

Coimbatore wetlands record a drop in migratory birds

Survey by the Coimbatore Nature Society finds a 65% decline in their numbers in the last five years

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Wetlands in Coimbatore district registered a 65% decline in the number of migratory birds in the last five years, according to surveys conducted by the Coimbatore Nature Society (CNS) for the Asian Waterbird Census.

CNS recorded 2,592 migratory birds of 35 species in the wetlands of Coimbatore district in 2017.

This year, 18 birders of CNS recorded just 978 migratory birds of 31 species in 28 wetlands in the district between January 15 and 17. In 2020, birders of CNS had sighted 1,380 migratory



Studying causes: Birds like pelicans and storks may not be able to catch fish when the water level is high, said an expert.

birds of 39 species in 26 wetlands in the district.

Need for attention

“The reason for the decline in the number of wetland mi-

gratory birds needs to be studied – whether the cause is the fall in migration or disturbances in wetlands,” said CNS president Selvaraj P.R.

A. Pavendhan, a senior

member of CNS, said the gradual decline in the number wetland migratory birds in a five-year period was a cause for concern.

According to Prakash G., another senior member of CNS, higher water levels in waterbodies and the degradation of shorelines could be reasons for the decline in numbers.

“Due to high water levels, small islands or flatbeds in tanks have been submerged. They act as undisturbed resting places and habitats for a lot of birds, including ducks. Birds like pelicans and storks may not be able to catch fish when the water level is high,

as fish remain in the deeper portions,” Mr. Prakash added.

Meanwhile, this year’s survey results showed an increase in the number of resident birds.

The number of resident birds in waterbodies increased from 4,487 of 92 species in 2017 to 6,091 birds of 103 species this year.

In total, 7,069 birds of 134 species, both migratory and resident, were recorded this year. Of the total number of species, 45 were water birds and 89 were others.

Most populous birds found in this year’s census were the little cormorant

(508), cattle egret (498) and barn swallow (405).

Among the migrants, barn swallow (405), blue-tailed bee eater (105) and small pratincole (100) were high in numbers.

Topping the list

Ukkulam, with 67 bird species, topped the list of wetlands for diversity of species, while the Singanallur tank stood first with the highest number of bird counts – 486.

Important sightings recorded this year included that of the northern shoveler, northern pintail, temminck’s stint, small pratincole, and the whiskered tern.