



Whispering Wings®

Newsletter of the Chandigarh Bird Club®

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Delicious autumn!

My very soul is wedded to it,

and if I were a bird,

I would fly about the earth

Seeking successive autumns

——— *George Eliot*

The migrants have started flocking in, perhaps seeking successive autumns! A large flock of Oriental Pratincoles at Jawaharpur created a flutter. As we go out exploring the ISCR, the list grows. Maybe more species are moving in or just possible that we are discovering them as the efforts intensify. Whatever be the reason, CBC members are making large strides and working hard at their ascribed tasks.

The opening of Siswan-Mirzapur trail offers an excellent opportunity to CBC as a whole. The larger blueprint envisaged by

Forest Department, Punjab, has a marked role for CBC which needs to be taken up as a challenge. Training local youth as bird guides will be a very enabling exercise for the unemployed and literate youngsters; it will also work towards conservation once ecotourism becomes their livelihood in this very biodiverse but less economically developed region.

Autumn, that time of the year when our friends fly in from all over, is here. I wish you a delightful migrant watch.

May you always hear the birdsong....

Mitinderpal Singh Sekhon

Three years of Whispering Wings



Indian Silverbills

This edition marks the third anniversary of Whispering Wings®, our club's quarterly newsletter. In September 2015, we began with our first edition. On board, the editorial team were Mitinderpal S Sekhon, the president of CBC and I, Amandeep S Channa.

Over the years, we have published eight issues, and eighty articles, ten articles per issue on average. Seventeen writers have contributed to these newsletters, all members of CBC except one. The newsletter gets circulated to all our members and other birding clubs and organisations.

We have written trip reports to thirty-two locations both in India and abroad. Thirteen locations in ISCR, thirteen outside of ISCR, and six international locations (Bhutan, Borneo, Manchester, San Francisco, Singapore, and Uganda). One can see our members are very well travelled.

One constant in all our articles is the editorial. From our editor's desk, comes the most intriguing, most interesting, and most informative articles to begin the newsletter.

With this issue, we mark the beginning of the third volume of newsletters and an exciting array of editions in the coming year.

Amandeep Singh Channa

Brahminy Starling



The Brahminy Starling or Brahminy Myna (*Sturnia pagodarum*) is a member of the starling family of birds. One can see it usually in pairs or small flocks in open habitats on the plains of the Indian Subcontinent.

It's very common in residential areas of Chandigarh and has occupied a nest box in my house in Sector-35A, installed especially for House Sparrows. The breeding season is from March to September but varies with location, breeding earlier in Southern India.

Both sexes take part in nest building. They line the nest with grass, feathers, and rags. A typical clutch is 3 - 4 eggs which are pale bluish green. The eggs hatch in about 12 to 14 days. They raise two or three broods in succession. They raise the first clutch between 20th April - 10th June 2017 and the next one started in the second week of July 2017. There is a reason for the long gap. After the first brood, they began taking out the old material from the nest. Seeing that, I got doubtful and opened the nest box. To my surprise, I found it infested with maggots. The nest box was cleaned and disinfected and closed. The very next day, the pair of Brahminy Starling started bringing the nesting material to raise the second brood in the same nesting box. Like some of the other passerines, they keep the nest cabin clean and carry the fecal sac in their beak that nestling usually produces within seconds of being fed. Whosoever has installed nest Boxes, must make sure that they are kept clean and not infested with any creepy-crawly insects.

Sarbjeet Kaur



Degrading Ecosystem

Let's go to Chakki Mor (near Chandigarh) if you are free and want to do some birding!! That is what I asked my wife's Taya Ji and Tai Ji, Shashi Sharma and Dr Susan Sharma, who were in Chandigarh for a family get together on the weekend. As we all know nature lovers never miss a chance to go for a nature walk or bird watching, so did they and were ready in no time. We started at 0630 on a bright morning. On the way, as we crossed the Timber Trail, the hills were being cut for making a four-lane highway. Commuters were greatly inconvenienced due

to rain followed by landslides on the route causing long traffic jams. At one such place, Dr Susan thought to get some pictures so that she can, in a way, highlight the effects of the damage done to the hills. It was shocking to see that the damage was too much, workers were putting the debris in a truck which was then



