

OF FEATHERS AND FLIGHTS



FROM PAGE 3

While it is true that the number of migrating birds spending the winter in Bangladesh is significantly lower than in the past, many species still settle in temporary homes here during the season. In fact, a number of birders and ornithologists suggest that the capital city of Dhaka lies in the middle of the flyway of these migratory birds due to which they can often be seen perched in different locations in the city, perhaps while they rest between their long and arduous flight.

COMMON MIGRATORY BIRDS OF BANGLADESH

Of the many birds to be seen, some are more common. For an amateur bird-watcher, it is best to start off with the more commonly seen migratory birds. The ones to look out for in Bangladesh are:

Dusky Warbler - A passerine(perching bird) in nature, the dusky warbler has a distinctly shaded brown body and breeds in Asia.

Blyth's Reed Warbler - Another passerine with dusky features which comes from Asian, as well as European regions.

Peregrine Falcon - The emperor of the skies, peregrine falcon is the fastest bird in the world and hails from the Arctic regions.

White Wagtail - Breeding in parts of Asia, Europe and Africa, this small slender bird has a frosted silvery outlook that complements its name.

Indian Blue Robin - Has a vibrant teal-amber body and visits Bangladesh from the Himalayas, Nepal or India.

Fulvous Whistling Duck - These common visitors can be found mostly near water bodies and marshes and migrate from other tropical regions of the world.

In addition to these aerial visitors, Siberian ducks of various kinds can be seen in many locations during the winter. But where exactly are you supposed to explore to catch a glimpse of one of these? There are a number of ideal spots inside and outside of Dhaka which serve as the perfect nature retreat.

WHERE TO SPOT THEM?

Jahangirnagar University- This place has already gained much popularity for the vast number of migratory, as well as resident birds that flock there. Wide open spaces, water bodies and a landscape generously dotted with trees makes Jahangirnagar University a premier destination for bird watching.

National Botanical Garden- The foliage here makes it an ideal home to various species of plants and thus serves as a sanctuary for many birds who come here to rest, take shelter and while away their "vacation".

Purbachol/300 ft Road - As the area still remains fallow and constitutes some grasslands, many species of birds flock there throughout the year. The open spaces, small ponds and the lack of too many people, makes the areas by the 300 ft road an unex-



pected yet comfortable resting grounds for many of our feathered tourists.

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Safari Park - The park has a spacious lake as well as lots of greenery to attract migrants during winter. Ample supply of food from nature, cover and an expansive foliage makes this the perfect retreat for many of our tired avian friends after their long journey from home.

Visiting all these sites may not be a feasible option at times. In those cases, it is important to have knowledge about the kind of areas that are suitable for bird-watching. Most birds can generally be found in any location that is filled with trees, while some can be found near water bodies like ponds, lakes, etc. Passerines can usually be spotted reposing in fields, fallow lands and on tree branches. Moreover, you can even go bird-watching on your own rooftop at dawn or during sunset and you might as well discover a rare bird. It all depends on how much information you have. Tools can also help.

When one is going out bird-watching,

there are a handful of tools that the birder may carry to ease his quest.

BIRDERS' GEAR:

Field Guide - When you're out birding, a field guide or bird book is a must. "Bangladesh Encyclopedia Flora and Fauna, Vol. 26" is one such guide highly recommended by most birders and can be found in any large book store in Nilkhet.

Pair of binoculars - Some birds, especially passerines are so tiny that it is almost impossible to spot them with the naked eye. A pair of powerful binoculars can come in handy when observing one of these birds from far away.

Digital camera - Now an affordable good, the digital camera will enable you to capture pictures of rare birds and natural beauty.

Recorder - It can be used to record a



bird's call to crosscheck with the call of other birds and identify its exact species.

Telescope and tripod - To spot a soaring bird or one seated on the branch high above, you might need a telescope with a tripod to set it up.

Along with these must-haves, a birder may carry a notebook to take notes. There are many applications available on the

phone which can also be used to identify an unknown bird.

THE DO'S AND DON'TS

When you start bird-watching, you will start loving not only birds, but every element of nature as well. So when you are indulging in your favourite hobby, but there are some things you should keep in mind. Bird-watching carries with itself some etiquette and its best to follow them.

DO

Go out with other birders - This is important, especially if you are a newbie. Going out with other more experienced birders will encourage you and help you amass more knowledge than you would birding along.

Always maintain a safe distance from the birds. You may scare them away if you get too close.

Learn bird directions - Make sure you know your cardinal directions well so that you can spot a bird easily.

Enjoy yourself - Always remember that this is your perfect retreat from your busy hectic life and try to enjoy yourself.

DON'T

Don't go near breeding birds - Birds may act on their strong motherly instincts and there is also a high risk of harming the eggs or nestlings.

Don't feed them - Birds, just like humans, feed on their own accord. Feeding them may cause them to behave unnaturally and artificially influence their rate of reproduction, thus causing their population to explode.

Don't chase them - Often some birders may get so deeply engaged in watching a specific bird that they may try to follow it everywhere which is quite harmful for the bird as well as the birder.

Bird-watching, like any other hobby, is an activity that people indulge in mostly because it reaches to their heart and makes them feel close to nature. It is an activity which connects people to not only birds but other people and different aspects of nature as well. Hence, with burning issues like climate change and pollution hanging over our heads, it is important to always keep in mind that these birds, both residents and migratory, are after all our treasures and we must always do everything within our capacity to preserve and protect them.

By Nafisa Faruque
Photo: Sayam U. Chowdhury