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Whispering Wings®

NEWSLETTER OF THE CHANDIGARH BIRD CLUB

Volume 2 Issue 1

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

I greet all Chandigarh Bird Club members and congratulate them on the Whispering Wings' first anniversary. Four issues of our e-newsletter have been published and this is the fifth. It has been possible only by your contributions, encouragement, critical analysis and co-operation.

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“The hawk-cuckoo calls in the ambrosial hours before dawn; its prayers are heard in the Court of the Lord.
An order is issued to the clouds to rain mercy.”

*Raag Malaar,
Guru Amardas Ji,
Sri Guru Granth Sahib ji.*

Rain Gods send down their benedictions. Pittas, weavers, grass birds, prinias, bee-eaters rear their young while the countryside turns verdant. A good monsoon is harbinger of bounty for all, be it bird, beast or man. The brimming water bodies and replete wet-lands are a birders delight as are the lush fields and forests. As the monsoon retreats, the summer visitors pack up and start leaving with their fledged broods while autumn raises hopes of winter visitors. A birder rejoices in every change of season, every turn of the Earth, every equinox and every solstice. If the cuckoo stops singing, the herons start booming and then the honking of geese and ducks...the divine melody continues.

Responsibility of ensuring these delightful rhapsodies to be heard in perpetuity lies with us. Educating children about protection and conservation of habitats is the need of the hour and we have to start taking out time to do so. We have to reach out to the forest and environment departments and tie up for joint ventures in this regard. We have to contribute to study of habitats, protest against all habitat destruction and laude all conservation efforts.

Birds in Indian mythology are associated with freedom, flights of fancy, transcending time and higher levels of consciousness. Would it not be beautiful to research about these associations and write about them? By adding a sacred dimension, these writings can become alternate vehicles of understanding the need to save our winged friends.

May you always hear the birdsong!

Mitinderpal S Sekhon

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SUMMARY OF THE CLUB ACTIVITIES

The monthly fieldtrip for the month of July was scheduled to be held in the Siswan -Baddi-Nayagaon area. The programme had to be cancelled due to inclement weather.

Bristled Grassbird was the target bird. Bristled Grassbird had been seen in the Sukhna Lake reedbed a few years back where it was known to breed. However, when the administration carried out a desilting programme in the lake, entire reedbeds were pulled out. Ever since, the Bristled Grassbird was heard no more and attempts to locate it in the reeds bordering the Sukhna forest were in vain.

It was decided that an effort should be made to try to locate it at Sirsa Nadi near Baddi as the habitat was promising.

The August fieldtrip went to the same area. As it was still the nesting season for the Bristled Grassbird it seemed likely that it would be quite vocal and hence visible.

Sirsa Nadi, located around 15 km northwest of Chandigarh proved to be the new nesting site for the Grassbird. Two birds were seen along with other inhabitants of reedbeds. Tricoloured Munia, Scaly-breasted Munia and Indian Silverbill, Streaked Weavers, Grey Francolins, Brown Crake, White-breasted waterhen etc.

In August again, the Club members cased the Derabassi– Jawaharpur area which is 15km to the southeast of Chandigarh and came up with another nesting sight of Bristled Grassbird. Around three pairs were sighted and photographed.

In September, members of the Club went along the Shivalik foothills to look for the birds who might be returning to the south for the oncoming winters.

Members of the Club have been very active in the field. Multiple numbers of Wryneck were seen around the Sukhna catchment.

One group made a trip to Ladakh where Spotted Sandgrouse at Tsokar and Tibetan Snowcock at Changla were seen in large flocks.

We look forward to a great birding season ahead.

Happy Birding!

Rima Dhillon

CBC PHOTOGRAPHY WORKSHOP

On 17th July 2016, the Chandigarh Bird Club® organized a workshop to bring the birders closer to their cameras. The workshop was conducted by Mr. Saurabh Sawant, a naturalist, wildlife photographer, and filmmaker. Present were about two dozen of the club members, inc. the President and the Secretary.

Mr. Sawant started with explaining the different types of lenses and what they are used for. This was followed by an explanation about the working of the Digital SLR. He also explained the sensor of the camera, differentiating between the various sensors, most common among the DSLRs are full frame (35mm) and the ASP-C (27mm), while mobile cameras use a very small (8.75mm).

He also answered various queries of the participating members of the club, who had questions for the expert.

He then went on to explain about aperture, which “is a posh word for a hole”, and depth of field. Aperture is represented on the camera as F/32 etc., and is called as F-stops, the higher the number in the denominator, the smaller the aperture. He explained the various factors which affect the aperture setting, including light and distance from the subject. Inputs were made by members on this subject.

The second part of clicking any photograph is shutter speed. He explained the mechanical working of the camera in respect to shutter. Shutter speed is set to allow appropriate exposure to the photograph. Shutter speed are usually in fractions of seconds $1/400$ etc., hence higher the denominator faster the shutter speed. Higher shutter speeds are required to freeze moments. Lower shutter speed is preferred when capturing star trails and milky water falls.

From there he then moved to ISO, i.e. light sensitivity. Higher the ISO, brighter the picture, and noisier the picture, i.e. a grainy picture. ISO setting very eith sensor size and camera technology. He explained the relationship between ISO, shutter speed and aperture using the exposure trangle.



After a tea break, we came to camera modes and automation. Various modes were discussed; aperture priority, which involved light metering and its relation with aperture setting; shutter priority; program; auto; manual. Many member got their queries answered and made inputs into the discussion.

Metering was the next topic in discussion. He explained what happens when we set exposure compensation and how its affected by shutter speed and aperture. He explained the various modes of metering, especially in situations of photographing landscapes and birds which are against the sky, which is a very tricky situation to photograph. It was in this discussion that the birders were most curious and asking questions upon questions to understand how to cope with this problem.



Focus followed metering, which according to Mr. Sawant deemed to be most important. He explained various modes of autofocus. Here, the problem of focusing on moving birds was solved. Further, he explained various Auto Focus area modes. Mr. Sawant then gave a brief summary for Auto Focus modes for Nikon and Canon cameras separately. He also shared tips for focusing in low light conditions, which he also demonstrated.

Mr. Sawant went forward on to stabilization and explained the two modes of stabilizing and when they are to be used. He explained the various situations in which they can be used.