Oriental White-eye



unloaded at the other end of the road into the valley. This dumping of the rubble was uprooting trees, and it was going deep into the foothill zones of the Shivaliks, which in turn would certainly block the course of the river Ghaggar which flows through Panchkula in to Punjab. The blocked course of the river by the debris harmed the ecosystem; nests, insects, birds and animals. It is a matter of great concern and was hurting us deep inside. Do we need this kind of development which is damaging



our ecosystem? Do we want a four-lane road? Do we need to hurry to reach Shimla in two hours? Do we have more space in Shimla for tourists? Do we have more resources to compensate for the loss inflicted every day? NGT is only a way for collecting funds for the government, which is thereby making it cash-rich



Crimson Sunbird



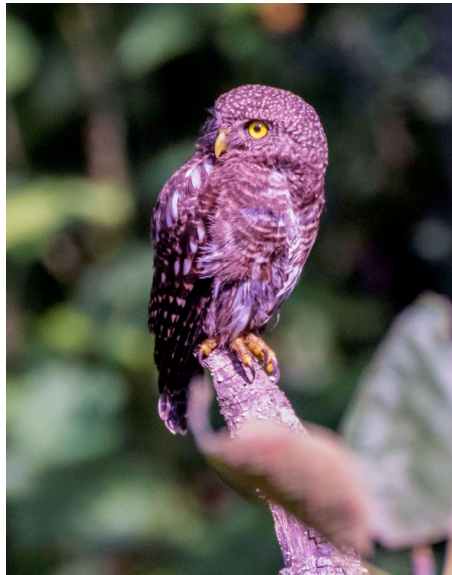
**Fulvous-breasted
Woodpecker**

funds for the government, which is thereby making it cash-rich and doing nothing for sustaining the ecosystem.

We headed towards Chakki Mor, and as we reached the curve, I stopped the car to see what our eyes were looking for, Yellow-naped Woodpecker, Great Barbet, and House Sparrows.

As we went a little further, I was surprised to see that the place where we sit and click the Red-billed Leiothrix, Spot-winged Starlings and House Sparrows were missing, and everything was under the debris deposited at any suitable site according to them.

A bit further, I managed to get some of the good shots. We all nature lovers should come forward to highlight this grim



Jungle Owlet

situation and do our bit to save Mother Earth from further damage.

Vikas Sharma

Breeding Parasitism

Nature has made Asian Koel (*Eudynamys scolopaceus*) a truant parent. It is a brood parasite, it lays its egg in a House Crow's nest. The female Koel slyly approaches the unguarded nest of the House Crow, lays eggs in it, and slips away. The male Koel distracts the House Crow from the nest to give an opportunity to the female to lay her egg.



The gullible Crow takes care of the chicks, and the young ones are fed by the Crow even when they leave the nest. They stay perched in the trees in the nearby area and keep cawing for food till they can take care of themselves.

I saw the other day in a park near my house, a young one of a koel fed along with the juvenile of the House Crow. The House Crow had a nest in an eucalyptus tree in front of my house, and I checked through binoculars that there were three chicks, but only two survived. One host's and the other of the Koel, keeping the crow busy, searching for food.

The Crow's young one is always following the parent wherever it is going in search of food, whether it is roadside or in the park or some other nearby place. The Koel's young one stays in the treen only and follows the crow flying from one tree to the other one and keeps cawing for food.

I managed to click a photo of Crow feeding the young one of a Koel. The Crow got intestines of some rodent, and it was tearing it into small bits to feed the Koel's young one. As the Crow was perching on an electric wire, it was struggling hard with that piece of food, so it lost its balance and dropped it.



The young one of the Koel was still demanding food, cawing away. The Crow flew away to a nearby house in search of more food, and the clever Koel's young one flew away to a tree near that house.

