

Mandarin Duck

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In news: The rare, most beautiful Mandarin Duck has been spotted at Maguri beel in Assam recently

About Mandarin Duck

- The mandarin duck is a perching duck species native to the East Palearctic.
- It is closely related to the North American wood duck, the only other member of the genus *Aix*.
- *Aix* is an Ancient Greek word which was used by Aristotle to refer to an unknown diving bird, and *galericulata* is the Latin for a wig, derived from *galerum*, a cap or bonnet
- Considered the most beautiful duck in the world, the Mandarin duck, or the (*Aix galericulata*) was first identified by Swedish botanist, physician and zoologist Carl Linnaeus in 1758.
- The eBird website, a platform that documents birds world over, describes it as a “small-exotic looking bird” native to East Asia
- As per this website, the male Mandarin Duck is described as “very ornate with big orangey ‘sail fins’ on the back, streaked orangey cheeks, and a small red bill with a whitish tip” and the female with “narrow white spectacles on a shaggy grey head, bold pale dappled spots along flanks, and pale bill tip.”
- This bird breeds in Russia, Korea, Japan and northeastern parts of China. It now has established populations in Western Europe and America too.
- IUCN status: Least Concern

Why is its recent visit to Assam important?

- Though it visits India but it does not fall in its usual migratory route. There are only a handful of recorded

sightings here

- It was recorded in 1902 in Dibru river in the Rongagora area in Tinsukia
- More recently, it was sighted in Manipur's Loktak Lake in 2013, and in Saatvoini Beel in Manas National Park and Tiger Reserve in Assam's Baksa district 2014
- While the duck is not a globally threatened species, spotting one is always considered significant because they only make "rare appearances

Maguri beel

The Maguri Motapung wetland, an Important Bird Area as declared by the Bombay Natural History Society is located close to the Dibru Saikhowa National Park in Upper Assam. In May 2020, the beel was adversely affected by a blowout and fire at an Oil India Limited-owned gas well. The resulting oil spill killed a number of fish, snakes as well as an endangered Gangetic dolphin, and the fire had burnt a large portion of the grassland