Next came drive, i.e., how many photos can be clicked with one click of the shutter button. Mr. Sawant explained, with various examples, the different modes of drive and how they are affected by the memory card being used. Also he discussed with us the function, timer, and its various uses.

White balance followed next where he explained the various modes of white balancing. He explained the white balance correction and errors that follow.



Then he explained RAW and how to process them. Composition was the last topic discussed for this section of the workshop. Mr. Sawant explained the rules of composition; visa-a-vis rule of thirds, simplicity, working with angles, and framing. He further explained the characteristics of a good photo.

Post lunch, Mr. Sawant began with explaining the various tools and process involved in the post-processing of an image. The software used for this purpose is Adobe Photoshop.

After another round of tea, the workshop came to an end. Everyone present for the workshop enjoyed the whole event. Mr. Prabhat Bhatti presented him with some bird photographs as a token of gratitude.

Amandeep Singh
Chandigarh Bird Club



BRISTLED GRASSBIRD

The name Bristled Grassbird first became known to me when it was mentioned by Prof. Sekhon. He informed all of us, during our monthly meeting in August, that he had heard the bird call out from among the tall grass in Chhappar Chhiri, a local birding spot near Mohali. Some members, Narbir Kahlon for example, had previously seen it on the lake and had photographs of it to show us. One of the most striking feature of the bird was, of course, its bristles which protect its eyes from the tall grass in which it lives.

Before I indulge the readers in the exciting tale of finding it, or should I say, to happen upon it, lets talk about the bird itself. Here, I am quoting a text from Wikipedia, ‘The bristled grassbird (*Chaetornis striata*) is a small passerine bird in the monotype genus *Chaetornis*. Also known as the bristled grass warbler, this species is endemic to the Indian Subcontinent, where it is patchily distributed in India, Pakistan and Nepal. These insectivorous birds skulk in dense and tall grasslands, often in marshy areas, habitats that are threatened by human activities. Formerly considered to be sedentary, the species may be migratory, moving south and east in Indian Peninsula during winter and returning to their breeding grounds in the Northern Plains south of the Himalayas.



Bristled Grassbird is large and brownish with broad dark streaks to the crown, back and can appear almost babbler-like in appearance. The tail is graduated with white tips to the feathers. The rachis of the tail feathers is dark and there are dark ribs to the feathers. The bill is strong. The tarsus is brown and the bill is black with the lower mandible tipped bluish grey. They have a buff supercilium and have a pale unmarked underside. The generic name *Chaetornis* is derived from Greek *chaete* for bristles and *ornis* for bird. There is no dimorphism.

The habitat in which tis species occurs is tall grass-covered marshlands. The distribution range is mainly in the northern part of the Indian Subcontinent. Formerly, it was described as common in at least Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, Orissa, Lahore, parts of Bangladesh, and Nepal. The species is threatened by the destruction of grasslands and marshlands. It has been put on the IUCN Red List as being vulnerable.

Bristled Grassbirds are hard to spot, usually seen briefly at the top of a grass clump but diving in and most often hidden inside grass clumps where they forage for insect prey. Males display by rising above the grass to about a metre or so and zigzag in the air before parachuting back down. They also call in flight with a rising and falling *chwee-chew*. The breeding season is May to September.

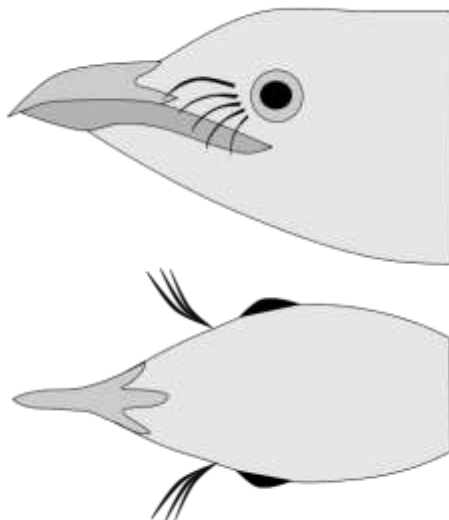
Now that I have informed you all about what a bristled grassbird is and how it looks like, its habitat, behaviour etc., let me tell you how we spotted it.

Once upon a time (14th August 2016), in a city called Chandigarh, lived five people, Rima Dhillon, Sarabjit Randhawa, Rajive Das, Dr. Bhupesh Goyal, and Amandeep Singh (that's me). The people were peacefully sleeping blissfully unaware that these people have arisen early in the morning with the express intention of going birding. Braving the torrential rain we reached Sirsa river banks in Baddi.

The bird was in the reeds on the banks of the Sirsa river, but we were not to know. What happened was this. We were all entertaining ourselves with the sights of Black-breasted Weaver and Brown Crake when Rajive sir played the grassbird's call. The bird responded from among a clump of reeds taller than others. Various such clumps were scattered among the already tall grass. He called all of us, with the exception of Sarabjit sir who was deep into the reeds trying to click a good photograph of the weaver. Rajive sir again played the call, and the bird responded.

It would appear that the presence of Sarabjit sir was conducive to its eventual sighting. Disturbed by his presence, the bird started to fly overhead in a zig-zag manner, later into an eight-figure. The call matched exactly to the one we were playing, since we thought it was some other bird flying. Rajive sir attempted to photograph it in flight. We, i.e., Rima ma'am, BKG sir and I, spotted it through our binoculars. From the silhouette, and its call we deduced it to be the grassbird.

After flying about 10 rounds over the reeds it perched itself on the top of a clump some ways inwards into the reeds. Again we focused our binoculars. Then Rajive and BKG sirs attempted, and suc-



ceeded, to reach the clump. I followed, heedlessly plunging into the reeds, the ground was wet and swampy due to recent rain, which was still drizzling until a few minutes prior. We reached close, very close to see it clearly. Rajive sir got very clear shots as well.

Later in the afternoon, I went again, this time with Geeta Goswami and Saroj Gulati, fellow club members. We carried a Bluetooth speaker with us as well. We played the call this time on the other side of the bridge and lo! there it was as well, in flight, although we saw it perched exactly where it was in the morning.

This achievement is thanks to Miti sir, whose information just a week back about the bird, and Rajive sir's presence of mind in finding the similarity in the habitat between the reeds in front of us and those in Chhapar Chhiri. This gave me my lifer, and us all our bird of the day.

