

A note on sightings of Common Merganser, an overlooked migrating species in National Chambal Sanctuary, India



Common Merganser in National Chambal Sanctuary. © R.K. Sharma

The wetland bird Goosander, also called the sawbills, fish-ducks, and Common Merganser *Mergus merganser* is a winter visitor to western India. Bharos et al. (2022) have reviewed the occurrence of Merganser in India from 1877 onwards and mentioned that its occurrence records are from Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra (Mumbai), Madhya Pradesh (Raipur District), and river Mahanadi in the states of Chhattisgarh and Odisha.

The Common Merganser, which is a diving duck, was overlooked or slipped off from specific accounting in our first survey report from NCS (Sharma & Singh 1986). In the Son River, located north-east in Sidhi District, Madhya Pradesh,

the duck has been sighted in 1996 (Sharma & Sharma 1997) and 2019 (Sharma & Kumar 2019) in the downstream of Jogdah Ghat (24.514° N, 82.143° E) up to Deora. Rahmani & Islam (2008) reported the sighting of five Common Merganser in the year 2000 and three in 2001, in river Chambal. In NCS, we could take note of the presence of Common Merganser only from the annual surveys of 2003 onwards.

We have summarised our data on the status of Common Merganser *Mergus merganser* in the National Chambal Sanctuary (NCS). The standardized intensive annual survey methodology started since 1983–84 was adopted to assess the population status and

distribution of Common Merganser (CM). The study area of 435 km in river Chambal was divided into twelve zones of NCS. The total number of Common Mergansers sighted during the annual survey from 2003–2012 was 74.

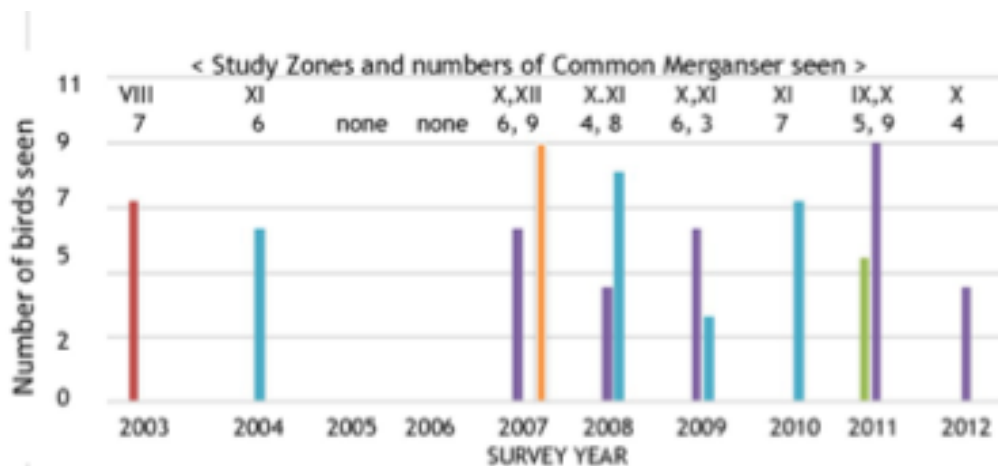
Of the total, 83.78% counts were made in the study zones X, XI & XII. These zones stretch over 115 km and occur on the downstream, closure to the confluence of Chambal with Yamuna River. This is a stretch of deep river, and other

large birds are also seen in this zone.

Common Merganser in NCS is an additional species covered in our bird studies, that has been benefitting from gharial conservation in Chambal. Regular and thorough survey for the species in the state of Madhya Pradesh and other Indian states south of its latitude-longitude is expected to render a clear understanding on migration dynamics of Common Merganser.



Map of National Chambal Sanctuary showing study zones starting with zone I- Pali to zone XII- Chakarnagar



Zone VIII-BabusinghGher– Usedghat 40km, IX-Usedghat – Ater 40km, X-Ater – Barhi 40km, XI-Barhi – Chakarnagar 38km, XII-Chakarnagar – Pachhnada 37km. No sightings in other zones.

Zone-wise counts of Common Merganser in National Chambal Sanctuary during 2003-2012.

Zone-wise occurrence of Common Merganser in National Chambal Sanctuary

Study Zones	Area(km stretch)	Numbers of Merganser counted
Zone I	Pali-Rameshwar(22)	No Confirmed sighting(1983-2002)
Zone II	Rameshwar-Khirkhiri(15)	No Confirmed sighting(1983-2002)
Zone III	Khirkhiri-Baroli(20)	No Confirmed sighting(1983-2002)
Zone IV	Baroli-Atar(48)	No Confirmed sighting(1983-2002)
Zone V	Atar-Sarsaini(65)	No Confirmed sighting(1983-2002)
Zone VI	Sarsaini-Rajghat(35)	No Confirmed sighting(1983-2002)
Zone VII	Rajghat-Babusingh Gher(35)	No Confirmed sighting(1983-2002)
Zone VIII	Babusingh Gher-Usedghat(40)	7 in Year 2003
Zone IX	Usedghat-Ater(40)	5 in Year 2011
Zone X	Ater-Barhi(40)	29 in Years 2007 (6), 2008 (4), 2009 (6), 2010 (0), 2011 (9),2012 (4)
Zone XI	Barhi-Chakarnagar(38)	24 in Years 2004 (6), 2008 (8), 2009 (3), 2010 (7), 2011 (0), 2012 (0)
Zone XII	Chakarnagar-Pachhnda(37)	9 in Year 2007
All Zones	Total(435 km)	2003:7, 2004:6, 2007:15, 2008:12, 2009:9, 2010:7, 2011:14 and 2012:4

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