

# BUCEROS

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**ENVIS Newsletter: Avian Ecology & Inland Wetlands**

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## **Bibliography of the Birds of North India**

Compiled by

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## **ENVIS**

ENVIS (Environmental Information System) is a network of subject specific nodes located in various institutions throughout the country. The Focal Point of the present 25 ENVIS centres in India is at the Ministry of Environment and Forests, New Delhi, which further serves as the Regional Service Centre (RCS) for INFOTERRA, the global information network of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to cater to environment information needs in the South Asian sub-region. The primary objective of all ENVIS centres is to collect, collate, store and disseminate environment related information to various user groups, including researchers, policy planners and decision makers.

The ENVIS Centre at the Bombay Natural History Society was set up in June 1996 to serve as a source of information on *Avian Ecology* and *Inland Wetlands*.

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## **BNHS Mission**

**Conservation of nature, primarily biological diversity, through actions based on research, education and public awareness**

## BIBLIOGRAPHY OF THE BIRDS OF NORTH INDIA

### Introduction

This issue of BUCEROS is a part of series of state-wise bibliography of birds of India. In this issue we are dealing with the bibliography of the birds of North India. The bibliography has been extracted from the bibliographic database of Avian Ecology maintained by the ENVIS Centre at Bombay Natural History Society. A bibliography of this type can not be complete and this bibliography is also not an exception. There are limitations on collecting all the published material on such a vast subject. **This bibliography includes only references that are available at the BNHS library.**

We have included seven states of North India: Bihar, Delhi, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh and Uttaranchal. Hence, the bibliography is divided into seven parts. It is organized according to taxonomic order of the birds following Manakadan & Pittie (2001) Remaining references are categorized under broad headings such as Checklist, Survey, Wetlands (reservoirs, lakes, ponds), Protected Areas (National Parks, Wildlife Sanctuaries, Tiger Reserves, Reserve Forest and Biosphere Reserve), Regions (City, Area), Agriculture and Birds, Conservation and Miscellaneous.

Our aim is to bring out ready reference material for amateur and expert birdwatchers. At the end of the bibliography an index has been provided and abbreviations are placed at the beginning on page 1 for quick reference.

### Acknowledgement

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### Abbreviations used:

*AWB Publ.*= Asian Wetland Bureau

*Blackbuck* = *Blackbuck* (Madras Naturalist Society)

*IWRB Spec. Pulp* = International Waterfowl & Wetland Research Burea

*J. Bengal Nat. Hist. Soc.* = Journal of Bengal Natural History Society

*J. Bombay Nat. Hist. Soc.* = Journal of Bombay Natural History Society

*Proc. Indian Nat. Sci. Acad.* = Proceedings of the Indian National Sciences Academy

*WPA News* = World Pheasant Association News

*J. Yamashina Inst. Orn.* = Journal of Yamashina Institute of Ornithology

## BIHAR

Bihar ( $22^{\circ} 00'$  -  $27^{\circ} 45'$  North and  $83^{\circ} 15'$  -  $88^{\circ} 30'$  East) has a geographical area of 94,163 sq. km which constitutes 2.9% of the land area of the country. Bihar has two distinct physiographic regions, namely the Gangetic Plain and the Southern Plateau. The state is watered by four major rivers, the Ganga, the Sone, the Gandak and the Damodar. It was left with the agriculturally rich alluvial Gangetic area when the forest and mineral rich region of Jharkhand in the south became a separate state in 2000. Bihar has a long and impressive history of culture and education.

The annual rainfall in the state varies from 1,000 mm to 2,000 mm. The temperature ranges from 4 °C to 45 °C. Bihar is the second most populous state of the country. The total population is 82.88 million (8.1% of India's population), 89.5% of which is rural (2001 census). The population density is 880 per sq. km.

### Vegetation

There are three major forest types in undivided Bihar: Tropical Moist Deciduous, Tropical Dry Deciduous, and Subtropical Broadleaf Hill Forests. Sal *Shorea robusta* is the major forest species, which covers about 55% of the forest area (Ministry of Environment and Forests 1999).