Amandeep Singh
Chandigarh Bird Club

CHANDIGARH — A BIRDER'S PARADISE

When one thinks of Chandigarh, one visualizes a city laid to plan, straight roads, well laid-out localities, and beautifully maintained parks. Yet no one thinks of Chandigarh as a natural habitat, a city with wildlife around. When I tell my family that I am going out for birding, their reply is more or less predictable, “are there any birds in the city, other than crows and pigeons”.

Chandigarh is a very beautiful city, its not called City Beautiful for nothing. One might say because of its impressive architectural buildings, Rock Garden, Sukhna Lake, and not forgetting the UNESCO World Heritage the Capitol Complex. But for me and many others like me; members of the Chandigarh Bird Club® for instance, they are not its only beauty. The beautifully laid-out Japanese Gardens and the Butterfly Park, the impressive Leisure Valley and the Botanical Gardens, and the numerous parks dotting every sector of the city. Not only that, the city is close to the hills and it has four check dams and one major dam in the vicinity, and where there is a dam, there is a lake, and where there is a lake, there are birds.

These parks and gardens, dams and lakes, hills and rivulets, contain within them an impressive number of avian species. According to the present definition of the ISCR, i.e. the Inter-state Capital Region, there are about 413 species, of which 150 can be easily found within the city itself. All one has



Sukhna Lake

to do is to listen and observe.

Within Chandigarh lies many specie rich parks, such as Leisure Valley in Sector-10, where I had recorded 33 species on one wintery day in December. One can see the Black Redstart very easily when it visits the city in winters. Also present is the Butterfly Park, which despite its name, is not only for butterflies but many other birds like the Indian Paradise Flycatcher, Verdieter Flycatcher, Oriental Honey Buz-zard and many more. The Chandigarh Golf Course also has a number of common species of Chandigarh. I have myself seen the drongos and Indian Grey Hornbill, the State Bird of Chandigarh, in there and when lucky, even the Kestrel is perched on one of the floodlights in the course.

But perhaps the most abundant is the Sukhna Lake and nearby Saketri. Created in 1958 by damming the Sukhna Choe, this 3 km² rain-fed lake is the home for thousands of migratory birds. The lake has, as its neighbour a 25 km², man-made forest. Together they make the Sukhna Wildlife Sanctuary. The lake hosts migratory and resident water fowl like shelducks, coots, wigeons, pintails, shovellers, moorhens and swamphens, cormorants, kingfishers etc. The forest boasts a multitude of bird species, and among the wildlife it has sambhar, wild hog, python, leopard, jungle cat etc.

Outside Chandigarh, there are a number of places one can visit to see birds. Among them are the check dams from west to east are; Mirzapur, Siswan, Jayanti, and Perch Dams. Going along the road to Siswan, one reaches the Sirsa River, which is surrounded by reeds on either side. All these lie north-west of the city. To the north-east lie the city of Panchkula and military cantonment of Chandimandir, the latter of which plays host to visiting Indian Pitta here during the monsoon months. Beyond the cantonment are the Shivalik foothills, which has many rivulets and forest for us to look for birds there. To the south-west lies the city of Mohali, which has Chhapar Chhiri and Bakarpur in its midst, the former is one of the best known spots for Barred Buttonquail and Francolins, the latter has a pond where Knob-billed Ducks and Ruddy Shelducks are present along with Cormorants and Herons. The south and the south-east is dominated by the fields of Punjab and Haryana. Among the important areas is Mote Majra, where resides the lone Flamingo; and Jawaharpur, famous for its Tricoloured Munia and Oriental Pratincole.

Closer home are the man-made forests, Kansal and Nepli. These forests are laid out on the hills surrounding Chandigarh in the north-east. These plantation forests are home to many different species of birds and wildlife. Many trekking routes are marked, the most famous being the Kansal-Nepli trek.

To name some areas close to Chandigarh where one can go for one-day birding trips, the first is Chakki ka Mor. At the time of writing this, the monsoon has been here for some time, so the under-



growth is dense, and there is lot of construction going on along the way, but let the winters come, when the undergrowth is dried, and you can see its abundance. It lies on the national highway connecting Chandigarh to the Himachal capital Shimla, on one of the roads leading off the highway, Its marked by the presence of about 5-6 shops. Another area is the Morni Hills. Along the way you pass through Berwala Bird Sanctuary. A detailed account of Morni can be found in our first edition of the newsletter. A very interesting road is the Old Kasauli Road which passes through Parwanoo and goes all the way upto Kasauli.

The city is surrounded on all sides by birding areas. And you don't have to look any further than the parks and gardens to begin. The Bamboo Gardens in Sector-23, Shanti Van in Sector-16, Smriti Van in Sector-1, Chandigarh Botanical Gardens in Sarangpur, and Panjab University Botanical Gardens in the PU Campus Sector-14. Even the gardens of some members receive more than two dozen different species.

To end it all, Chandigarh and its surrounding areas are a birders paradise with lakes and forests and hills and fields abundant bird life.

Amandeep Singh
Chandigarh Bird Club

BIRDING IN SAN FRANCISCO

There are a lot of places in the Bay area, San Francisco, to watch birds — from its coastal habitats to its wetlands, lakes, ponds, creeks and rivers. Some are the favourite spots of birding enthusiasts and clubs. One can spot different species in large numbers at Don Edwards, San Antonio Road, Palo Alto Bayland Reserve, Ulistac Natural Area etc.



American Avocet, Radio Road



Black Skimmer, Radio Road

Whenever I visit my son, who is residing in Sunny Vale at present, I try to visit maximum areas for birding within that short span of time.

On 14th May 2016, I joined a birding group, organised by Nancy H. DeStefanis (Executive Director of San Francisco Nature Education). She organizes such activities quite often on weekends. It was a four kilometre walk around the Stow Lake — Goldengate Park near Goldengate in San Francisco. She, herself, guided the tour. She has been working for the conservation of that area and saving the nesting of Blue Herons along with her team mates since 1993. We spotted almost thirty species but the highlight of the day were two Great-horned Owls. I managed to click a few shots with great difficulty as they were perched on a tall conifer tree and almost camouflaged in the foliage. They were a lifer for me.



