A checklist of birds sighted from Sri Sivasubramanium Nadar (SSN) College of Engineering, Chengalpet, Tamil Nadu

Bird diversity studies from educational institutions with wildlife-friendly habitats are valuable datasets, as they could highlight the peaceful co-existence of birds and humans. An invaluable insight to the historical work from a campus in this district is from MCC, where Dr. Gift Siromoney compiled his observations of birds and butterflies (Siromoney 1978). This work serves as a baseline for the bird diversity for the district where Sri Sivasubramanium Nadar College of Engineering (SSN-CE) is located. Here I report the avifauna of SCE campus.

SSN-CE is located at SSN nagar, at Kalavakkam in the newly created district of Chengalpet in Tamil Nadu. The campus spans 250 acres, with a mixture of scrub, wooded country and maintained lawns. Some patches of grassland are also present in the western parts of campus. The campus also has a pond located near the Electrical & Electronics Department (EEE), which fills up during the winter months and attracts many species of birds such as sandpipers and quails. The expanse beyond the cricket stadium is one of the most important birding zones in campus, where more than 75% of the species recorded in campus have been sighted.

The cricket stadium is a great vantage point that was used to spot birds that visited the large water tank adjacent to the western boundary of campus (not to be confused with the previously described pond).

Birding walks were opportunistically conducted for a period of more than three years (2017–2020) around the entire campus. These walks were carried out through various periods of the day to ensure better temporal coverage. Additionally, formal, day-long, Campus Bird Counts were done with studentparticipation, to educate students on the bird life of the campus. These exercises, along with other monitoring surveys such as Endemic Bird Day (Bird Count India 2020) and World Wetland Day, helped boost student engagement in the field. Though opportunistic birding was the prime mode of data collection, certain hotspots were identified in campus and a more concentrated approach was focus on these areas when compared to other spots in campus. These spots include the cricket stadium, football field, open spaces infront of the EEE and chemical engineering departments, the regions behind the chemistry department and the clock tower. Apart from these spots, four transects were frequented during the counts. These include the pathways leading to the cricket stadium, the pathway beyond the cricket stadium, the road connecting the EEE and chemistry department and the road leading to the chemical engineering department. On average 15

individuals/100m, 20 individuals/100m, 3 individuals/100m, 5 individuals/100m were observed in each of these pathways respectively.

A total of 174 species of birds were recorded in the campus in the three years of survey. Of these, five peninsular India endemics, nine other species endemic to the Indian subcontinent were recorded from campus. Two species, Tawny Eagle Aguila rapax and Greater Spotted Eagle Clanga clanga, are listed vulnerable according to the IUCN (Birdlife International 2020a,b). The most frequently encountered species in campus include House Crow Corvus splendens, Large-billed Crow Corvus macrorhynchos, Common Myna Acridotheres tristis, Black Drongo Dicrurus macrocercus, Indian Pond Heron Ardeola grayii, Asian Palm Swift Cypsiurus balasiensis, White-throated Kingfisher Halcyon smyrnensis, Rufous Treepie Dendrocitta vagabunda, Plain Prinia Prinia inornata, and Red-vented Bulbul Pycnonotus cafer. Among migrants, Barn Swallows Hirundo rustica dominated the campus, with flocks of nearly 500 individuals recorded in campus. Other characteristic migrants seen on walks included wagtails, pipits, harriers, and warblers.

Table 1 provides a checklist of birds that were recorded during the study period. It includes the exact on-campus location in which the birds were recorded, to enable future researchers. The migratory status of the bird species was given based on the following criteria: Resident—found year-round; Winter

Migrant—found predominantly November through February; etc. The abundance status was assigned as follows: C—Common (>60%), O—Occasional (40–60%), R—Rare (20–40%), VR—Very Rare (<20%), where % describe the chance of seeing the species, calculated on basis of number of sightings with respect to the number of surveys done.

Selected species accounts:

Rain Quail Coturnix coromandelica Two birds were heard calling and the

Two birds were heard calling and the call was recorded (Nagarajan 2018) on the 10 December 2018. A male was also seen on the 14 February 2020 beyond the cricket stadium. The distinct black breast and other features noted in the field. There are many recent observations of this species from neighbouring Kanchipuram District (eBird India 2020c).

Black Baza Aviceda leuphotes

On the 26 October 2017, a single individual was seen near the clock tower. It was following the thermals and flying northwards. Another bird was seen flying close to it, but was its identity was not confirmed due to the distance. This is the only sighting of this bird from the Chennai surroundings in the recent past. The bird had been recorded more often in the years preceding 1990 and is a stray visitor to Chennai (Kannan 1985; Santharam 2009).