The Forest Survey of India report of 2001, reports that the recorded forest area is 2.92 million ha which constitutes 16.81% of the geographical area of the State. The Chotanagpur Plateau and the south Bihar Plains covering the southern half of the State are rich in forest resources whereas the Gangetic Plains, which are thickly populated and intensively cultivated, have meager forest resources. The reserved forest constitutes 11.4%, and the protected forest 88.6% of the recorded forest area. The Forest Survey of India report of 2001 has recorded dense forest in northwest, southwest and southern Bihar.

Bihar is basically an agricultural state where nearly 80% people depend on farming or related activities. Thanks to the rich alluvial soil, good rainfall and annual flooding of rivers, most of the forest cover has gone under the plough. As human population density is high, most land holdings are small and intensively used. Bihar used to have, and still has in many areas, a large number of wetlands that are extremely important for waterfowl. The finest example left is the Kabar taal. Most of the smaller wetlands have been drained, encroached upon and/or are under intense human pressure. The larger wetlands, which cannot be drained due to topography, hydrology and annual flooding, are intensively fished, leaving no room for wildlife. Community fishing is a part of the culture and during summer, when agricultural activities are reduced, an entire village could be seen fishing. Ingenious nets and traps are used to catch the smallest fish. This leaves very little food for the fish-eating birds. Traditional trapping of birds

is another menace for the waterfowl and other species. Although it has been reduced after the state ban, it still goes on in smaller towns and villages.

## AVIFAUNA

The major area of the State comes under the Gangetic Plain, especially the northern part, where many water-bodies exist that attract migratory waterbirds. However, most of them remain unstudied. One of the Important Bird Area of this region is the Kabar Taal, with a very large congregation of waterbirds during winter months. *Chaura* of north Bihar have many wetlands where more than 100,000 birds congregate. Other congregatory sites are Kursela, Kusheshwarthan, the Mokama Taal (Barah) wetlands, Nagi Dam and Nakti Dam Bird Sanctuary, and the reservoirs of the Chotanagpur Plateau. These sites attract hundreds of thousands of waterbirds in winter.

The key threatened species that are found in Bihar are the Lesser Adjutant *Leptoptilos javanicus*, Pallas's Fish Eagle *Haliaeetus leucoryphus*, Oriental White-backed *Gyps bengalensis* and Long-billed *Gyps indicus* vultures. The Valmiki Tiger Reserve in the *terai* belt bordering Nepal, could have significant populations of Swamp Francolins *Francolinus gularis*. There are some records of the Greater Spotted Eagle *Aquila clanga* from Mokama Taal, and the Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni* from the *Chaura* of Chotanagpur, Danapur and Mokama. These birds are widespread across the country, and are not seen in regular and significant numbers in Bihar.

The Black-necked Stork *Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus* is regularly seen in Gogabil, Mokama and the Valmiki Tiger Reserve (Rahmani 1989). Ferruginous Pochard *Aythya nyroca* is an uncommon duck of Asia and considered Vulnerable by BirdLife International (2001) which is also seen occasionally in Bihar.

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# DELHI

Delhi ( $28^{\circ} 25'$  to  $28^{\circ} 52'$  N and  $76^{\circ} 50'$  to  $77^{\circ} 21'$  E) is the capital of India. It has an area of 1,483,00 ha. The State is divided into two main ecological zones, an extension of the Aravalli Hills and the Plains. The Yamuna river, where a large number of waterbirds congregate during winter, is the main source of water. Delhi experiences extreme temperatures. Winter temperatures can fall as low as  $2^{\circ}\text{C}$ , while the mercury soars to an uncomfortable  $48^{\circ}\text{C}$  in summer. Delhi falls in a semi-arid zone so the rainfall is low, reaching a maximum of 600 mm.

The human population of the State is 13.78 million (2001 census) with a density of 9,294 persons per sq. km, which is the highest density in the country. The urban population is 93% and the rural population 7%.

