tourists for recreational purposes, fishing, hunting, boating and aesthetic retreats. The revenue generated from such tourism activity would benefit both the wetlands as well as the local communities depending on it.

The importance of local freshwater ecosystem for conservation can only be understood by knowing the structure of the bird community of that region (Kattan and Franco, 2004). Regular monitoring and assessment of threats for the wetland bird population provides valuable information about the ecological health of that wetland. Periodic bird monitoring programmes can be a vital tool in developing awareness on the conservation value the wetland among local communities who depend on this wetland for their livelihood. The Diverse prey base attracts a large number of water birds from Europe, Siberia, Asian countries and other parts of the nation. These birds spend use Ousteri wetland as a wintering ground roosting on the natural vegetation (Davidar, 2011). Even though, there are considerable number of studies on the bird diversity of Ousteri (Abbasi, 2008; Padmavathy et.al. 2010; Davidar, 2011; Murugesan et.al. 2013) there were none carried out so far on the assessment of threats to the avian population of Oussudu lake.

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## CONSERVE OUR PUDUCHERRY BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

# Common Name Index

Sl.No.	Common Name	Page No.	SI.No.	Common Name	Page No.
1	Ashy prinia	37	33	Indian silverbill	44
2	Ashy-crowned sparrow-lark	38	34	Indian spot-billed duck	22
3	Asian openbill stork	09	35	Intermediate egret	23
4	Asian palm swift	52	36	Large-billed crow	69
5	Barn swallow	39	37	Lesser golden-backed woodpecker	63
6	Baya weaver	40	38	Lesser whistling duck	24
7	Black-crowned night-heron	10	39	Little egret	25
8	Black kite	53	40	Little ringed plover	26
9	Black headed lbis	11	41	Loten's sunbird	45
10	Black headed munia	41	42	Malabar woodshrike	64
11	Blue-faced malkoha	54	43	Oriental darter	27
12	Brahminy kite	55	44	Paddyfield pipit	46
13	Brahminy starling	68	45	Paddyfield warbler	47
14	Brown shrike	56	46	Pheasant-tailed jacana	28
15	Cattle egret	12	47	Pied crested cuckoo	65
16	Collard pratincole	13	48	Pied kingfisher	29
17	Common greenshank	14	49	Plain prinia	48
18	Common hawk cuckoo	57	50	Purple heron	30
19	Common moorhen	15	51	Red-wattled lapwing	31
20	Common tailorbird	42	52	Rock pigeon	70
21	Eurasian collared dove	43	53	Rose-ringed parakeet	66
22	Eurasian golden oriole	58	54	Rosy starling	71
23	Eurasian spoonbill	16	55	Spot-billed pelican	32
24	Fork tailed drongo cuckoo	59	56	Spotted owlet	67
25	Glossy ibis	17	57	Watercock	33
26	Greater coucal	60	58	White-breasted waterhen	34
27	Greater flamingo	18	59	White-browed wagtail	49
28	Grey francolin	19	60	White-rumped munia	50
29	Grey heron	20	61	Wire-tailed swallow	51
30	Grey-bellied cuckoo	61	62	Yellow bittern	35
31	Indian paradise flycatcher	62	63	Yellow watted lapwing	36
32	Indian roller	21			

# Scientific Name Index

Sl.No.	Scientific Name	Page No.	Sl.No.	Scientific Name	Page No.
1	Acrocephalus agricola (Jerdon, 1845)	47	33	Hirundo rustica (Linnaeus, 1758)	39
2	Amaurornis phoenicurus (Pennant, 1769)	34	34	Hirundo smithii (Leach, 1818)	51
3	Anas poecilorhyncha (Forster, 1781)	22	35	Hydrophasianus chirurgus (Scopoli, 1786)	28
4	Anastomus oscitans (Boddoert, 1783)	09	36	Ixobrychus sinensis (J.F.Gmelin, 1789)	35
5	Anhinga melanogaster (Pennant, 1769)	27	37	Lanius cristatus (Linnaeus, 1758)	56
6	Anthus rufulus (Vieillot,1818)	46	38	Lonchura malacca (Linnaeus, 1766)	41
7	Ardea cinerea (Linnaeus, 1758)	20	39	Lonchura striata (Linnoeus, 1766)	50
8	Ardea intermedia (Wagler, 1827)	23	40	Milvus migrans (Boddaert, 1783)	53
9	Ardea purpurea (Linnaeus, 1766)	30	41	Motacilla maderaspatensis (J.F. Gmelin, 1789)	49
10	Athene brama (Temminck, 1821)	67	42	Nycticorax nycticorax (Linnaeus, 1758)	10
11	Bubulcus ibis (Linnaeus, 1758)	12	43	Oriolus oriolus (Linnaeus, 1758)	58
12	Cacomantis passerinus (Vahl, 1797)	61	44	Orthotomus sutorius (Pennant, 1769)	42
13	Centropus sinensis (Stephens, 1815)	60	45	Pastor roseus (Linnaeus, 1758)	71
14	Ceryle rudis (Linnaeus, 1758)	29	46	Pelecanus philippensis (Gmelin, 1789)	32
15	Charadrius dubius (Scopoli, 1786)	26	47	Phaenicophaeus viridirostris (Jerdon, 1840)	54
16	Cinnyris lotenius (Linnaeus, 1766)	45	48	Phoenicopterus roseus (Pallas, 1811)	18
17	Clamator jacobinus (Boddgert, 1783)	65	49	Platalea leucorodia (Linnaeus, 1758)	16
18	Columba livia ( J.F.Gmelin, 1789)	70	50	Plegadis falcinellus (Linnaeus, 1766)	17
19	Coracias benghalensis (Linnaeus, 1758)	21	51	Ploceus philippinus (Linnaeus, 1766)	40
20	Corvus macrorhynchos (Wagler, 1827)	69	52	Prinia inornata (Sykes, 1832)	48
21	Cypsiurus balasiensis (J.E.Gray, 1829)	52	53	Prinia socialis (Sykes, 1832)	37
22	Dendrocygna javanica (Horsfield, 1821)	24	54	Psittacula krameri (Scopoli, 1769)	66
23	Dinopium benghalense (Linnaeus, 1758)	63	55	Streptopelia decaocto (Frivaldszky, 1838)	43
24	Egretta garzetta (Linnaeus, 1766)	25	56	Sturnia pagodarum (J.F.Gmelin, 1789)	68
25	Eremopterix grisea (Scopoli, 1786)	38	57	Surniculus lugubris (Horsfield, 1821)	59
26	Euodice malabarica (Linnaeus, 1758)	4	58	Tephrodomis sylvicola (Jerdon, 1839)	64
27	Francolinus pondicerianus (J.F.Gmelin, 1789)	19	59	Terpsiphone paradisi (Linnaeus, 1758)	62
28	Gallicrex cinerea (J.F.Gmelin, 1789)	33	60	Threskiornis melanocephalus (Latham, 1790)	11
29	Gallinula chloropus (Linnaeus, 1758)	15	61	Tringa nebularia (Gunnerus, 1767)	14
30	Glareola pratincola (Linnaeus, 1766)	13	62	Vanellus Indicus (Boddaert, 1783)	31
31	Haliastur indus (Boddaert, 1783)	55	63	Vanellus malabaricus (Boddgert, 1783)	36
32	Hierococcyx varius (Vahl, 1797)	57			

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