

A checklist of avifauna of the Central University of Tamil Nadu (CUTN) campus, Thiruvarur, Tamil Nadu, India

Introduction

Water birds depend on wetlands for survival. Wetlands are one of the most productive ecosystems and water birds play a vital role in their ecological functioning (Raju 2015). Common water birds include numerous groups of birds, such as grebes, pelicans, cormorants, darters and its allies, herons, bitterns, storks, ibises and spoonbills, flamingos, and ducks (wildfowl), raptors, cranes, rails and its allies, jacanas, waders (or shorebirds), gulls, skimmers, terns, and coucals (Article 1.2 of the Ramsar Convention text). In India, there are about 744 universities with varying land size, and most of them have at least a few patches of natural vegetation and plantations. Documentation of birds in such areas, however, was not given importance on par with natural and reserve forests (Pragasan & Madesh 2018). Few bird diversity studies have been carried out in the Thiruvarur District. The present study is the

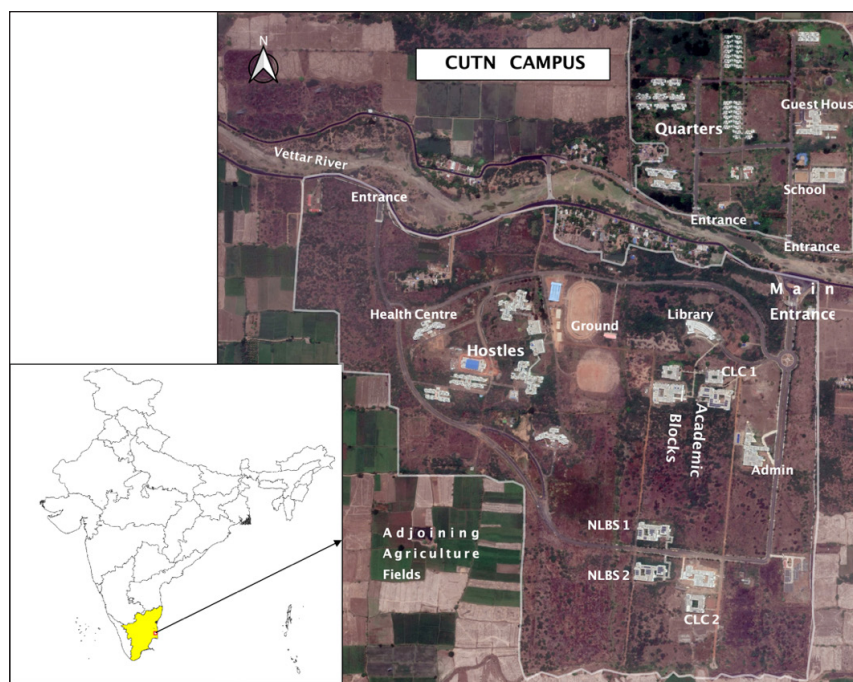


Image 1. Central University of Tamil Nadu campus adjoining agricultural fields and Vettaru River in Thiruvarur, Tamil Nadu, India. The campus boundaries are drawn roughly, only for representational purpose (Source: QGIS using Google Earth Imagery).

first attempt to document the bird diversity in the CUTN campus (10.8193° N, 79.6102° E) located in the Thiruvarur District, Tamil Nadu, India. The campus is spread on both sides of the River Vettaru (the major tributary of Cauvery River in the heart of the delta). The campus is situated seven kilometres to the north-west of Thiruvarur Town and spread across 516.76 acres of land in two revenue villages

Neelakudi and Nagakudi (Image 1). Thiruvarur District has a tropical dry climate with annual mean temperature of 28.5°C and annual mean rainfall of about 1178mm. The campus is located near a riverine freshwater wetland and hence it is characterised by productive alluvial soil with many permanent and temporary ponds and water pools that support rich diversity of flora and fauna. It is located

82km from Point Calimere Wildlife Sanctuary in Nagapattinam District, which is a Ramsar site; 52km from Udhayamarthandapuram Bird Sanctuary; and 46km from Vaduvor Birds Sanctuary in Thiruvavur District, therefore, apart from common birds, the campus attracts a large number of wetland birds. The CUTN campus has a range of microhabitats within the campus such as grasslands, woodlands, shrubs, herbs, many ponds and water bodies. Additionally, both academic and residential campuses are surrounded by rich vegetation and agricultural lands.

We conducted the bird surveys from November 2017 to May 2019. We observed the birds using a standard 10x binoculars and recorded the images with a DSLR camera (18MP with lens (55–250mm)). We also photographed the bird habitats. We designed and carried out the present study in two ways (a) routine bird surveys, (b) casual bird watching. Routine bird surveys involved observing and recording bird species in fixed locations using line transect and point count method. We carried

out the study on a regular basis, except during heavy rains. Regular visits were made to different areas of the campuses for 2–4 hours, starting from 6am in the summer and 6.30am in the winter. Short visits were also made for an hour to a specified site in the evenings. During the routine bird surveys, a pre-defined line transect of 200m in length were laid in the campus. During the casual bird watching, we recorded different types of information such as visual sightings which include shape, size, colour, beak, and also flight pattern. We also recorded acoustic information including bird calls, perch location, and habitat (wherever possible). The roads and pathways in the campus were divided into transects for bird watching and ease of counting. For those areas which are inaccessible by walk, songs/calls of birds were observed from a distance.

For bird identification standard field guides by Ali (2012) and Grimmett & Inskipp (2005), various standard journal articles for diagnostics and online databases which provided

images and recorded calls of birds were used. For taxonomy work we followed Praveen et al. (2016).

