

## BIRDS OF SINGANALLUR LAKE, COIMBATORE, TAMIL NADU

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The Ramsar Convention (Anon, 1971) has defined wetlands as "areas of marsh, fen, peatland or water, whether natural or artificial, permanent or temporary with water that is static or flowing, fresh, brackish or salt, including areas of marine water the depth of which at low tide does not exceed six meters". In an urban biodiversity, wetlands form an important area in supporting species diversity and to regulate the ecological web. Survey of waterbirds on urban wetlands received very little attention. Although most urban wetlands are considered to be extremely polluted areas, they still attract a large number of winged visitors.

**Study Area:** Singanallur lake (10°59'46"N & 77°01'11"E) is one of the biggest lakes in Coimbatore city. Coimbatore is situated on the banks of river Noyyal and the foothills of the Western Ghats of Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve at an altitude of 411m and an area of 254km<sup>2</sup>. Climate is of mild winter and moderate summer and a rainfall of 61.22cm annually with a peak during September-November. The length of the bund of Singanallur lake extends to 3102m and water spread area of 1.153km<sup>2</sup>. A railway line passes across the lake, which has three sluices. It is surrounded by agricultural and residential areas on eastern, southern and western sides and by a national highway and residential area on the northern side. This lake is developed and maintained by the Coimbatore city corporation for boating to provide entertainment to people.

**Methodology:** This report is based on the field observation carried out during June 2004 to September 2006. A weekly survey was done by systematically walking on fixed routes through the study area. The birds were mostly observed during the most active period of the day, i.e., from 0600 to 1000hr and from 1600 to 1800hr. However, observations were also made during other timings according to convenience. Observations were carried with the aid of 8x40 and 10x50 binoculars. Field characteristics and the number of birds were counted and noted on data sheets. The identification of birds was done using field guides (Ali, 2002; Ratnam, 2002; Ali & Ripley, 1996). The checklist was prepared using standardized common and scientific names of The Birds of The Indian Subcontinent by Manakadan & Pittie (2001) and vernacular name by Ratnam (1998). The status of birds are categorized as resident (R),

migratory (M) and as resident migrant (RM) after Ali (2002).

**Results and Discussion:** A list of birds recorded from Singanallur Lake and their common, scientific and vernacular names (Tamil), status, feeding habit and the occurrence is reported in Table 1. The study reveals the occurrence of 116 species of birds belonging to 44 families and 17 orders. Among the 17 orders, Passeriformes dominated the list with 43 species followed by Ciconiiformes with 13 species, Charadriiformes with 11 species, Coraciiformes with nine species, Gruiformes with seven species, Falconiformes with six species, Pelecaniformes and Anseriformes with five species each, Galliformes, Columbiformes and Cuculiformes with three species each, Strigiformes and Apodiformes with two species each, Turniciformes, Podicipediformes and Psittaciformes with one species each. Out of 116 species, 66 were resident, 17 were migratory and 33 were resident migrant. Species diversity and abundance of birds were observed to be more during June to October.

Spot-billed Pelican, a globally Near Threatened species (IUCN, 2007) is a resident with local movements. Presence of 330 Spot-billed Pelicans in one day (2.ix.2006) in this lake highlights the importance of this area. Similarly, 175 Painted Storks, a Near Threatened (IUCN, 2007), resident bird with local movements were observed on the same day. These two bird species were observed to be regular visitors to Coimbatore wetlands during July to January. Data on the regular presence of these birds in the study area during the season explains this area is the preferred foraging site for these birds in Coimbatore city. A total of 5777 Spot-billed Pelicans and 3146 Painted Storks were encountered during the study period.

Oriental White Ibis (*Threskiornis melanocephalus*) is another Near Threatened bird (IUCN, 2007) that was frequently recorded from this wetland. Population of White Ibis was recorded scattered in Coimbatore lakes between June and October. In Singanallur, 43 birds were encountered with a minimum of one and a maximum of four individuals. Western Marsh Harrier (*Circus aeruginosus*), which was considered a migratory winter visitor (Ali, 2002) was observed throughout the year in this lake. This over-wintering habit of the wetland predator needs serious further study.

Little Crane (*Porzana parva*), a rare, migratory bird was not observed from this region earlier. Here, the record of this species is not based on a direct sighting during their activities, instead a dead bird (relatively unputrefied condition) was sighted on the bank of the lake near the railway track. The body was identified at the Salim Ali Centre for Ornithology & Natural History, Coimbatore. However, since that incident this bird was not observed around the lake. This may be an extra-limital occurrence. Another interesting rare bird sighting was of a male Pallied Harrier (*Circus macrorurus*) on 2.ii.2006 by a group of birdwatchers on the occasion of World Wetland Day.

