

WHISPERING WINGS[®]

NEWSLETTER



CHANDIGARH[®]
BIRD CLUB



COVER PHOTO

GEETA GOSWAMI

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK



The birds they sing

To let us know its almost spring.

Baisakhi, the season of spring.

The season of hope and new beginnings is heralded by hectic nesting activity in the avian world. It all start with the retreat of the wintering species to their breeding grounds in the far north- whether it be Ladakh for some waterfowl like the Ruddy Shelduck or the Tundra for the Geese and other duck species.

From October to March members of Chandigarh Bird Club are busy helping out with various bird census and recording their observations on ebird and other citizen/science platforms.

In this respect January is the busiest time as Asian Waterfowl Census is carried out in the entire country and members of CBC enthusiastically give their time to help out in this exercise. The wetlands of Punjab at Harike, Keshopur, Nangal and Ropar are covered during this census. This year it was observed that fewer number of birds had been recorded in these wetlands as compared to previous years. This was an observation from most wetlands around the country.

One remarkable sighting was that of a set of three Barnacle Geese in the Motemajra Pond in January 2024. Mr. Lalit Mohan Bansal recorded the sighting. After ascertaining from various zoos and sanctuaries that they are not escapees they were declared to be wild birds that had somehow found their way to our locally popular birding hotspot. It was the first sighting for Asia. This goose species is not known for long distance migration.

In the past we have had Persian Wheatear sighted for the first time in this area at Chhapparchiri another birding hotspot not far from Motemajra. Grasshopper Warbler also a first so far west in its range in the grassland of Jawaharpur which too is a hotspot.

Unfortunately, all these areas in the periphery of Chandigarh are disappearing as they fall prey to various agencies in the name of development.

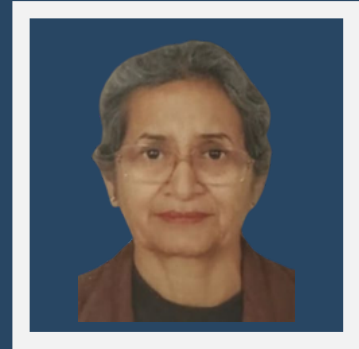
The monthly survey of Sukhna lake is regularly carried out by members for AHWS along with the study and checklist of invertebrates inhabiting it. Numerous species are being recorded for the first time in the region, some even in the country.

There is a need to preserve the rich biodiversity surrounding us but we are unable to control the insidious encroachment of vested interests.

May the Dawn Chorus herald every Sunrise.

RIMA DHILLON
PRESIDENT, CHANDIGARH BIRD CLUB

SECRETARY'S REPORT



January to March represents a pivotal period of transition, not only from winter to spring but also as a critical time for bird migration and conservation efforts.

During this time frame, the Chandigarh Bird Club (CBC) actively participated in significant events and initiatives:

In January, CBC contributed to the Asian Waterfowl Census at Nangal, Harike Wildlife Sanctuaries, and Keshopur-Miani Community Reserve.

From 16th to 19th February, CBC conducted the Backyard Bird Count in Chandigarh, aiming to raise awareness about urban bird diversity.

On 18th March, CBC carried out its monthly bird survey at Sukhna Lake, aiding in long-term bird population monitoring.

CBC joined the Pong Bird Festival 2024 in Nagrota Surian, Kangra, HP, on 1st-2nd February, making valuable contributions to bird conservation efforts.

Additionally, CBC organized field trips to Mote Majra on 11th February for a survey of wintering winged visitors and to Bhoj Nagar on 10th March, providing members with opportunities to explore diverse bird habitats.

May this CBC flourish more and more and we remain committed to protecting our avian friends and fostering community involvement in the future.

SARBJEET KAUR
SECRETARY



14TH HSBC CHANDIGARH BIRD RACE 2024

The HSBC Chandigarh Birdrace, a much anticipated annual birding event was held in Chandigarh on Sunday, 11th February 2024. The event is open to interested birders both beginners and hardcore!

Members of Chandigarh Bird Club participated with their usual zeal and enthusiasm setting out at the crack of dawn to try and cover maximum number of diverse habitats in and around Chandigarh and at dusk they still hadn't had enough but wanted a few more minutes before submitting their checklists!

This year's event included a team of four from the Air Force station. They were all beginners for the event but being posted along the runways to keep them bird free they had developed an interest in the winged beauties and started to identify them. One had gone as far as doing the basic ornithology course with BNHS! The team from HSBC made a valiant effort and brought in a list of 25 species after an hour's birding in their neighbourhood park.

A total of fifteen teams set out and managed to list 245, of the total 436 species on the ISCR bird list, in a 12-hour period. It was marginally more than last year's total of 236 species.

