

## Recurring observations of Red Junglefowl near the Solani River, Roorkee, Uttarakhand

The Red Junglefowl *Gallus gallus*, a wild ancestor of the domestic chicken, occurring widely across tropical Asia, has its domestication traced back approximately 8,000 years (Liu et al. 2006). It is ecologically significant by acting as a natural pest controller by consuming insects and aiding in seed dispersal (Arshad et al. 2000) and contributes to forest regeneration. As a crucial prey species, it supports the food web, providing sustenance for various predators. In India, it is common in the Gangetic plains, central regions, and Himalayan foothills, particularly within protected areas like Corbett and Rajaji national parks (Fernandes et al. 2009).

Although a few previous records exist from Roorkee on citizen-science platforms such as eBird (eBird 2025), these are sparse and lack detailed contextual information. Some of the sightings are mentioned as Exotic Escapees. A series of field observations in 2024 and 2025 suggests a consistent presence of the species near the Solani River in Haridwar District, Uttarakhand.

One adult male Red Junglefowl was sighted on 15 April 2025 at 0830 h near the confluence of the Solani River and the upper Ganga canal (approximately 29.88° N, 77.90° E). The temperature was recorded at around 25°C, and the humidity was 59–62%. The bird was observed foraging in a mixed plantation with sparse undergrowth for approximately 10 minutes, remaining undisturbed at a distance of 10–15 m. It was identified by its prominent red comb, wattles, grey legs, and long, metallic green tail feathers, consistent with field guides (Grimmett et al. 2011). The habitat consisted of Sal forest *Shorea robusta* and associated deciduous species, interspersed with agricultural fields and mango orchards. Urban habitation bordered the site between 200–400 m, but there was no human disturbance except for authors.

Additional observations of single individuals, primarily adult males, were recorded in different months during 2024 in similar habitats within the same general area. These repeated sightings suggest continued use of the



Red Junglefowl  
*Gallus gallus* in  
the open under-  
storey in Roorkee,  
Haridwar.  
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site by the species and raise the possibility of a resident population. It also suggests the extant distribution of the species from the Shivalik region. The subtropical climate, availability of undergrowth, and riparian connectivity likely support its presence. The area is approximately 20–30 km<sup>2</sup> south-west of Rajaji National Park, suggesting potential habitat continuity in the broader Tarai-Shivalik region (Champion & Seth 1968).

The Red Junglefowl prefers forest edges, secondary scrub, and agricultural mosaics (Collias & Collias 1967; Johnsgard 1999). Its tolerance for modified landscapes has been reported from other parts of India (Sullivan 1991; Javed & Rahmani 2000; SoIB 2023). However, the proximity of rural poultry raises concerns about hybridization, which may threaten the genetic integrity of wild populations (Peterson & Brisbin 1998). Although classified as ‘Least Concern’ by the IUCN Red List (BirdLife International 2024), the species is protected under Schedule II of India’s Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 and is vulnerable to local threats such as habitat degradation and genetic introgression.

While existing eBird records confirm its presence in the area, this set of observations provides additional, site-specific data on habitat use and seasonality. These findings underscore the value of documenting occurrences in under-surveyed landscapes and can inform regional assessments of distribution and population status. Systematic surveys are recommended to confirm breeding activity and evaluate conservation concerns such as hybridization. Submitting photographic and temporal records to platforms like eBird would aid long-term monitoring and support science-based conservation planning.

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