South of the Border

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Jahangirnagar University is more than just an abode of knowledge, its sprawling fields and gardens are home to many species of animal and plant life. But from the beginning of December till late January and even into February there is a pronounced increase in the number of animals present on campus. That marks the traditional season of the migratory birds that come to take refuge in the relatively warm delta that is Bangladesh. Flying south from their regular roosts the birds head to numerous spots around the country, mostly around large water bodies for their annual vacation, but this year they probably have mixed feelings about their holiday. Bangladesh is going through an unusually cold winter coupled with a renewed bird flu outbreak; they have come at a tricky time indeed. While many varieties of birds fly down to Bangladesh for their annual migration in Jahangirnagar roughly seven or eight species are usually seen and they make themselves heard as anyone who lives there will be able to tell you. They come in their thousands and are noisy to say the least but they are treated like royal guests and admired for the spirit and good cheer they bring along with them. But there is also the other side of the coin, around the country thousands of birds are illegally caught and sold by unscrupulous traders. In response to this Jahangirnagar often arranges a 'Pakhi Mela' to celebrate the birds and most importantly to create awareness over different aspects of the birds stay and the illegal trade that flourishes when they arrive. For birds that bring so much joy and warmth with them it would be fair to say we are anything but good hosts. Fifty years ago Frank Sinatra released a hugely successful album titled 'Come Fly with Me' and our migratory birds would probably take more than a few songs of that album to heart. They are sure to have thought more than once *lets get away from it all* and what better place for them to go than *south of the border*, next time you hear a migratory bird sing, listen carefully and you may just hear *come fly with me.*