Among the star sightings like Chestnut-headed Tasia, Scaly-breasted Cupwing, Long-legged Buzzard, Indian spotted eagle, Collared scops owl the Bird of the Day would be awarded to Golden Bush-robin.

This annual event is to record the species richness of the ISCR with the added excitement of a bit of competition as incentive. It is a day to spend with the birds with no other distractions!



Lalit mohan Bansal, Onkar Singh, Aryan Bhalla, Kulbhushan Kanwar



**Simmi Waraich, Gagan,
Saroj Gulati, Sandeep Sekhon**



**Golden bush robin (*Tarsiger chrysaeus*)
Parveen Nain**



Aprajita Mohan, Bindu Nangia, Sarbjeet Kaur

CLUB FIELD TRIP FOR THE MONTH OF MARCH 2024

LOCATION : CHAKKIMODH, HIMACHAL PRADESH, INDIA

DATE :

TIME : 7:00AM TO 1:00 PM

WEATHER : BRIGHT SUNSHINE.COOL TEMPERATURE

PARTICIPANT :(L-R) DR. NUSRAT SHAFIQ, SUMEET, SOFIA DAHIA, DR. SIMMI WARAICH, GAGAN, SARBJEET KAUR, DR. APRAJITA MOHAN, RIMA DHILLON



After a gap of two months it was wonderful to take to the foothills for the monthly fieldtrip. In January and February members were busy with the Asian Waterfowl Census and the Chandigarh Bird race, respectively.

Chakkimodh in the month of March is a hub of frantic activity for both birders and birds. With the cold weather coming to an end the avian world gets busy with preparing for the nesting season. The air was filled with the sounds of spring. The Wild Cherry trees were in full bloom with the pristine white blossoms a magnet to many species. Oriental White eye, Bulbuls, Laughingthrushes Sparrows all made an appearance. Kaleej pheasant was the most often seen bird during the birding period.

Ever since the road widening work on the national highway got underway a few years back Chakkimodh has been on the receiving end of a lot of degradation. A road less travelled lined with trees both flowering and fruiting ,serene surroundings with just the whisper of wind through the pines-fast forward to the present and the air is rent with the honking of horns from the constant flow of traffic,some of the beautiful pines have been removed to make way for a wider road,the construction of a massive educational institution has led to numerous budget homestays mushrooming all along the road-one even advertises a swimming pool !! Alas Chakkimodh as we knew it till the early 20's is gone forever.Though the number of species was not that many however the birding experience was wonderful as usual.



RED-BILLED BLUE MAGPIE (*EUROCISSA ERYTHRORYNCA*)



CINEREOUS TIT (*PARUS CINEREUS*)

CHECKLIST (also on ebird)

- 1.Red-vented Bulbul
- 2.Himalayan Bulbul
- 3.Black Bulbul
- 4.Speckled Pisulet
- 5.Grey-headed Woodpecker
- 6.Red-billed Blue Magpie
- 7.Common Tailorbird
- 8.Humes' leaf Warble
- 9.Rufous Sibia
- 10.Red-billed Leiothrix
- 11.White-crested Laughingthrush
- 12.Blue Whistlingthrush
- 13.White-capped Redstart
- 14.Chestnut-bellied Rock-thrush
- 15.Pied Bushchat
- 16.Grey Bushchat
- 17.Purple Sunbird
- 18.House Sparrow
- 19.Russet Sparrow
- 20.Kalij Pheasant
- 21.Alexandrine Parakeet
- 22.Plum-headed Parakeet
- 23.Grey Treepie
- 24.Large-billed Crow
- 25.Grey-breasted Prinia
- 26.Black-chinned Babbler
- 27.Streaked Laughingthrush
- 28.Red Junglefowl
- 29.Indian Whiteeye
- 30.Common Hawk-cuckoo
- 31.Black-throated bushtit
- 32.Cinereous Tit
- 33.Barn Swallow

