



## State of India's Birds 2023 Report

**For Prelims:** State of India's Birds 2023 Report, [IUCN \(International Union for the Conservation of Nature\)](#), Western Ghats, Asian Koel, [Migratory Birds](#), [Climate Change](#).

**For Mains:** State of India's Birds 2023 Report.

**Source:** [IE](#)

### Why in News?

Recently, the **State of India's Birds (SoIB) 2023** was released, which highlighted that despite thriving a few bird species, there is a **substantial decline in numerous bird species**.

- the **SoIB 2023** is a first-of-its-kind collaborative effort of 13 government and non-government organisations, including the **Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS)**, [Wildlife Institute of India \(WII\)](#), and [Zoological Survey of India \(ZSI\)](#), [Wildlife Trust of India \(WTI\)](#), Worldwide Fund for Nature-India (WWF-India) among others, which evaluates the overall **conservation status of the most regularly occurring bird species in India**.

### What are the Methodologies Used in the Report?

- This report is based on data collected from **approximately 30,000 birdwatchers**.
- The report relies on **three primary indices to assess bird populations**,
  - Long-term trend (change over 30 years)
  - Current annual trend (change over the past seven years)
  - Distribution range size within India
    - Among the 942 bird species assessed, the report indicates that many could not have their **long-term or current trends accurately established**.

### What are the Key Highlights of the Report?

- **Status:**
  - For the 338 species with identified long-term trends, 60% have experienced declines, 29% are stable, and **11% have shown increases**.
  - Among the 359 species with determined current annual trends, 39% are declining, 18% are rapidly declining, 53% are stable, and 8% are increasing.
- **Positive Trends: Increasing Bird Species:**
  - Despite the general decline, there are some positive trends among certain bird species.
    - The **Indian Peafowl**, for instance, the national bird of India, is **showing a remarkable increase** in both abundance and distribution.
      - This species has expanded its range into new habitats, including high-altitude Himalayan regions and rainforests in the [Western Ghats](#).
    - The **Asian Koel**, House Crow, Rock Pigeon, and Alexandrine Parakeet are also highlighted as **species that have demonstrated a notable increase in**

abundance since the year 2000.

▪ **Specialist Birds:**

- Bird species that are “**specialists**” - **restricted to narrow habitats** like wetlands, rainforests, and grasslands, as opposed to species that can inhabit a wide range of habitats such as plantations and agricultural fields - **are rapidly declining**.
- The “**generalist**” **birds that can live in multiple habitat types** are doing well as a group.
  - “Specialists, however, **are more threatened than generalists**.”
  - Grassland specialists have **declined by more than 50%**.
- Birds that are **woodland specialists** (forests or plantations) **have also declined more than generalists**, indicating a need to conserve natural forest habitats so that they provide habitat to specialists.

▪ **Migrant and Resident Birds:**

- **Migratory Birds**, especially long-distance migrants from Eurasia and the Arctic, have experienced **significant declines** by more than 50% - followed by short-distance migrants.
- Shorebirds that breed in the Arctic have been particularly affected, declining by **close to 80%**.
- By contrast, resident species as a group have remained much more stable..

▪ **Diet and Decline Patterns:**

- Dietary requirements of birds have also shown up in abundance trends. Birds that feed on vertebrates and **carrion have declined the most**.
  - Vultures were nearly driven to extinction by consuming carcasses contaminated with diclofenac.
- White-rumped Vultures, Indian Vultures, and Red-headed Vultures have suffered the maximum **long-term declines (98%, 95%, and 91%, respectively)**.

▪ **Endemic and Waterbird Declines:**

- Endemic species, unique to the **Western Ghats** and Sri Lanka biodiversity hotspot, have experienced rapid declines.
  - Of India's 232 endemic species, many are inhabitants of **rainforests, and their decline raises concerns** about habitat preservation.
- **Ducks, both resident and migratory, are declining**, with certain species like the Baer's Pochard, Common Pochard, and Andaman Teal being particularly vulnerable.
- Riverine sandbar-nesting **birds are also declining due to multiple pressures** on rivers.

▪ **Major Threats:**

- The report highlighted several major threats - including **Forest Degradation, urbanization, and energy infrastructure** - that bird species face across the country.
- **Environmental pollutants** including veterinary **drugs such as nimesulide** still threaten vulture populations in India.
- Impacts of **Climate Change** (such as on migratory species), **avian disease, and illegal hunting and trade** are also among the major threats.

▪ **Other Species:**

- **Sarus Crane has rapidly declined** over the long term and continues to do so.
- Of the 11 species of woodpeckers for which clear long-term trends could be obtained, **seven appear stable, two are declining, and two are in rapid decline**.
  - The **Yellow-crowned Woodpecker**, inhabiting widespread thorn and scrub forests, has **declined by more than 70% in the past three decades**.
- While half of all bustards worldwide are threatened, the three species that breed in India - **the Great Indian Bustard, the Lesser Florican, and the Bengal Florican** - **have been found to be most vulnerable**.

