

Flamingo

Newsletter of the Bird Conservation Society, Gujarat



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Editor: Bakul Trivedi, M.S.
Associate Editors: Bhavbhuti Parasharya, PhD; Prasad Ganpule
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Consulting Faculty: Geeta Padate, PhD; Pranav Trivedi, PhD; Shantilal Varu;
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Layout and design: Pugmark Qmulus Consortium
Address for articles: 19/414, Satyagrah Chhavni, Satellite Road, Ahmedabad-380015,
Gujarat. flamingo.bcsbg@gmail.com / drbakultrivedi@gmail.com

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Bird Conservation Society, Gujarat (BCSG) was founded in 2000 with the objective of conservation of birds of the State through field research, documentation, training, awareness activities, networking with like-minded NGOs; and lobbying for protection of birds and their habitats. It is the only statewide network of bird-watchers, ornithologists and conservationists of Gujarat striving to achieve the above goal.

BCSG brings out a quarterly newsletter – 'Flamingo'. Articles, notes on bird-life of Gujarat, interesting bird sightings, knowledge about important bird areas, information / appeal regarding conservation issues, reports on society's events and activities are published in 'Flamingo'. For publication of articles/notes in the Flamingo, both the common English and scientific names must be given when a bird species is mentioned for the first time and later references, common English name only. Common English and scientific names should follow Richard Grimmett, Carol Inskipp and Tim Inskipp (2011), Birds of Indian Subcontinent, Second edition. Oxford University Press, New Delhi. If the nomenclature is adopted from other source, full reference should be given.

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Editorial....

Recently, we learnt from the media that a MoU had been signed between the Gujarat Forest Dept. and BNHS regarding a joint bird-ringing programme in the state, to be conducted over the next five years. It is planned that about five thousand birds are to be ringed every year during this period.

A massive developmental need throughout the Central Asian Flyway has been responsible for the changing agriculture practices and land use. In addition to this, the looming global climate change has made bird-migration studies all the more relevant. The data obtained from this study will go a long way in framing site-specific policy guidelines for conservation measures related to water-birds.

In comparison to 4 million birds ringed in Europe every year, the total of around 5 lac birds ringed by BNHS till date is an extremely low figure. Considering India is a core country falling in the Central Asian Flyway, which covers at least 279 populations of 182 migratory bird species - including 29 which are globally threatened - it is obligatory for us to be more aggressive in pursuing ringing exercises across the country.

Gujarat has always been on the forefront of ornithology in India. The earliest records of bird ringing in Gujarat are from 1943, when K. S. Dharmakumarsinji of Bhavnagar ringed Lesser Frigates to study their movements. The ringing of Lesser Frigates was done from 1943 to 1947, and a total of 489 birds were ringed! The earliest record of a ring recovery from Gujarat is of a Northern Pintail ringed in Russia in 1944, which was shot near Wankaner, in January 1946. Bird ringing programmes were conducted at Kuar Bet, in Kachchh, in March 1960 by BNHS. Dr. Salim Ali conducted many bird ringing camps in Kachchh and Hingolghadh in the 1960s. The BNHS/WHO Bird Migration Study Project was one of the first organised attempts to understand the migration of birds in India. Under this project, many ringing camps were conducted in Kachchh and Saurashtra over the course of a few years, resulting in ring recoveries, which helped in understanding the migration of birds. These camps also had the added advantage of adding a few species to the Gujarat checklist, as these were recorded in Gujarat for the first time.

Geographically, Gujarat is located on all the three flyways; African, Eurasian and Central Asian. This, alongwith variety and volume of wetlands, qualify Gujarat as a preeminent sector for bird-ringing project. There was an unfortunate and unexplainable gap of almost 50 years during which the Gujarat Forest Dept. did not give permission for regular bird-ringing exercises in the state. The recent MoU with BNHS is certainly a welcome step. If permanent bird-ringing stations are established in key locations, this activity could be pursued effectively and effortlessly in the future.

- Bakul Trivedi

Email: birdcsg@gmail.com

Web: www.bcsbg.co.in