Another rare bird observed was Gadwall (*Anas strepera*). Populations of this bird were observed scattered in different lakes in Coimbatore with only a few individuals during winter. Though this bird was sighted in very few numbers (2-3 individuals) in Singanallur lake, 12 individuals were observed in the Vedapatti lake, a relatively unpolluted lake in the outskirts of the city.

Table 1. Birds of Singanallur lake, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu

	Common Name	Scientific Name	Vernacular Name (Tamil)	Status	Feeding Habit	Observed Months
	<b>Order: Podicipediformes</b>					
	<b>Family: Podicipedidae</b>					
1.	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	Mukkulippan	R	P	Mar- Oct
	<b>Order: Pelecaniformes</b>					
	<b>Family: Pelecanidae</b>					
2.	Spot-billed Pelican	<i>Pelecanus philippensis</i>	Kuzhai Kada	RM	P	Jun-Jan
	<b>Family: Phalacrocoracidae</b>					
3.	Little Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax niger</i>	Chinna Neerkagam	RM	P	+
4.	Indian Shag	<i>Phalacrocorax fuscicollis</i>	Kondai Neerkagam	RM	P	Jun
5.	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	Peria Neerkagam	RM	P	Jul-Aug
	<b>Family: Anhingidae</b>					
6.	Darter	<i>Anhinga melanogaster</i>	Pambu Thara	RM	P	Mar-Jul
	<b>Order: Ciconiiformes</b>					
	<b>Family: Ardeidae</b>					
7.	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	Chinna Kokku	R	P, I	+
8.	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	Sambal Narai	RM	P	+
9.	Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>	Sen Narai	RM	P	+
10.	Large Egret	<i>Casmerodius albus</i>	Peria Kokku	RM	P	+
11.	Median Egret	<i>Mesophoyx intermedia</i>	Naduthara kokku	RM	P	+
12.	Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	Unni Kokku	RM	I	+
13.	Indian Pond Heron	<i>Ardeola grayii</i>	Kuruttu Kokku	R	P, I	+
14.	Black-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	Erakkokku	R	P	+
	<b>Family: Ciconiidae</b>					
15.	Painted Stork	<i>Mycteria leucocephala</i>	Manjal Mookku Narai	RM	P	Jun-Oct
16.	White-necked Stork	<i>Ciconia episcopus</i>	Venkaluthu Narai	R	P	# Jul
	<b>Family: Threskiornithidae</b>					
17.	Glossy Ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>	Arival Mookkan	RM	P	Jun-Oct
18.	Oriental White Ibis	<i>Threskiornis melanocephalus</i>	Vellai Arival Mookkan	R	P	Jun-Oct
19.	Eurasian Spoon Bill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>	Karandivayan	RM	P	# Aug
	<b>Order: Anseriformes</b>					
	<b>Family: Anatidae</b>					
20.	Gadwall	<i>Anas strepera</i>	Karuval Vathu	M	P	Nov
21.	Spot-billed Duck	<i>Anas poecilorhyncha</i>	Pulli Mookku Vathu	RM	P	Apr- Dec
22.	Northern Shoveller	<i>Anas clypeata</i>	Andi Vathu	M	P	Dec
23.	Garganey	<i>Anas querquedula</i>	Neela Chiragu Vathu	M	P	Jul-Aug
24.	Common Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>	Kiluvai vathu	M	P	Nov-Dec
	<b>Order: Falconiformes</b>					
	<b>Family: Accipitridae</b>					
25.	Black Kite	<i>Milvus migrans</i>	Kalla Parundhu	R	C	+
26.	Brahminy Kite	<i>Haliastur Indus</i>	Semparundhu	R	C	+
27.	Western Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	Setru Poonai Parundhu	M	C	+
28.	Pallid Harrier	<i>Circus macrourus</i>	Poonai Parundhu	M	C	# Feb
29.	Shikra	<i>Accipiter badius</i>	Valluru	R	C	+
30.	Pied Harrier	<i>Circus melanoleucos</i>	Vellai Poonai Parundhu	M	C	Sep
	<b>Order: Galliformes</b>					
	<b>Family: Phasianidae</b>					
31.	Grey Francolin	<i>Francolinus pondicerianus</i>	Kowdhari	R	I	+
32.	Indian Peafowl	<i>Pavo cristatus</i>	Neela Mayil	R	O	+
	<b>Order: Turniciformes</b>					
	<b>Family: Turnicidae</b>					
33.	Common Button Quail	<i>Turnix suscitator</i>	Kurung kaadai	R	I	+
	<b>Order: Gruiformes</b>					
	<b>Family: Rallidae</b>					
34.	White-breasted Waterhen	<i>Amaurornis phoenicurus</i>	Kambul Kozhi	R	I	+
35.	Little Crane	<i>Porzana parva</i>	Chinna Kaanaan Kozhi	M	I	June
36.	Ruddy-breasted Crane	<i>Porzana fusca</i>	Sivappu Kaanaan Kozhi	R	I	June-July
37.	Water Cock	<i>Gallicrex cinerea</i>	Thanneer Kozhi	M	I	June-July
38.	Purple Moorhen	<i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i>	Neela Thaazhai Kozhi	R	I	+
39.	Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	Thaazhai Kozhi	RM	I	+
40.	Common Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	Naamak Kozhi	RM	P	+
	<b>Order: Charadriiformes</b>					
	<b>Family: Jacanidae</b>					
41.	Pheasant-tailed Jacana	<i>Hydrophasianus chirurgus</i>	Neela Vaal Ilai Kozhi	R	O	Mar-Oct
	<b>Family: Charadriidae</b>					
42.	Little-ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>	Pattaani Uppukkothi	RM	I	Jul-Sep

