



DAANGEER

Issue 4 • Winter 2024



Rarities

Taxonomy

Bird Artist Profile

Ringling Recovery

A Quarterly Analysis of Pakistan's Birds

Introduction

Daangeer: A Quarterly Analysis of Pakistan's Birds is a platform dedicated to celebrating the avian diversity of Pakistan. We invite submissions from all bird enthusiasts, researchers, and writers who wish to share their insights, observations, and experiences related to birds and birdwatching in Pakistan. Here are some basic guidelines for submitting your work:

Scope:

- Daangeer accepts any writing related to birds and birdwatching in Pakistan.

Format:

- Email submissions to rewildingindusmanagement@gmail.com with "Submission: [Title]" in the subject line.
- Attach your submission as a Word document and send in relevant figures and photographs separately.

Review Process:

- Our editorial team will review submissions for quality and adherence to guidelines.

Publication:

- Accepted submissions will be featured in Daangeer. Contributors will be credited.

Copyright:

- Contributors retain the copyright to their work but permit us to publish it.

Editors Note:

The *Daangeer* Team strives for the best quality of data and information published. However, given the extent of the experience of the editorial board, some discrepancies may be expected, and if our readers come across any inaccuracies, we motivate them to get in touch with us so we may aspire to identify, address and learn accordingly.

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NEW TO BIRDWATCHING?

Below are some relevant links for you if you are interested in learning more about birds and the birdwatching scene in Pakistan:

Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/672890519498797>

X/Formerly Twitter:

@OrnithoPakistan

eBird:

<https://ebird.org/region/PK>

Rewilding Indus Library

<https://rewildinginduslibrary.org/archives/>

Pakistan Rarities and Distribution Committee (PRDC)

Guidelines for submissions to PRDC

Rare bird assessment is an initial step to establishing a record; evidence must be submitted to PRDC. Here are our essential guidelines for explorers; we would expect you to follow them strictly. We understand not all of these guidelines can be followed in certain situations, but failing to fulfil most of the necessary guidelines will deem the record pending until more evidence is presented or rejected, independently. We still encourage you to submit any record you think is rare to PRDC.

Ideally, we would like to receive reports/sightings that include the following:

1. We strongly advise photographers and birders to strictly avoid disturbing actively breeding birds, e.g., approaching a nest with eggs, nestlings, or a parent, using loud playbacks in breeding season, and discourage others from doing so in a respectful manner.
2. We recommend activating coordinate recording settings in your camera (if option available), which should be embedded in EXIF, or using the eBird Mobile App (record track) option in the field by turning on location settings in your smartphone.
3. Observations must have a complete date (DD/MM/YYYY), specific location of observation (preferably coordinates), and observer(s) full name.
4. Written or digital documentation of the events surrounding the observation, e.g., clear photos or videos of habitat and surroundings.
5. Identification of species in question with reasons, e.g., personal identification, taking help from online ID forums or an expert. It will go through critical scrutiny and review by PRDC.
6. We recommend good-quality photographs from various angles, clips, and adding sound recordings (if necessary).
7. Supporting evidence from co-observers, if any. Co-observers can be contacted independently.
8. English is a recommended language to submit observations; otherwise, Urdu and major provincial languages are also accepted. The records, however, will be published solely in English.

****Any supporting evidence in the form of photos, video clips, or vocal recordings is for the purpose of record evaluation and publication in the newsletter. They will not be used otherwise unless approved by the observer****

Note: We value published historical data (books, articles, field notes) to cross-check the validity of personal claims, such as "first record for Pakistan." We understand that most of the historical data is based on sightings, descriptions, sketches, and museum specimens. Lack of digital documentation does not mean the old data is all wrong. Any relevant records of further queries can be emailed to iazankhan4@gmail.com.

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Featuring a vibrant group of Painted Storks *Mycteria leucocephala* by Muhammad Babar taken on 8 January 2017 at Head Marala, Sialkot, Punjab.



BACK COVER:

Featuring a Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos* holding a pine branch as nesting material. Captured by Abdul Hadi on 3 March 2024 at Salkhala Game Reserve, Neelum Valley, Azad Jammu & Kashmir.