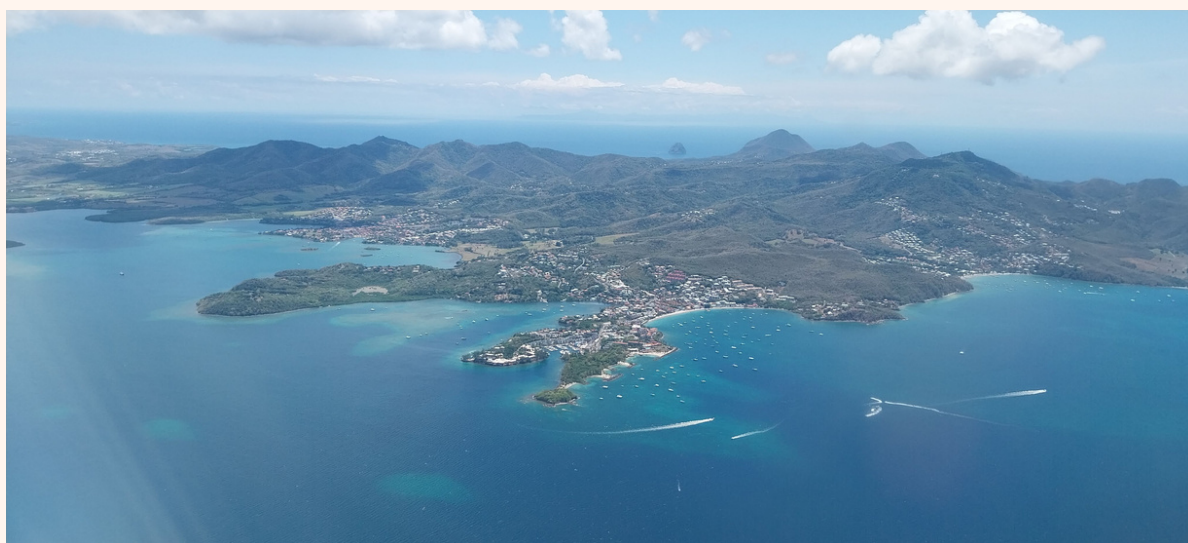
GUADALOUPEAN ODESSEY

Rima Dhillon



West Indies! The Caribbean conjures up images of bright blue seas, golden beaches and rain forests. Not yet having made it to Costa Rica, a destination on every birders' bucket list it seemed like the closest I would get to it so it was an opportunity not to be missed to see some island endemics.

After some research on google I realized that the butterfly shaped island of Guadeloupe was a dominion of France. To get there a visa is required from the French embassy. It is part of a group of islands in the Caribbean called the Lesser Antilles. The island has a population of barely 4 lac inhabitants with a sketchy public transport system including taxis. To get about one needs to hire some sort of vehicle-car, scooter or motorcycle. Being a right hand drive it can be a bit daunting but one soon realizes that having driven in India driving anywhere else is a cake walk! I however did not need to hire a car for birding as my excellent bird guide was kind enough to pick me up from the hotel for a full days birding and dropping me off in the evening.



Through Fatbirder and Google I was able to get the services of Mr. Anthony Levesque. A pleasant and well-informed birder with excellent English speaking skills. His profile on his website convinced me that I would come away with a great birding experience. He runs his own company Levesque Birding Enterprise. During our email communication Anthony apprised me of the bird life on the island and the number of endemics which he assured me would all be possible to see in that one 12 hour period

The Island of Guadeloupe was a French colony and like all the islands in this region it was used for cultivation of Sugarcane & Bananas. The rainforests were cut down to put land under agriculture. Today a small part of the rainforest remains which is declared a National Forest and is therefore under protection of the state. During the course of the day we visited the Rainforest, Mangroves and the coastal area along with driving through some of the plantations.

Starting out at 5.30 am on 26th March 2024 I excitedly embarked on a birding journey of Guadeloupe.

Guadeloupe Woodpecker

Melanerpes herminieri

This unassuming, medium sized, black coloured woodpecker is strictly an endemic of Guadeloupe as it only lives on this island which measures only a mere 1628 square km. Though there is a healthy population, even a small change in habitat could take it to extinction!



Photo credit: Anthony Levesque

It is the national bird of Guadeloupe and rightly so. It inhabits the rain forest on the island and like other woodpeckers it excavates its nest hole. Their diet consists of mostly insects and small invertebrates like tree frogs etc along with fruit.

Interestingly, it does not fly over water—the reason it is limited to this one island and also to just one part of the island as Guadeloupe is actually in two parts separated by a ‘river’ of sea water which houses the mangroves. Therefore the population on Grand Tere (the part that does not have the rainforest) is extremely scarce. There is no dimorphism in appearance of the species but there is dimorphism in their calls.

Hummingbirds

There are three species of hummingbirds found on the island. They are known to be the smallest birds with the fastest speed for propelling their wings.

Purple throated Carib

Eulampis jugularis



It derives its name from the Carib Indians who were the original inhabitants of the islands in the Caribbean. The purple/magenta throat is visible when it fluffs up its throat feathers to reveal the sudden splash of colour. It is common in its habitat which is the entire Lesser Antilles islands.

Green-throated Carib

Eulampis holosericeus

A bright emerald flash among the hibiscus flowers and you know the Green throated Carib is busy stealing the nectar from the flowers. As for all hummingbirds nectar is the staple food. With the constant whirring of the wings while it hovers over the blossoms requires a whole load of energy which only a sugar high can provide!