Pied Harrier Circus melanoleucos

Two birds were seen, the first was a male by the lake near the cricket stadium on the 2 March 2018. The second was seen at the

Table 1. Checklist of birds recorded from SSN College of Engineering from 2017–20.

Common Name	Scientific name	Best seen at	Migratory Status to district	Abundance in SSN-CE
Fulvous Whistling Duck	Dendrocygna bicolor	Water body at campus edge	Resident	0
Lesser Whistling Duck	Dendrocygna javanica	Flyover	Resident	R
Knob-billed Duck	Sarkidiornis melanotos	Water body at campus edge	Winter migrant	R
Cotton Pygmy Goose	Nettapus coromandelianus	Water body at campus edge	Resident	R
Garganey	Spatula querquedula	Flyover	Winter migrant	С
Northern Shoveler	Spatula clypeata	Flyover	Winter migrant	С
Indian Spot-billed Duck	Anas poecilorhyncha	Flyover	Resident	С
Northern Pintail	Anas acuta	Flyover	Winter migrant	С
Tufted Duck	Aythya fuligula	Flyover	Winter migrant	R
Indian Peafowl	Pavo cristatus	SSN Pond	Resident	С
Rain Quail	Coturnix coromandelica	Beyond Cricket Stadium	Winter migrant	VR
Jungle Bush Quail	Perdicula asiatica	SSN Pond	Resident	R
Grey Francolin	Francolinus pondicerianus	Football ground	Resident	С
Little Grebe	Tachybaptus ruficollis	SSN Pond, water body at campus edge	Resident	0
Rock Pigeon (Feral)	Columba livia	Throughout campus	Resident	С
Eurasian Collared Dove	Streptopelia decaocto	Beyond Cricket Stadium	Resident	0
Spotted Dove	Streptopelia chinensis	Throughout campus	Resident	С
Laughing Dove	Streptopelia senegalensis	Beyond Cricket Stadium	Resident	R
Greater Coucal	Centropus sinensis	Outside Chemical Engineering department	Resident	С
Blue-faced Malkoha	Phaenicophaeus viridirostris	Beyond Cricket Stadium	Resident	0
Pied Cuckoo	Clamator jacobinus	Cricket Stadium	Resident	С
Asian Koel	Eudynamys scolopaceus	All Ficus trees in campus	Resident	С
Grey-bellied Cuckoo	Cacomantis passerinus	Cricket Stadium	Resident	С
Common Hawk Cuckoo	Hierococcyx varius	Management area	Resident	С
Little Swift	Apus affinis	Flyover	Resident	С
Asian Palm Swift	Cypsiurus balasiensis	Flyover	Resident	С
Eurasian Moorhen	Gallinula chloropus	Water body at campus edge	Resident	С
Eurasian Coot	Fulica atra	Water body at campus edge	Resident	С
Grey-headed Swamphen	Porphyrio poliocephalus	Water body at campus edge	Resident	С

Common Name	Scientific name	Best seen at	Migratory Status to district	Abundance in SSN-CE
Watercock	Gallicrex cinerea	Water body at campus edge	Resident	С
White-breasted Waterhen	Amaurornis phoenicurus	Water body at campus edge	Resident	С
Baillon's Crake	Zapornia pusilla	Water body at campus edge	Winter migrant	0
Black-winged Stilt	Himantopus himantopus	Cricket stadium (After flooding)	Resident	R
Yellow-wattled Lapwing	Vanellus malabaricus	Cricket stadium	Resident	0
Red-wattled Lapwing	Vanellus indicus	Cricket stadium	Resident	С
Little ringed Plover	Charadrius dubius	Cricket stadium (After flooding)	Resident	R
Pheasant-tailed Jacana	Hydrophasianus chirurgus	Water body at campus edge	Resident	С
Whimbrel	Numenius phaeopus	Flyover	Winter migrant	R
Common Snipe	Gallinago gallinago	Football field	Winter migrant	С
Pin-tailed Snipe	Gallinago stenura	Cricket stadium (After flooding)	Winter migrant	R
Common Sandpiper	Actitis hypoleucos	SSN Pond	Winter migrant	С
Green Sandpiper	Tringa ochropus	SSN Pond	Winter migrant	0
Wood Sandpiper	Tringa glareola	SSN Pond	Winter migrant	0
Indian Courser	Cursorius coromandelicus	Flyover	Resident	R
Brown-headed Gull	Chroicocephalus brunnicephalus	Flyover	Winter migrant	R
Little Tern	Sternula albifrons	Flyover	Winter migrant	R
Gull-billed Tern	Gelochelidon nilotica	Flyover	Winter migrant	0
Caspian Tern	Hydroprogne caspia	Flyover	Winter migrant	R
Whiskered Tern	Chlidonias hybrida	Water body at campus edge	Winter migrant	0
Asian Openbill	Anastomus oscitans	Water body at campus edge	Resident	С
Woolly-necked Stork	Ciconia episcopus	Flyover	Resident	R
Painted Stork	Mycteria leucocephala	Water body at campus edge	Resident	С
Oriental Darter	Anhinga melanogaster	Water body at campus edge	Resident	С
Little Cormorant	Microcarbo niger	Water body at campus edge	Resident	С
Great Cormorant	Phalacrocorax carbo	Water body at campus edge	Resident	С
Indian Cormorant	Phalacrocorax fuscicollis	Water body at campus edge	Resident	С
Spot-billed Pelican	Pelecanus philippensis	Flyover	Resident	С
Yellow Bittern	Ixobrychus sinensis	Water body at campus edge	Resident	С
Chestnut Bittern	Ixobrychus cinnamomeus	Water body at campus edge	Resident	R