	Common Name	Scientific Name	Vernacular Name (Tamil)	Status	Feeding Habit	Observed Months
43.	Yellow-wattled Lapwing	<i>Vanellus malabaricus</i>	Manjchal Mookku Aalkatti	R	I	+
44.	Red-wattled Lapwing	<i>Vanellus indicus</i>	Sivappu Mookku Aalkatti	R	I	+
	<b>Family: Scolopacidae</b>					
45.	Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>	Karuvaal Mukkan	M	I	Jul, Nov
46.	Marsh Sandpiper	<i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>	Chinna Pachaik Kaali	M	I	# Sep
47.	Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>	Pori Ullan	M	I	Jun-Jan
48.	Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	Ullan	RM	I	Jun-Jan
	<b>Family: Recurvirostridae</b>					
49.	Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>	Nedungaal Ullan	R	I	Jun-Dec
	<b>Family: Laridae</b>					
50.	Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>	Aala	RM	P	Sep
51.	Black-bellied Tern	<i>Sterna acuticauda</i>	Karuppu Vayitru Aala	R	P	Sep
	<b>Order: Columbiformes</b>					
	<b>Family: Columbidae</b>					
52.	Blue Rock Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>	Maada Pura	R	G	+
53.	Little Brown Dove	<i>Streptopelia senegalensis</i>	Chinna Thavittu Pura	R	G	+
54.	Spotted Dove	<i>Streptopelia chinensis</i>	Pullip Pura	R	G	+
	<b>Order: Psittaciformes</b>					
	<b>Family: Psittacidae</b>					
55.	Rose-ringed Parakeet	<i>Psittacula krameri</i>	Senthaar Pynkili	R	F	+
	<b>Order: Cuculiformes</b>					
	<b>Family: Cuculidae</b>					
56.	Pied Crested Cuckoo	<i>Clamator jacobinus</i>	Sudalai Kuyil	RM	I	+
57.	Asian Koel	<i>Eudynamis scolopacea</i>	Kokilam	R	F	+
58.	Greater Cauca	<i>Centropus sinensis</i>	Shenbagam	R	O	+
	<b>Order: Strigiformes</b>					
	<b>Family: Tytonidae</b>					
59.	Barn Owl	<i>Tyto alba</i>	Koogai Aandhai	R	C	+
	<b>Family: Strigidae</b>					
60.	Spotted Owlet	<i>Athene brama</i>	Pulli Aandhai	R	C	+
	<b>Order: Apodiformes</b>					
	<b>Family: Apodidae</b>					
61.	Asian Palm Swift	<i>Cypsiurus balasiensis</i>	Panai Uzhavaran	R	I	+
62.	House Swift	<i>Apus affinis</i>	Naattu Uzhavaran	RM	I	+
	<b>Order: Coraciiformes</b>					
	<b>Family: Alcedinidae</b>					
63.	Small Blue Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>	Siraal Meenkothi	RM	P	+
64.	Stork-billed Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon capensis</i>	Peria Alagu Meenkothi	R	P	# Jul
65.	White-breasted Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon smyrnensis</i>	Venmaarbu Meenkothi	R	P	+
66.	Lesser Pied Kingfisher	<i>Ceryle rudis</i>	Karuppu Vellai Meenkothi	R	P	+
	<b>Family: Meropidae</b>					
67.	Small Bee Eater	<i>Merops orientalis</i>	Pachai Panchuruttan	R	I	+
68.	Blue-tailed Bee Eater	<i>Merops philippinus</i>	Neelavaal Panchuruttan	RM	I	Oct-Nov
69.	Chestnut-headed Bee Eater	<i>Merops leschenaulti</i>	Chenthalai Panchuruttan	R	I	Oct
	<b>Family: Coraciidae</b>					
70.	Indian Roller	<i>Coracias benghalensis</i>	Panangadai	R	I	+
	<b>Family: Upupidae</b>					
71.	Common Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>	Kondalaathi	RM	I	+
	<b>Order: Piciformes</b>					
	<b>Family: Capitonidae</b>					
72.	Coppersmith Barbet	<i>Megalaima haemacephala</i>	Chemmarbu Kukkuruvaan	R	F	+
	<b>Family: Picidae</b>					
73.	Lesser Golden-backed Woodpecker	<i>Dinopium benghalense</i>	Ponmudhugu Maramkothi	R	I	+
	<b>Order: Passeriformes</b>					
	<b>Family: Alaudidae</b>					
74.	Red-winged Bush-Lark	<i>Mirafra erythroptera</i>	Sivappu Irakkai Vanampaadi	R	I	+
75.	Eastern Skylark	<i>Alauda gulgula</i>	Chinna Vanampaadi	R	I	+
	<b>Family: Hirundinidae</b>					
76.	Common Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	Thagaivilaan	RM	I	Oct-Mar
77.	Red-rumped Swallow	<i>Hirundo daurica</i>	Sivappu Pitta Thagaivilaan	RM	I	Oct-Mar
	<b>Family: Motacillidae</b>					
78.	White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	Vellai Vaallatti	RM	I	Nov-Jan
79.	Large Pied Wagtail	<i>Motacilla maderaspatensis</i>	Karuppu Vellai Vaallatti	R	I	+
80.	Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>	Manjchal Vaallatti	RM	I	Dec-Jan

