



विश्वेश्वरय्या राष्ट्रीय प्रौद्योगिकी संस्थान , नागपुर
Visvesvaraya National Institute of Technology, Nagpur

Amusing Avifauna of VNIT



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The enchanters and
jesters,

Who fill the campus
with glee,

Let's admire their
subtle beauty,

On the bush, the bank
and up-tree!!

PREFACE

Visvesvaraya National Institute of Technology (VNIT) campus spreads over 214 acres of land in central India. VNIT is located in the city of Nagpur and has a lush green campus with a large variety of flora and fauna. The campus is also situated close to Ambazari Lake, a major birding hotspot in the city. The age-old trees in the campus and roadsides studded with bushes that bloom and flower in different seasons are home to more than 100 diversified bird species, ranging from the everyday backyard birds to rare and hard-to-find birds like the Indian Pitta.

Laughing Doves, Jungle Babblers, Red-vented Bulbuls, Rufous Treepies, Asian Koels, Black Drongos, Orioles, and Starlings are some of the commoners in the campus and please the birders with their presence each day. VNIT campus also hosts a variety of migrants- the amazing flycatchers, the extremely swift warblers and there are so many more! The Indian Pitta, Asian Paradise Flycatchers, Indian Grey Hornbills, and Yellow-footed Green Pigeons are summer visitors, and many prefer to nest within the green campus. Tickell's Blue Flycatchers, Oriental Magpie-

Robins, Common Ioras, Cuckoos, White-throated Fantails are sweet singers who can easily grab the attention of nature lovers passing by!

Shikras and Oriental-honey Buzzards are raptors who sweep pretty frequently across the campus skies in search of prey. Owls and Owlets make the campus trees even interesting to observe; they breed in their nest holes, which are almost reserved for them over the years. Indian Peafowls, Grey Francolins, White-throated Kingfishers, White-browed Bulbuls, Lapwings, and Flameback Woodpeckers are sure to make the visitors jubilant with their heralding sounds in the mornings. VNIT campus is a paradise for resident bird watchers, VNITians, and visitors.

This book is a quick glimpse of the spectacular feathered friends you can meet @VNIT. With character sketches of the common ones, accompanied by their local names and a detailed photo gallery, this book is your perfect companion to explore the mesmerizing avifauna at the campus. Join us to admire and cherish the beauty of our winged wonders!

THE TORCHBEARERS OF VNIT/VRCE NAGPUR



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Dr. C. S. Moghe



Dr. M. U. Deshpande



Dr. M. R. Madan



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Dr. Ashok Misra



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Dr. S. K. Joshi



Shri. S. S. Sohoni



Shri. Vishram Jamdar

Infrastructural Development: VRCE to VNIT Nagpur



Administrative Building (VRCE, Nagpur)



Construction Activities: View from Administrative Building (VRCE, Nagpur)



Administrative Building (VNIT, Nagpur)



Multiactivity and Food Complex



Academic Block (G + 6 Floors)



Library Building



Indoor Sports Complex



Boys Hostel (1000 Capacity)



Classrooms Complex

A day with the Avians @ VNIT



Oriental Magpie Robin
(दहियर, दयाळ)

The Sun climbs higher each hour,
And shines bright on the pretty bloom,
The 'Sun'birds suck nectar in delight,
And *White-eyes* flit about at noon!

The Sun's now perfect overhead,
Sending down his glorious rays,
The *Barbet's* so happy with him up there,
With his 'tuk-tuk' the branches sway!

Yet in the shade, in the cool Neem foliage,
Flycatchers sing their musical song,
The *Thrushes* leap about on ground,
And in the scrubs, *Warblers* singalong!

As the Sun peeps out and clouds turn gold,
'Good daybreak!' says the *Magpie Robin*,
With his fresh mellifluous concert,
He sets the stage for a chirpy morning!

He's joined by the joyful *Bulbul* pair,
Who chats away in a cordial way,
Then comes the sweet call of the *Oriole*,
Enchanting the trees to pre-mid-day!



Oriental White-eye
(बबूना, चष्मेवाला)



Coppersmith Barbet
(छोटा बसंत, तांबट)

Now the Sun sinks lower in the skies,
Giving way for a magnificent evening,
That's when *Shikras* fly calmly about,
And *Francolins* scurry to their dwelling!