Residential status as, R–resident; R/LM–resident with local movements; WM–winter migrant; R/AM–resident with altitudinal movements; R/LM/SM–resident with local as well as summer movements; R/WM–resident with winter influx. The roosting and foraging zones of birds in and around the campus were observed. There were 29 foraging zones and seven roosting zones during the study period, partitioned by roads, pathways and buildings. Habitats of the CUTN campus were categorized as garden (G), cropland (CL), light forest having moderately high trees and bushes underneath (LF), open woodland which includes trees of different height, bushes and vines on the trees, varieties of herbs and grasses underneath (OW), grassland (GL), wetland which includes all types of water bodies (WL), and human habitation, the buildings (HH).

We recorded 79 bird species belonging to 16 orders and 43 families (Table 1).

We found that university campus is dominated by Passeriformes, followed by Pelecaniformes and Cuculiformes (Fig 1). The birds in the campus are diversified with different types of micro habitats such as grassland, woodland, river and ponds and these micro habitats were classified as given in the table. Some species like Rock Pigeon, Spotted Dove, Jungle Babbler, Common Myna, Large-billed Crow, Black Drongo, Red-vented Bulbul are very common and can be seen almost everywhere. The number of species with residential status — resident 17; resident with local movements 52; winter migrant 6; resident with local as well as summer movements 1; resident with winter influx 1. There were 29 foraging zones and seven roosting zones during the study period, partitioned by roads, pathways, and buildings.

There is little information on checklist of birds and related studies in Thiruvavur region (Asokan 1998a,b; Chandru & Asokan, 1999; Asokan et al. 2009; Sivakumaran & Thiyagesan 2003; Neelanarayanan 2007), and

most of this information is related to the population and feeding ecology of birds. However, very few studies reported the nesting behavior of birds (Thiyagesan 1991; Sivakumar & Jayabalan 2004; Asokan et al. 2009) in this region. The Cauvery River bank attracts a greater diversity of birds due to its diverse ecosystem and vegetation types, and hence availability of a variety of food sources for birds. Along both sides of the river bank in the CUTN campus, there are many wooded tree species, scrub and bushy type stumpy vegetation which provide both roosting and nesting habitats for many bird species. Even in the surrounding agricultural fields a number of bird species were recorded.

Accounts of species of interest

Species that are rare in the region and observed for the first time in the campus during study period.

Circaetus gallicus: Rarest among the raptors found in CUTN campus. One individual was sighted and photographed near the main gate during May 2018.

Tringa nebularia: One individual was found foraging near roundabout (near New Girls Hostel) on 3 Dec 2018.

Phaenicophaeus viridirostris: One individual was observed in the campus (Residential) on 13 Feb 2019 and one on 22 Mar 2019 near CLC 1 (Department of Life Sciences building), but no observation after that.

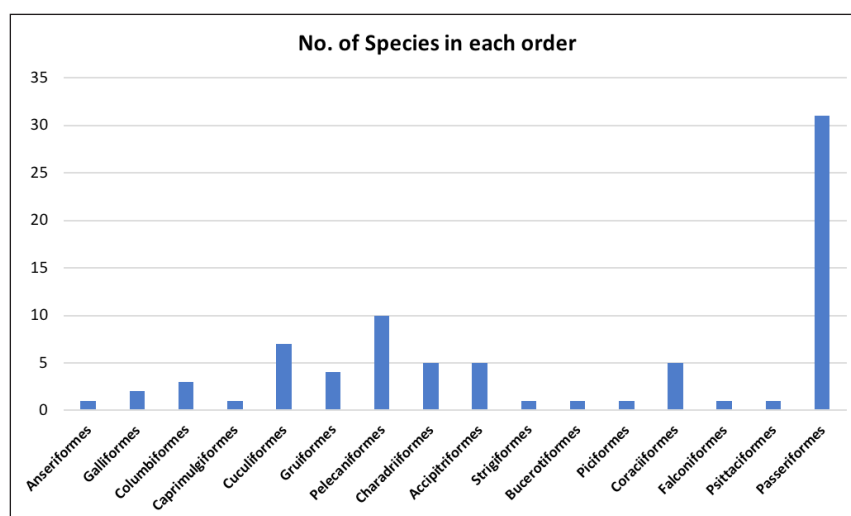


Fig 1. Number of bird species in each order recorded during the study.

Table 1. List of bird species in each order with their IUCN Red List, Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 status, Residential status and their Habitat.

	Family	Name of the Species	Scientific Name	IUCN Category	WPA	Residential Status*	Habitat**
Accipitriformes							
1	Accipitridae	Short-toed Snake Eagle	<i>Circaetus gallicus</i> (J.F.Gmelin, 1788)	LC	Sch I	R/LM	CL
2		Black-winged Kite	<i>Elanus caeruleus</i> (Desfontaines, 1789)	LC	Sch I	R/LM	OW
3		Shikra	<i>Accipiter badius</i> (J.F.Gmelin, 1788)	LC	Sch I	R/LM	OW
4		Brahminy Kite	<i>Haliastur indus</i> (Boddaert, 1783)	LC	Sch I	R/LM	OW
5		Black Kite	<i>Milvus migrans</i> (Boddaert, 1783)	LC	Sch I	R/LM	OW
Anseriformes							
6	Anatidae	Lesser Whistling Duck	<i>Dendrocygna javanica</i> (Horsfield, 1821)	LC	Sch IV	R/LM	CL
Bucerotiformes							
7	Upupidae	Common Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i> Linnaeus, 1758	LC	Sch IV	R/LM	G, LF, OW
Caprimulgiformes							
8	Apodidae	Asian Palm Swift	<i>Cypsiurus balasiensis</i> (J.E.Gray, 1829)	LC	Sch IV	R	OW
Charadriiformes							
9	Charadriidae	Red-wattled Lapwing	<i>Vanellus indicus</i> (Boddaert, 1783)	LC	Sch IV	R	GL, WL
10	Jacanidae	Pheasant-tailed Jacana	<i>Hydrophasianus chirurgus</i> (Scopoli, 1786)	LC	Sch IV	R/LM/SM	WL
11	Recurvirostridae	Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i> (Linnaeus, 1758)	LC	Sch IV	R/WM	WL
12	Rostratulidae	Greater painted-Snipe	<i>Rostratula benghalensis</i> (Linnaeus, 1758)	LC	Sch IV	R/LM	WL
13	Scolopacidae	Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i> (Gunnerus, 1767)	LC	Sch IV	WM	WL
Columbiformes							
14	Columbidae	Rock Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i> J.F.Gmelin, 1789	LC	Sch IV	R	LF, OW, HH
15		Eurasian Collared-Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i> (Fridvaldszky, 1838)	LC	Sch IV	R	CL, OW, GL
16		Spotted Dove	<i>Streptopelia chinensis</i> (Scopoli, 1786)	LC	Sch IV	R	LF, OW, HH
Coraciiformes							
17	Alcedinidae	Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i> (Linnaeus, 1758)	LC	Sch IV	R/LM	WL
18		Pied Kingfisher	<i>Ceryle rudis</i> (Linnaeus, 1758)	LC	Sch IV	R/LM	WL
19		White-throated Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon smyrnensis</i> (Linnaeus, 1758)	LC	Sch IV	R/LM	LF, OW, WL