Black-necked Stilt, Radio Road



Cooper's Hawk, Steven's Creek

Don Edwards — another wildlife refuge and Ulistac Natural Area are my favourite birding spots. I have been birding there for the last eight years. Earlier my son was staying in Bella Vista on Lick Mill Road, just opposite Ulistac Natural Area. Almost every morning and evening I used to spend my time in that birding area. It's a haven for the birds — ficses, doves, House Wren, bushtits, woodpeckers, nesting of Red-shouldered Hawk, orioles, Californian Quails, warblers, mockingbird and many more to watch in different seasons throughout the year.



Great-horned Owl, Goldengate Park



Anna's Hummingbird, Don Edwards Wildlife Refuge

Though my son has shifted to Sunny Vale, I will visited Ulistac quite often during my two months visit in April—June 2016.



House Finch, Ulistac Natural Area



Snowy Egret, Palo Alto Bayland Reserve



*Sarbjee Kaur
Chandigarh Bird Club*

BIRDING IN MANCHESTER

As an amateur birder, I have been nurtured and guided by the experienced birders of our club. So when I ventured into independent birding in a totally new environment. I sure was at sea! I did start with birds that visited my sister's beautiful garden, also it gave me opportunity to get acquainted with my new possession.....camera.



Blue Tit



Dunnock

Wood pigeons, doves, magpies, robins, crows, feral pigeons, tits, sparrows and blackbirds were a few that came to feed. There's an amazing variety of feed in from seeds and cakes available and I did notice that the birds have their favourite tastes and can be fussy if a new one is introduced.



Canada Goose and Eurasian Coot



Mute Swan

I was putting up my very first amateur efforts of clicking birds.....to begin with magpie, wood pigeon, robin and the blackbird. Since Manchester has the typical weather....rains most of the time.....sometimes days together which enhance the lush vegetation but it is hard to spot birds in the



Lesser Black-headed Gull



Bullfinch

thickets and huge trees.

At Salford quays I did get to see the grey heron amidst the wild lush yellow irises. Amidst so much forestation I could spot the green and the gold finches and the greater crested grebe. On my walks in the parks which housed huge ponds, I got to see the mallards, Canada goose, the mute swan, coots....a juvenile coot too and a couple of thrushes.

Saroj Gulati
Chandigarh Bird Club

MY TRYST WITH A DRAIN

I know the title sounds weird but this drain in Kaithal has become my hot spot for birding. It was by pure chance I came to know about it last year while cycling. And henceforth it became my own mini bird sanctuary.

In Haryana, these drains and canals are one of the good places to bird because we do not have much forest cover, and especially in my place Kaithal, almost ninety percent of land is used for cultivation. Luckily this drain gets some fresh water from a nearby small canal when the water is extra in it. The water hyacinth in it has lots of White-breasted Waterhens, Grey-headed Swampheens, Common Moorhens along with Plain and Ashy Prinias and Clamorous Reed Warblers etc. This is the place where for the first time in Kaithal, I came across a big flock of **Sind Sparrows** and what a sight it was!! And this is not all I have come across, Booted Warblers, and Paddyfield Warblers in the desi kikar along this drain too. Not to forget my lifer the Orphean Warbler was also seen by me over here.



The fields along this drain have given me a visual treat of Red-headed Buntings, Munias and all kinds of Pipits and wagtails. I got to see a single Red-headed Falcon being pestered by the Shikra in this place only. In the winters the sheesham trees in the drain become a host to many small warblers and Chiffchaffs.

But sometimes the pleasures come with little pains too. The other day I saw a beautiful specimen of male Jungle Cat lying dead on the road along the drain, most probably a road kill and Neelgais taking on the feral dogs in the sugarcane fields. Everyday there is so much to see and admire along this drain and mind you I have become very protective about it and try my best to scare people away when I see them cutting trees there by saying that I am a forest official and I will get them arrested. On a lighter note my grey hair does put an impression on them.

In the end I would say that we really need to protect our drains and canals, our last hopes of birding in Haryana, in this time of rapid urbanization and deforestation.

Chetna Sharma

MORNI – TIKKAR TAL FIELD TRIP

BKG sir and I decided to go for birding trip near Chandigarh so that we can come back in time, as BKG sir was the only doctor available in the Command Hospital in case of any emergency. Though there were clouds all over we decided to start at 7.00am. We knew that it was not a good time for birding but thought of trying our luck. In early mornings there is less natural light which always spoil the photographs. We started towards Morni where there is a Golden Tulip Hotel. BKG sir narrated to me, that on his last visit here, he had heard the Indian Pitta and tried to spot it, but it flew on the higher branches so he could not click it. We were going very slow so that we could hear the songs/calls of the birds and we saw/heard Peacocks, Grey Francolins, Green Bee-eaters, Pied Bushchats and Cattle Egrets. As we crossed the Berwala bridge, which is always full of troops of monkeys and this being the Berwala Bird Sanctuary, BKG sir told me that he had spotted a Blue Bearded Bee-eater here earlier, so we checked the area thoroughly looking for my lifer. But it was as if luck was not on our side because of the clouds, it was like the jungle was silent and there were no calls/songs or movement of birds. After stopping on 2-3 spots and having some glucose-rich water and some biscuits, finally, we came across a place where we heard some calls/songs of the birds. We got out of the car and looked all around, we saw Oriental White-eyes, Thick-billed Flowerpeckers, Common Iora, Grey-hooded Warblers & Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrikes, forming a hunting party and moving uphill. We were amazed and satisfied that at least we found some nice birds chirping in the forest. We heard the Golden Oriole also, making calls for its mate. As we moved towards Mandana village, we saw a pair of Rufous Treepies and heard a Black Francolin. Suddenly I pointed out a Common Hawk Cuckoo sitting on a branch on a roadside tree just 10ft above the ground level. We came out of the car and just wanted to click the bird. Some youngsters passing by blew their pressure horn which scared the bird and it flew to a nearby branch on the other side of the road, somehow we clicked the desired photographs. As we were searching for more birds there came a police car and stopped and enquired what were we doing (it is a place with high density of love birds all around) we said we are birding and BKG sir introduced himself to the person, "I am Colonel Bhupesh Goyal", and they went away in the pursuit of their next victim. Our next stop was at Badish-er where we had a cup of tea and saw some House Sparrows, Long-tailed Shrike and Grey-bellied Cuckoo. BKG sir told me that we could find some migrant species of finches in these scrubs in the winters. As we moved ahead BKG sir pointed out some of the Ashy Woodswallows which were on a tree nearby. We clicked some nice images of the Plain Martin, Cinereous Tit, Grey-capped Pygmy Woodpecker and Indian Robin. We were lucky to spot Ashy Woodswallows which were seen on the same spot in an earlier trip by BKG sir. It was a lifer for me. It was an awesome weather with little rain and BKG sir wanted to tick the Tikkar Tal in the last leg of his Chandigarh Diaries. So he insisted and I was more than happy to accompany him to Tikkar Tal as we were hopeful of seeing Lesser Flameback Woodpecker en route. As we reached Tikkar Tal, BKG sir was overwhelmed with the nature around him. We took a quick sip of

tea and walked towards the lake, there BKG sir asked me to click a picture of him for his memory and we did a selfie too.