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Dance of The Egrets
A graceful group of Great Egret *Ardea alba*, one of them potentially sun-bathing with open wings in early morning sunlight. Head Marala, Sialkot, Punjab - 29 November 2020

Rarities Review

October to December 2024

Azan Karam

These notable records are accepted based on meeting most of the guidelines of PRDC. Nevertheless, they are open to critical questioning after publication. If any record was found weak or questionable post-publication, it will be re-published as an erratum in the proceeding issue if convincing counterarguments were presented to PRDC. The symbol (Δ) with any record shows that supporting digital media was shared with PRDC.

In the previous three months, a total of six notable records were reported, including provincial and locally first records. Additionally, two belated records of noteworthy observation are presented. No previously unrecorded species was added in this period. Furthermore, remarks have been given on two interesting records with incomplete information at the end. We urge birders to go out in winter for potential vagrants to any suitable habitat. Do not forget to submit the observations to eBird (Pakistan) with supporting evidence and live track recording. Take as many good photos as you can of any unusual-looking bird. Elaborated field notes or sketches are also encouraged. If the birds are vocal, we strongly recommend taking sound recordings.

Pakistan's 4th record of Grey-headed Lapwing *Vanellus cinereus* (Δ) came from different areas in the Head Marala, Sialkot, Punjab, two times reported independently of each other: 5-6 birds on 29 September (TMA & ARB) and 13 October (SS), respectively.

In Sindh, an unusual number of Rook *Corvus frugilegus* (Δ) were reported on 24 December in Jacobabad; a few were photographed, but "thousands" were observed (pers.comm. KR)—the first provincial and southernmost sighting of this corvid in the country. There is no mention of the species in Sindh avifaunal literature. The exceptionally high number should be taken with caution until further observations in the future.



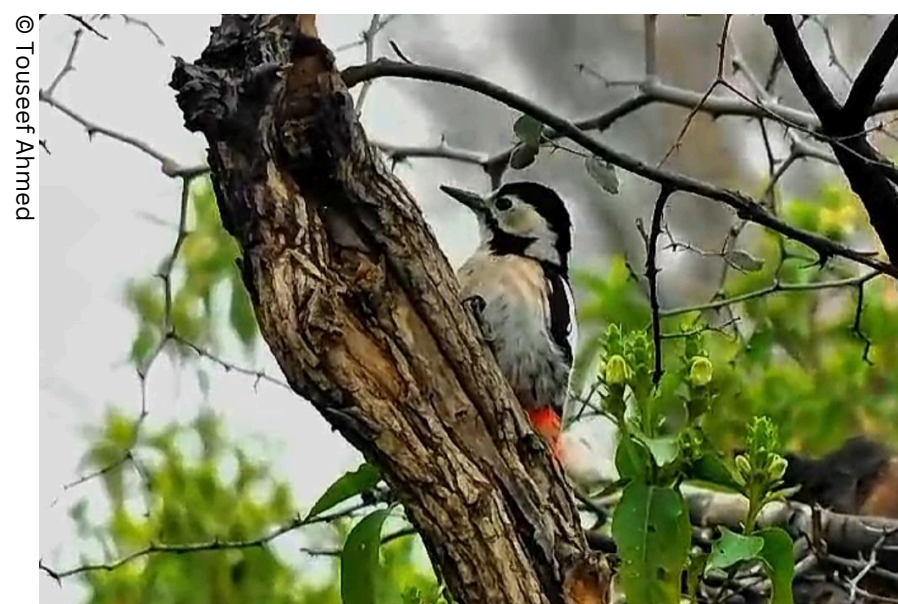
Grey-headed Lapwing *Vanellus cinereus*



Rook *Corvus frugilegus*

In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 4 European Greenfinch *Chloris chloris* (Δ) were sighted and two photographed on 13 December in Gollain Nullah, Chitral Gol National Park, making it the northernmost observation in the country. A 2nd national and first provincial record (AHK and AH)

A belated record of Common Iora *Aegithina tiphia* (Δ) came from Kundpur, Barnala, Distt Bhimber in April 2024. Just a second record for AJK, 3rd for the country (TA). It was followed by a 4th national record (Δ); a single bird clicked in November in DVNP, Azad Jammu & Kashmir (MAM). At the same time, Red Junglefowl *Gallus gallus murghi* were heard in the national park (MAM and MAW). A female Sind Woodpecker *Dendrocopos assimilis* (Δ) was belatedly reported from Kundpur, Barnala, Distt Bhimber, which turned out to be first for Azad Jammu & Kashmir (TA).



