

ON A BIRD QUEST: AN ANAESTHETIST TURNS AVID BIRD PHOTOGRAPHER

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June 03, 2023 10:12 pm | Updated June 04, 2023 08:20 am IST - CHENNAI

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Deepthi Cheran, an anaesthetist, takes a boat ride in Pulicat lake to capture images of winged visitors. | Photo Credit: B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

On a quiet Sunday morning, Deepthi Cheran sets out on a boat journey far away from her everyday hectic work schedule as an anaesthetist.

Over the next four to five hours, Dr. Deepthi along with local fisherman Logu scans the Pulicat lake, with camera in her hand, to capture the [winged visitors](#) — a pursuit that she has taken over the last six years.

An associate professor of anaesthesia in a government hospital in Chennai, Dr. Deepthi is a trained liver transplant anaesthetist and was part of the team that performed the first cadaveric liver transplant at the Government Stanley Medical College Hospital in 2009. Subsequently, she went on to be on the team for 33 liver transplants.

It was in 2017 that she learned the ropes of photography from Rathika Ramasamy, a wildlife photographer. Since then, she has travelled to places in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Uttarakhand, Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu in search of the winged beauties, and in all, has captured 300 to 400 species of birds so far.

“This is definitely a stressbuster. It is a different world altogether. Nature, breath of fresh air and birds keep me going. When I walk through forests and wade across small streams with my camera in hand and looking for birds, I tend to forget the world outside,” she said.

Being an anaesthetist, the hospital is a separate world in itself, she said, adding, “Work hours are hectic both in the operation theatre and post anaesthesia care unit. So, these are worlds apart.” She along with her husband K. Elancheralathan, professor and head, Vascular Surgery, Government Stanley Medical College Hospital has travelled to places such as Kotagiri, Thattekad and Sattal.

At Pulicat lake, on spotting greater and lesser flamingos, Dr. Deepthi gets into the water and waits patiently before clicking the images. “I have a bird bucket list that includes Rufous-necked hornbill and Black Baza found in West Bengal. Among the birds that I have spotted and clicked so far, my prized possessions are Nilgiri Sholakili chick, Great Barbet at Sattal and Oriental

Dwarf kingfisher at Thattekad,” she says.

In a recent visit to the Nilgiris, Dr. Deepthi Cheran spotted the Black-and-orange flycatcher. | Photo Credit: Deepthi Cheran

Dr. Deepthi Cheran has travelled to places in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Uttarakhand, Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu in search of winged beauties, and in all, has captured 300 to 400 species of birds so far. A photograph of the Nilgiri flycatcher shot by the anaesthetist. | Photo Credit: Deepthi Cheran

In a recent visit to the Nilgiris, she spotted the Black-and-orange flycatcher and Velvet-fronted nuthatch. “Bird photography has helped me in more than one way. Each photograph speaks of a story. We walk for hours and wait patiently for that fraction of a second to capture the image of a bird. I learn from nature, from birds. For instance, the Baya weaver, which is known for its hanging nest, has a lesson to teach — to keep on working relentlessly,” she said.

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