

# THE SECOND EDITION OF BIRDS OF COIMBATORE IS A HANDY GUIDE FOR SEASONED BIRD WATCHERS OF TAMIL NADU

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

Spot-bellied eagle-owl | Photo Credit: [Sathish Senniyappan](#)

A striking image of a dusky brown bird captures my attention as I flip through the pages of the newly-launched book titled *Birds of Coimbatore*. It's the spot-bellied eagle-owl with a pair of round, dark eyes staring out of a flat face. It has a sharp yellow bill but what makes it arresting is its pair of distinctive ear tufts. A quick glance through the section on owls enlightens you on 15-odd species: the serene-looking barn owl in brown and grey shades, the Ceylon bay-owl distributed across the Western Ghats and Sri Lanka, and the jungle owlet with bright, yellow eyes.

A brief description accompanies every photograph and highlights the conservation status of the bird as rare, threatened, extinct, uncommon or of least concern as determined by the International Union for Conservation of Nature(IUCN). "A pictorial habitat icon indicates if the bird can be seen in grasslands, wetlands, rocky forests or paddy fields, or is nocturnal, and a QR code guides the readers to the xeno-canto website (dedicated to sharing bird sounds from all over the world) where they can listen to the bird call," says G Prakash, who has co-authored the book along with A Pavendhan and PB Balaji.

The book, in its second edition, is brought out jointly by Coimbatore Nature Society (CNS), a birding group with over 200 members that has been organising bird walks every weekend since 2012, and Young Indians (Coimbatore Chapter), an initiative of the Confederation of Indian Industry. "It is a compilation of birds, a total of 409 species, sighted over the landmass of Coimbatore across different habitats from 2012 to September 2020," says Pavendhan.

While the section on trogons, the birds of tropical forest, shows a male and female Malabar trogon with its crimson red plumage, the one on hoopoes and hornbills is a visual treat of cinnamon coloured common hoopoe, black-yellow-white great hornbill, and the Malabar grey hornbill. It continues with the section on doves and pigeons. Check out the Asian emerald dove, the State bird of Tamil Nadu that sits pretty with a bluish-grey crown, emerald green wings and pinkish legs.

The 'ducks and geese' segment features resident ducks like cotton pygmy-goose, knob-billed duck and the migrant ones like the highest-flying bar-headed goose. "The great crested grebe, a rare winter visitor, sighted in Coimbatore and nowhere else in South India finds a mention in the book," says P B Balaji, adding that Tamil names of birds along with scientific and common names is a big plus. "For those who are new to bird watching, introduction to birds chapter is comprehensive. For seasoned birders, the checklist and the 40 hotspots are invaluable. It can give a push to ecotourism in the region," adds Balaji. Another highlight is the introduction by Krishnaraj Vanavarayar that covers Coimbatore's history from the prehistoric times as well as its current milestones in education, agro-industries, textiles and automobile sector.

Pavendhan draws your attention to the migratory birds that throng a myriad landscapes including wetlands, forests, and grasslands during the wintering months. "The birds featured can be seen across all districts of Tamil Nadu."

While the Indian peafowl and gray francolin (*koudhari* in Tamil) that can easily be spotted in urban landscape take centre stage among ground-feeding birds, there is enough information on greater flamingos, that make an occasional appearance at Coimbatore wetlands while enroute to their wintering grounds.

Tracing the journey of the book, R Selvaraj, the founding president of CNS says the objective is to educate people on bird watching and eventually conservation. A 10-member team has worked tirelessly to ensure that the data is credible. "We have specialists amongst us in shore birds, owls, and ducks to name a few, who have contributed immensely to the book."

Prakash is quick to add that the book's USP are the priceless on-field observations by birders; he gives an example: "Darter, which is called snake bird, has a unique feeding behaviour. It darts its neck to impale fish and then brings it out of water and tosses it in air before swallowing the fish. The cormorants who share the habitat tries its luck to catch the fish."

The authors say bird watching is also about common birds. "Have you tried seeing a jungle crow or common crow using binoculars?" asks Prakash, adding, "The appearance and behaviour is fascinating. You can learn a lesson in every single move of the bird. Bird watching can never be boring."

*The book is priced at 1,000. Google Pay numbers are 9840092602, 9842261279. Discounts offered for students and bulk purchases from institutions. Write to [cnsnature@gmail.com](mailto:cnsnature@gmail.com)*

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