As the Sun hides into the nightfall,
The *Black Drongos* squeak at twilight,
The wise *Owls* get to work in style,
And the *Lapwings* fly over all night,

The night's so peaceful with a few crickets,
Who keep loneliness and gloom at bay,
Then dusk draws close as skies turn pink,
Welcoming a brand-new day!



Red-wattled Lapwing
(तितीरी, टिटवी)



Shikra (शिक्रा)



Tickell's Blue Flycatcher
(निलीमा)

Up are the *Robins* before we are,
For another splendid morning recital,
The *TBFC* gives them good company,
And they usher joy and life that's vital!

Each day blossoms like a bottlebrush,
With the birds crafting minutes of pleasure,
The little joys to cherish and wonders to
glimpse,

Are the moments @ VNIT to treasure!

Feathers and Foliage @ VNIT

As the Sun rises over Nagpur, he surely smiles down on VNIT. A witness to this magnificent journey of over sixty years, the VNIT campus boasts as one of the greenest campuses of the country that's brimming with flora and fauna. The mini-groves that grow along each road of the campus make it a heaven to walk. The campus aura is created by the friendly trees that sway their branches onto the walkways and the chirping birds that bring glee and pleasure to just anyone nearby. Spring brings a huge bouquet of flowers to VNIT, and that's when the *Flame of the Forest* paints the skyline with hues of orange and red. The beautiful blossoms are such a favourite of birds that the winter migrates- *Rosy Starlings* do indeed stay back longer to enjoy them! Then there are the red coloured flowers with curvy petals that carpet the campus lawns and are beauties to cherish - the *Silk Cotton flowers*. The *Silk Cotton* trees laugh as *Starlings* and other birds jump all about them in the joyful spring breeze. These very trees lose their flowery look in just weeks after the blossom, looking all bare again, ready to turn all green next; what a transformation display!



Flame of the Forest (पलाश)



Silk Cotton Blossoms (सेमल)

It's often a question how the campus survives the scorching summer, but the answer's probably simple – *Neem* trees. The campus has *Neem* trees all over which keeps the campus cool and they are also a gift to everyone, being medicinal. VNIT has been home to many bird species, shy and special, and simply splendid too! The *Indian Pitta* takes to his evergreen *Neem* bushes in summers, and they are good hides for the adorable, shy bird! The graceful *Paradise Flycatchers* have been observed nesting in the campus in summers, and they too love the *Neem*! It has been sheer joy for all nature lovers to watch the elegant *Asian Paradise Flycatcher* family right in the campus, that too for a fair bit of time! The pretty *Plum Headed Parakeets* visit VNIT almost every summer and later as dark clouds begin to near, *Jacobin Cuckoos* begin their monsoon heralds. Soon monsoon is here and the trees ring all day with the songs of the *Common Hawk-Cuckoo* and the *Grey-Bellied Cuckoo*.



Plum-headed Parakeet
(दुइयाँ तोता, टोई पोपट)



Asian Paradise Flycatcher
(शाही बुलबुल, स्वर्गीय नाचण)

VNIT welcomes and hosts about *100 species of birds* every year, some residents and others as seasonal guests. The cheerful *Siberian Stonechat* that migrates all the way from the temperate regions of Asia to Central India, the *Black Redstart* and the gorgeous *Small Minivets* crown the treetops and bushes even in the chilly winters. VNIT is home to around 8 species of the Flycatcher family alone, each one flitting about in the season of choice. The *Bamboo* clusters spread over the campus are the playgrounds of these high-spirited wonders! To the great pride of VNIT, our national bird- the *Indian Peafowl* walks about freely on the campus roads. Our trees are also dwelled by the state bird of Maharashtra - the *Yellow-Footed Green Pigeon*! One more attraction, rare to see is the *Oriental Honey Buzzard* who is observed flying around quietly, too quietly for his size, and it's really lucky to watch him on an open perch some day!



Small Minivet (सहेली, निखार)



Rosy Starling (गुलाबी मैना)



Spotted Owlet (चुघड, पिंगळा)



Jungle Babblers (सातभाई)

Sandalwood trees, Bottlebrushes, Crepe Myrtles and so many more woody and floral species sequin the campus and make it prettier. Thanks to the age-old trees and their tough barks, *Spotted Owlets* and *Coppersmith Barbets* have made our college their home. The *Orange Headed Thrush* is another gem of a bird that's seen in the campus quite often, and he's just happiness for birders, owing to his beautiful plumage with shades of orange and his typical call. The evergreen vibes of VNIT have even been strong enough to bring a rare and jungle-loving avian - the *Greater Racket-Tailed Drongo* to the campus, and the sighting had indeed been a great delight for birders!