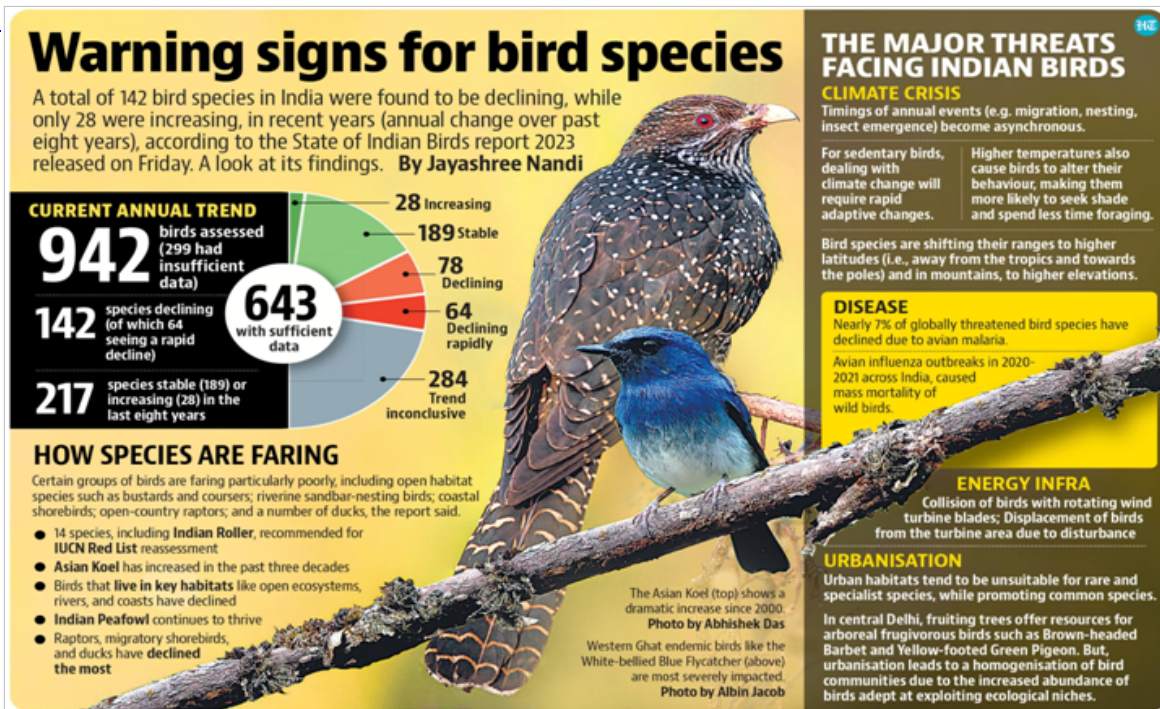
## What are the Recommendations?

- **There is a need to conserve specific groups of birds.** For instance, the report found that **grassland specialists** have declined by more than 50% - indicating the importance of **protecting and maintaining grassland ecosystems**.
- Systematic monitoring of bird populations over long periods of time is critical to **understanding small-scale changes** in bird populations.
- It is becoming clearer the need for more research to **understand the reasons behind the**

declines or increases.

- The report's findings emphasize the importance of **habitat preservation, addressing pollution, and understanding the dietary requirements of birds** in order to reverse the decline of bird populations and ensure a healthier ecosystem.

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## What Can be done to Ensure the Viable Population of the Birds in the Ecosystem?

- **Habitat Conservation and Restoration:**
  - Protect and preserve natural habitats, such as forests, wetlands, grasslands, and coastal areas, that are essential for birds' nesting, feeding, and breeding.
  - Restore degraded habitats by **planting native vegetation and removing invasive species** that can threaten bird populations.
- **Protected Areas and Reserves:**
  - Establish and manage protected areas and wildlife reserves where birds can **thrive without human disturbances**.
  - Implement regulations and guidelines to prevent habitat destruction and disturbances in these areas.
- **Reducing Pollution:**
  - **Control pollution sources, including air and water pollution**, that can harm bird populations directly or through the contamination of their food sources.
  - Promote sustainable practices to minimize pollution in urban and industrial areas.
- **Mitigating Climate Change:**
  - Address **climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions** and promoting sustainable energy sources.
  - **Support habitat corridors** that allow birds to move and adapt to changing climatic conditions.
- **Limiting Human Disturbances:**
  - Educate the public about the **importance of minimizing disturbances** to nesting and feeding sites, particularly during breeding seasons.
  - Establish buffer zones around sensitive bird habitats to reduce human interference.

## What Measures Have Been Taken to Safeguard Different Bird Species?

- **National Action Plan for the Conservation of Migratory Birds (2018-2023)**

- Transboundary protected areas for conservation of species like [Tigers](#), [Asian elephants](#), [Snow Leopard](#), [the Asiatic Lion](#), [the one-horned rhinoceros](#), and [the Great Indian Bustard](#).
- [Wildlife Protection Act, 1972](#)
- India has taken several steps to [conserve vultures](#) like imposing a ban on the veterinary use of diclofenac, establishment of Vulture breeding centres, etc.

PDF Refernece URL: <https://www.drishtias.com/printpdf/state-of-india-s-birds-2023-report>