We were very exhausted so we had a fantastic Omelette. We started back but on the way we realised that from last 4-5 hours we were in a no-network area and if there would have been an emergency in the hospital then we were out of coverage and BKG sir would have regretted it. Soon we reached a spot where there was network and after making 6-7 calls, BKG sir relaxed. He spotted Tickle's Leaf Warbler, Cinerous Tit, Purple Sunbird, Ashy Prinia, Plain Prinia and Dusty Crag Martin. We were near Mandana village where we spotted a Chestnut-tailed Starling feeding its chick and we took some clicks. Then we decided to go towards Tapli where we can see Tipra range to the left and the Ghaggar river that separates Tipra from Morni. BKG sir wanted me to see the newly made Baya Weaver nest. So we moved towards Tapli, en route we saw Baya Weaver nests, and Scaly-breasted Munia collecting material from the road. We heard a different song/call which made us stop and come out of car and saw it was 2 chicks of Oriental Magpie Robin which are capable of making different calls/songs, we also made a small video of it. Then en route we saw Indian Roller, Bank Myna and Plain Prinia chirping in a grassland. We were very happy to end the day full of birding after around 8 hours. A trip to be remembered with almost 65 species of birds recorded that day. It was like OMG its BKG magic.

*Vikas Sharma
Chandigarh Bird Club*

BIRD LIST

1. Babbler, Jungle - *Turdoides striatus*
2. Barbet, Brown-headed - *Megalaima zeylanica*
3. Barbet, Coppersmith - *Megalaima haemacephala*
4. Bee-eater, Blue-tailed - *Merops philippinus*
5. Bee-eater, Green - *Merops orientalis*
6. Bulbul, Himalayan - *Pycnonotus leucogenys*
7. Bulbul, Red-vented - *Pycnonotus cafer*
8. Bushchat, Pied - *Saxicola caprata*
9. Chat, Indian - *Cercomela fuscus*
10. Crow, House - *Corvus splendens*
11. Crow, Large-Billed - *Corvus macrorhynchos*
12. Cuckoo, Grey-bellied - *Cacomantis passerinus*
13. Cuckoo, Indian - *Cuculus micropterus*
14. Dove, Eurasian Collard - *Streptopelia decaocta*
15. Dove, Laughing - *Streptopelia senegalensis*
16. Dove, Spotted - *Streptopelia chinensis*
17. Drongo, Ashy - *Dicrurus leucophaeus*
18. Drongo, Black - *Dicrurus macrocercus*
19. Egret, Cattle - *Bubulcus ibis*
20. Egret, Little - *Egretta garzetta*
21. Flycatcher, Indian Paradise - *Terpsiphone paradisi*
22. Francolin, Black - *Francolinus francolinus*
23. Francolin, Grey - *Francolinus pondicerianus*
24. Iora, Common - *Aegithina tiphia*
25. Junglefowl, Red - *Gallus gallus*
26. Kingfisher, White-throated - *Halcyon smyrnensis*
27. Lapwing, Red-wattled - *Vanellus indicus*
28. Martin Dusky Craig - *Hirundo concolor*
29. Martin, Plain - *Riparia diluta*
30. Munia, Scaly-Breasted - *Lonchura punctulata*
31. Myna, Bank - *Acridotheres gingianus*
32. Myna, Common - *Acridotheres tristis*
33. Oriole, Indian Golden - *Oriolous kundoo*
34. Parakeet, Rose-ringed - *Psittacula krameri*
35. Peafowl, Indian - *Pavo cristatus*
36. Petronia, Chestnut-shouldered - *Petronoa xanthocollis*
37. Pigeon, Common/ Rock - *Columba livia*
38. Prinia, Ashy - *Prinia socialis*
39. Prinia, Grey-breasted - *Prinia hodgsonii*
40. Prinia, Plain - *Prinia inornata*
41. Robin, Oriental Magpie - *Copsychus saularis*
42. Robin, Indian - *Saxicoloides fulicatus*
43. Roller, Indian - *Coracias benghalensis*
44. Shikra - *Accipiter badius*
45. Shrike, Long-tailed - *Lanius schach*
46. Sparrow, House - *Passer domesticus*
47. Starling/Myna, Brahminy - *Sturnus pagodarum*
48. Starling, Chestnut-tailed - *Sturnus malabaricus*
49. Sunbird, Purple - *Nectarinia asiatica*
50. Swallow, Barn - *Hirundo rustica*
51. Swallow, Red-rumped - *Hirundo daurica*
52. Swallow, Wire-tailed - *Hirundo smithii*
53. Tit, Cinereous - *Parus cinereus*
54. Treepie, Rufous - *Dendrocitta vagabunda*
55. Warbler, Grey-hooded - *Seicercus / Phylloscopus xanthoschistos*
56. Warbler, Tickell's Leaf - *Phylloscopus affinis*
57. Waterhen, White-breasted - *Amaurornis phoenicurus*
58. Weaver, Baya - *Ploceus philippinus*
59. White-eye, Oriental - *Zosterops palpebrosus*
60. Woodpecker, Brown-fronted - *Dendrocopus auriceps*
61. Woodpecker, Grey-capped Pygmy - *Dendrocopus canicapillus*
62. Woodshrike, Common - *Tephrodornis pondicerianus*
63. Woodswallow, Ashy - *Artamus fuscus*

BADDI FIELD TRIP

Date: - 14th August 2016

Place: - Siswan-Baddi-Sirsa River-Hills beyond upto Subathu

Birders: - Rima Dhillon, Sarabjit Randhawa, Dr. Bhupesh Goyal, Rajive Das and Amandeep Singh

On the 14th, we had decided to go to Sirsa River. Waking up at 0430 to get ready and leave, I looked out of the window to see it was pouring cats and dogs. I telephoned Rima ma'am and we decided to wait out till 0630 to see if rain subsided.