Common Name	Scientific name	Best seen at	Migratory Status to district	Abundance in SSN-CE
Black Bittern	Ixobrychus flavicollis	Water body at campus edge	Resident	0
Grey Heron	Ardea cinerea	Water body at campus edge	Resident	С
Purple Heron	Ardea purpurea	Water body at campus edge	Resident	С
Great Egret	Ardea alba	Water body at campus edge	Resident	0
Intermediate Egret	Ardea intermedia	Water body at campus edge	Resident	С
Little egret	Egretta garzetta	Water body at campus edge	Resident	С
Cattle Egret	Bubulcus ibis	Water body at campus edge	Resident	С
Indian Pond Heron	Ardeola grayii	Water body at campus edge	Resident	С
Black-crowned Night Heron	Nycticorax nycticorax	Flyover	Resident	С
Glossy Ibis	Plegadis falcinellus	Flyover	Resident	С
Black-headed lbis	Threskiornis melanocephalus	Flyover	Resident	С
Osprey	Pandion haliaetus	Water body at campus edge	Winter migrant	С
Black-winged Kite	Elanus caeruleus	Football field	Resident	С
Oriental Honey Buzzard	Pernis ptilorhynchus	Flyover	Resident	С
Black Baza	Aviceda leuphotes	Flyover (Clock Tower)	Passage Migrant	VR
Short-toed Snake Eagle	Circaetus gallicus	Cricket Stadium	Resident	R
Greater-Spotted Eagle	Clanga clanga	Cricket Stadium	Winter migrant	R
Booted Eagle	Hieraaetus pennatus	Cricket Stadium	Winter migrant	0
Tawny Eagle	Aquila rapax	Flyover (Clock Tower)	Winter migrant	VR
Bonelli's Eagle	Aquila fasciata	Flyover (Clock Tower)	Resident	R
White-eyed Buzzard	Butastur teesa	Flyover	Resident	С
Eurasian Marsh Harrier	Circus aeruginosus	Water body at campus edge	Winter migrant	С
Pallid Harrier	Circus macrourus	Water body at campus edge	Winter migrant	С
Pied Harrier	Circus melanoleucos	Water body at campus edge	Winter migrant	R
Montague's Harrier	Circus pygargus	Water body at campus edge	Winter migrant	0
Shikra	Accipiter badius	Throughout campus	Resident	С
Eurasian Sparrowhawk	Accipiter nisus	Eastern edge of campus	Winter migrant	VR
Black Kite	Milvus migrans	Flyover (Clock Tower)	Resident	0

