

State of World's Birds report

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In news— The State of the World's Birds, an annual review of environmental resources was published in the Annual Review of Environment and Resources, a peer-reviewed journal recently.

Key findings of the report-

- **The study, which involved scientists from Manchester Metropolitan, Cornell University, Birdlife International, the University of Johannesburg, Pontifical Xavierian University, and the India-based Nature Conservation Foundation (NCF),** reviewed changes in avian biodiversity using data from the IUCN's Red List to reveal the changes in fortunes of all the global bird species.
- The report has found that **populations of almost half of all bird species are declining globally** because of human influenced factors such as loss or degradation of habitats, changes in land use, overexploitation, and climate change.
- Around 48% of bird species worldwide are known or suspected to be undergoing population declines.
- **This is in contrast to trends in 39% of species where numbers are stable,** and 6% showing increasing population trends.
- **Avian diversity peaks globally in the tropics,** and it is there that they also find the highest richness of threatened species
- World is now witnessing the **first signs of a new wave of extinctions of continentally distributed bird species,** which has followed the historic loss of species on islands like the Dodo.
- The Indian report **refers to the 2020 State of India's Birds report** that compiled and analysed data from over 15,500 birdwatchers and was curated by 140 volunteer

editors.

- It had found that endemic species, birds of prey, and those dwelling in forests and grasslands were the most threatened.
- Although **there are no confirmed recent continental extinctions in Asia**, numerous threatened species have not been seen in recent years. For example, **the critically endangered Jerdon's Courser, endemic to the Eastern Ghats in India, has not been seen since 2009.**
- **Detailed information on population changes in common birds was still patchy**, with the best data coming from North America and Europe.
- **Around 57% of North American species are recording declining trends** (303 out of 529 species), a net loss of almost 3 billion birds since 1970.
- **In North America, long-distance migratory species have been badly affected.**
- The situation is **similar in the European Union, where trends across 378 species indicate an overall decrease in breeding bird abundance of 17-19% between 1980 and 2017**, which translates into a net loss of 560-620 million individuals.
- The paper flagged the threat of hunting and trapping in different parts of the world, including northeast India.
- It also said that for some species, like the critically endangered Great Indian Bustard, power transmission lines represent the most significant threat.
- As many as 1,481 species (13.5% of 10,994 recognized species) are currently threatened with global extinction, according to BirdLife International's latest assessment of all birds.
- **More threatened bird species (86.4%) are found in tropical than in temperate latitudes**, with hot spots for threatened species concentrated in the tropical **Andes, southeast Brazil, eastern Himalayas, eastern Madagascar, and southeast Asian islands.**

Recommendations—

The paper recommended conducting reliable estimates of population abundance and change; novel and more effective solutions applied at scale for demand reduction for over harvested wild birds; monitoring green energy transitions that can impact birds if inappropriately implemented; eradication of populations of invasive alien species, and shifting human societies to economically sustainable development pathways, among others, to deal with bird diversity loss. The study underlines birdwatching, a global pastime involving millions of people, as a form of avian conservation but warns of “local negative impacts” of bird feeding valued at \$5-6 billion per year and growing by 4% annually.