Flora and Fauna galore! That's what VNIT really is! Natural Wonders have been decorating the institute over the years and have enhanced its technological glory. Such a confluence of technology and nature is rare to see and VNIT is a wonderful showcase of how science and mother nature go hand in hand. So how about calling VNIT '*Vibrant Nature that Inspires Technology*' ?



Crimson Bottlebrushes (चील)



Crepe Myrtles (जरुल, ताम्हण)

Getting
to know
the
feathered
angels of
VNIT!

Meeting the angels with ribbons!

Perhaps one of the most gorgeous species of the winged world, the Paradise Flycatcher is a bulbul sized bird with a magnificent tail. The male bird is known for his ribbon-tail that he sways about gracefully during flight. The fully grown male flycatcher is pretty white all over with a kingly black crest. The young male is rufous-brown in colour with tail streamers just like the adult. The male can also be identified by an unmistakable ring around his eye that's absent in females. The female birds are somewhat less conspicuous as they lack the long tail and the eye ring, sometimes they may look just like a tiny Bulbul!

The Paradise Flycatcher is a gleeful bird who can be easily traced by his playful activities and chirp. The male even sings when he's happy, and the song is a musical one! The birds love to be around water streams and brooks, though they also nest in the cool Neem trees! They are residents in Central Indian forests, and you can meet them in the campus in summers. Look out for the ribboned wonders in your vacation this time! They would all be ready to enchant you!



Paradise Flycatcher (Male)

(शाही बुलबुल, स्वर्गीय नाचण)



Paradise Flycatcher (Female)

(शाही बुलबुल, स्वर्गीय नाचण)

The Chatterly pals!

Starlings and Mynahs are the groups of pals who bring life to the campus in almost any season! Though most of them are active in springs when the campus brims with colourful blossoms, Common Mynahs shall steal the attention of a birder all year round with their loud and announcing call. Brahminy starlings are smaller than Mynahs, and they too are seen all round the year! These birds have beautiful fawn plumage with a magnificent black crest they spring up while 'talking'.

The Silk Cotton and Flame of the Forest blossoms are the assembly-spots of the Starlings in springs! Rosy Starlings who migrate from the North, along with Chestnut-tailed Starlings take to the treetops to bask in the Sun and enjoy the sweet nectar from the bloom! We do occasionally come across the black and white Pied Starlings too, who love to forage about even on the grass! All the birds of the Mynah-Starling family have bright plumage and loud chatterly calls, making them entertaining, fun-to-watch and unmistakable!



Brahminy Starling
(ब्राह्मिणी मैना)



Asian Pied Starling
(अबलकी मैना)

The evening acrobats!

It's quite surprising when we suddenly notice bird activity in the evenings, as birds are usually fond of the sunlight. But this family is quite the opposite! Drongos are large birds, with primarily black plumage and conspicuous tail shapes! The Black Drongo is a commoner, we can spot the bird almost anywhere. While he's active, he can be seen performing wondrous dives and cackling together in a typical three note 'noise' with his group of friends. Black Drongos have a striking feature that can help tell them apart- the V-tail! Look for a black bird with a curved V in his tail who flies about boldly even at twilight, he's sure to be the Black Drongo.

The Racket-tailed Drongo does contrast the Black Drongo's boldness though! This one's a shybie, not so common to see and not as noisy too! The Racket-tailed Drongo is slightly bigger, with a pretty crest, a shallower V and two long streamers which give him his name! He's found more often in forests and seeing him in the campus has been a delight for birders! His silent whereabouts are tricky to trace, but worth the search, as the bird is just majestic!



Black Drongo (कोतवाल)



Racket-tailed Drongo (भृंगराज)

Of Golden Feathers and Melodies!

With striking colours and a mellifluous whistle, the Golden Oriole is a bird who's really aptly named, for the 'Oriole' has so much music in the name! Orioles are the yellow beauties of the foliage. The most common one you can recognize just by his sweet call is the Indian Golden Oriole. The bird has beautiful yellow-and-black plumage with a pinkish bill and an unmistakable black band around his eye. The Orioles visit our campus in winters! They are one of the most beautiful creations of the avian world, for their feathers, song and their peculiar flight-with-a-call never fail to amaze birders!