	Family	Name of the Species	Scientific Name	IUCN Category	WPA	Residential Status*	Habitat**
Coraciiformes							
20	Coraciidae	Indian Roller	<i>Coracias benghalensis</i> (Linnaeus, 1758)	LC	Sch IV	R	LF, OW
21	Meropidae	Green Bee-eater	<i>Merops orientalis</i> Latham, 1801	LC	Sch IV	R/LM	LF
Cuculiformes							
22	Cuculidae	Greater Coucal	<i>Centropus sinensis</i> (Stephens, 1815)	LC	Sch IV	R	LF, OW
23		Blue-faced Malkoha	<i>Phaenicophaeus viridirostris</i> (Jerdon, 1840)	LC	Sch IV	R/LM	G, LF, OW
24		Pied Crested Cuckoo	<i>Clamator jacobinus</i> (Boddaert, 1783)	LC	Sch IV	R	LF, OW
25		Asian Koel	<i>Eudynamis scolopaceus</i> (Linnaeus, 1758)	LC	Sch IV	R	LF, OW
26		Grey-bellied Cuckoo	<i>Cacomantis passerinus</i> (Vahl, 1797)	LC	Sch IV	R/LM	LF, OW
27		Drongo Cuckoo	<i>Surniculus lugubris</i> (Horsfield, 1821)	LC	Sch IV	R/LM	LF, OW
28		Common Hawk Cuckoo	<i>Hierococcyx varius</i> (Vahl, 1797)	LC	Sch IV	R	LF, OW
Falconiformes							
29	Falconidae	Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i> Linnaeus, 1758	LC	Sch IV	WM	LF, OW
Galliformes							
30	Phasianidae	Indian Peafowl	<i>Pavo cristatus</i> Linnaeus, 1758	LC	Sch I	R	CL, GL
31		Grey Francolin	<i>Francolinus pondicerianus</i> (J.F.Gmelin, 1789)	LC	Sch IV	R	CL, GL
32	Rallidae	White-breasted Waterhen	<i>Amaurornis phoenicurus</i> (Pennant, 1769)	LC	Sch IV	R/LM	GL, WL
33		Watercock	<i>Gallicrex cinerea</i> (J.F.Gmelin, 1789)	LC	Sch IV	R/LM	GL, WL
34		Purple Swampphen	<i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i> (Linnaeus, 1758)	LC	Sch IV	R/LM	GL, WL
35		Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i> (Linnaeus, 1758)	LC	Sch IV	R/WM	GL, WL
Passeriformes							
36	Acrocephalidae	Paddyfield Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus agricola</i> (Jerdon, 1845)	LC	Sch IV	WM	LF
37	Alaudidae	Indian Bushlark	<i>Mirafra erythroptera</i> Blyth, 1845	LC	Sch IV	R/LM	CL, GL
38	Cisticolidae	Ashy Prinia	<i>Prinia socialis</i> Sykes, 1832	LC	Sch IV	R/LM	LF, GL
39		Plain Prinia	<i>Prinia inornata</i> Sykes, 1832	LC	Sch IV	R/LM	LF, GL
40		Common Tailorbird	<i>Orthotomus sutorius</i> (Pennant, 1769)	LC	Sch IV	R/LM	G, LF, OW

