

Salim Ali: Birdman of India

January 11, 2021

In news

Salim Ali was in news for two times

- His birth anniversary on 12th November
- The Salim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History's involvement Pulikat lake issue

About the Sálím Moizuddin Abdul Ali

- Sálím Moizuddin Abdul Ali was an Indian **ornithologist** (a person who studies or is an expert on birds) **and naturalist**.
- Born in Mumbai on 12th November in 1896, Sálím Moizuddin Abdul Ali was not only a bird lover but also a naturalist
- Sometimes referred to as the "**Birdman of India**", Salim Ali was the first Indian to conduct systematic bird surveys across India and wrote several bird books that popularized ornithology in India.
- An unlikely parliamentarian, he was nominated to the Rajya Sabha in 1985.
- □Dr. Sálím Ali passed away in 1987 at the age of 91.

Inspiration for his love towards birds

- At the age of 10, a life-changing incident happened when he shot a yellow-throated sparrow . His interest was piqued and hence his uncle took him to the **Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS)**.
- □Seeing the young lad's interest in the bird, the BNHS's secretary showed him their entire collection of stuffed birds.
- **This was the start of his amazing journey to become one of the world's best ornithologists.**

- □After India's Independence, Dr. Salim Ali took over the BNHS and managed to save the 100 year old institution from shutting down due to lack of funds. His contribution to the field of ornithology in India is exemplary

His contributions

- He was one of the first scientists to introduce systematic surveys to study the distribution pattern of birds.
- His research work is considered highly influential in the development of ornithology.
- He was a well-known environmental crusader who often stood for protecting the wildlife.
- Salim Ali played a pivotal role in **establishment of Bharatpur Bird Sanctuary** (Keoladeo National Park) and prevented the destruction of what is now the Silent Valley National Park.

Works

- Along with Sidney Dillon Ripley, he wrote the landmark ten-volume Handbook of the Birds of India and Pakistan, a second edition of which was completed after his death.
- □Dr. Salim Ali wrote numerous journal articles, popular and academic books and field guides.
- Among the several books authored by him the '**Book of Indian birds**' still remains the bible for budding ornithologists.

Awards

- He was awarded the **Padma Bhushan in 1958 and the Padma Vibhushan in 1976**, India's third and second highest civilian honours respectively.
- Besides the Padma Bhushan and the Padma Vibhushan, **Ali received the Gold Medal of the British Ornithologists'**

Union in 1967. He was the first non-British citizen to receive the honour.

- **Dr. Salim Ali received numerous awards including the J. Paul Getty International Award, the Golden Ark of the International Union for Conservation of Nature, the Golden Medal of the British Ornithology Union (A rarity for the non-British)**

**Salim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History(SACON)
It is a centre of excellence under the Ministry of
Environment, Forest and Climate Change**

SACON came into being at a time when the twin issues, namely the sustainable use and conservation of natural resources figured in the global agenda.

**The president of SACON is Minister of Environment Forest and
Climate Change**

Realizing the indispensability of holistic approach in avian studies and conservation, the major objectives of SACON have been envisaged encompassing the entire natural history with ornithology at the centre stage.

- To design and conduct research in ornithology covering all aspects of biodiversity and natural history
- To develop and conduct regular courses in ornithology and natural history for M.Sc., M.Phil. and Ph.D. and also, short term orientation courses in the above subjects
- To create data bank on Indian ornithology and natural history
- To disseminate knowledge relating to ornithology and natural history for the benefit of the community
- To confer honorary awards and other distinctions to persons who have rendered outstanding services in the fields of ornithology and natural history