Antillean crested Hummingbird

Orthorhyncus cristatus

Tiny thumb-sized hummingbird

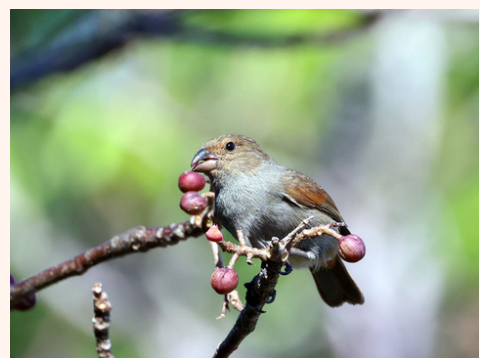
It is one of the few hummingbirds supporting a crest. The 'mohawk' gives flashes of metallic green/blue as it hovers and the sunlight hits it from different angles. Maybe due to its tiny size it can be quite aggressive towards even non competitive species.

With wings whirring at 80 beats per second it looks almost motionless while hovering for nectar. It moves back and forth while almost 'standing' straight.



Lesser Antillean Bullfinch

It behaves like a house sparrow in as much as it likes to be part of human habitation. They are quite common and try nesting in nooks and crannies in the building.



Forest Thrush

A thrush found only on four tiny islands in the Lesser Antilles, it has been given a Near Threatened status. Its natural habitat is moist tropical mountain forest. It can be seen lurking in the dark recesses of the forest floor. It mostly feeds on the ground by flicking leaves with its beak in a quest for locating insects under them.



Lesser Antillean Bananaquit

Coereba flaveola bartholemica

Very often found pecking nectar from the banana flower it seems to be the obvious reason for its name. With molecular genetics it has been placed in the tanager family but at a glance it looks like a cross between a hummingbird and a sunbird with a bit of spiderhunter thrown in!!



Tropical Mockingbird

Mimus gilvus

It is common throughout its range which stretches from south Mexico through the Caribbean islands to northern parts of South America. Although it enjoys the status of Least Concern however the degradation of forests in south eastern Brazil has already affected its population in that region.



Lesser Antillean Saltator

Saltator albicollis

It belongs in the tanager family and is found on all islands in the Lesser Antilles. It is fructivorous and insectivorous.



Brown Trembler

Cinclocerthia ruficauda

It derives its name from the fact that it drops its wings and shakes them like it is trembling. It belongs to the same family as the mockingbirds and is also about the same size. It inhabits the wet forests and enjoys rummaging among the foliage of the bromeliads growing on the trees. It is endemic to the islands of the Lesser Antilles.



Plumbeous Warbler

Setophaga plumbea

Endemic to the islands of Guadeloupe and Dominica



Black faced Grassquit

Melanospiza bicolor

Small finch-like birds usually seen in pairs or flocks. In Guadeloupe they can be seen in the agricultural areas like banana plantations and sugarcane fields. They are basically grassland birds.



Bridled Quail-dove

Geotrygon mystacea

Ground dwelling quail dove usually found foraging in fallen leaves for fruit, seeds or crustaceans.



Lesser Antillean Peewee

Contopus latirostris

A small flycatcher found in all the islands of the Caribbean. Both sexes are similar. It can be found hunting from the lower branches of the trees.



Photo Credit: *Rima Dhillon*

TITLE: A JOURNEY OF BIRDING ALONG THE JUINIDHAR TREK

In mid-November 2023, I embarked on an impromptu adventure to Gattadhar in the Sirmour district of Himachal Pradesh, spurred by the wanderlust ignited by a traveler's tales. Arriving late in the evening, the anticipation of what awaited me at dawn filled the air with excitement.

As the sun rose, I embarked on a morning walk along the motorable road, indulging in my passion for birding. The serene landscape echoed with the chirping of various avian species, including the mesmerizing blue-capped redstart, the vibrant, yellow-breasted greenfinch, and the majestic gray tree pies. The enchanting melodies of these feathered creatures captivated my senses, setting the tone for the day ahead. Before noon, I set out on the Juinidhar temple trek, eager to explore the rugged terrain and discover hidden avian treasures. Along the way, I was enthralled by the sight of two striated laughing thrushes and a flock of white-throated laughing thrushes, their harmonious calls reverberating through the forest.



Continuing my trek, I was entranced by the melodious song of a bird, later identified as the Eurasian wren with the help of the Merlin and Birdnet applications. However, a moment of temptation led me to play the bird's call, unknowingly disturbing its natural behavior. The bird's sudden agitation served as a stark reminder of the delicate balance of our biodiversity and the impact of human interference. This encounter humbled me, urging mindfulness and respect for our environment as I continued my journey.