Sarbjeet Kaur

July Field Trip-Bird List

Sarbjeet Kaur, Sarabjit Randhawa, Saroj Gulati and Niti Singh, went for a field trip to Kumarhatti, on July 9th, 2017 at 0515 hours. They noted the following species:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. Black Francolin | 27. Cinereous Tit |
| 2. Red Junglefowl | 28. Black-throated Tit |
| 3. Cattle Egret | 29. Red-vented Bulbul |
| 4. Black Kite | 30. Himalayan Bulbul |
| 5. Black-eared Kite | 31. Gray-hooded Warbler |
| 6. River Lapwing | 32. Gray-breasted Prinia |
| 7. Rock Pigeon | 33. Oriental White-eye |
| 8. Spotted Dove | 34. Black-chinned Babbler |
| 9. Asian Koel | 35. Rusty-cheeked Scimitar-Babbler |
| 10. White-throated Kingfisher | 36. Jungle Babbler |
| 11. Great Barbet | 37. Streaked Laughingthrush |
| 12. Blue-throated Barbet | 38. Indian Robin |
| 13. Gray-capped Woodpecker | 39. Oriental Magpie-Robin |
| 14. Brown-fronted Woodpecker | 40. Blue Whistling-Thrush |
| 15. Rose-ringed Parakeet | 41. Spotted Forktail |
| 16. Slaty-headed Parakeet | 42. Pied Bushchat |
| 17. Plum-headed Parakeet | 43. Gray Bushchat |
| 18. Ashy Drongo | 44. Gray-winged Blackbird |
| 19. Indian Paradise-Flycatcher | 45. Common Myna |
| 20. Black-headed Jay | 46. Jungle Myna |
| 21. Red-billed Blue-Magpie | 47. Upland Pipit |
| 22. Rufous Treepie | 48. Crested Bunting |
| 23. House Crow | 49. House Sparrow |
| 24. Dusky Crag-Martin | 50. Russet Sparrow |
| 25. Barn Swallow | 51. Scaly-breasted Munia |
| 26. Red-rumped Swallow | |

A Visit to Perch Dam



Green Bee-eater



Indian Peafowl



Black Francolin

On 30th of July, Sarbjeet ma'am and I undertook a birding excursion to Perch Dam and its environs. We left for the dam at about 0600 hrs, with ma'am at the steering wheel. A mild rain had fallen last night, and the ground was wet and muddy, with water collected in potholes. The weather was cold and cloudy with a light breeze blowing. The area around Perch consists mostly of small hills and fields. In the fields, one could spot the Red-wattled Lapwings and the Green Bee-eaters as well as Swallows flying overhead. A particularly interesting site was a

flock of Red-naped Ibis flying over us into the fields beyond.

Upon reaching the dam, we were greeted by a majestic sight of an Indian Peacock perched on regulator building of the dam. That was all we saw there, despite making the journey through the mud and water. What was more exciting waited for us on the way back.

While coming back from the dam to Chandigarh, we saw a pair of Yellow-wattled Lapwings in the fields. They were a beautiful sight, what with me not having seen them for almost five years. We took a turn and went to Sarangpur, into the land plots abandoned for many years now, where nature has taken its course. On a stretch of a double-laned road, one kilometre in length, which we circled thrice, we found Black and Grey

length, which we circled thrice, we found Black and Grey Francolins, Jacobin Cuckoos and Green Bee-eaters.

After following the Francolins and the Cuckoos on the road for an hour, we returned to Chandigarh, very satisfied.

Amandeep Singh Channa



Jacobin Cuckoo

- | | |
|--------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Black Francolin | 14. Jacobin Cuckoo |
| 2. Grey Francolin | 15. Asian Koel |
| 3. Red-naped Ibis | 16. Greater Coucal |
| 4. Cattle Egret | 17. Common Hoopoe |
| 5. Black Kite | 18. Green Bee-eater |
| 6. Shikra | 19. Indian Grey Hornbill |



Green Bee-eater



Grey Francolin

- | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|
| 7. White-breasted Waterhen | 20. Black Drone |
| 8. Yellow-wattled Lapwing | 21. Rufous Treepie |
| 9. Red-wattled Lapwing | 22. House Crow |
| 10. Common Rock Pigeon | 23. Wire-tailed Swallow |
| 11. Eurasian Collared Dove | 24. Red-vented Bulbul |
| 12. Laughing Dove | 25. Himalayan Bulbul |
| 13. Rose-ringed Parakeet | 26. Plain Prinia |

27. Jungle Babbler

28. Common Myna

29. Indian Robin

30. Pied Buchchat

August Field Trip



Baya Weaver

Location: - Jayanti Devi Dam

Date: - August 2017

Time: - 5:30 a.m. to 9:30 a.m.