## VEGETATION

Despite dense human population, Delhi does have some natural forests, especially on what is known as the Ridge. The forest type is Tropical Dry Deciduous. The total recorded forest area is 8,500 ha. The reserved forest is 7,800 ha. and the protected and other forests cover 700 ha. The main forest occurs in the southeastern districts of the State, where mainly dense and open forests are found (Ministry of Environment and Forests 2001):

## Important Bird Areas and Protected Areas

Delhi has a fully notified Asola-Bhatti Wildlife Sanctuary spread over about 2,760 ha. It was notified in 1986. Delhi is divided into nine districts, two of which, the Northeast and East are situated on the banks of River Yamuna. This part of the Yamuna is important for migratory waterbirds, along with the Okhla barrage, which extends to the Okhla Wildlife Sanctuary in Uttar Pradesh, identified as Important Bird Area.

The Uttar Pradesh (U.P.) side of Okhla has already been declared as a bird sanctuary and lies on the border of Delhi in the Gautam Buddha Nagar district near the Okhla village. This Sanctuary comes under the Irrigation Department (Uttar Pradesh): On May 8, 1990 the U. P. Government declared 4000 ha of land as protected area for a bird sanctuary under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.

## Avifauna

Despite its dense human population, Delhi is a birdwatcher's paradise, thanks to old avenue trees, a large number of parks, historical monuments with gardens, colonial bungalows with large lawns, and the famous Delhi Ridge. More than 400 species of birds have been identified till now (Devasar 2002), including some rare ones such as the Spot-billed Pelican *Pelecanus philippensis*, Lesser Adjutant *Leptoptilos javanicus* and Indian Skimmer *Rynchops albicollis*. The Delhi Region also

has a very active Delhi Bird Club, whose members regularly go bird-watching and new species are added to the checklist.

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## HIMACHAL PRADESH

Himachal Pradesh ( $30^{\circ} 22' - 33^{\circ} 13'$  North and  $75^{\circ} 36' - 79^{\circ} 02'$  East) is situated in the northwest of India in the Himalayan ranges. It is bounded by Jammu and Kashmir in the north, Uttaranchal in the southeast, Haryana in the south and Punjab in the west and in the east it forms India's international boundary with Tibet (China). Himachal Pradesh has a geographical area of 5.57 million ha. The State is mountainous with altitudes ranging between 460 and 6,600 m. It has a deeply dissected topography, a complex geological structure and a rich temperate flora in subtropical latitudes. Himachal Pradesh is drained by a number of snow-fed perennial rivers. The Chenab, the Ravi, the Beas, the Sutlej and the Yamuna are the important ones. Forestry in Himachal Pradesh constitutes the biggest land use.

Agriculture and horticulture are the mainstay of Himachal's economy as 71% of the people are engaged in these pursuits (Mathew 2003). Climatic conditions are suitable for a variety of fruits and cash crops such as seed potatoes, ginger, vegetable seeds, apples and other fruits. The main cereal crops are wheat, maize and paddy.

Himachal Pradesh is famous for its hill stations. Tourists come here mainly during the summer. The tourist department of Himachal Pradesh claims that Kharjiar in the Chamba district has earned the name "Mini Switzerland" because of the striking similarity in landscape.

The State is also known for its rich wildlife, especially for rare species such as Musk Deer *Moschus chrysogaster*, Ibex *Capra ibex*, Himalayan Thar *Hermitragus jemlahicus*, Asiatic Brown Bear *Ursus arctoides* and Snow Leopard *Uncia uncia*. Some of the pheasant species which are very important in the State, include the Himalayan or Impeyan Monal *Lophophorus impejanus*, Western Tragopan *Tragopan melanocephalus*, Koklass Pheasant *Pucrasia macrolopha* and Snowcocks *Tetraogallus* spp.

The average rainfall in the State is 1,800 mm. The mean annual temperature ranges between  $20^{\circ}\text{C}$  to  $22.5^{\circ}\text{C}$ .

The total population of the State is 6.08 million (2001 census) of which 90.2% is rural and 9.8% is urban. The population density is 109 persons per sq. km.

### Vegetation

There are six major forest types in Himachal Pradesh: Tropical Dry Deciduous, Sub-tropical Pine, Sub-tropical Dry Evergreen, Himalayan Moist Temperate, Himalayan Dry Temperate, and Sub-alpine and Alpine. By legal status, the reserved forest constitutes 5.1%, the protected forest 89.2% and the unclassed forest 5.7% (Ministry of Environment and Forests 2001). The Forest Survey of India report of 1999, states that there has been an overall decrease of 440 sq. km of dense forest

because of the conversion of 640 sq. km to open forest, and of 33 sq. km to non-forest. Also 92 sq. km of open forest, 42 sq. km of scrub and 99 sq. km of non-forest have been converted to dense forest.