Sind Woodpecker *Dendrocopos assimilis*



Common Iora *Aegithina tiphia* © Muhammad Ayaz Mahmood



European Greenfinch *Chloris chloris*

An interesting swift, potentially Common Swift *Apus apus* (Δ) was first photographed in Sindh on 14 December at Manjar Goth. The species is known to fly over the province based on tagged bird studies, but there is no mention of its presence in Sindh in literature except for two unconfirmed sightings on eBird (ZAS). A Brown Shrike *Lanius cristatus* was reported from Wetland Centre, Hawksbay, Karachi, Sindh, on 30 December—the 13th national record (ZAS).

Additional Comments:

Mottled Wood-Owl *Strix ocellata* photos were shared on social media with no info related to location or date. Possibly smuggled from Sindh (pers.comm. poster). Only a handful of records are known from Punjab, Pakistan. The upper Sindh region is worth exploring for this owl's potential presence. A female Amur Falcon *Falco amurensis* was seen in captivity at Empress Market, Karachi. Potentially caught on passage; no info on date of capture or location. It would have been a 3rd national record if complete, reliable information was known. This rare record also reveals the widespread target subjects of the illegal bird trade in Pakistan.

CONTRIBUTORS:

Abdul Hadi (AH), Muhammad Akram Awan (MAA), Ali Hasnain Kazmi (AHK), Atif Riaz Baba (ARB), Khadim Rind (KR), Muhammad Ayaz Mahmood (MAM), Sajid Saeed (SS), Touseef Ahmed (TA), Tahir Manzoor Aatir (TMA) and Zafeer Ahmed Shaikh (ZAS)

Hotspot Review : Siranda Lake

December 2024

Zafeer Ahmed Shaikh

Siranda Lake is a significant natural waterbody located in the Lasbela district of Balochistan, Pakistan. It lies in the southern part of the province, near the town of Uthal, and is a vital freshwater body for the surrounding regions. The lake is positioned amidst the arid and semi-arid terrain of Lasbela, which is known for its rugged, mountainous topography and desert-like landscapes. The total area of the lake is estimated to be over 2700 hectares and is situated very close to the N-25 Highway, which it connects with via a thin carpeted road along with at least 2 *katcha* (unpaved) roads.

Geographically, the lake is surrounded by short dunes, scrubland, and seasonal grasslands, forming a unique environment. Despite the lack of extensive exploration in the area, early observations were made by significant figures like General Bentham and Mr. Ludlow submitted notes to Baker (1929), followed by Ticehurst (1922-24), Eates (1930), and Roberts (1980), who all contributed to understanding the ecological importance of Siranda Lake.



Mudflat on the western shore of Siranda Lake

Roberts (1977, 1979) conducted multiple visits to the lake, confirming the nesting of Slender-billed Gulls *Larus genei*, Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia*, and Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica*. In recent summers, Gull-billed Terns and Caspian Terns have been noted in peak breeding colors, with alarm calls distinct from their wintering grounds. However, definitive confirmation of regular breeding for both tern species has yet to be established. There have been no confirmed sightings of Slender-billed Gulls in breeding plumage, nor have their nesting sites or fledged young been observed in recent years.

In spring and autumn, the scrubland of the lake will almost definitely support known passage migrants, especially passerines such as Rufous-tailed Scrub Robins *Cercotrichas galactotes*, European Rollers *Coracias garrulus*, Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters *Merops persicus*, and more. In winters, the lake supports a small population of Dalmatian Pelicans *Pelecanus crispus* and a few of the common dabbling ducks such as Pintail *Anas acuta*, Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* and Eurasian Teal *Anas crecca*. Common Shelducks *Tadorna tadorna* have been noted well into early summers. In the scrubzone, mainly near some of the *Goths*, an odd pair of Brown-necked Ravens *Corvus ruficollis* can be seen. This is of high importance since this site is the easternmost part of its global distribution. On the west-central part of the lake, where xerophytic plants dominate, bird species like Desert Warblers *Sylvia nana*, Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti*, and Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina* are commonly spotted.



Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia*



Slender-billed Gulls *Larus genei* and Pied Avocets *Recurvirostra avosetta*

Raptors such as Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*, Greater Spotted Eagle *Aquila clanga*, Steppe Eagle *Aquila nipalensis*, Western Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*, and Steppe Eagles *Aquila nipalensis* are regular visitors to the area. The proximity of the lake to the coast, coupled with the presence of saline mudflats, also attracts a variety of waders. Species such as Dunlins *Calidris alpina*, Curlew Sandpipers *Calidris ferruginea*, Sand Plovers *Charadrius* species, Glossy Ibises *Plegadis falcinellus*, and Greater Flamingos *Phoenicopterus roseus* can be seen feeding along the lake's edges. Pied Avocets *Recurvirostra avosetta* have also been observed in early summer, maintaining small pairs and exhibiting alarm calls, possibly indicating breeding activity. Additionally, Kentish plovers *Anarhynchus alexandrinus* have been seen holding territory and actively alarm calling, also indicating promising signs of local breeding.

In conclusion, Siranda Lake is not only an important freshwater resource for the Lasbela region but also a vital habitat for both resident and migratory bird species. Its unique topography, alongside its role in supporting rare and diverse wildlife, makes it a critical ecological hotspot in Balochistan. The lake's significance to bird conservation, especially for species like the Slender-billed Gulls, Caspian Terns, and Gull-billed Terns, ensures its value as a critical site for ornithological studies in the region.

The eBird link for the hotspot is provided as follows:

<https://ebird.org/hotspot/L28543688>



Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica*



Curlew Sandpipers *Calidris ferruginea*

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Regional Reflections on the 2024 Clements Taxonomy Updates: Pakistan's Perspective

Azan Karam

Taxonomy is the science of classifying organisms—such as species, subspecies, and families—based on their traits, distribution, and genetic makeup. The definition of taxonomy may differ across sources, but its essence remains the same: the identification, naming, and classification of groups of organisms. Various taxonomic systems are used worldwide to categorize birds, such as Birdlife International/Handbook of Birds of the World (HBW), the IOC World Bird List, and Clements/eBird Taxonomy. In our newsletter, we follow the Biological Species Concept (BSC) dependent Clements Taxonomy due to its expansive usage in the world's largest biodiversity-related citizen-science platform (eBird), refined annual updates and continuous efforts to unify a global single list in collaboration with other major avian taxonomic authorities, which can be followed by avian researchers, birders, organizations, conservation practitioners and policymakers for the extraordinary birdlife our planet hosts.

In 2024, Clements Taxonomy was released in October with major taxonomic updates involving 'splitting' (one species becomes multiple), 'lumping' (multiple species becomes one), and 're-lumping' (previously split species becomes one) due to the latest, more robust research dealing with the complicated and dynamic nature of bird taxonomy and systematics. Overall, 03 new species were described to science; 141 species were gained through splits and 16 species were lost through lumps, resulting in a net gain of 128 species. All of these changes raise the tally of total species in the world to 11,145.

A few taxonomic changes are filtered below that deal with Pakistan's rich birdlife in the latest update. They include a net gain of one species through splitting and a few changes to scientific and common English names—all portrayed in a simplified way with emphasis on changes relevant to Pakistan. Each species that underwent major taxonomic changes is shown in photos. The older names, both common English and scientific, are shown in double quotation marks. The symbol tick mark (✓) in front of the species name (bold) indicates the ones occurring in Pakistan according to the new changes. The distribution range of split species is mentioned in the context of Pakistan. Brief identification and remarks are also added wherever necessary.

★ "Barn Owl" *Tyto alba* was split three ways,

1. **Eastern Barn Owl** *Tyto javanica* (✓)
2. Western Barn Owl *Tyto alba*
3. American Barn Owl *Tyto furcata*

Range: Mainly confined to the Indus Plains with erratic distribution, mostly in Sindh, including suburban areas. They are patchily distributed in central and northern Punjab and recently recorded as north as Swat in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Anecdotal sporadic records from Baluchistan. Status in Gilgit-Baltistan is unknown, whereas expected in Azad Jammu & Kashmir.

Remarks: The only *Tyto* owl in Pakistan with no confusing species.

★ "Large Cuckooshrike" *Coracina macei* was split three ways,

1. **Oriental Cuckooshrike** *Coracina javensis* (✓)
2. Indian Cuckooshrike *Coracina macei*
3. Malaysian Cuckooshrike *Coracina larutensis*

Range: Based on a single record from Samahni, the species can be potentially present in adjacent districts in the region of Azad Jammu & Kashmir and upper parts of NE Punjab.