	Family	Name of the Species	Scientific Name	IUCN Category	WPA	Residential Status*	Habitat**
41	Corvidae	Rufous Treepie	<i>Dendrocitta vagabunda</i> (Latham, 1790)	LC	Sch IV	R/LM	G, LF, OW
42		Large-billed Crow	<i>Corvus macrorhynchos</i> Wagler, 1827	LC	Sch IV	R	ALL HABITATS
43	Dicruridae	Black Drongo	<i>Dicrurus macrocercus</i> Vieillot, 1817	LC	Sch IV	R	G, LF, OW
44	Estrildidae	Indian Silverbill	<i>Euodice malabarica</i> (Linnaeus, 1758)	LC	Sch IV	R/LM	GL
45		Scaly-breasted Munia	<i>Lonchura punctulata</i> (Linnaeus, 1758)	LC	Sch IV	R/LM	GL
46		Black-headed Munia	<i>Lonchura malacca</i> (Linnaeus, 1766)	LC	Sch IV	R/LM	GL
47	Hirundinidae	Wire-tailed Swallow	<i>Hirundo smithii</i> Leach, 1818	LC	Sch IV	R/LM	LF, HH
48		Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i> Linnaeus, 1758	LC	Sch IV	WM	LF
49	Laniidae	Brown Shrike	<i>Lanius cristatus</i> Linnaeus, 1758	LC	Sch IV	WM	LF, OW
50	Leiothrichidae	Jungle Babbler	<i>Turdoides striata</i> (Dumont, 1823)	LC	Sch IV	R	ALL HABITATS
51	Monarchidae	Indian Paradise Flycatcher	<i>Terpsiphone paradisi</i> (Linnaeus, 1758)	LC	Sch IV	R/LM	LF, OW
52	Motacillidae	Paddyfield Pipit	<i>Anthus rufulus</i> Vieillot, 1818	LC	Sch IV	R/LM	CL, GL
53		White-browed Wagtail	<i>Motacilla maderaspatensis</i> J.F. Gmelin, 1789	LC	Sch IV	R/LM	GL
54	Muscicapidae	Indian Robin	<i>Saxicoloides fulicatus</i> (Linnaeus, 1766)	LC	Sch IV	R/LM	LF, OW, HH
55		Oriental Magpie Robin	<i>Copsychus saularis</i> (Linnaeus, 1758)	LC	Sch IV	R/LM	LF, OW, HH
56	Nectariniidae	Purple-rumped Sunbird	<i>Leptocoma zeylonica</i> (Linnaeus, 1766)	LC	Sch IV	R/LM	G, HH
57		Loten's Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris lotenius</i> (Linnaeus, 1766)	LC	Sch IV	R/LM	G, HH
58	Oriolidae	Eurasian Golden Oriole	<i>Oriolus oriolus</i> (Linnaeus, 1758)	LC	Sch IV	WM	G, LF, OW
59	Ploceidae	Baya Weaver	<i>Ploceus philippinus</i> (Linnaeus, 1766)	LC	Sch IV	R/LM	LF, OW
60	Pycnonotidae	Red-vented Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus cafer</i> (Linnaeus, 1766)	LC	Sch IV	R/LM	G, LF, OW, HH
61		White-browed Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus luteolus</i> (Lesson, 1841)	LC	Sch IV	R/LM	LF, OW
62	Sturnidae	Rosy Starling	<i>Pastor roseus</i> (Linnaeus, 1758)	LC	Sch IV	WM	LF, OW
63		Brahminy Starling	<i>Sturnia pagodarum</i> (J.F.Gmelin, 1789)	LC	Sch IV	R/LM	LF, OW
64		Common Myna	<i>Acridotheres tristis</i> (Linnaeus, 1766)	LC	Sch IV	R	ALL HABITATS

	Family	Name of the Species	Scientific Name	IUCN Category	WPA	Residential Status*	Habitat*
65	Vangidae	Malabar Woodshrike	<i>Tephrodornis sylvicola</i> Jerdon, 1839	LC	Sch IV	VA	LF, OW
66		Common Woodshrike	<i>Tephrodornis pondicerianus</i> (J.F.Gmelin, 1789)	LC	Sch IV	R/LM	LF, OW
Pelecaniformes							
67	Anhingidae	Oriental Darter	<i>Anhinga melanogaster</i> Pennant, 1769	NT	Sch IV	R/LM	WL
68	Ardeidae	Yellow Bittern	<i>Ixobrychus sinensis</i> (J.F.Gmelin, 1789)	LC	Sch IV	R/LM	CL, GL, WL
69		Indian Pond Heron	<i>Ardeola grayii</i> (Sykes, 1832)	LC	Sch IV	R/LM	CL, GL, WL
70		Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i> (Linnaeus, 1758)	LC	Sch IV	R/AM	CL, GL, WL
71		Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i> Linnaeus, 1766	LC	Sch IV	R/LM	CL, GL, WL
72		Intermediate Egret	<i>Ardea intermedia</i> Wagler,1829	LC	Sch IV	R/LM	CL, GL, WL
73		Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i> (Linnaeus, 1766)	LC	Sch IV	R/LM	CL, GL, WL
74	Ciconiidae	Asian Openbill Stork	<i>Anastomus oscitans</i> (Boddaert, 1783)	LC	Sch IV	R/LM	CL, GL, WL
75	Phalacrocoracidae	Little Cormorant	<i>Microcarbo niger</i> (Vieillot, 1817)	LC	Sch IV	R/LM	WL
76	Threskiornithidae	Black-headed Ibis	<i>Threskiornis melanocephalus</i> (Latham, 1790)	NT	Sch IV	R/LM	CL, GL, WL
Piciformes							
77	Picidae	Lesser Golden-backed Woodpecker	<i>Dinopium benghalense</i> (Linnaeus, 1758)	LC	Sch IV	R/LM	LF, OW
Psittaciformes							
78	Psittaculidae	Rose-ringed Parakeet	<i>Psittacula krameri</i> (Scopoli, 1769)	LC	Sch IV	R/LM	LF, OW
Strigiformes							
79	Strigidae	Spotted Owlet	<i>Athene brama</i> (Temminck, 1821)	LC	Sch IV	R	LF, OW

* R- Resident; R/LM- Resident with Local Movements; WM- Winter Migrant; R/AM- Resident with altitudinal movements; R/LM/ SM- Resident with local as well as summer movements; R/WM- Resident with winter influx.

** Garden (G), Cropland (CL), Light Forest having moderately high trees and bushes underneath (LF), Open Woodland which includes trees of different height, bushes and vines on the trees, varieties of herbs and grasses underneath (OW), Grassland (GL), Wetland which includes all types of water bodies (WL) and Human Habitation, the buildings (HH).

Cacomantis passerinus: Sighted and photographed near residential campus on 13 Feb 2019. The population seems very less compared to the other members of the Cuculidae family.

Surniculus lugubris: Observed near NLBS 2 only once during mid-September. No observations after that.

Falco tinnunculus: Winter Migrant to the region. One individual was observed and photographed near main gate on 6 Nov 2018.

Lanius cristatus: Winter migrant to the region. An individual was found near New Girls Hostel on 14 Dec 2018.