## AVIFAUNA

Himachal Pradesh is extremely important for the protection of many species of pheasants and forest birds. Its six major forest types have Western Himalayan species, some with significant populations. A total of 390 species of birds have been identified till now from the State (Grimmett and Inskip 2003): Seven globally threatened species are found in the State. The two vulture and two eagle species are widely found but the two pheasant species (Cheer Pheasant *Catreus wallichii* and Western Tragopan *Tragopan melanocephalus*) have restricted range, both in altitude and habitat. The Wood Snipe *Gallinago nemoricola* classified as Vulnerable (BirdLife International 2001) also had a wide distribution in the Himalayas based on old shooting records (Ali and Ripley 1987): Only few recent records are available after the prohibition of sport-hunting in India. It is reported only from Dhauladhar WLS, but is likely to be found in many more areas.

Himachal Pradesh lies in the Western Himalayas Endemic Bird Area (EBA 128): Eleven species are confined to this EBA (Stattersfield *et al.* 1998)

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## Jammu & Kashmir

Jammu and Kashmir ( $32^{\circ} 17' - 37^{\circ} 05' \text{ N}$  and  $72^{\circ} 31' - 80^{\circ} 20' \text{ E}$ ) is bounded on the north by China (Karakoram mountains), on the east by Tibet, and on the south by Himachal Pradesh and Punjab and on the west by Pakistan and Afghanistan. This hilly State is divided into three geographical regions namely, the Kashmir Valley, the Ladakh region and the Jammu region. The higher regions are covered by Pir Panjal, Karakoram and the inner Himalayan ranges. The State has a geographical area of 22.22 million ha (6.8% of India's geographical area): The important river systems are the Chenab, the Ravi and the Jhelum. The capital city is Srinagar but in winters the administration offices move to Jammu.

Agriculture is the mainstay of the State's economy. Paddy, wheat and maize are the major crops. Barley, bajra and jowar are cultivated in some parts. Gram is grown in Ladakh (Mathew 2003): Kashmir handicrafts have always been a byword for excellence. This sector provides employment to about 0.2 million people. Kashmir carpets earn substantial foreign exchange (Mathew 2003): The 300 km long Srinagar-Jammu National Highway is the only major surface link between the Kashmir Valley and the rest of the country. Kashmir is internationally known for its beauty and is a favourite tourist destination. The main tourist centres are Srinagar, Pahalgam, Gulmarg and Sonamarg. Hindu pilgrim centers of special importance include Amarnath and Vaishno Devi.

The average annual rainfall and temperature is in the range of 600 to 800 mm and  $15^{\circ}\text{C}$  to  $17.5^{\circ}\text{C}$  respectively. The climatic conditions vary from subtropical in the Jammu region to cold and arid in Ladakh.

The total population of the State is 10.07 million (2001 census), which is 1.0% of the country's population. Nearly 75% of the people live in the villages. The population density is 45 persons per sq. km, which is very low in comparison with other states. This is due to the large uninhabited cold desert area in Ladakh.

### Vegetation

Broadly, Jammu and Kashmir has five types of vegetation, namely Sub-tropical Dry Evergreen, Himalayan Moist Temperate, Himalayan Dry Temperate, Subtropical Pine, and Sub-alpine and Alpine Forests. The recorded forest area is 2.02 million ha which constitutes 9.08% of the geographical area of the State. Forests are largely distributed in the Kashmir Valley and the Jammu region. Leh and Kargil are devoid of forest vegetation. This area is cold desert. Dense forest and open forest account for 11,84,800 ha and 9,38,900 ha respectively (Ministry of Environment and Forest 2001): The total number of districts in the State are 14. The western districts of the State have more forest cover with dense and open forests, while Gilgit and Ladakh have no forest cover as detailed by the Forest Survey of India report of 2001. Raisi, Punch, Muzzaffrabad, Kathua and Jammu have more forest cover than Ladakh, by the Forest Survey of India report of 2001. Raisi,

Punch, Muzzaffrabad, Kathua and Jammu have more forest cover than Ladakh, Gilgit, Baramula, Anantnag (Ministry of Environment and Forest 2001).