The not-so-common Oriole is the Black-hooded Oriole. He too has a pretty plumage just like the Indian Golden Oriole, but differs in appearance due to the black head. This birdie is not as forthcoming as his close cousin but can be heard if you give a careful ear, for he sounds pretty similar to other Orioles. He's a bit shy and prefers foraging in dense foliage unlike the Golden Oriole who boldly announces his arrival from treetops! You can meet both these wonders this winter on your bird walk!



Indian Golden Oriole (पीलक, हळद्या)



Black-hooded Oriole (पीलक, हळद्या)

The tough peckers with pretty crests!

Woodpeckers are one of those fascinating birds many of us might have longed to watch right from childhood. Guess what, you can meet two of them at VNIT! The commonly spotted one is the Black-rumped Flameback or Lesser Goldenbacked Woodpecker. True to his name, he has a really bright golden back, a black tail, a white-streaked-with-black face, and a beautiful red crest. He makes a very conspicuous shrill sound, especially while flying around in a typical undulating fashion that's so fun to watch! Usually, these birds would be spiralling about some tree bark, and you won't even notice he was so close until he flies off with a shriek in the air!

There's one more little Woodpecker, the Yellow-crowned Woodpecker, who's smaller and not-so-common. He's spotted black and white on the back and has a yellow forecrown with a red crown. He doesn't spiral so often like the Flameback, he's a patient little bird who pecks meticulously all day just at his favourite bark! Both these peckers are great architects and craft spectacular wood art on tree trunks. Don't forget to look close at the trunk in your backyard, you might find them right there!



Black-rumped Flameback

(कठफोरा, सुतार)



Yellow-crowned Woodpecker

(कठफोरा, सुतार)

Ground and tree dwellers with a loud noise!

Birds are quite often identified by their peculiar calls, and here are two birds whom you just can't miss when they announce they're around! The Grey Francolin is a hen sized big ground bird, often seen scurrying about on open terrain or in low bushes. He's also seen taking bold strides right on the road with his family at times! The bird is brown-rufous and highly striped which makes a good camouflage in his habitat! What's the most conspicuous feature of the bird is the loud call of his! It's so loud and strong, you could actually hear it miles away! He's the most announcing bird yet shies away promptly when you follow the sound! Good luck finding him!

The Indian Grey Hornbill is a tree lover with a huge beak and a shrill loud call. He has a typically shaped bill with a horn on it, giving him his unique name. Hornbills too build their homes in bark-holes, though they are quite bigger than the Flamebacks! The call of this birdie sounds like a true horn, a loud and screeching sound, which can make you jump at first until you know where it came from! The Hornbill is a caring birdie and though he sounds loud, he's gentle at building his nest and feeding his chicks too!



Grey Francolin (तीतर, तितीर)



Indian Grey Hornbill (धनेश)

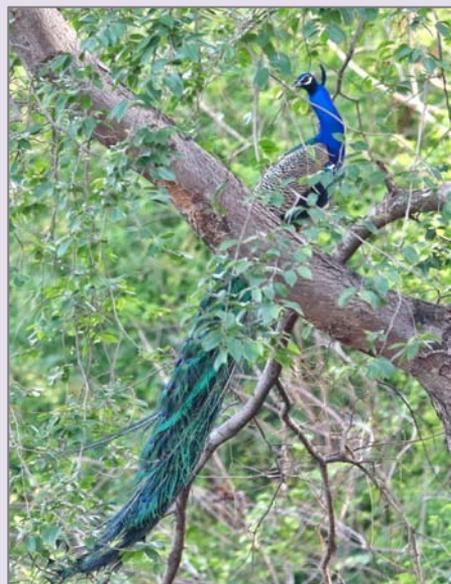
Blue-green Magnificence!

All of us know this bird for sure, and we've met him so many times! From pictures in school textbooks to the dancing Peacocks in zoos, the bird is good friend of ours. But did you know he's actually called the Indian Peafowl? The Peafowl is a large bird, with a royal stride, a beautiful crest and a picturesque tail-fan. He's a monsoon herald too, and dances in delight when the rains arrive! The male is metallic blue on his neck with a pretty crest and long tail feathers that open into a magnificent fan! Of the many blues he has, the green, purple and brown show up wonderfully when he fans up his tail! The female Peafowl or Peahen is really pretty too! She too has a brown crest and a metallic green neck, she's primarily brown all over. That doesn't curtain her beauty though, for she strides with immense grace alongside the magnificent male!