I pulled off my shoes (I was all dressed up, you see) and laid down for a brief nap. No sooner had I done this, that my phone rang and Rima ma'am told me that Sarabjit and Rajive sirs were in her driveway, and BKG sir, who was in Sector-8 Chandigarh, was also on his way over. I hurried in the torrential rain, first wading my way through to the scooter, then driving it all the way to my car parked some ways away, from where I drove through rain, puddles and potholes, making sure not to drench the already wet



bicycle riders in a splash of water.

Upon reaching the night food street, i.e. Sectors-12-14 road, I joined BKG sir in his car, it was still raining and reached our first stop, the Sirsa river, bypassing Siswan Dam, which we reached in rain. It seems our labours to reach the river in pouring deluge paid off.

Initially, we went down the left side of the bridge. There, we went to the bank and scoured the area for crakes. No such luck, but we were greeted by river lapwings and their red relatives, and not to forget the Ibis. An occasional kingfisher and drongo, along with paddyfield pipits made appearances. Af-

ter a while there, we walked to the bank on the right side of the bridge.

On the right side, however, lay a booty for most of us. But lets not jump head first into it, let me tell you all the events leading to it. The first sighting on that side was the Black-breasted Weaver, a lifer for me. It was among the reeds growing on banks of the river. One could get a closer view by steeping into them and Sarabjit sir did. Also all this while Rima ma'am, BKG sir and I spotted the Brown Crake, a lifer for both BKG sir and I, just on the boundary of the reed and open grass. The two of us went forward



for a closer look (Rima ma'am had an injured foot, so she stayed back). We also spotted the Yellow-bellied Prinia in the reeds.

It was sometime then that Rajive sir got an idea and he pulled out his phone and played the call of a Bristled Grassbird which was reported by Miti sir to be heard in the reeds in Chhapar Chhiri, the same habitat that we were facing now. To his delight and later to ours, the call was responded by a bird flying overhead. After flying many rounds, it stopped and perched over a reed. The photographers were delighted for the opportunity and made a journey through the reeds to get as close as the bird would allow. After



clicking to their hearts' content, we came back outside the reeds. Sarabjit sir, having missed the opportunity, returned inside closely followed by BKG sir. They returned with another bird in their bag, the Tri-coloured Munia.

Completely exhausting this side of the bridge we drove back to the other side where the other car was parked. We went further ahead along the river and saw a multitude of Green Bee-eaters; a pair of White-throated Kingfishers; Black Drongos; White-browed Wagtails and to our joy, a Brown Crake in the clear, as close as your phone will be when you are reading this.

We were filled with satisfaction over these species. But we carried on towards Subathu. However their we witnessed a long stretch of inactivity. A thick undergrowth also hindered any chance of sighting

anything. We turned back with Crimson Sunbirds, White-crested Laughingthrushes, Black-chinned Babblers and one woodpecker we couldn't identify.

On our way back, we made a detour via Padhol village which is after crossing a gurdwara on the right side. The entrance to the village is on the left side of the road after 200 metres from the gurdwara. The road through the village is surrounded on either side by eucalyptus trees which border the fields. It is not uncommon to see the peacocks dancing about their but this time, however, they eluded us. It seemed to us that the inactivity in the hills proceeded us everywhere we went on the day.

Returning, we took yet another detour into Sarangpur to see the Cotton Pygmy Goose, but, yes you guessed it, we did not see it.

In hindsight it was a very productive day when it began with everyone getting atleast one lifer in common, the Bristled Grassbird. Dr BKG and I had three each. Those who braved the rain, were awarded handsomely in the end.

Amandeep Singh
Chandigarh Bird Club

Photographs courtesy:
Sarabjit Randhawa and

BIRD LIST

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| 1. Avadavat, Red — <i>Amandava amandava</i> | 11. Crow, House — <i>Corvus splendens</i> |
| 2. Babbler, Black-chinned — <i>Stachyridopsis pyr-</i> | 12. Crow, Large-billed — <i>Corvus macrorhynchos</i> |



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| 3. Babbler, Jungle — <i>Turdoides striata</i> | 13. Dove, Eurasian Collared — <i>Streptopelia decaocto</i> |
| 4. Bee-eater, Green — <i>Merops orientalis</i> | 14. Dove, Spotted — <i>Spilopelia chinensis</i> |
| 5. Bulbul, Himalayan — <i>Pycnonotus leucogenys</i> | 15. Drongo, Black — <i>Dicrurus macrocercus</i> |
| 6. Bulbul, Red-vented — <i>Pycnonotus cafer</i> | 16. Egret, Cattle — <i>Bubulcus coromandus</i> |
| 7. Bushchat, Pied — <i>Saxicola caprata</i> | 17. Francolin, Black — <i>Francolinus francolinu</i> |
| 8. Cormorant, Little — <i>Microcarbo niger</i> | 18. Francolin, Grey — <i>Francolinus pondicerianus</i> |
| 9. Coucal, Greater — <i>Centropus sinensis</i> | 19. Grassbird, Bristled — <i>Chaetornis striata</i> |
| 10. Crake, Brown — <i>Amaurornis akool</i> | 20. Ibis, Red-naped — <i>Pseudibis papillosa</i> |

21. Kingfisher, White-throated — *Halcyon smyrnensis*

22. Kite, Black — *Milvus migrans*

23. Lapwing, Red-wattled — *Vanellus indicus*

maderaspatensis

36. Waterhen, White-breasted — *Amaurornis phoenicurus*

37. **Weaver, Black-breasted** — *Ploceus bengha-*



24. Lapwing, River — *Vanellus duvacicelli* *lensis*

25. Laughingthrush, White-crested — *Garrulax leucolophus*

26. Munia, Black-headed/Tricoloured — *Lonchura Malacca*

27. Munia, Scaly-breasted — *Lonchura punctulata*

28. Myna, Common — *Acridotheres tristis*

29. Pigeon, Common/Rock — *Columba livia*



30. Pipit, Paddyfield — *Anthus rufulus*

31. Plover, Little Ringed — *Charadrius dubius*

32. **Prinia, Plain** — *Prinia inornata*

33. Prinia, Yellow-bellied — *Prinia flaviventris*

34. **Sunbird, Crimson** — *Aethopyga siparaja*

35. Wagtail, White-browed — *Motacilla*

JAWAHARPORE FIELD TRIP

Date: - 25th August 2016

Place: - Sarbjeet Kaur, Rima Dhillon, Saroj Gulati, Preet Cheema, Onkar Singh, Mahesh Garg, Saiyam Nagar, Palash Majumdar, Mitinderpal Singh Sekhon, and Amandeep Singh

It was a spur-of-the-moment decision for me when Miti sir posted on the club a message asking for anyone wanting to join him for birding in Jawaharpur on the 25th, since it was a holiday for most of us due to Janamashtami. He said anyone who is interested to meet him at the Bakarpur pond at 7 a.m. Since I was on the way, I requested Miti sir to pick me up and he did so.