## AVIFAUNA

Jammu and Kashmir lies in the Western Himalayas Endemic Bird Area (EBA 128) where 11 Restricted Range species have been listed by Statterfield *et al.* (1998): Because of great altitudinal variations and differing physiogeographical regions, Jammu and Kashmir has three biomes: Biome-5 (Eurasian High Montane-Alpine and Tibetan), above c. 3,600 m; Biome-7 (Sino-Himalayan Temperate Forest), mainly between c. 1,800 to 3,600 m; and, Biome-8 (Sino-Himalayan Subtropical Forest), between c. 1,000 and 2,000 m. The Eurasian High Montane (Alpine and Tibetan) Biome is mainly distributed in the Ladakh region, especially in the Changthang plateau. The Sino-Himalayan Temperate Forest type habitat is present in most of the Important Bird Areas in the State.

In the Kashmir Valley, many protected areas support restricted range species and some waterbodies support large congregations of migratory waterbirds. These restricted range species occur mainly in Temperate Coniferous or Broadleaf Forest, Sub Alpine Forest and Montane Grasslands. For example, the Kashmir Flycatcher *Ficedula subrubra* which is one of the globally threatened species is found between an altitude of 1,800 m to 2,700 m in the Temperate Mixed Broadleaf Forest, especially where there is dense growth of *Parrotia* (Stattersfield *et al.* 1998): Other similar species, namely, the Tytler's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus tytleri*, White-throated Tit *Aegithalos niveogularis* and White-cheeked Tit *Aegithalos leucogenys* are found between 1,500 m to 3,600 m in Pine, Oak, Mixed and Deciduous Forests. White-throated Tit can be seen easily in rhododendrons and willow scrub, near the tree line, and White-cheeked Tit, besides in the habitats already mentioned, can be seen in riverine tamarisk scrub. Similarly, other restricted range species which can be seen in or near the Valley are the Kashmir Nuthatch *Sitta cashmirensis*, Spectacled Finch *Callacanthis burtoni* and Orange Bullfinch *Pyrrhula aurantiaca*. These finches are found in the open Coniferous Forest, Mixed Forest, Deciduous Forest and occasionally birch (Statterfield *et al.* 1998):

The Changthang region in Ladakh is an important breeding ground for waterbirds. Apart from hosting the largest breeding congregation of Bar-headed geese *Anser indicus* in India, the Changthang region also supports the largest population of the endangered Black-necked Crane *Grus nigricollis* in India. During a study on the breeding ecology of the Black-necked crane, Pfister (1998) recorded 12 sites in the Changthang region as breeding sites for this endangered species and counted 38 cranes. In a subsequent survey of Changthang in 2001, 42 cranes were counted with 10 breeding pairs in the Changthang region (S. A. Hussain *pers. comm.* 2003).

Hemis National Park is also one of the important bird areas in Ladakh. This is important for all the high altitude birds of the Western Himalayas. About 80 bird species are found in the Park and 50 of them breed there.

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## JHARKHAND

Jharkhand is one of the recently formed states of India; it was carved out of Bihar on November 1, 2000. It accounts for 45% of former Bihar's geographical area, mainly the Chotanagpur plateau. It is one of the most important mineral-producing states of the country (Ministry of Environment and Forest 2001): The total area of the State is 79,714,00 ha, about 2.4% of the country's geographical area. The State is bounded by Bihar on the north, West Bengal on the east, Madhya Pradesh on the west and by Orissa on the south. Jharkhand has a forest-dwelling tribal population of about 22.5%. The total human population of the State is 26.91 million (2.6% of the country's population), of which the rural population is 78% (2001 Census): The population density is 338 persons per sq. km.