Common Name	Scientific name	Best seen at	Migratory Status to district	Abundance in SSN-CE
Brahminy Kite	Haliastur indus	Flyover	Resident	R
Spotted Owlet	Athene brama	Lawn	Resident	0
Eurasian Hoopoe	Upupa epops	Cricket Stadium	Resident	0
Common Kingfisher	Alcedo atthis	Water body at campus edge	Resident	С
White-throated Kingfisher	Halcyon smyrnensis	Throughout Campus	Resident	С
Pied Kingfisher	Ceryle rudis	Water body at campus edge	Resident	С
Green Bee-eater	Merops orientalis	Cricket Stadium	Resident	С
Blue-tailed Bee-eater	Merops philippinus	Cricket Stadium	Resident	С
Indian Roller	Coracias benghalensis	Cricket Stadium	Resident	С
Coppersmith Barbet	Psilopogon haemacephalus	All Ficus trees in campus	Resident	С
Black-rumped Flameback	Dinopium benghalense	Throughout Campus	Resident	С
Eurasian Kestrel	Falco tinnunculus	Flyover	Winter migrant	0
Red-necked Falcon	Falco chicquera	Flyover	Resident	R
Peregrine falcon (Calidus form)	Falco peregrinus	Flyover	Winter migrant	R
Rose-ringed Parakeet	Psittacula krameri	Throughout Campus	Resident	С
Plum-headed Parakeet	Psittacula cyanocephala	Flyover	Resident	R
Indian Pitta	Pitta brachyura	Beyond Cricket Stadium	Winter migrant	R
Black-headed Cuckooshrike	Lalage melanoptera	Beyond Cricket Stadium	Resident	С
Indian Golden Oriole	Oriolus kundoo	Management area	Resident	С
Black-naped Oriole	Oriolus chinensis	Ficus Tree near Chemistry Department	Winter migrant	R
Ashy Woodswallow	Artamus fuscus	Flyover	Resident	С
Common Woodshrike	Tephrodornis pondicerianus	Beyond Cricket Stadium	Resident	С
Common lora	Aegithina tiphia	Beyond Cricket Stadium	Resident	С
Black Drongo	Dicrurus macrocercus	Throughout Campus	Resident	С
Ashy Drongo	Dicrurus leucophaeus	Near Boy's Hostel	Winter migrant	R
Indian Paradise Flycatcher	Terpsiphone paradisi	Near Boy's Hostel	Winter migrant	0
Brown Shrike	Lanius cristatus	SSN Pond	Winter migrant	С
Bay-backed Shrike	Lanius vittatus	Beyond Cricket Stadium	Resident	0
Long-tailed Shrike	Lanius schach	Beyond Cricket Stadium	Resident	R
Rufous Treepie	Dendrocitta vagabunda	Throughout Campus	Resident	С
House Crow	Corvus splendens	Throughout Campus	Resident	С
Large-billed Crow	Corvus macrorhynchos	Throughout Campus	Resident	С

Common Name	Scientific name	Best seen at	Migratory Status to district	Abundance in SSN-CE
Ashy-crown Sparrow-Lark	Eremopterix griseus	Football field	Resident	R
Jerdon's Bushlark	Mirafra affinis	Football field	Resident	С
Oriental Skylark	Alauda gulgula	Football field	Resident	С
Common Tailorbird	Orthotomus sutorius	Opposite the chemical Department	Resident	С
Grey-breasted Prinia	Prinia hodgsonii	Beyond Cricket Stadium	Resident	0
Jungle Prinia	Prinia sylvatica	Beyond Cricket Stadium	Resident	С
Ashy Prinia	Prinia socialis	Beyond Cricket Stadium	Resident	С
Plain Prinia	Prinia inornata	Beyond Cricket Stadium	Resident	С
Zitting Cisticola	Cisticola juncidis	Beyond Cricket Stadium	Resident	0
Booted Warbler	Iduna caligata	Thickets near Chemistry department	Winter migrant	R
Sykes's Warbler	Iduna rama	Thickets near Chemistry department	Winter migrant	VR
Paddyfield Warbler	Acrocephalus agricola	Thickets near Chemistry department	Winter migrant	VR
Blyth's Reed Warbler	Acrocephalus dumetorum	Thickets near Chemistry department	Winter migrant	С
Clamorous Reed Warbler	Acrocephalus stentoreus	Water body at campus edge	Resident	0
Barn Swallow	Hirundo rustica	Electric cables on boundary	Winter migrant	С
Red-rumped Swallow	Cecropis daurica	Electric cables on boundary	Resident	С
Red-vented Bulbul	Pycnonotus cafer	Football field	Resident	С
Red-whiskered Bulbul	Pycnonotus jocosus	Beyond Cricket Stadium	Resident	С
White-browed Bulbul	Pycnonotus luteolus	Beyond Cricket Stadium	Resident	С
Greenish Warbler	Phylloscopus trochiloides	First Year Block	Winter migrant	R
Lesser Whitethroat (Hume's)	Sylvia curruca	First Year Block	Winter Migrant	R
Tawny-bellied Babbler	Dumetia hyperythra	Beyond Cricket Stadium	Resident	R
Yellow-billed Babbler	Turdoides affinis	Throughout Campus	Resident	С
Rosy Starling	Pastor roseus	Beyond Cricket Stadium	Winter migrant	0
Asian Pied Starling	Gracupica contra	Flyover	Resident	VR
Brahminy Starling	Sturnia pagodarum	Beyond Cricket Stadium	Resident	С

