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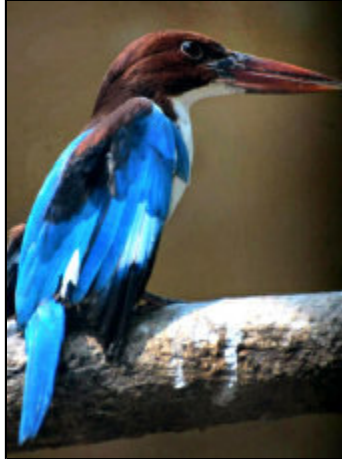
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## Bird in the bush

Delhiites went on a bird-spotting mission on the Big Bird Day, finds out AMRITA TALWAR

Photos: Lingaraj Panda and Surya Prakash



***The winged denizens* Among the likeable commoners seen were pied and common kingfishers, the peasant-tailed and bronze-winged jacanas, larks, prinias, babblers and spot bills**

A couple of years ago, most Delhiites could not differentiate between a red-vented bulbul and a woodpecker, and mistook the common black kite for an eagle. The house sparrows and mynas comprised the bird population in the Capital for them. But thankfully, the scenario has changed of late. Thanks to various birding groups, bird watchers and naturalists, many people are attracted to bird watching and are becoming aware of the importance of birds. They can now also recognise flamingos, painted storks and eagles.

### Bird watching

The Big Bird Day that was celebrated this past Sunday is proof, as more than 600 people participated in the event . Many enthusiasts were initiated to bird watching too. The idea was to record as many species of birds in and around Delhi as possible. The final tally was close to 200 species, compared to 188 in 2007. There are 400 bird species (migratory and resident) recorded in Delhi.



Like on a mission to the Everest , the teams were divided and areas demarcated. Among the participants were professors, students and government officials, who hunted every bush, tree, ditch, field, garden and water body for birds from the wee hours to late evening and ticking the checklist as they came across different birds.

The hotspots covered included the Bhindawas bird sanctuary, the Sultanpur national park, KG wetlands, Palwal (Haryana), the Asola sanctuary, the Yamuna diversity park and its banks at Okhla and the northern ridge, Dadri wetlands, Noida and areas around Sonipat-Panipat, thus covering the natural habitat in the Delhi area.

Delhi's academia took an active interest in the bird-spotting endeavour. Professor Surya Prakash and his team birded at the Jawaharlal Nehru University ridge, Aravalli biodiversity park and Hauz Khas lake. From the Delhi University, Professor Mihir Deb, Govind Singh and students of environmental and zoology studies birded at the Kamla Nehru ridge. Around 200 school children birded at Lodhi Gardens with World Wildlife Fund's education officer Lima Rosalind.



The highest bird count came from Sultanpur sanctuary, with 141 species spotted there . JNU, ABP and Hauz Khas Lake together reported 66 species of birds.



Among the likeable commoners seen were pied and common kingfishers and the peasant-tailed and bronze-winged jacanas, larks, prinias, babblers and spot bills . Juvenile white-tailed eagle, moustached warbler, ballion's crake, chestnut-bellied sandgrouse, short-eared owl and Indian scops owl were spotted in Sultanpur. The yellow-legged gull was found at the Okhla bird park. Black-headed bulbul was spotted at the Kamla Nehru ridge. In JNU and

Aravalli, a red-throated and grey-headed canary flycatcher were spotted. Dadri wetlands had a count of 137 identified species including the eurasian curlew. Asola being a deciduous thorny scrub had a count of 41 bird species. The junior birders and the school students spotted around 30 species in Lodhi gardens.

### Siberian cranes



It was a great day for birders. Many teams scattered around Delhi hoped to catch a glimpse of the endangered Siberian cranes that were reported a couple of months ago from a wetland called Chhatta near Palwal. But nobody could confirm the sighting. The crane proved elusive again on the bird day.



### FACT FILE

Areas covered: Bhindawas bird sanctuary, Sultanpur national park, Asola sanctuary, KG wetlands, Palwal (Haryana), Dadri wetlands, Yamuna diversity park and its banks at Okhla and the Northern ridge, Noida and areas around Sonipat-Panipat

The winged count

Sultanpur sanctuary: 141 species

Jawaharlal Nehru University campus, Aravalli Biodiversity

Park and Hauz Khas lake: 66 species

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