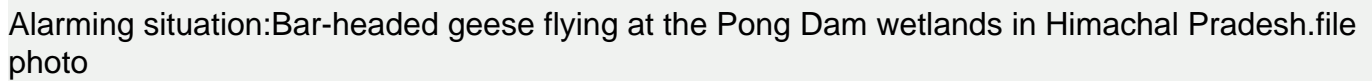


## 27 MIGRATORY BIRDS FOUND DEAD AT WILDLIFE SANCTUARY IN HIMACHAL

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

Alarming situation: Bar-headed geese flying at the Pong Dam wetlands in Himachal Pradesh. 

As many as 27 migratory birds have been reported dead on account of avian influenza in the Pong Dam Wildlife Sanctuary area of Himachal Pradesh since March 25, setting off alarm bells and forcing authorities to shut down the sanctuary.

Archana Sharma, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (wildlife), told *The Hindu* on Sunday that 14 migratory birds, mostly bar-headed geese, were found dead at the sanctuary on March 25. "Another 12 birds were found dead over the next two days. We have sent the samples to the Regional Diseases Diagnostic Laboratory in Jalandhar. Any confirmation about the presence of avian flu could be ascertained only after the reports come," she said.

"At this time of the year, migratory birds are on their way back to their breeding grounds in central Asia. Some of them may be infected because immunity levels are low as they are coming from different wetlands. We are assuming that it could be avian influenza — H5N1 or H5N8 — but until the reports come nothing can be confirmed," she said.

"As a precautionary measure, we have closed the sanctuary area for now. The wildlife wing of the Forest department is working actively to monitor the situation and field staff have been directed to maintain strict vigil and active surveillance on the situation," added Ms. Sharma.

Earlier in January this year, avian influenza (H5N1) led to the death of over 5,000 migratory birds in the Pong Dam Wildlife Sanctuary area in Kangra district of the State.

**END**

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