Common Name	Scientific name	Best seen at	Migratory Status to district	Abundance in SSN-CE
Common Myna	Acridotheres tristis	Throughout Campus	Resident	С
Orange-headed Thrush	Geokichla citrina	First Year Block	Winter migrant	R
Asian Brown Flycatcher	Muscicapa dauurica	First Year Block	Winter migrant	R
Indian Robin	Copsychus fulicatus	Cricket Stadium	Resident	С
Oriental Magpie Robin	Copsychus saularis	Throughout Campus	Resident	С
Siberian Stonechat	Saxicola maurus	Beyond Cricket Stadium	Winter migrant	R
Pied Bushchat	Saxicola caprata	Football field	Resident	С
Pale-billed Flowerpecker	Dicaeum erythrorhynchos	Throughout Campus	Resident	С
Purple-rumped Sunbird	Leptocoma zeylonica	Throughout Campus	Resident	С
Purple Sunbird	Cinnyris asiaticus	Throughout Campus	Resident	С
Loten's Sunbird	Cinnyris lotenius	Throughout Campus	Resident	С
Streaked Weaver	Ploceus manyar	Chemical Engineering Block	Resident	R
Baya Weaver	Ploceus philippinus	Beyond Cricket Stadium	Resident	0
Red Avadavat	Amandava amandava	Open space infront of EEE block	Resident	0
Indian Silverbill	Euodice malabarica	Beyond Cricket Stadium	Resident	С
White-rumped Munia	Lonchura striata	Beyond Cricket Stadium	Resident	0
Scaly-bellied Munia	Lonchura punctulata	Chemical Engineering Block	Resident	С
Tri-coloured Munia	Lonchura malacca	Water body at campus edge	Resident	С
House Sparrow	Passer domesticus	Main Gate	Resident	R
Yellow-throated Sparrow	Gymnoris xanthocollis	Football Feild	Resident	0
Western Yellow Wagtail	Motacilla flava	Cricket Stadium	Winter migrant	0
Citrine Wagtail	Motacilla citreola	Cricket Stadium	Winter migrant	0
White-browed Wagtail	Motacilla maderaspatensis	Cricket Stadium	Resident	С
White Wagtail	Motacilla alba	Cricket Stadium	Winter migrant	R
Richard's Pipit	Anthus richardi	Cricket Stadium	Winter migrant	С
Paddyfield Pipit	Anthus rufulus	Cricket Stadium	Winter migrant	С
Blyth's Pipit	Anthus godlewskii	Cricket Stadium	Winter migrant	0
Tawny Pipit	Anthus campestris	Cricket Stadium	Winter migrant	R
Tree Pipit	Anthus trivialis	Cricket Stadium	Winter migrant	VR

same place on the same date in 2019, but was a female bird. On both occasions the bird seemed to be hunting, flushing out various species of ducks with its presence.

The Pied Harrier is infrequently seen in winter from the surroundings of Chennai (eBird India 2020b).

Tawny Eagle Aquila rapax

One bird was seen by the Clock Tower, circling over campus in the thermals on the 20 October 2017. It was a very large bird and easily told apart from other similar species by its very pale appearance. The bird is a scare visitor to Chennai, and has been recorded from Poondi Lake (Kesavabharathi 2010) and historically from Guindy National Park (Kannan & Santharam 1982).

Asian Pied Starling Gracupica contra

On the 8 February 2018, this bird was seen flying towards the west, being chased by a few Common Mynas *Acridotheres tristis*. The bird had a characteristic black and white appearance. Historically this is not a bird known from Chennai and its surroundings. However, it has been regularly reported around Chennai (eBird India 2020a) and trends in eBird (2020a) indicate that the bird may be extending its range southwards and move as far south as Cuddalore (Vigneshwaran 2020). However, there are to be no published articles of its presence around Chennai.

Threats and conservation: As is the case with any expanding educational institution, future construction projects are a foreseeable threat to the biodiversity of the campus. However, the management's appreciation of biodiversity and its value is commendable and bodes well for the local wildlife. Its policy of reforesting and maintain a campus with native species has ensured that the pressure on the biodiversity of campus is minimised. Further, the areas beyond the cricket stadium have

virtually been untouched, allowing for wildlife to thrive. Other policies that have been initiated have encouraged birdlife to exist inside a bustling campus. For example, the restriction on walking over lawn spaces has now afforded ample and undisturbed foraging habitat for Cattle Egrets *Bubulcus ibis*, Indian Pond Herons *Ardeola grayii*, Indian Roller *Coracias benghalensis*, Black Drongo *Dicrurus macrocercus* and other species of birds. This continued approach to enable human-wildlife coexistence makes the campus a model for other institutions to follow.

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