Birders: - Rima Dhillon, and Sarbjeet Kaur

It was an overcast sky when we started out, and a short heavy shower caught us at the entrance to Jayanti Devi Dam which is about seven kilometres from Chandigarh. After that, there was no rain for the entire morning though the sky remained overcast.

The plan was to check out the water body behind the dam and visit Sarangpur on the way back.

Khair and Kikar trees cover the area along with tall grass, where a pair of Red Avadavats were busily feeding on the seed-filled cobs.

The lake behind the dam had thirteen Painted Storks and two Little Cormorants. Several Black Drongos had perched on the electric poles along the bandh. A shikra atop the wall of the machine room gave grand poses, and we were able to sidle up quite close to get almost eye level shots.

The track leading to the water was wet and slushy and wasn't worth the risk of having the car getting bogged down, so we turned back and headed towards the road to try to get some birds in the fields.

One large flock of Grey-headed Starling (Chestnut-tailed Starling) lined the electric wires in company with Green Bee-eaters, Black Drongos and Common Babblers.



Baya Weaver

Many of the species - Common Babblers, Rufous Treepie, Common Myna, Bank Myna, House Sparrow and Grey-headed Starling - were seen with juveniles which are now almost grown up and taking on the appearance of adults.

A small colony of Baya Weavers were still trying to attract females to approve their handiwork, and at one nest two females were seen checking out the nest together.

The morning was pretty advanced by the time got to Sarangpur, so there wasn't much to be seen there except the Black Francolin on its regular perch, Green Bee-eaters, Rufous treepie and Indian Grey Hornbills.

Rima Dhillon

August Field Trip-Bird List

1. Indian Peafowl
2. Black Francolin
3. Painted Stork
4. Little Cormorant
5. Cattle Egret
6. Indian Pond Heron
7. Balc-crowned Night Heron
8. Shikra
9. Black Kite
10. White-brested Waterhen
11. Red-wattled Lapwing
12. Rock Pigeon
13. Eurasian Collared Dove
14. Laughing Dove
15. Greater Coucal
16. Pied Cuckoo
17. Asian Koel
18. Eurasian Hoopoe
19. Indian Grey Hornbill
20. White-throated kingfisher
21. Green Bee-eater



Common Babbler



Shikra

22. Indian Roller
23. Coppersmith barbet
24. Rose-ringed Parakeet
25. Black Drongo
26. Indian Paradise Flycatcher
27. Rufous Treepie
28. House Crow
29. Wire-tailed Swallow
30. Red-vented Bulbul
31. Common Tailorbird
32. Grey-breasted Prinia
33. Lesser Whitethroat
34. Yellow-eyed Babbler
35. Common Babbler
36. Jungle babbler
37. Indian Robin
38. Oriental Magpie Robin
39. Indian Chat
40. Asian Pied Starling
41. Brahminy Starling
42. Bank Myna
43. Purple Sunbird
44. Paddyfield Pipit
45. House Sparrow
46. Baya Weaver
47. Red Avadavat
48. Scaly-breasted Munia

Morni Hills

On 20th of August 2017, Rima Dhillon, Sarbjeet Kaur, Saroj Gulati, Vikas Sharma and I, went to Morni Hills. The



Chestnut-bellied Nuthatch



**Brown-fronted
Woodpecker**

weather was overcast, and at quarter past five, we left for Morni



Scaly-breasted Munia



Dark-sided Flycatcher

weather was overcast, and at quarter past five, we left for Morni hills.

The surroundings were mostly thick with foliage. The undergrowth was also very thick, making it almost impossible to spot birds hiding there. Most of the trip we drove through, with Green Bee-eaters, Martins and Swallows as our companions. Our first stop was at Mandana where we had a small breakfast with tea. Moving on, we stopped on the road, with a clearing up one side and pines down the valley. It was here that we saw a Grey Francolin, Brown-fronted Woodpecker, Lesser Goldenback (Black-rumped Flameback), Yellow-naped Woodpecker, Long-tailed Minivets, Dark-sided Flycatcher, Chestnut-bellied Nuthatch, and Western Crowned Warbler. While on the road to



Long-tailed Minivet



Common Kestrel

Morni village after taking the upper fork, we spotted a Common Kestrel hovering. On our way back we added a Common Hawk Cuckoo to our bag.

