

RARELY SPOTTED MANDARIN DUCK AND BLACK-NECKED CRANE STOP BY IN ASSAM

Relevant for: Environment | Topic: Biodiversity, Ecology, and Wildlife Related Issues

Mandarin duck in Assam | Photo Credit: [Gunjan Gogoi](#)

“I couldn’t believe it,” says Madhab Gogoi excitedly over the phone from Assam, about his surprise date with the spectacular-looking bird in the early weeks of February. He was at Maguri-Motapung *beel* (wetland) in Tinsukia district, Assam, birdwatching in the wetlands when he noticed a colourful bird floating on the surface of the lake. Curious, he zoomed in with his binoculars and realised that it was the Mandarin duck, a rare bird that was last seen in Assam in the 1900s.

“It was a historic moment, as the bird has shown up after 120 years at the same location. It was last spotted at Dibru river in Tinsukia in 1902. The streak of colours on the plumage, especially the male during the breeding season is a mind-boggling mix of white, green, golden orange and blue. You can call it the ‘queen’ among water birds,” says Gogoi.

The eBird website, a platform that documents birds the world over, calls it a ‘small-exotic looking bird’ native to East Asia, and describes the male as ‘very ornate with big orangey ‘sail fins’ on the back, streaked orangey cheeks, and a small red bill with a whitish tip.’

According to birders like Jaydev Mandal, the duck “seems to have strayed from its regular migratory path”. He says over call from Assam, “They breed in Russia, Korea, Japan and the northeastern parts of China — as the name Mandarin also suggests. The species is also found in western Europe and the US. The bird rarely visits India as the wintering grounds of the birds are Mongolia and China.”

Jaydev spearheaded the second edition of Bihu Bird Count that covered 27 districts and recorded 400 species of birds. “ We can call it a vagrant that briefly stopped by at the same location where it was last seen in the 20th Century, making it a record sighting.”

“Maybe it’s a casual sighting” says Nilutpal Mahanta, a PhD scholar at Gauhati University and an avid birder. “If one studies the migratory pathways listed on ebird, we learn that this bird is not a winter visitor to India. The birds that flock wintering grounds in India take the Central Asian Flyway, and Mandarin ducks don’t take that route.

It could even be a species that escaped from an illegal wildlife trader. The ducks is often captured and traded because of its beauty. Illegal trading of exotic species is rampant along China, Bangladesh, and Myanmar border,” he adds.

Naturalists suspect that climate changes and habitat destruction have triggered a spate of rare sightings in Assam. A pair of black-necked cranes were also sighted in the countryside of the outskirts of the Panbari range of Manas National Park, a first-ever record in Assam.

Explains Nilutpal, “It is a medium-sized crane that breeds on the Tibetan Plateau and remote parts of India and Bhutan. They have been mostly recorded in high altitudes of Jimithang and Sangti valley in western parts of Arunachal Pradesh in India. Locals of Panbari have named bird *deu korchon* (Deu means related to God and mythology, and Korchon means crane) as it has mythological importance in Buddhist culture.”

Though the environment became stable in the last year with less pollution, habitat destruction is a cause of worry, says Nilutpal. “In January, we also spotted the rarely seen Indian golden oriole in Assam. Such rare sightings make us happy but also leave us confused,” he explains.

Gogoi is happy; the appearance of Mandarin duck has kick-started a discussion on conservation. “Of the 1,200 birds that can be seen in India, over 900 species are found in the Northeast part of India, including Assam and Mizoram. Birders throng to Assam to see resident beauties like grey peacock pheasant and white winged wood duck,” he says. Then adds, “But the beauty of Mandarin has left not just the naturalists, but also the general public speechless. It has inspired them to give a serious thought about conservation. It is heartening.”

You have reached your limit for free articles this month.

Already have an account ? [Sign in](#)

Start your 14 days free trial. [Sign Up](#)

Find mobile-friendly version of articles from the day's newspaper in one easy-to-read list.

Enjoy reading as many articles as you wish without any limitations.

A select list of articles that match your interests and tastes.

Move smoothly between articles as our pages load instantly.

A one-stop-shop for seeing the latest updates, and managing your preferences.

We brief you on the latest and most important developments, three times a day.

*Our Digital Subscription plans do not currently include the e-paper, crossword and print.

Dear reader,

We have been keeping you up-to-date with information on the developments in India and the world that have a bearing on our health and wellbeing, our lives and livelihoods, during these difficult times. To enable wide dissemination of news that is in public interest, we have increased the number of articles that can be read free, and extended free trial periods. However, we have a request for those who can afford to subscribe: please do. As we fight disinformation and misinformation, and keep apace with the happenings, we need to commit greater resources to news gathering operations. We promise to deliver quality journalism that stays away from vested interest and political propaganda.

Dear subscriber,

Thank you!

Your support for our journalism is invaluable. It's a support for truth and fairness in journalism. It has helped us keep apace with events and happenings.

The Hindu has always stood for journalism that is in the public interest. At this difficult time, it becomes even more important that we have access to information that has a bearing on our health and well-being, our lives, and livelihoods. As a subscriber, you are not only a beneficiary of our work but also its enabler.

We also reiterate here the promise that our team of reporters, copy editors, fact-checkers, designers, and photographers will deliver quality journalism that stays away from vested interest and political propaganda.

Suresh Nambath

Please enter a valid email address.

Subscribe to The Hindu now and get unlimited access.

Already have an account? [Sign In](#)

Start your 14 days free trial [Sign Up](#)

You can support quality journalism by turning off ad blocker or purchase a subscription for unlimited access to The Hindu.

[Sign up for a 30 day free trial.](#)

END

Downloaded from **crackIAS.com**

© **Zuccess App** by crackIAS.com

CrackIAS