Tephrodornis sylvicola: A species endemic to the Western Ghats. This species is suspected to be a 'partial migrant' (Partial migration describes intra-population variation in migratory tendency, i.e., when just a fraction of a population migrates and a fraction remains resident within a single habitat the whole year around). One individual was found foraging near residential campus on 13 Feb 2019.

The campus houses a wide variety of flora ranging from herbs, weeds, grasses to big trees. The swamps and bushes surrounding it, attracts migratory birds during winter and rainy seasons. The trees (avenue, ornamental, fuel wood, timber, fodder and fruit bearing) has created a typical habitat and several ecological niches for the birds. Although the vegetation is dominated by grasses, shrubs and bushes, the marshy spots surrounded by reeds provide good habitat for small birds like munias and

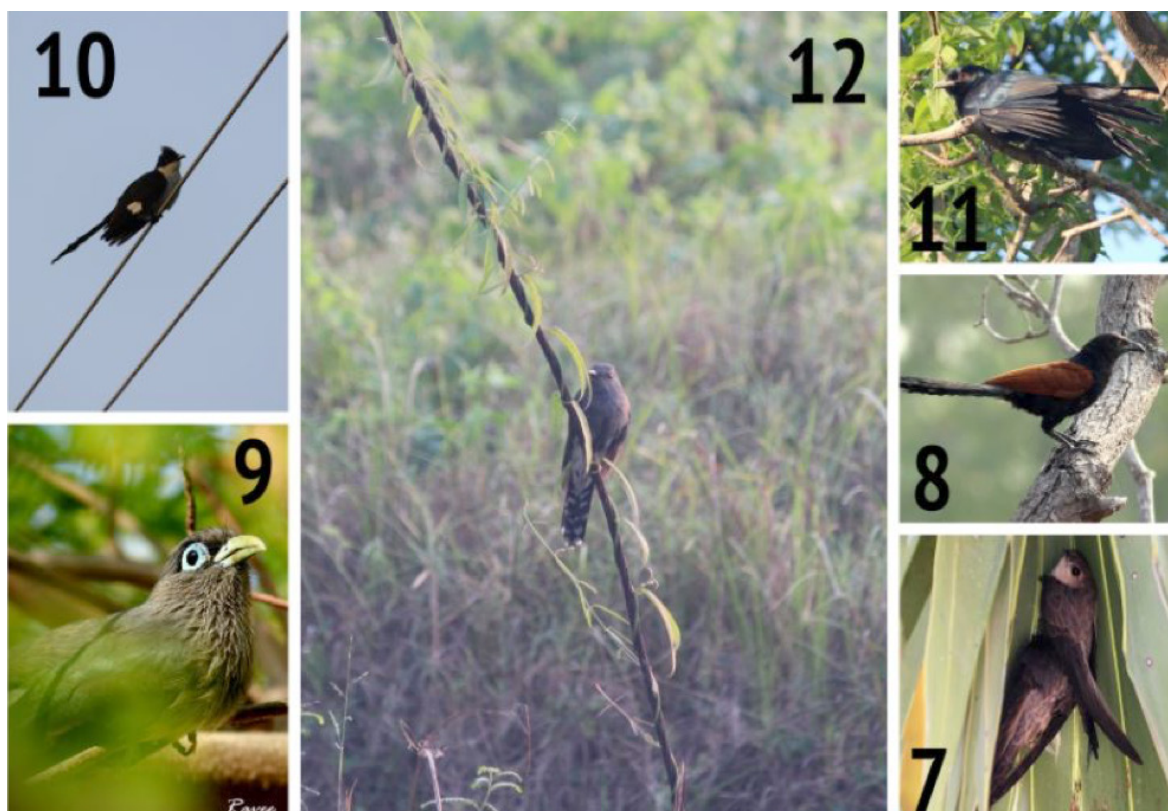
warblers. The herbs which provide fruits and nectar, attract birds like cuckoos, bulbuls, and sunbirds. All the roads and the infrastructures are surrounded by bushes and trees. The fauna includes plethora of insects, mollusks, reptiles, fishes and amphibians. The rise in population of these fauna during the north-east monsoon months (September–January) attracts migratory birds.

Future research on the behaviour and feeding ecology of birds in the campus will help to understand the birds more accurately and thereby pave the way for their better conservation measures. Although, there are natural vegetation such as grasslands, woodlands, water bodies and shrublands in the CUTN campus as habitat for birds of this region, conservation measures are of immense need for their future survival. The present study also suggests the planting of native fruit trees such as Jamun, figs, etc. inside the campus will increase the habitat size for birds. Keeping micro catchments all over the university campus help drive the thirsts of birds during drought season. Initiating bio monitoring program is necessary for monitoring and conservation of the birds and promotion of conservation education for university students. A further complete study is required to understand species assemblage with changes in the habitats and climatic and other resources. This could be an ideal ecosystem to study the avifauna with respect to changes in the habitat over the period of time.

Images of Birds spotted in CUTN campus.



1. Lesser Whistling Duck; 2. Indian Peafowl; 3. Grey Francolin; 4. Rock Pigeon; 5. Eurasian Collared-Dove; 6. Spotted Dove.



7. Asian Palm Swift; 8. Greater Coucal; 9. Blue-faced Malkoha; 10. Pied Crested Cuckoo; 11. Asian Koel; 12. Grey-bellied Cuckoo.



13. Drongo Cuckoo; 14. Common Hawk Cuckoo; 15. White-breasted Waterhen;
16. Watercock; 17. Purple Swamphen; 18. Common Moorhen.



19. Asian Openbill Stork; 20. Yellow Bittern; 21. Indian Pond Heron; 22. Cattle Egret;
23. Purple Heron; 24. Intermediate Egret.