### Vegetation

According to the Forest Survey of India report 2001, Jharkhand ranks 10<sup>th</sup> among all the States and Union Territories of India in respect of the area under forest cover. The dense forest distributed in the northwest and the southeast of the State constitutes about 15%, the open forest areas are evenly distributed in the north, central and southeastern parts of the State and constitute about 13.6%, and the non-forested area is about 71.6%. The total recorded forest area is about 23,605 sq. km, which contains reserve forest of about 18.6%, protected forest of 81.3% and unclassified forest about 0.1% (Ministry of Environment and Forest 2001): The main forest types are (a) Peninsular Dry and Moist Sal Forests, (b) Hill Valley Swamp Forest, (c) Moist Sal Savannah, (d) Moist Mixed Deciduous Forest, (e) Riverine Forest, (f) Bamboo and Cane brakes (Ministry of Environment and Forest 1999).

The increase in the forest cover in the Santhal Pargana and the Gaya district is mainly due to plantation of *Dalbergia sissoo*, *Acacia catechu*, *Eucalyptus* spp., *Acacia* spp. raised during the early 1990s. Losses in Singhbhum and Hazaribagh districts are mainly due to encroachments and also due to the transfer of about 2 sq. km of forest area to the Kiriburu mines in the Singhbhum district and 7 sq. km of forest area to the Piparwar Coal Project of Central Coalfields Ltd. in the Hazaribagh district (Ministry of Environment and Forest 2001):

### AVIFAUNA

Jharkhand is one of the least studied states and the information on birds is meager. A bird checklist of the State is not available. The only ornithological work (e.g. Jamal Ara) was conducted nearly 40 years ago when Jharkhand was a part of Bihar. Later, Shahi (1982) published some articles on poaching crises, which also dealt with areas, which are now in Bihar. Nevertheless, in Palamau Tiger Reserve about 170 bird species have been recorded (Sinha and Mukherjee 1995), including six globally threatened species and 33 Biome-restricted species. Although none of the globally threatened species have significant populations in this forest.. Although the core area of 21,300 ha is good for birds of

Dry Deciduous Forest (Biome-11): This site is important because of the biome-restricted assemblage of bird species.

Hazaribagh Wildlife Sanctuary is rich in avifauna although a systematic survey needs to be done here in order to know more about birds and their density and abundance. In 1996, Ara (1966) published a preliminary list of 97 bird species. Since then, no further study has been conducted on birds in this Sanctuary. The site has the typical Dry Deciduous Forest of central India. Based on the biome classification of BirdLife International (undated), it lies in the Indo-Malayan Tropical Dry Zone (Biome-11):

Udhuwa Lake Bird Sanctuary is situated in the northeastern part of the State and here also not much work has been done, but Choudhary *et al.* (1992) have identified 83 species of birds, including many forest species. The list includes such rarities as Nordmann's Greenshank or Spotted Greenshank *Tringa guttifer*. This however, needs to be reconfirmed. A. Mishra (*pers. comm.* 2001) has sighted the Near Threatened Black-necked Stork *Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus*. If the site is properly protected, it has great potential to become an important waterfowl refuge (A. Mishra *pers. comm.* 2001):

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## UTTAR PRADESH

Uttar Pradesh ( $23^{\circ} 52'$  -  $30^{\circ} 24'$  North and  $77^{\circ} 5'$  -  $84^{\circ} 38'$  East) has a very ancient and interesting history. Uttar Pradesh is bounded by Uttarakhand and Nepal on the north; Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh on the south; Rajasthan, Haryana and Delhi on the west and Bihar and Jharkhand on the east. It has a geographical area of 24,092,800 ha, about 7.3% of the land area of the country (Ministry of Environment and Forests 2001): Despite its bifurcation in November 2000 into Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh, it is still one of the largest and most densely populated states in India. It has been divided into 70 administrative districts.

Uttar Pradesh comprises three physiographic regions namely, the submontane region lying between the Himalayas and the plains, the vast alluvial Gangetic plains and the southern hills and plateau. All the rivers except the Gomati and the Chambal emerge from the Himalayas. The State is fed by five major rivers, the Ganga, the Yamuna, the Ramganga, the Gomati and the Ghaghra, which drain into the Bay of Bengal. More than one-fourth of Uttar Pradesh lies within the Gangetic plains consisting of alluvial deposits brought down from the Himalayas by the Ganga, Yamuna and their tributaries. The southern hills form part of the Vindhya range whose elevation rarely exceeds 300 m.