Upon reaching Bakarpur, all our fellow birders were there in four cars. And so a caravan of four cars made its way to Jawaharpur which lies beyond Dera Bassi on the left side of the road just before Glass Palace hotel. I think 10 people with binoculars and cameras as long as elephant trunks and appearing as if armed to the teeth caused a twinkle of doubt in their minds but anyway, we made it through the village to the fields.

It was in the fields that my first sighting of the Indian Skylark occurred. These fields were full of bird activity. We stopped finding an appropriate space and disembarked. A little further into the open space, swampy land we saw the Oriental Pratincole and the Bengal Bushlark. Also flying above us was the Pied Cuckoo. It was then we played the call of the Bristled Grassbird and were very delighted to see it when it responded to the call. In the far sky we could spot a solitary Woolly-necked Stork flying.



After a spot of tea and mathis, along with Sarbjeet ma'am's birthday cake, which was on the previous day, we made our way onwards. However, Mahesh and Saiyam sirs left to return to their work. Palash sir joined us in our car. It was while we were trying to locate the Black Francolin, that Preet sir

called me to tell that there was a pair of European Rollers. Upon reaching there we got very beautiful shots of them.

While driving we spotted the Blue-tailed Bee-eater. While we were admiring it we completely overlooked the Tricoloured Munia on the road. Our final stop was a colony of baya weaver nest, something extremely common, but here were just next to the road. We returned via a circuitous route returning through Dera Bassi.



Our last port of call was Mote Majra and a road leading to Mohali via Aerocity which has a series of three ponds next to it. Here we saw the Red-naped Ibis, Pied Kingfishers, Painted Stork and Striated Heron among others. We returned, dropping Palash sir and them me. The day ended with four lifers for me.

Amandeep Singh
Chandigarh Bird Club

Photographs courtesy:
Mitinderpal Singh Sekhon

BIRD LIST

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| 1. Babbler, Jungle — <i>Turdoides striata</i> | 5. Bulbul, Red-vented — <i>Pycnonotus cafer</i> |
| 2. Babbler, Yellow-eyed — <i>Chrysomma sinense</i> | 6. Bushchat, Pied — <i>Saxicola caprata</i> |



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| 3. Bee-eater, Blue-tailed — <i>Merops philippinus</i> | 7. Bushlark, Bengal — <i>Mirafra assamica</i> |
| 4. Bee-eater, Green — <i>Merops orientalis</i> | 8. Chat, Indian — <i>Cercomela fusca</i> |

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| 9. Cisticola, Zitting — <i>Cisticola juncidis</i> | 21. Egret, Intermediate — <i>Egretta intermedia</i> |
| 10. Cormorant, Little — <i>Microcarbo niger</i> | 22. Francolin, Black — <i>Francolinus francolinus</i> |
| 11. Coucal, Greater — <i>Centropus sinensis</i> | 23. Francolin, Grey — <i>Francolinus pondicerianus</i> |
| 12. Crow, House — <i>Corvus splendens</i> | 24. Grassbird, Bristled — <i>Chaertornis striata</i> |
| 13. Cuckoo, Jacobin — <i>Clamator jacobinus</i> | 25. Heron, Pond — <i>Ardeola grayii</i> |
| 14. Dove, Eurasian Collared — <i>Streptopelia decaocto</i> | 26. Heron, Purple — <i>Ardea purpurea</i> |
| 15. Dove, Laughing — <i>Spilopelia senegalensis</i> | 27. Heron, Striated — <i>Butorides striata</i> |



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| 16. Drongo, Black — <i>Dicrurus macrocercus</i> | 28. Heron, Striated — <i>Butorides striata</i> |
| 17. Duck, Knob-billed — <i>Sarkidiornis melantostomus</i> | 29. Hoopoe, Eurasian — <i>Upupa epops</i> |
| 18. Duck, Lesser Whistling — <i>Dendrocygna javanica</i> | 30. Hornbill, Indian Grey — <i>Ocyroceros birostris</i> |
| 19. Duck, Spot-billed — <i>Anas poecilorhyncha</i> | 31. Ibis, Red-naped — <i>Pseudibis papillosa</i> |
| 20. Egret, Cattle — <i>Bubulcus coromandus</i> | 32. Kingfisher, Pied — <i>Ceryle rudis</i> |
| | 33. Kite, Black — <i>Milvus migrans</i> |
| | 34. Lapwing, Red-wattled — <i>Vanellus indicus</i> |

35. Moorhen, Common — *Gallinula chloropus*
36. Munia, Black-headed/Tricoloured — *Lonchura philippinus*
37. Munia, Scaly-breasted — *Lonchura punctulata*
38. Myna, Bank — *Acridotheres ginginianus*
39. Myna, Common — *Acridotheres tristis*
40. Myna, Pied — *Gracupica contra*
41. Parakeet, Rose-ringed — *Psittacula krameri*
42. Pigeon, Common/Rock — *Columba livia*
51. **Skylark, Oriental** — *Alauda gulgula*
52. Sparrow, House — *Passer domesticus*
53. Stilt, Black-winged — *Himantopus himantopus*
54. Stint, Little — *Calidris minuta*
55. Stork, Painted — *Mycteria leucocephala*
56. Stork, Woolly-necked — *Ciconia episcopus*
57. Swallow, Barn — *Hirundo rustica*
58. Swallow, Wire-tailed — *Hirundo smithii*