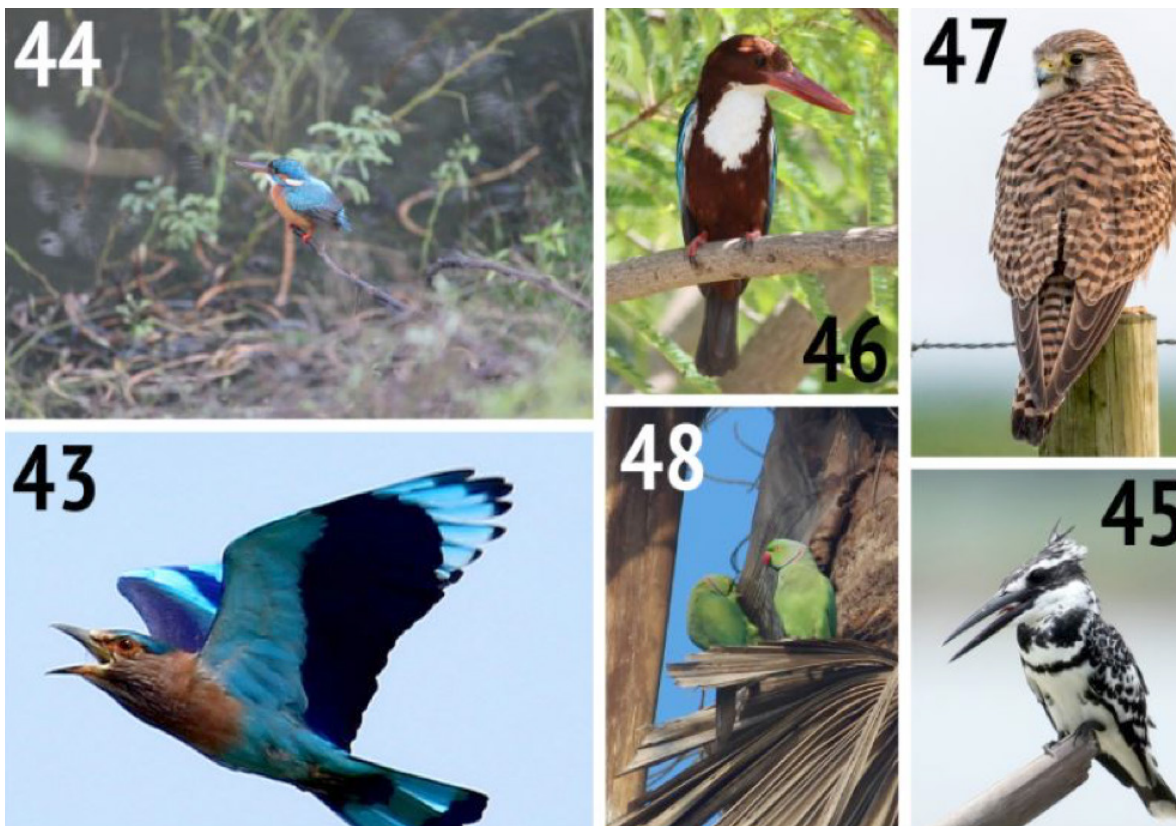
25. Little Egret; 26. Black-headed Ibis; 27. Little Cormorant; 28. Oriental Darter; 29. Black-winged Stilt; 30. Red-wattled Lapwing.



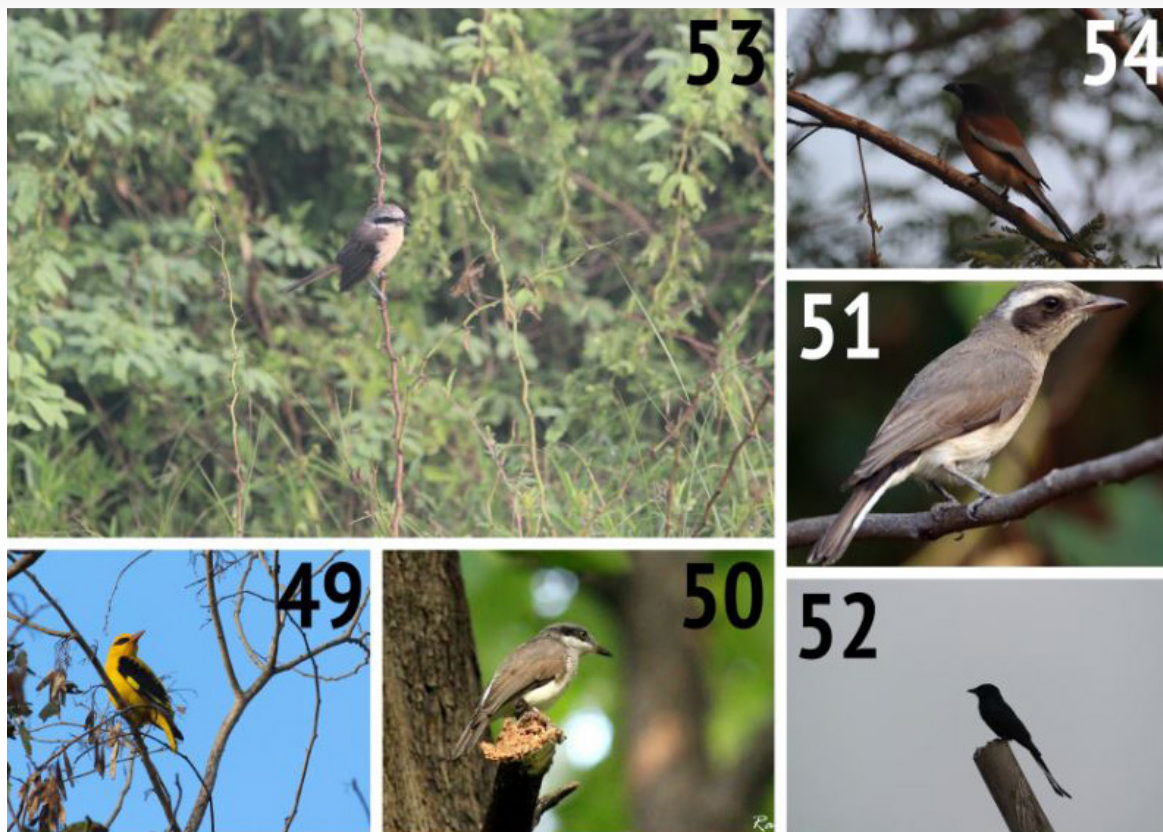
31. Greater painted-snipe; 32. Pheasant-tailed Jacana; 33. Common Greenshank; 34. Short-toed snake eagle; 35. Black-winged Kite; 36. Shikra.