EURASIAN WREN (TROGLODYTES TROGLODYTES)

Reaching the summit, I encountered a thrush unlike any I had seen before, sparking curiosity and wonder. On my journey back, the call of the Eurasian nutcrackers resonated through the forest, reminding me of the interconnectedness of all living beings.

As I proceeded, I captured the sound of a bird and utilized the Birdnet app to initially identify it as a Hill Partridge. Nevertheless, confirmation from the Merlin app emphasized the resemblance of the call, highlighting how technology effectively aids birdwatchers in identifying various avian species.

After a restful break at the guest house, I reluctantly began my journey back home. However, fate had more encounters in store for me. Along the way, near Nahan, my attention was drawn to a lifeless green snake lying in the middle of the road. Curiously, I captured photos and uploaded them to the iNaturalist app, later the snake was identified as Nepal Pitviper.

Later in the evening, tragedy struck once again. After crossing Kala Amb, I witnessed an animal being hit by a passing truck. I stopped my vehicle and approached the injured animal only to realize it was a Civet, struggling to breathe. Despite my efforts and calls for assistance, the Civet succumbed to its injuries, leaving me with a profound sense of loss. Though I could not save them, I made sure their presence was documented and shared, a minute tribute to their lives. Each encounter served as a reminder of the fragility of life and the importance of preserving our natural heritage for future generations.



GOLDCREST (REGULUS REGULUS)



**BLACK-CRESTED TITS
(PARUS MELANOLOPHUS)**



**NEPAL PITVIPER
(TRIMERESURUS
SEPTENTRIONALIS)**



**SMALL INDIAN CIVET
(VIVERRICULA INDICA)**

That's all for this edition of Feathered Friends. We hope you enjoyed exploring the world of birds and animals with us. Stay tuned for more avian adventures in our next issue!

Gagan Singh

Twittering songs for Fluttering hearts

By

Sofia Dahiya, the budding birder

**“YOU MUST HAVE THE BIRD IN YOUR HEART BEFORE YOU CAN FIND IT
IN THE BUSH.” JOHN BURROUGHS**

The rhythmic drumming of the pretty petite ‘Acorn Woodpecker’ on an oak tree, with its gorgeous red head moving with each peck. The hover of ‘Anna’s and Allen’s Hummingbirds’, flapping their wings a hundred times per second, moving their radiant shiny pink and orange necks to suck nectar from the nectar feeders. These are undoubtedly my most cherished memories from my recent visit to the United States. Needless to say, there were a myriad other moments of joy during the trip, but the ecstasy of these experiences is beyond compare. The most beautiful element of the passion for birding is that it always gives you the same high irrespective of geography or boundaries. I experienced the same trance like exhilaration when I watched the oh so popular ‘Darter’ at the sukhna lake in the winter of 2023 with some fellow CBC birders. Watching the snake bird, busy with its super skilful chore of darting for fish and tossing and swallowing it, was a deliciously delightful experience.

My passion for bird watching is as yet in its infancy. I am taking baby steps, with help from the veteran CBC birders, all of whom are extremely helpful and knowledgeable about the beautiful world of birds. And the fact that my home is in the heart of Saketri Panchkula, a rich bird habitat, has been a bonus blessing. Many a times when I wake up on a Saturday, when I look out of my kitchen window to gaze at the Aravallis, I also get to see some camouflage clad figures moving around and I jump out of my maingate and join in for some birding. The first such encounter was a pleasant surprise and after a couple of hours with the experts, I was pleasantly surprised to note that a large part of my inexperienced Bird-IDing efforts were in fact spot-on accurate. I confess that after that first such chance encounter, every time I look out of the window, I secretly hope to see some of the fellow birders from the CBC community. It is a sad development though, that the fast-paced construction activity in the area has meant that both the avian and the camouflage community in the area has already started dwindling.

Though I have harboured a love for birds for many years now, I truly commenced bird watching in July 2023 when a dear friend (a veteran birder) gifted me my first pair of binoculars. One of my best birthday gifts so far. Some of the pretty birds I looked at through the binocs, early on were the 'Superb Starling' (aptly named superb) and the 'lilac breasted roller', in Mikumi game park, Tanzania. The bright electric blue back of the superb starling and the pretty lilac on the breast of the roller were sights that took my breath away, far more than the mighty lions that everyone visiting the park went after.