Uttar Pradesh is one of the poorest states in India. It has low income and low productivity levels, low degree of urbanization, widespread illiteracy, high birth and death rates, and low levels of investment. It is one of the most populous States, supporting 16.2% of India's population. The total population is 166.05 million (2001 census) of which 79.2% is rural and 20.8% urban. The population density is 689 persons per sq. km.

Uttar Pradesh is the largest producer of food grains and oilseeds in the country. The State leads in the production of wheat, maize, barley, grain, sugarcane and potatoes. It has world famous cities and sites such as Agra (Taj Mahal, Sikandara, Agra Fort, Fatehpur Sikri), Varanasi and Mathura (Hindu pilgrimage centers), and Allahabad (where the Ganga and Yamuna rivers meet):

The State has a diverse range of habitats for birds and other biodiversity that include forest areas in the sub-Himalayan *terai* and also the Dry Deciduous Forests of the Bundelkhand regions bordering Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. According to the Forest Survey of India report of 2001, the forest area in the State is 16,826,000 ha which is about 2.2% of India forest and 7% of the States geographical area.

The State has a tropical climate with a wide temperature fluctuation from  $2^{\circ}\text{C}$  to  $48^{\circ}\text{C}$ . There are three main seasons: summer from March to mid-June; the rainy season from mid-June to September; and, winter from October to February. There is a great variation in rainfall. The *bhabhar* area has an average rainfall from 1300 to 1900 mm, whereas in the *terai* it varies from 1200 to 2500 mm. In the Gangetic plains the rainfall varies from 600 to 1200 mm.

## Vegetation

By legal status, Reserved Forest constitutes 65.9%, Protected Forest 14.4% and Unclassed Forest 19.7% (Ministry of Environment and Forests 2001): There are three forest types, namely Tropical Moist Deciduous, Tropical Dry Deciduous and Tropical Thorn. Sal is an important forest formation of the State. Forests are distributed largely in the northern and partly in the southern parts of the State. The central part is devoid of forest vegetation as it is mainly under agriculture. A forest cover increase was recorded by the Forest Survey of India report of 1999, in the districts of Hardoi, Kheri, Saharanpur, because plantation was undertaken 4-5 years earlier and also due to effective protection measures. A decrease in forest cover was observed in the districts of Banda, Jhansi, Mirzapur, and Sonbhadra, which was largely on account of biotic pressures.

Uttar Pradesh has been categorized into three major eco-zones on the basis of forest and vegetation types. These three zones are: the *Terai* region; the Gangetic plains (West and East Uttar Pradesh); the Bundelkhand of Uttar Pradesh including the Vindhya ranges.

The *terai* region of Uttar Pradesh is a very important ecosystem for many threatened species of tall wet grasslands and swamps (Rahmani 1987, 1988, 1992, 1996, Javed 1996) and is the topmost priority for conservation (Rahmani and Islam 2000): It supports many threatened bird species such as the Swamp Francolin *Francolinus gularis* (Javed *et al.* 1999, Iqubal *et al.* 2003) and Bengal Florican *Houbaropsis bengalensis* (Rahmani *et al.* 1991): Earlier, the *terai* was continuous, but now it occurs in pockets in protected areas of India and Nepal such as the Royal Chitwan National Park (NP), Royal Bardia NP, Royal Parsa Wildlife Reserve and Royal Suklaphanta Wildlife Reserve in Nepal, and Karterniaghata Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS), Kishanpur WLS, and Dudwa NP in Uttar Pradesh and Valmiki WLS in Bihar.

## AVIFAUNA

The bird life of Uttar Pradesh is rich and varied. More than 500 species are found (A. R. Rahmani unpublished), including some extremely rare ones. Among the Critically Endangered species, Oriental White-backed Vulture *Gyps bengalensis*, Long-billed Vulture *G. indicus* and Slender-billed Vulture *G. tenuirostris* are found in this State. BirdLife International (2001) has listed ten Endangered species, of which, the Bengal Florican, the White-headed Duck *Oxyura leucocephala* and Lesser Florican *Syphocetes indica* are occasionally seen, and the Greater Adjutant *Leptoptilos dubius* has not been recorded recently (Rahmani *et al.* 1990): In this State, 20 out of 57 vulnerable species have been recorded. BirdLife International (2001) has listed 52 Near Threatened bird species from India, 14 of which occur in Uttar Pradesh. The wetlands and tall grasslands of Uttar Pradesh are very important sites for the conservation of the Black-necked Stork and Rufous-rumped Grassbird *Graminicola bengalensis* (earlier known as Large Grass Warbler): Earlier, Rahmani (1989), and recently Gopi Sunder and Kaur (2001) have shown that the wetlands of Uttar Pradesh are the major strongholds of the Black-necked Stork.