The Peafowl springs into a 'meaoooh' in glee when he forecasts the rains, and it's simply awesome to see him dance to the rhythm of the showers. We can hear and glimpse him quite often in the campus, so how about exploring the nature trails to catch a close glimpse of the National Bird?



Indian Peafowl (Female) (मोरनी)



Indian Peafowl (Male) (मोर)

Flamboyant Plumage – many hues!

Bright colours always brighten us up, and these wonders are sure to gladden you with their spectacular hues, if they let you get a glimpse! The Indian Pitta is an elusive beauty who nests at VNIT in Summers. The cool neem trees are his preferred habitat, though you may see him hopping about on the ground too! The Pitta is called 'Navrang' in local languages, and if you look really close, he truly does have nine distinct colours in his plumage! The bird is extremely shy and the best (or probably the only) way to find him is by following his 'twee-teeuu' two note call! The bird is bright green on the wings and has buff underparts with a noticeable black eyeband. He prefers foraging about in thick undergrowth and you sometimes can spot him cross the road too if you're lucky!

Another beautiful species is the Orange headed Thrush. He too is a ground lover, often seen jumping over bare ground in pairs. This bird has pretty orange-and-grey feathers with a white striped face. He's bolder than the Pitta and easier to spot too, unless he hides in the foliage (a common behaviour during nesting seasons). He too is a music maker with a conspicuous whistle and indeed a very merry birdie!



Orange-headed Thrush (कस्तुर)



Indian Pitta (नवरंग)

Blue wings and cheerful chirps!

If asked for the most high-spirited beings in the avian world, birders shall surely agree upon a single name- 'Flycatchers'! These tiny birds are always full of dynamism, be it their lively flits to catch insects or their 'click-click' call when they hop about the bushes in glee! The most common one is the Tickell's Blue Flycatcher characterized by a merry musical song that's uttered from the bushes. Two more blue beauties visit us during winters and watching them is sheer pleasure!

The Verditer Flycatcher is a blue-green bird with a conspicuous black eye patch. He's extremely fond of the treetops and gives you a great neck-stretching exercise while tracing him in the foliage! He has some favourite perches and he's sure to return to them after a few dives in the air for 'fly catching'! That's good news, for once you spot him it can be fairly easy to watch him! The Ultramarine Flycatcher is another cutie who is rare to hear but a wonder to glimpse! He's beautiful blue in colour with a white brow and bright snow-white underparts. Now this one's a bit hard to find, for he's so fond of the thick canopy, that he rarely ventures out on open perches. He also loves shady branches, giving photographers a good challenge! Both these blue wonders bring merriness to the campus bushes as weather turns cool towards winter.



Verditer Flycatcher (नीलांग)



Ultramarine Flycatcher (नीलसागर)

Pigeons bold and shy!

How can a pigeon be shy? We see him walk about boldly at our window each day, don't we? But there's a pigeon you'll meet in our campus who's really shy, except while he's sun basking on treetops in the cold weather. He's the state bird of Maharashtra- the Yellow footed Green Pigeon. He's about the size of the Rock Pigeon we see everyday in our backyard, but he's much more colourful. Just as he's named, he has bright yellow legs, yellow-green underparts, a grey head, olive green wings and a pretty lilac wing patch. He's a berry lover and you would find him walking steadily about bushes of large fruit-bearing trees, mingling beautifully with the foliage. He's a calm birdie, and it can be fun to click him for he shall give you some nice poses with a berry in his beak! Don't miss scanning the treetops of big trees this winter when the Sun smiles onto them, you might find these pals having a nice sunny time up there!

The Rock Pigeon is an everyday coo-er we all know quite well, but he's more than just a coo-er, he too has beautiful plumage! Primarily grey with a bright red eye, he has a pretty pattern of blues, greens and greys on his neck. He's an over-urbanized bird who can find his comfort even in the hustle bustle of huge busy cities!



Rock Pigeon (कबूतर, पारवा)



Yellow-footed Green Pigeon (हरियाल)

Peeky eyes and Camouflages!

Let's meet the wise old Scops Owl and his friend the Spotted Owlet right here at VNIT! These masters of camouflage can startle you with their subtle presence when you suddenly spot them after a close look at their tree-hole! The Spotted Owlet is a relatively small member of the Owl family, greatly spotted on his wings and having bright yellow bordered eyes. With his brown plumage, he blends quite well with the tree trunks and if he happens to spot you around, he'll stare back at you with a look that can make you jump! He seems like a cute little buddy at first glance, but he's a great hunter too! And he can give you really scary glares, twisting his head all the way to watch you as you watch him!