Photo Credit : Anuj Jain

My current journey of bird gazing however started even before the Mikumi adventure, right at my doorstep in Saket. The very first day when I started playing with my binoculars to understand its basic functioning, while looking around, I saw some movement on the palm tree in front of my house. And then I saw some yellow specks. Once I got the binoculars in focus and learnt to keep my head and hands still, I saw these amazing yellow-bellied birds working on the half-finished hanging nests. The images of the Baya's nest from childhood memories came rushing to me immediately and I was filled with thrill (I experience this thrill every time I observe birding activity). All of my childhood I have had a fascination for the hanging baya nests. At that time however I did not know how a baya looked. And to my amazement that day, I discovered that the builder of this skilful piece of work was a pretty petite yellow bird. Simultaneous to the birds watching, I also got down to some google searching and learnt the basics about the baya weaver birds and how they built the nests and most of all, the fact that the male baya weaver makes it for the female who has a choice to choose the nest and its builder or move to the next more skilful one. This amazing story and the beauty of the birds, which I witnessed that one Saturday morning is what made me a bird watcher, for life!

After the first unforgettable 'Baya Weavers' encounter, I have had several such joy and thrill filled experiences as part of my short birdwatching joyride. Before this, I used to be an admirer of the Kingfisher bird and used to be so happy when I saw one. And now the big wide colourful and magical world of birds has opened to me. Consequently, I can proudly identify at least three types of Kingfishers- the white throated, the common and the pied kingfisher.

Early-on during my tryst with this amazing hobby, I took a conscious call to not give in to getting some heavy-duty lenses for my existing humble DSLR and restrict myself to my binoculars. In other words, I chose not to go in for photography and stick simply to watching and observing birds. Many people have nudged me over the past few months to get clicking, but I have resisted those temptations. I bought my first DSLR a decade back, when it was not a fad to get one and only those who loved photography bought it. Of course, I will eventually get to taking pictures of the pretty birds, but as of now, I am happy being mesmerised looking through the binocs.

A word now on the role of technology, of which I am a huge supporter. While many a times I bird with the extremely experienced and helpful fellow birders of CBC, often I do it alone, especially in my home garden, and there I have found Merlin as a good mate. Its database needs some strengthening though. And that brings in the role of apps like e-Bird for recording our sightings. I feel we need to do more of it so that the databases in the country become richer. Though I think that I am a novice in the world of Bird Ids and cannot claim any accomplishment yet, I am happy to share that my due diligence on e-bird recently got me a certificate of appreciation. Needless to say, the email that brought this certificate got me oodles of joy, happiness and encouragement.

And before I wrap up, my penny worth on what can be done at a community level to make things better for birds and birding. I recently saw nectar feeders in the Kenneth Hahn park in Los Angeles wherein this simple, yet effective and useful (for the birds) feeders got the hummingbirds at a spot. Apart from getting the birds their food in a near natural manner, it also made a very good spot for bird watching. I think we need to take initiatives on similar lines for the countless species in our neighbourhood. Many of the CBC veterans are already doing this but may be there is room for more here.

I end this maiden attempt at penning down my thoughts on my nascent but infinite love for birding, with a heartfelt and sincere gratitude towards all the fellow CBC birders, from whom I learn so much, every day.

"I don't feed the birds because they need me; I feed the birds because I need them."

— Kathi Hutton

THE HIDDEN HORNIBILLS OF PGI CAMPUS !!...

Discover the beauty of an Oriental Pied Hornbill *Anthracoceros albirostris* at the PGI hospital campus in Chandigarh. Keep an eye out for these charismatic Oriental Pied Hornbills and appreciate the beauty of nature right in the heart of the city. Birding was getting boring now! Nothing new, No lifers, checklists were full of Babblers and Mynas... Ebird too was asking for recording something new in the area! But is this end? No!



This magnificent bird adds vibrancy to the surroundings. A close-up with its colourful feathers & unique huge beak.

It's quite a treat to see them in an urban setting like this.

We know it's the passion which never ends. As I say, Luck and Patience are the two basic keys to Birding- "Dhundhte Raho dost, kuch na kuch toh zaroor Milega!"

But, one day you are going through the photo gallery on your Dad's phone and see the pics of Oriental Pied Hornbill 🏠 What would your reaction be? That was mine - WOW!! He has clicked them on the PGI campus!

The tricity has a record of three different sets of Oriental Pied Hornbills-Siswan Bird Trail, Panjab University Botanical Garden, and Sukhna wildlife Sanctuary (Sukhna lake trail)

The pair seen in the PGI campus are from the PU Botanical Garden.

The male has a yellow bill and casque with a partly black patched mandible. Female has a smaller casque with more black marks.



A MALE HORNBILL



THE MALE IN NATURAL HABITAT



FEMALE HAS A SMALLER CASQUE



PAIR IN A GULMOHUR TREE

You get more excited when you get that they are daily visitors there! You are dying and want to capture them... But, you're having your chemistry exam-the exam which troubles!