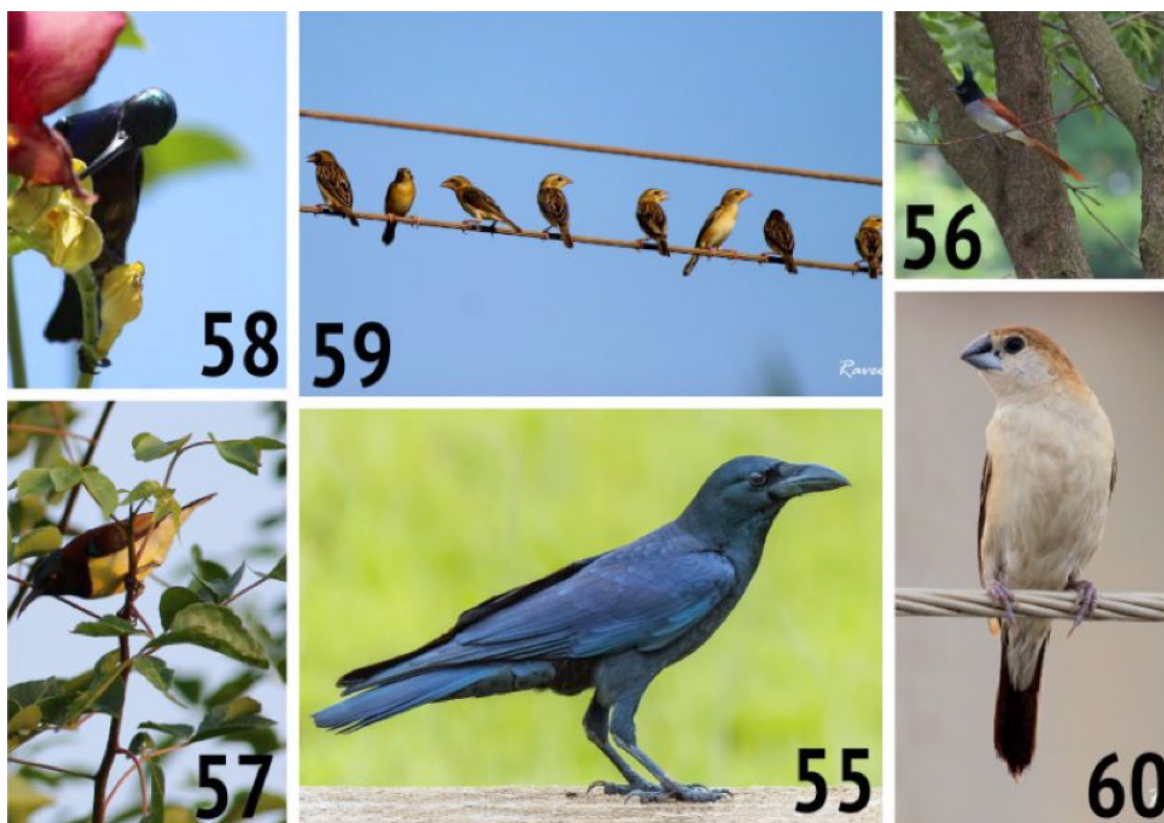
37. Brahminy Kite; 38. Black Kite; 39. Spotted owllet; 40. Common Hoopoe; 41. Lesser Golden-backed Woodpecker; 42. Green Bee Eater.



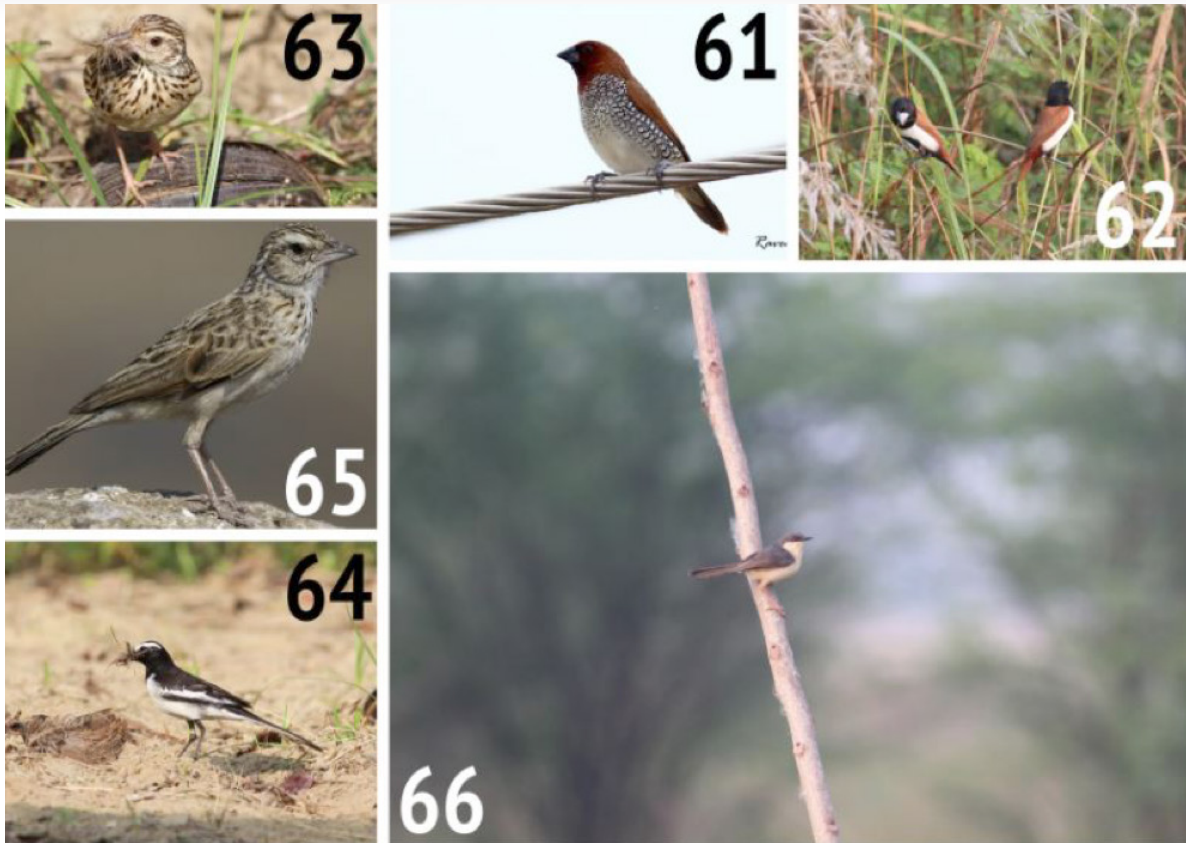
43. Indian Roller; 44. Common Kingfisher; 45. Pied Kingfisher; 46. White-throated Kingfisher; 47. Common Kestrel; 48. Rose-ringed Parakeet.



