

Nine more bird, biodiversity areas in Kerala

Nilgiri Flycatcher | Photo Credit: [Dileep Anthikad](#)

The bird and biodiversity-rich areas in Kerala are drawing global attention with nine more locations being identified as Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBAs).

The newly identified IBAs of Kerala are Achencoil Forest Division; Anamudi Shola National Park; Camel's Hump Mountain, Wayanad; Kurinjimala Wildlife Sanctuary; Malayattoor Reserve Forest; Mankulam Forest Division; Mathikettan Shola National Park; Muthikulam-Siruvani; and Pampadum Shola National Park.

With the latest addition, Kerala now has 33 IBAs.

The new list was released by the Bombay Natural History Society, a partner of BirdLife International, in its recent publication, Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas in India Priority sites for conservation.

The IBAs are "places of international significance for the conservation of birds and other biodiversity" and are "distinct areas amenable to practical conservation action," according to BirdLife International.

Three species

Kerala IBAs are home to three critically endangered species — Whiterumped Vulture, Indian Vulture, and Red-headed Vulture. Studies have identified the presence of five endangered, 13 vulnerable, and 32 near-threatened bird species in the Kerala IBAs, said P.O. Nameer, Kerala State coordinator of the Indian Bird Conservation Network, a BirdLife partner, and one of the contributors for the enlistment of the areas from Kerala.

The BirdLife International had earlier listed 19 endangered species in India, out of which nine are found in Kerala, the report said.

Listing out the conservation threats faced by the IBAs, the report pointed out that anthropogenic pressure on the forests was very intense. The protection and maintenance of evergreen and semi-evergreen forests of the State were required to ensure the survival of endemic threatened species, it said.

The "birds of the low altitude evergreen forests seem to have suffered the most in Kerala, mainly due to human interventions. Species such as Malabar Pied Hornbill, a near-threatened species, has declined, along with Orange-breasted Green-pigeon," it said.

Habitat fragmentation in high altitude areas, according to conservationists, was a major cause for concern as many "species have nowhere to go. These 'sky islands' are now surrounded by tea estates or plantations, leaving very limited habitat for species such as White-bellied Blue Robin, Nilgiri Blue Robin, and Blackand-Orange Flycatcher," it said.

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V. J. Kurien, Managing Director of the Cochin International Airport, has been selected for this year's FACT Lalithakala Akademy's MKK Nayar Award. The

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