The Oriental Pied Hornbill—Guys! I must say it's a bird (hornbill) which the Chandigarh birders generally really die for spotting. This species is rarely found in this area, making it a truly special sighting. It feeds in the Peepal and Gular trees of the hospital car park.

That's an incredible find! Oriental Pied Hornbills are not commonly seen in the Chandigarh Tricity area, so I must add my Dad's discovery is quite remarkable, at the PGI Hospital campus.

A sight to behold.

Regardless of all the things- Since the Nagar Van has been converted into a Captivated cage so-called "Aviary", they are not much seen there. Otherwise, Kaimbwala Road, Sukhna Nature Trail, and the road to Rock Garden were good Spots to have a glance at them! That's an incredible find! Oriental pied hornbills are not commonly seen in the Chandigarh tricity area, so I must add my dad's discovery is quite remarkable, that even at PGI Hospital campus are a sight to behold too. 😊

The bird showing its beak which is much greater than the Indian Grey Hornbill. This Male foraging on the Peepal tree fruits, especially the ripen ones. They feed on a variety of fruits, dispersing the seeds as they move from tree to tree.

Birding is a wonderful opportunity to appreciate and learn more about these magnificent birds and the local ecosystem they inhabit.

Seeing a pair of Oriental pied hornbills in an urban environment like PGI Hospital in Chandigarh suggests that there might be suitable habitats and food sources for them in the vicinity. It's also a testament to the importance of preserving natural habitats and green spaces in urban areas to support wildlife.

It's great that the birders were informed about this sighting to document and appreciate this rare occurrence. Observations like these contribute to our understanding of rare species as well as local biodiversity. The sweepers and construction workers said that they were residents here, their presence was quite normal for them, but not for us. The shutter of the camera didn't stop for even a single second.



The Detailed Closeup of the Hornbill with a red Iris and its huge horn! Only a few of the birds including Pied Hornbill have eyelashes.

Male in Flight shows the tail is black with white tips on all the feathers except the central feathers. We were waiting under the Peepal Tree, when I saw a person clicking photographs under a tree. I became curious, and there they were doing their Matargashti and Sharaaratein, tree to tree & branch to branch!

They have been a frequent sight by the Doctors and staff at PGI at different locations like Punjab university Botanical Garden, Behind Library, Behind Administrative Block, APC Staff Parking, Behind Nehru Hospital, Research Block A etc.

For the Bird, I went to the Sukhna nature trail (Nagar Van) more than 20 times, was my lifer and were in front of me. Take a moment to appreciate the wonders of nature in unexpected places. Share this breathtaking sight with your friends and let them experience the hidden treasures of Chandigarh too. Enjoy the diversity of our world! Let's come together to protect and preserve these amazing birds for future generations to enjoy

"The reason birds can fly and we can't is simply because they have perfect faith, for to have faith is to have wings."

May we hear the birdsong Forever!!

Happy Birding!!...

Aaryan Bhalla

THE THRILLING ENCOUNTER



In the world of birdwatching, every sighting is a treasure, but some experiences stand out as truly exceptional. For me, the sighting of three Barnacle Geese *Branta leucopsis* at Mote Majra was not just another addition to my checklist; it was an unforgettable journey filled with excitement, discovery, and unexpected twists. Join me as I recount this thrilling adventure and celebrate a milestone in my birding journey.

It all began on a sunny day in January, as I ventured to Village Mote Mazra, a haven for migratory birds. Surrounded by the beauty of nature, I immersed myself in capturing the mesmerizing sights of Bar Headed Geese, Norther Shovelers, and other avian wonders. Little did I know that amidst the familiar flock, a remarkable discovery awaited me? It was only upon reviewing my photographs later that I realized the presence of three elusive Barnacle Geese, subtly mingling with their counterparts. The unexpected encounter left me exhilarated and eager for more.

Fuelled by curiosity and a newfound sense of wonder, I returned to the wetland the following day, determined to confirm my sighting. However, nature had other plans, as thick fog obscured my view and challenged my resolve. Despite the adverse conditions, perseverance paid off, and I managed to locate the elusive trio once again. Though the photographs were not crystal clear, the distinct behaviour of the Barnacle Geese set them apart from the rest, reinforcing the authenticity of my discovery.

Excited to share my findings with fellow birders and enthusiasts, I sought guidance from esteemed members of the Chandigarh Bird Club. Their wisdom and counsel reminded me of the importance of ethical birdwatching practices and the need to prioritize the welfare of our feathered friends. With their support and encouragement, I exercised caution, ensuring that the geese were undisturbed and free to roam their natural habitat without interference.