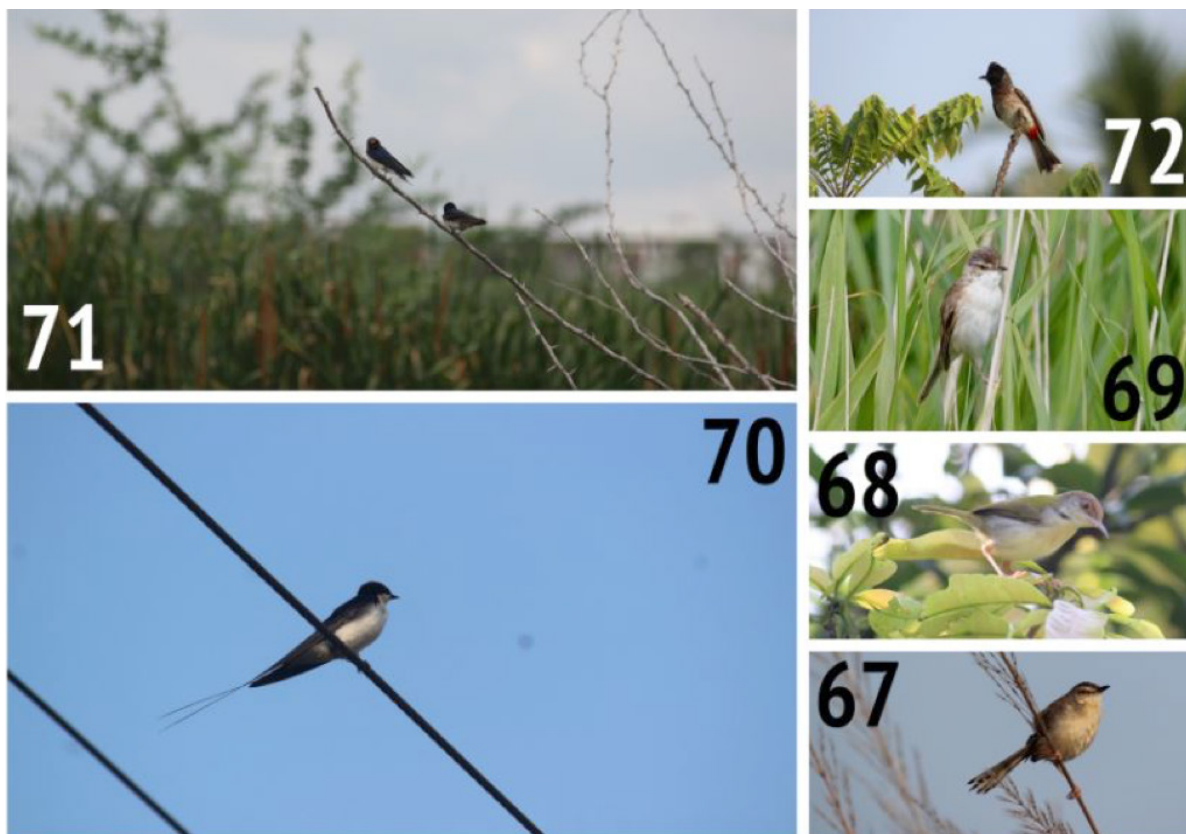
49. Eurasian Golden Oriole; 50. Malabar Woodshrike; 51. Common Woodshrike; 52. Black Drongo; 53. Brown Shrike; 54. Rufous Treepie.



55. Large-billed Crow; 56. Indian Paradise Flycatcher; 57. Purple-rumped Sunbird; 58. Loten's Sunbird; 59. Baya Weaver; 60. Indian Silverbill.



61. Scaly-breasted Munia; 62. Black-headed Munia; 63. Paddyfield Pipit; 64. White-browed Wagtail; 65. Indian Bushlark; 66. Ashy Prinia.



67. Plain Prinia; 68. Common Tailorbird; 69. Paddyfield Warbler; 70. Wire-tailed Swallow; 71. Barn Swallow; 72. Red-vented Bulbul.



73. White-browed Bulbul; 74. Jungle Babbler; 75. Rosy Starling; 76. Brahminy Starling; 77. Common Myna; 78. Indian Robin; 79. Oriental Magpie Robin.

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