	Common Name	Scientific Name	Vernacular Name (Tamil)	Status	Feeding Habit	Observed Months
81.	Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>	Karum Saambal Vaallatti	M	I	Nov-Jan
82.	Paddyfield Pipit	<i>Anthus rufulus</i>	Vayal Nettai Kaali	R	I	Jul-Nov
	<b>Family: Campephagidae</b>					
83.	Common Woodshrike	<i>Tephrodornis pondicerianus</i>	Kaattu Keechaan	R	I	+
	<b>Family: Pycnonotidae</b>					
84.	Red-whiskered Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus jocosus</i>	Sivappu Meesai Chinnaan	R	F	+
85.	Red-vented Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus cafer</i>	Chinnaan	R	F	+
	<b>Family: Laniidae</b>					
86.	Brown Shrike	<i>Lanius cristatus</i>	Pazhuppu Keechaan	M	I	Sep-Jan
87.	Rufous-backed Shrike	<i>Lanius schach</i>	Chemudhugu Keechaan	R	I	Nov-Jan
	<b>Order: Muscicapidae</b>					
	<b>Turdinae</b>					
88.	Indian Robin	<i>Saxicoloides fulicata</i>	Karunchittu	R	I	+
89.	Common Stonechat	<i>Saxicola torquata</i>	Kalkuruvi	RM	I	Aug
90.	Pied Bushchat	<i>Saxicola caprata</i>	Karuppu Vellai Pudhar Chittu	R	I	+
	<b>Family: Timaliinae</b>					
91.	White-headed Babbler	<i>Turdoides affinis</i>	Venthalai Silamban	R	I	+
	<b>Family: Sylviinae</b>					
92.	Streaked Fantail-Warbler	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>	Karungottu Kadhirkuruvi	R	I	+
93.	Ashy Prinia	<i>Prinia socialis</i>	Saambal Kadhirkuruvi	R	I	+
94.	Paddyfield Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus agricola</i>	Vayal Kadhirkuruvi	RM	I	Nov-Feb
95.	Blyth's Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus dumetorum</i>	Blyth Naanal Kadhirkuruvi	RM	I	Nov-Feb
96.	Indian Great Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus stentoreus</i>	Naanal Kadhirkuruvi	R	I	Nov-Feb
97.	Common Tailor Bird	<i>Orthotomus sutorius</i>	Thaiyal Chittu	R	I	+
98.	Greenish Leaf Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochiloides</i>	Pachai Kadhirkuruvi	M	I	Nov-Dec
99.	Orphean Warbler	<i>Sylvia hortensis</i>	Karunthalai Kadhirkuruvi	M	I	Nov-Dec
	<b>Family: Monarchinae</b>					
100.	Asian Paradise Flycatcher	<i>Terpsiphone paradisi</i>	Arasawall Eeppidippan	RM	I	+
	<b>Family: Dicaeidae</b>					
101.	Tickell's Flowerpecker	<i>Dicaeum erythrorhynchos</i>	Tickall Malar Kothi	R	F	+
	<b>Family: Nectariniidae</b>					
102.	Purple-rumped Sunbird	<i>Nectarinia zeylonica</i>	Oodha Pitta Thenchittu	R	N, I	+
103.	Purple Sunbird	<i>Nectarinia asiatica</i>	Oodha Thenchittu	R	N, I	+
	<b>Family: Estrildidae</b>					
104.	White-rumped Munia	<i>Lonchura striata</i>	Venudhugu Chillai	R	G	+
105.	Spotted Munia	<i>Lonchura punctulata</i>	Pulli Chillai	R	G	+
106.	Black-headed Munia	<i>Lonchura malacca</i>	Karunthalai Chillai	R	G	+
	<b>Order: Passeridae</b>					
	<b>Family: Passerinae</b>					
107.	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	Chittu	R	G	+
	<b>Family: Ploceinae</b>					
108.	Baya Weaver	<i>Ploceus philippinus</i>	Tookkanang Kuruvi	R	G	+
	<b>Family: Sturnidae</b>					
109.	Rosy Starling	<i>Sturnus roseus</i>	Cholakkuruvi	M	F	Dec-Jan
110.	Common Mynah	<i>Acridotheres tristis</i>	Naganavaai	R	O	+
	<b>Family: Oriolidae</b>					
111.	Eurasian Golden Oriole	<i>Oriolus oriolus</i>	Maanguil	RM	I	Nov-Jan
112.	Black-hooded Oriole	<i>Oriolus xanthornus</i>	Karunthalai Maanguil	R	I	# Dec
	<b>Family: Dicruridae</b>					
113.	Black Drongo	<i>Dicrurus macrocercus</i>	Karung Karichaan	R	I	+
	<b>Family: Corvidae</b>					
114.	Indian Treepie	<i>Dendrocitta vagabunda</i>	Vaal Kaakkai	R	I	+
115.	House Crow	<i>Corvus splendens</i>	Kaakkai	R	O	+
116.	Jungle Crow	<i>Corvus macrorhynchos</i>	Andang Kaakkai	R	O	+