A species that needs special attention is the Hodgson's Bushchat *Saxicola insignis*. It is also known as the White-throated Bushchat or Hodgson's Stonechat. It has a much localized breeding range in the mountains of Mongolia where it is difficult to study. Its winter range is the northern Gangetic plains and the duars of northern India and the *terai* of Nepal. From the comparatively little information available it is probably the rarest species in its genus (Urquhart 2002): In northern India, it has been reported from Ambala in the west to northern Bengal in the east (Ali and Ripley 1987): It is found in heavy grassland, reeds and tamarisks along riverbeds and cane fields. Earlier it was recorded in Kanpur, Gonda, Faizabad, Basti, and Gorakhpur (BirdLife International 2001, Urquhart 2002) but there is a recent record only from Corbett (Bose *et al.* 1989): Javed and Rahmani (1998) did not record it in Dudwa. However, looking at the paucity of reliable birdwatchers in Uttar Pradesh, development of tall grasslands and marshes on seepages of the vast canal systems of the State, and extant tall grasslands along major rivers, this species is likely to be present in many areas.

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## UTTARANCHAL

Uttaranchal, a newly formed state, consists mainly of hilly areas which were earlier a part of Uttar Pradesh. Uttaranchal is bounded by Uttar Pradesh on the south, Nepal on the east, Himachal Pradesh on the west and China on the northeast. From the hilly districts of Uttaranchal two major Indian rivers originate, Ganga and Yamuna. Uttaranchal has an area of 53,483 sq. km (1.6% of the India's geographical area).

Uttaranchal has an interesting history as it finds mention in the Hindu scriptures as *Kedarkhand*, *Manaskhand* and *Himavant*. It is often called the Land of Gods (*Dev Bhoomi*) because of its various holy places and shrines. The present Uttaranchal was a part of Uttar Pradesh, but after a long agitation for a separate Hill State by the people, it was separated from Uttar Pradesh to preserve the cultural, tribal and linguistic identities of the people belonging to these regions. Uttaranchal became the 27<sup>th</sup> State of the Indian Union on November 9, 2000 with Dehradun as its capital.

As per the 2001 Census, the total human population of Uttaranchal is 8.48 million (0.8% of the country's population): The urban population is 25.6% and 74.4% is rural. The average population density is 159 persons per sq. km (2001 Census): The tribes constitute 3.0% of the State's population.

### Vegetation

Uttaranchal ranks sixth amongst the States in terms of percentage of recorded forest area (Ministry of Environment and Forest 2001): As per the Ministry of Environment and Forest report 2001, the total forest area of the State is 34,662,00 ha, of which reserve forest is 23,827,00 ha (68.7%), protected forest 10,673,00 ha (30.8%) and unclassified forest is 162,00 ha (0.5%): The Forest Survey of India also analysed that the dense forest is 19,023,00 ha (35.6%), open forest 4,915,00 ha (9.2%) while non-forest is 55.2% (Ministry of Environment and Forest 2001): The Nainital district has the highest forest cover (73.11%) followed by Champawat and Garhwal and then other districts (Ministry of Environment and Forest 2001):

The main forest types of the State are Tropical Moist Deciduous, Tropical Dry Deciduous, Sub-tropical Pine, Himalayan Moist Temperate, Himalayan Dry Temperate, and Sub-alpine and Alpine Forests (Ministry of Environment and Forest 1999).

### AVIFAUNA

In Uttaranchal, 623 species of birds have been recorded (Mohan and Sinha, 2003 unpublished): Out of these, the Oriental White-backed and Slender-billed vultures are in the Critically Endangered category of BirdLife International, 13 species are Vulnerable, 15 species are Near Threatened, while the Cheer Pheasant and the Western Tragopan are the two restricted range species.

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