Amandeep Singh Channa

Pictures by Vikas Sharma

September Field Trip

Date: - 10th September 2017

Birders: - Rima Dhillon, Aprajita Lobana, Bindoo Nagia, Samrath Singh, Onkar Singh, Mahesh Garg, Saiyam Nagar, Jaideep Grewal, and Vikas Sharma.

Sirkeer Malkoha, yes it is a lifer for many of the birders who visited the Sirsa riverbed for the monthly field trip. But I was the lucky one to catch a glimpse of this beautiful bird which was flying to the other side of the road.

In the beginning, it sat in the undergrowth and was not



Scaly-breasted Munia



Green Sandpiper

visible to us. Surprisingly it still gave us time to come out of the car and get ready with our cameras and binoculars to spot the winged beauty. It appeared within a short span of time wherein everyone was ready to capture it, some with binoculars, some with cameras and yet others just to get a glimpse with the naked eye.

It has been recorded earlier in Tapri, Kaimbwala, Nepli, Saketri. Berwala, Mandan, Bhojnagar, and Naulta (sightings confirmed by Mr Narbir Kahlon). It is not common but found throughout the Shivaliks surrounding Chandigarh

Vikas Sharma



Sirkeer Malkoha

September Field Trip-Bird List



Green-backed Tit

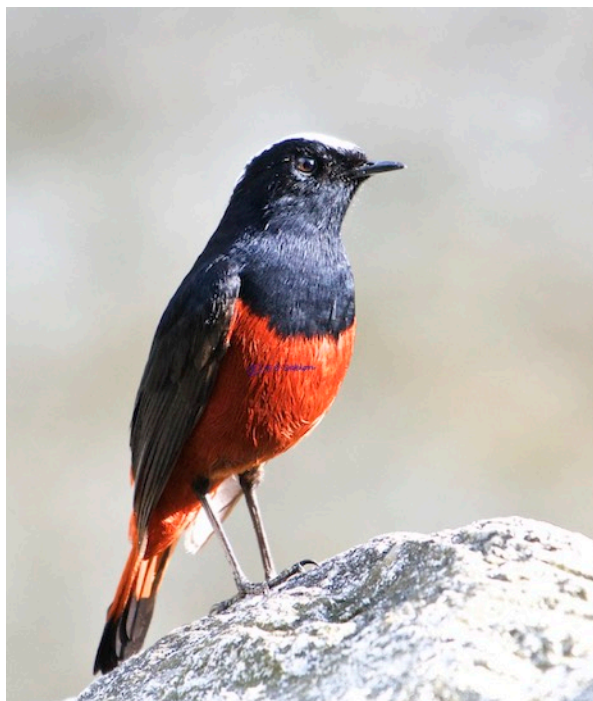
- | | |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Red-naped Ibis | 14.Red Avadavat |
| 2. Green Sandpiper | 15.Zitting Cisticola |
| 3. Sirkeer Malkoha | 16.House Sparrow |
| 4. Cattle Egret | 17.Indian Pitta |
| 5. Black Drongo | 18.Common Babbler |
| 6. Scally-breasted Munia | 19.Common Myna |
| 7. Brown Crake | 20.Asian Koel |
| 8. Black Kite | 21.Greater Coucal |
| 9. White-breasted Kingfisher | 22.Plain Prinia |
| 10.Black-winged Stilt | 23.White-breasted Waterhen |
| 11.Spotted Owlet | 24.Black Francolin |
| 12.Grey Francolin | 25.White-browed Wagtail |
| 13.Pied Bushchat | |



Brown Dipper (juv)



Whiskered Yuhina



**White-capped Water
Redstart**

Jawaharpur



Oriental Pratincole



Crested Lark

In the past one week, birders have frequented Jawaharpur because of the presence of a large flock of Oriental Pratincoles in the area. On 26th of September, Sarbjeet Kaur, Saroj Gulati and I too went there in search of them.

We started at quarter past six and reached Jawaharpur, by quarter to seven, but it was covered under a blanket of early morning mist. The visibility was bad, but we were undeterred. We stopped in a clearing in the fields, where the villagers have heaps of dung and harvested wheat. Here we found, Crested Lark, Paddyfield Pipit, Pond Heron, Purple Heron, Asian Koel, Scaly-bellied Munia, Tri-coloured Munia, Indian Silverbill, Red Avadavat and Green Bee-eaters among many others.