R - Resident; M - Migrant; RM - Resident Migrant; C - Carnivores; F - Frugivores; G - Granivores; I - Insectivores; N - Nectarivores; O - Omnivores; P - Piscivores; # - Recorded only once; + - Recorded throughout the year

Six species, White-necked Stork (*Ciconia episcopus*), Eurasian Spoon Bill (*Platalea leucorodia*), Pallid Harrier (*Circus macrourus*), Marsh Sandpiper (*Tringa stagnatilis*), Stork-billed Kingfisher (*Halcyon capensis*) and Black-headed Oriole (*Oriolus xanthornus*)

were recorded only once throughout the study period; 67 species of birds were observed to occur throughout the year with little variations and 43 species showed seasonal migration. Among the bird species recorded from Singanallur lake, the Darter

(*Anhinga melanogaster*), Painted Stork (*Mycteria leucocephala*), Oriental White Ibis (*Threskiornis melanocephalus*), Pallid Harrier (*Circus macrourus*), Black-bellied Tern (*Sterna acuticauda*) and the Spot-billed Pelican (*Pelecanus philippensis*) are Near Threatened (IUCN, 2007).

Waterbirds, being generally at or near the top of most wetland food chains are highly susceptible to habitat disturbances and are therefore good indicators of the general condition of wetland habitats (Kushlan, 1992). Hence these small urban wetlands should be prioritized and its conservation values should be highlighted.

Clearing of vegetation at the bunds for commercial purposes, fire and release of sewage waste are serious threats to the habitat together with cattle grazing, feral dogs, wood cutting, weeds and fishing are some major threats to the bird diversity of the lake. Hence, full protection to the existing habitats should be given with special attention during the migratory period. This paper clearly represents that the lakes and ponds too support a great diversity of birds in an urban area as in parks or campuses reported by Patwardhan *et al.* (2000) and Ramakantha (2004).

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#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We wish to express our gratitude to Mr. N. Durai Bhaskar, Department of Posts, Coimbatore, Mr. Sukumar, Superintendent, Central Excise, Coimbatore and Dr. R. Ratnam for the valuable inspiration and support during the early days of our study.

