

Welcoming the Grey Wagtail



Selva Ganesh talked about how his journey began with a forest officer taking him to compete in a drawing competition inside a forest in 2012. The first bird he saw through the binoculars was a Green Bee-eater and a Great Hornbill. His curiosity about birds motivated him to save money and buy 'The book of Indian Birds' by Sálím Ali. He now teaches English at Cinchona, a village near Valparai. After owning Salim Ali's field guide, he started documenting the birds in his backyard to the best of his knowledge. He recalls that he initially mistook a Large-billed crow for a raven. Later, he met P. Jegannathan from Nature Conservation Foundation, who corrected the checklists which he had prepared so far, as he shares this, he recalls

that Jegannathan also suggested him to get a 'Birds of the Indian Subcontinent' by Richard Grimmett, Carol Inskipp, & Tim Inskipp, for updated references. Jegannathan also taught him how to use the eBird mobile application and he suggested that Selva should document birds on the eBird. Following this Selva Ganesh created an ebird group called [Cinchona GPS](#), where his students and the public among whom he had sparked interest in birding contribute to the group's checklist.

He and his peers also have an Instagram handle '[Young birders of Valparai](#)'. He and his students so far have documented 133 species of birds among which 23 are migrants and 11 are endemic to the Western Ghats.

His initiative of welcoming the migratory bird, the Gray Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*, which comes all the way from the Himalaya to keep the Valparai ecosystem healthy, with public posters, distribution of sweets has created awareness among the local people to conserve the bird species and its habitat.

This initiative of Selva Ganesh has also been made into an animated [video](#) by [Mongabay India](#). Along with birds they also have recently started to document trees on ‘[season watch](#)’ and insects on [iNaturalist](#). He remembers continuous support given by NCF, Cre-a publication for his outreach works.

Selva did talk about his continuous contribution to GBBC (Great Backyard Bird Count), [Endemic Bird Day](#) (Global Big Day), [Pongal Bird Count](#), and the [Kerala Bird Atlas](#) project. He said he enjoys taking up the monthly eBirding challenges announced by Bird Count India. He added participating in these kinds of bird surveys as well as interacting with fellow birders have given him an opportunity to improve his knowledge of birds.



Selvaganesh is also part of the Coimbatore Bird Atlas which is similar to the popular Kerala Bird Atlas. He said his main role is to manage people who monitor birds and to enter the birds into a checklist or cross verify the lists. He explained to us how the city was divided into equal grids, subgrids. He adds each main grid cell would have three subgrids that were randomly selected. These subgrids are visited by citizens to list the birds observed and document on ebird which also tracks their path.

More information about the methodology can be found on the [Bird Count India](#) website.

This data is used to develop species richness maps. He then showed us through the early bird website, State of Indian Birds.

He was declared the eBirder of the month in December 2011.

His talk was indeed inspiring!



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