BARNACLE GOOSE *BRANTA LEUCOPSIS*

Until that moment, I believed that the sighting of the Barnacle Geese at Mote Mazra was not only a lifer for me but also the first of its kind in Northern India. Eager to share this remarkable discovery, I reached out to Mr. Vikramjit Singh, a respected journalist and columnist. Mr. Singh, in collaboration with India's eminent ornithologists, including Dr. Asad Rahmani, former director of BNHS, and Mr. Parveen, delved into thorough research on the sighting.

To my surprise, Mr. Singh's article in The Times of India on 31st January 2024, revealed that this sighting was not just significant regionally, but also had broader implications for South Asia. However, lingering doubts persisted regarding the origin of the geese—were they escapees from captivity or wild birds that had ventured into unfamiliar territories? Observations of their behaviour strongly suggested the latter, indicating a wild origin.





But the tale didn't conclude there. Encouraged by Rima Dhillon, I decided to pen an article detailing my experience and submit it to Indian BIRDS for publication. With the invaluable guidance of Ma'am and Mr. Parveen, the Chief Editor, Indian BIRDS, the article took shape. Further research and input from additional referees solidified the conclusion: the evidence overwhelmingly supported the geese's wild origin. Thus, it was declared a historic first for both India and South Asia.

The culmination of this journey came with the publication of the sighting in the Indian BIRDS Journal on March 27, 2024, marking a significant milestone in my birding endeavours. Mr. Vikramjit Singh, ever supportive, highlighted this achievement once more in the Sunday Wildbuzz of Hindustan Times, Chandigarh Edition, on March 31, 2024, celebrating it as "Great news for tri-city birders."

Throughout this extraordinary journey, I was humbled by the unwavering support and guidance of my mentors, colleagues, and friends. From Rima Dhillon and Mr. Mitinderpal Singh Sekhon to Mr. Vikramjit Singh and Mr. Parveen J, each played a pivotal role in shaping this remarkable experience. Their encouragement fueled my passion for birdwatching and reaffirmed the value of community and collaboration in our pursuit of knowledge and conservation.

As I reflect on this remarkable chapter in my birding journey, I am filled with gratitude for the privilege of witnessing nature's wonders first-hand. The sighting of the Barnacle Geese at Mote Majra served as a poignant reminder of the boundless beauty and mystery that surrounds us, waiting to be discovered and cherished. May this experience inspire others to embrace the spirit of exploration, conservation, and camaraderie, as we continue to marvel at the marvels of the avian world and beyond.

LALIT MOHAN BANSAL

**IT IS AMAZING HOW LOVELY COMMON THINGS BECOME,
IF ONE ONLY KNOWS HOW TO LOOK AT THEM**



**ORIENTAL WHITE-EYE
ZOSTHEROPS PALPEBROSA**

BLACK-CHINNED BABBLER
CYANODERMA PYRRHOPS



**“THE MUFFLED SYLLABLES THAT NATURE SPEAKS
FILLS US WITH DEEPER LONGING FOR HER WORD
SHE HIDES A MEANING THAT THE SPIRIT SPEAKS
SHE MAKES A SWEETER MUSIC THAN IS HEARD”**

-GEORGE SANTAYANA

RED-BILLED LEIOTHRIX
LEIOTHRIX LUTEA



“WHAT I SAW WAS JUST ONE EYE
IN THE DAWNAS I WAS GOING:
A BIRD CAN CARRY ALL THE SKY
IN THAT LITTLE BUTTON GLOWING
NEVER IN MY LIFE I WENT
SO DEEP INTO THE FIRMAMENT”

-HAROLD MUNRO

ALPANA NP SINGH

WINTERING WONDERS IN OUR GARDENS



Red-breasted Flycatcher
Ficedula parva



Sulphur-bellied Warbler
Phylloscopus griseolus



JASBIR RANDHAWA

Himalayan Griffon
Gyps himalayensis



PUSHKAR BALI

World Sparrow Day



Gurjeet Virk
PHOTOGRAPHY

Russet Sparrow (*Passer rutilans*)
Gurjeet Virk





House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* (male)



Sind Sparrow *Passer pyrrhonotus* (male)



House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*



House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* (pair)

Photo Credit : Chetna Sharma



CHANDIGARH BIRD CLUB



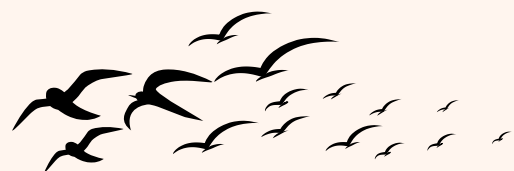
Chandigarh Bird Club® is a registered organisation formed by a group of local birdwatchers. The idea is to record the local avifauna, its habitats and help make the residents of Tri-City aware of birds in our region and protect them.

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 out 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 related to this activity.





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Vice President :- Narbir Singh Kahlon
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