

BIRDWATCHERS FROM INDIA, NEPAL AND BHUTAN RECORD HIMALAYAN SPECIES

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Birdwatchers in the Himalayan regions of India, Nepal and Bhutan came together for a unique inter-country exercise to document as many birds of the mountain range as possible. Photo: Special Arrangement

Uttarakhand reported the highest [number of bird species](#), at 293, while the maximum number of checklists (lists of birds seen and heard by birdwatchers), at 192, was uploaded from Jammu & Kashmir, according to the primary report from birdwatchers in the Himalayan regions of India, Nepal and Bhutan, who came together for a unique inter-country exercise to document as many birds of the mountain range as possible.

The Himalayas, the tallest mountain range in the world, with its snow-capped mountains, cold deserts, lush green forests and grasslands, and white waters of rivers, are home to numerous unique birds. The exercise was undertaken on May 14 and a total of 607 species have been documented so far, in just one day. The 'Himalayan Bird Count' programme aimed to celebrate the incredible bird diversity of the Himalayas.

"Birdwatchers from Ladakh, including members of the Wildlife Conservation and Birds Club of Ladakh, spread out in various regions of Ladakh and uploaded 182 checklists.

In just 36 checklists, birdwatchers from Sikkim recorded 157 species. Similarly, 50 checklists yielded a whopping 234 species in Arunachal Pradesh," Gala Mittal from Bird Count India said.

In India, the event was confined to Ladakh, J&K, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim, northwest Bengal and Arunachal Pradesh. In many places, birders took groups of people out for birdwatching, showing them the wonders of nature.

Bird Count India is an informal partnership of organisations and groups interested in documenting and monitoring India's birds. The initiative encourages birdwatchers to upload their bird lists to eBird (ebird.org/india), a global platform for bird observations.

This first edition of the event was co-organised by Bird Count India, Bird Conservation Nepal, and the Royal Society for Protection of Nature, Bhutan, which plan to bring the Himalayan birding fraternity together for a common good via more birding events such as this.

According to the organisers, around 1,000 lists were uploaded from India, Nepal and Bhutan on May 14.

"There was incredible participation from individual birdwatchers and various groups, ranging from government entities like the Himachal Pradesh Forest Department and bird clubs to various wildlife conservation organisations. Stretching from the westernmost Ladakh to the easternmost Arunachal Pradesh, the Himalayan region's biodiversity is threatened by rapid warming and rampant infrastructure development," Ms. Mittal said.

"Himalayan Bird Count can provide consistent, snapshot information of bird diversity in a region that is increasingly threatened by climate change. This kind of information, across years, can help us understand what's happening to our country's birds," said Ghazala Shahabuddin, senior

fellow with the non-profit Centre for Ecology, Development and Research working in the Kumaon hills, Uttarakhand.

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