The Indian Scops Owl is a slightly bigger Owl with marble-like reddish eyes and peculiar ear 'horns'. They are the peekiest Owls you'll ever meet, and the ones with the finest camouflage too. Their plumage is perfect tree brown with a wood like texture which crafts a matchless camouflage. The Scops Owls sit snugly in pairs only in tree barks and are rare to see on open perches, which makes them even trickier to spot! If you happen to spot them, they raise their ear horns and stare back! These tufted Owls are incredible hunters too!



Spotted Owlet (चुघड, पिंगळा)



Indian Scops Owl (उल्लू, डुडुळा)

The vocal Cuck-kooooos!

We've all heard tales of the Koel, the summer bird who springs into song as the weather turns warm and suddenly 'stops' his concert when it begins to rain. He's the Asian Koel. A jet-black bird with a red eye, the male is the legendary singer we all know, whereas the female is brown profusely spotted with white. Koels are tree loving birds who often feed on berries. Quite an urbanized bird, the Koel too can be spotted (or at least heard) right from your window. Watch for a repeated 'koo-hooo' and try to trace him next summer!

Birds are often seasonal heralders, and the Common Hawk Cuckoo is a good example. He's also called the 'Brainfever Bird'. Curious name, isn't it? Well, the bird has earned the name with a peculiar character of his- his tireless calls! Deep in the woods, while the whole jungle sleeps, he suddenly springs into a 'cooh-cooh-coo-coo' followed by a series announcing 'cooo-coohooo's that reach a zenith and fall sharply! His endless calls peak in the monsoon and can be heard miles away! But seldom is he seen! You may try to follow the call, but the fantastic echo eludes you and you'll rarely get a glimpse. Anyways, let's admire his call for now. See you next monsoon for a 'Brainfever search'!



Common Hawk-Cuckoo (पपीहा, पावश्या)



Asian Koel (कोयल, कोकीळ)

Gallery
of the
little
wonders!



Ashy Prinia



Black-headed Cuckooshrike



Booted Warbler



Cattle Egret



Common Hoopoe



Common Iora



Common Myna



Common Tailorbird



Common Woodshrike



Dusky Crag-Martin



Great Egret



Greater Coucal



Green Bee-eater



Greenish Warbler



Grey Wagtail



Indian Cuckoo



Indian Eagle-Owl



Indian Robin



Indian Silverbill



Indian Thick-knee



Indian Yellow Tit



Intermediate Egret



Jacobin Cuckoo



Jerdon's Leafbird



Jungle Babbler



Laughing Dove



Lesser Whitethroat



Little Egret



Long-tailed Shrike



Night Heron



Oriental Honey-buzzard



Paddyfield Pipit



Plum-headed Parakeet



Pond Heron



Purple Sunbird



Purple-rumped Sunbird



Red-breasted Flycatcher



Red-vented Bulbul



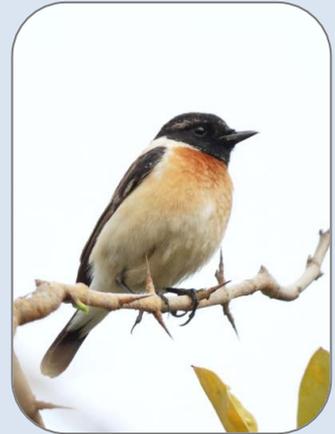
Rose-ringed Parakeet



Rufous Treepie



Scaly-breasted Munia



Siberian Stonechat



Spotted Dove



Stork-billed Kingfisher



Sulphur-bellied Warbler



Tawny-bellied Babbler



Tree Pipit



Western Crowned Warbler



White Wagtail



White-breasted Waterhen



White-browed Bulbul



White-browed Wagtail



White-throated Fantail



White-throated Kingfisher

The Feathered Angels

Birds are instrumental in balancing the ecosystem in many subtle ways. They disperse seeds naturally over great distances, creating new landscapes and ecosystems altogether. They help control pests right from homes to the farm. Fluttery birds like Sunbirds and Hummingbirds contribute to the pollination of plants and trees.

Birds have been helping mankind for ages. A lot of modern-day science is inspired by nature and birds. The joyful and optimistic beings do their bit meticulously, selflessly, and exceedingly well, and we have loads to learn from them. Let's be thankful for having these winged wonders around us, cherish their beauty and do our part to help them live a safe and pleasant life by conserving their habitats.