



Himalayan Magpies

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Why in News?

Recently, the enchanting **Himalayan magpies** have garnered increased attention as researchers delve deeper into their habitats and behaviours.

- These captivating birds adorn the mountainous landscapes from Kashmir to Myanmar, adding vibrancy to the region.



What are the Key Facts About Himalayan Magpies?

- **Corvidae Family and Magpies:** Magpies belong to the **Corvidae family** of birds, which includes **crows, jays, and ravens**.
 - Corvids are generally considered to be **noisy, inquisitive birds** that are often associated with omens, both good and bad, in folklore from around the world.
 - Despite their folklore associations, magpies are striking in appearance, and some of the most noticeable species are found in the Himalayas.
 - Himalayan magpies are classified as "**least concern**" on the [IUCN Red List of Threatened Species](#).
- **Himalayan Magpie Species:** From Kashmir to Myanmar, a few closely related blue magpie species are a common sight in the Himalayas.
 - The **gold-billed magpie (*Urocissa flavirostris*)**, also called the **yellow-billed blue magpie**, occupies the high-altitude zone between 2,000 and 3,000 meters above sea level.
 - The **red-billed magpie (*Urocissa erythroryncha*)** is found at slightly lower heights, while the **blue magpie** is found at lower altitudes where human populations are larger.
- **Corridors and Bird Diversity:** The best sightings of the yellow-billed and red-billed magpies are in the trekking corridor in **Western Sikkim, which leads from the town of Yuksom (1,780**

meters) to the Goche La pass (around 4,700 meters).

- **Nesting and Behavior of Himalayan Magpies:** Yellow-billed blue magpies build nests in *rhododendron trees*, hastily constructed with twigs and grass.
 - The blue magpie and red-billed magpie are similar in appearance, though a little smaller than the yellow-billed variety.
 - Magpies can be spotted as solitary birds, in pairs, or noisy flocks of 8-10 individuals.
- **Threats and Conservation Concerns:** Increasing human activity in forested areas raises concerns about the ability of magpies to cope with habitat changes.
 - Tourist attractions like rhododendron flowers pose sustainability challenges, as villagers may resort to forest resources to support tourism

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