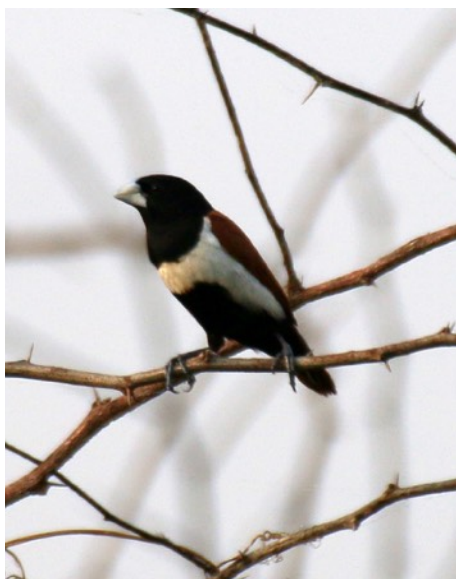


We were about to move on when we thought of looking into the fields across the road. We were right in doing so as we saw the most-sought after Oriental Pratincoles. And not just three or four, but three-or-four hundred. We spent a lot of time watching them, clicking photographs, all the time moving along the periphery of the field.

After spending two hours, we returned at about half-past nine. It was the most productive early morning I have had in months.

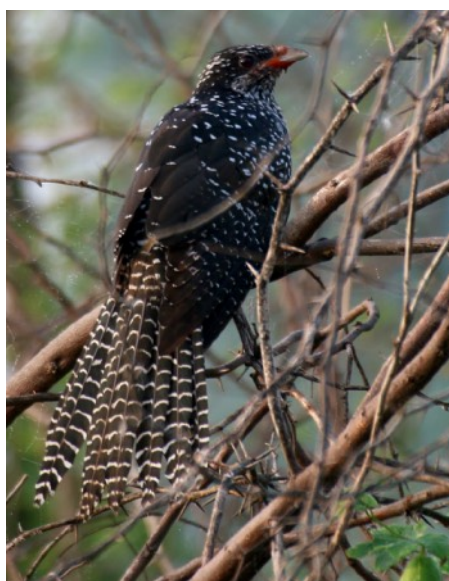
Amandeep Singh

- | | |
|--------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Black Francolin | 3. Indian Pond Heron |
| 2. Common Teal | 4. Purple Heron |



Tri-coloured Munia

- | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|
| 5. Cattle Egret | 23. Oriental Skylark |
| 6. Black-winged Stilt | 24. Plain Prinia |
| 7. Red-wattled Lapwing | 25. Pied Bushchat |
| 8. Green Sandpiper | 26. Indian Chat |
| 9. Oriental Pratincole | 27. Common Stonechat |
| 10. Common Rock Pigeon | 28. House Sparrow |
| 11. Eurasian Collared Dove | 29. Spanish Sparrow (?) |
| 12. Laughing Dove | 30. Indian Silverbill |
| 13. Rose-ringed Parakeet | 31. Red Avadavat |



Asian Koel



Oriental Pratincole

- | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 14. Jacobin Cuckoo | 32. Scaly-breasted Munia |
| 15. Asian Koel | 33. Tri-coloured Munia |
| 16. White-throated Kingfisher | 34. Citrine Wagtail |
| 17. Green Bee-eater | 35. Grey Wagtail |
| 18. House Crow | 36. White wagtail |
| 19. Wire-tailed Swallow | 37. Paddyfield Pipit |
| 20. Barn Swallow | |
| 21. Bengal Bushlark | |
| 22. Crested Lark | |

Incepted in 2008, the Chandigarh Bird Club dedicated itself 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, Vikramjit Singh, Mrs Rima Dhillon, Mrs Sarbjeet Kaur and Mrs Geeta Goswami.

The fundamental objectives of Chandigarh Bird Club continue to be to:

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



Newsletter of the
Chandigarh Bird Club®

- **President, CBC - Mitinderpal S Sekhon**
- **Vice President, CBC - Narbir S Kahlon**
- **Secretary, CBC - Rima Dhillon**
- **Joint Secretary, CBC - Sarbjeet Kaur**
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