43. Plover, Little Ringed — *Charadrius dubius*
44. Pratincole, Oriental — *Glareola maldivarum*
45. Prinia, Plain — *Prinia inornata*
46. **Roller, European** — *Coracias garrulus*
47. Roller, Indian — *Coracias benghalensis*
48. Sandpiper, Common — *Actitis hypoleucos*
49. Shrike, Long-tailed — *Lanius schach*
50. Silverbill, Indian — *Euodice malabarica*
59. Swamphen, Purple — *Porphyrio porphyrio*
60. Swift, Little — *Apus affinis*
61. Treepie, Rufous — *Dendrocitta vagabunda*
62. Waterhen, White-breasted — *Amaurornis phoenicurus*
63. **Weaver, Baya** — *Ploceus philippinus*

SAKETRI — DERA BASSI — MOTE MAJRA FIELD TRIP

The monthly field trip of the Chandigarh Bird Club took place on the 11th of September 2016, to Saketri, Dera Bassi and Mote Majra. The following birders, were present

1. Vikas Sharma
2. Sukhwinder Singh

BIRD LIST

Saketri Bird List

1. Bee-eater, Blue-tailed - *Merops philippinus*
2. Bee-eater, Green - *Merops orientalis*
3. Bulbul, Red-vented - *Pycnonotus cafer*
4. Bunting, Crested - *Melophus lathamii*
5. Bushchat, Pied - *Saxicola caprata*
6. Crow, House - *Corvus splendens*
7. Dove, Eurasian Collard - *Streptopelia decaocta*
8. Dove, Laughing - *Streptopelia senegalensis*
9. Drongo, Ashy - *Dicrurus leucophaeus*
10. Egret, Cattle - *Bubulcus ibis*
11. Francolin, Grey - *Francolinus pondicerianus*
12. Hoopoe – *Upupa epops*
13. Kingfisher, White-throated - *Halcyon smyrnensis*
14. Lapwing, Red-wattled – *Vanellus indicus*
15. Lapwing, Yellow-wattled - *Vanellus malabaricus*
16. Lark, Crested - *Galerida cristata*
17. Munia, Indian Silverbill - *Lonchura malabarica*
18. Munia, Scaly-Breasted - *Lonchura punctulata*
19. Myna, Bank - *Acridotheres gingianus*
20. Myna, Common - *Acridotheres tristis*
21. Pipit, Paddyfield - *Anthus rufulus*
22. Prinia, Plain - *Prinia inornata*
23. Roller, European - *Coracias garrulous*
24. Rosefinch, Common - *Carpodacus erythrinus*
25. Shrike, Long-tailed - *Lanius schach*
26. Starling, Chestnut-tailed - *Sturnus malabaricus*
27. Stonechat, Common - *Saxicola torquata*
28. Sunbird, Purple - *Nectarinia asiatica*

29. Wryneck, Eurasian - *Jynx torquilla*

Mote Majra and Dera Bassi Bird List

1. Bee-eater, Green - *Merops orientalis*
2. Bulbul, Red-vented - *Pycnonotus cafer*
3. Bushchat, Pied - *Saxicola caprata*
4. Buttonquail, Barred - *Turnix suscitator tiagoo*
5. Cormorant, Little - *Phalacrocorax niger*
6. Coucal, Greater - *Centropus sinensis*
7. Drongo, Black - *Dicrurus macrocercus*
8. Duck, Comb - *Sarkidiornis melanotos*
9. Duck, Indian Spot-billed - *Anas poecilorhynchus*
10. Egret, Cattle - *Bubulcus ibis*
11. Egret, Great - *Casmerodeus albus*
12. Egret, Little - *Egretta garzetta*
13. Francolin, Black - *Francolinus francolinus*
14. Francolin, Grey - *Francolinus pondicerianus*
15. Heron, Grey - *Ardea cinerea*
16. Heron, Indian Pond - *Ardeola grayii*
17. Heron, Purple - *Ardea purpurea*
18. Hoopoe, Common/Eurasian - *Upupa epops*
19. Kestrel, Common - *Falco tinnunculus*
20. Kingfisher, White-throated - *Halcyon smyrnensis*
21. Kite, Black - *Milvus migrans*
22. Lapwing, Red-wattled - *Vanellus indicus*
23. Munia, Scaly-Breasted - *Lonchura punctulata*
24. Myna, Bank - *Acridotheres gingianus*
25. Myna/Starling, Asian Pied - *Sturnus contra*
26. Parakeet, Rose-ringed - *Psittacula krameri*
27. Plover, Little-ringed - *Charadrius dubius*

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| 28. Roller, European - <i>Coracias garrulous</i> | 34. Swallow, Wire-tailed - <i>Hirundo smithii</i> |
| 29. Sandpiper | 35. Swampphen, Purple - <i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i> |
| 30. Sparrow, House - <i>Passer domesticus</i> | 36. Treepie, Rufous - <i>Dendrocitta vagabunda</i> |
| 31. Stilt, Black-winged - <i>Monticola solitarius pandoo</i> | 37. Vulture, Egyptian - <i>Neophron percnopterus</i> |
| 32. Stork, Painted - <i>Mycteria leucocephala</i> | 38. Wagtail, Citrine - <i>Motacilla citreola</i> |
| 33. Stork, Wolly-necked - <i>Ciconia episcopus</i> | 39. Weaver, Baya - <i>Ploceus philipinus</i> |

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Newsletter of the
Chandigarh Bird Club

Incepted in 2008, the Chandigarh Bird Club has been dedicated to its goal of protecting the environment. The Club owes its existence to those few dedicated and expert members, who started this club in the Chandigarh Boat Club, namely, Navjit Singh, Narbir Kahlon, Vikramjeet Singh, Mrs. Rima Dhillon, Mrs. Sarbjeet and Mrs. Geeta Goswami. The Basic objective of the Chandigarh Bird Club continues to be to:

- Bring people specially the younger generation closer to nature through birding and help them to enjoy the outdoors while making it a fun activity
- To make people and government more sensitive towards the environment to create a dynamic database for analysis in order to focus conservation efforts.
- To create a forum for birders to share information and discuss issues related to this activity

- President, CBC — M. S. Sekhon
- Vice-President, CBC — Narbir Kahlon
- Secretary, CBC — Rima Dhillon
- Joint Secretary, CBC — Sarbjeet Kaur
- Treasurer, CBC — Mahesh Garg

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