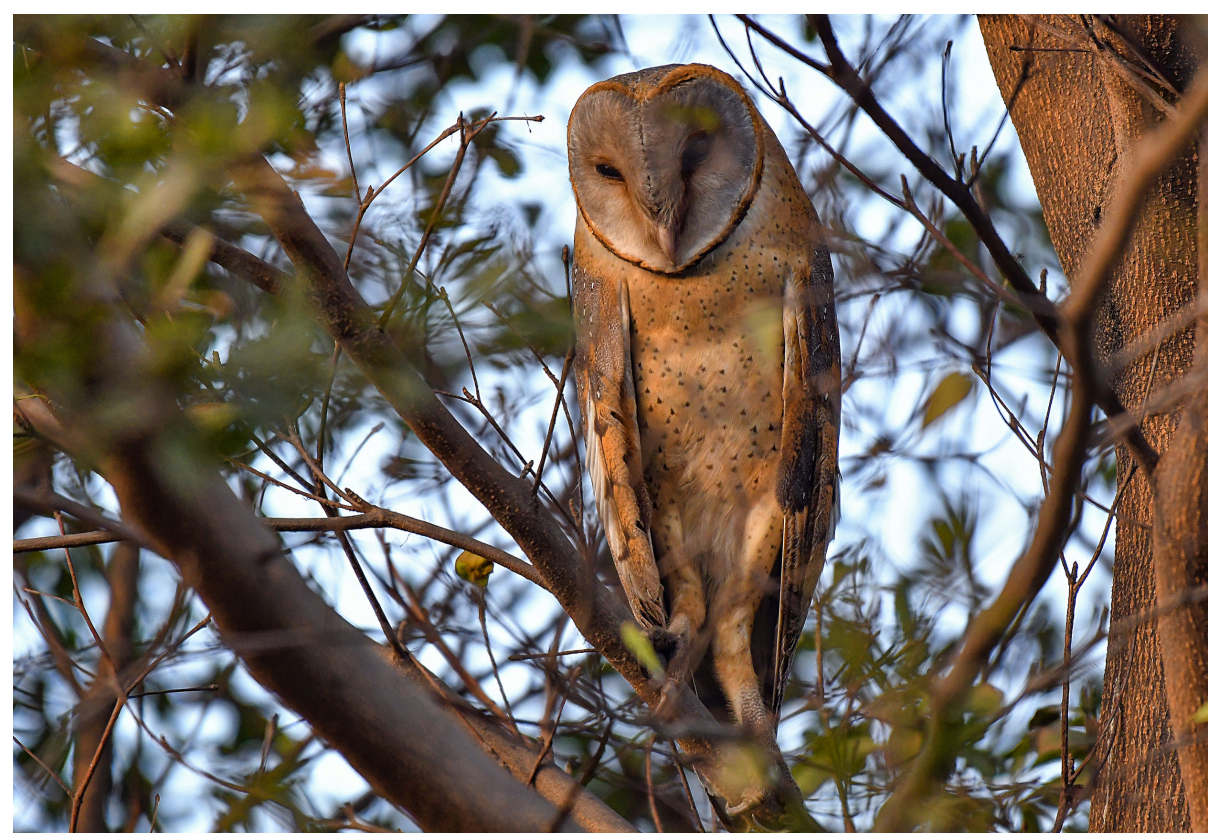
Remarks: One of the three species of cuckooshrikes recorded in Pakistan. Both this and the Black-headed Cuckooshrike *Lalage melanoptera* have been recorded once, hence vagrants. The current species underparts are either completely unbarred or display minimal barring (seen in males and occasionally in certain female plumages), with more distinct white edging on the wings.

★ "Rock Martin" *Ptyonoprogne fuligula* was split three ways,

1. **Pale Crag-Martin** *Ptyonoprogne obsoleta* (✓)
2. Red-throated Crag-Martin *Ptyonoprogne rufigula*
3. Southern Crag-Martin *Ptyonoprogne fuligula*

Range: Widespread in Baluchistan, reaching western Sindh and western Punjab bordering areas. There are several sightings in Pakistan outside this range, all lacking supporting evidence but are worth checking (eBird).

Remarks: The only confusing species in the range is the migrant Eurasian Crag-Martin *Ptyonoprogne rupestris*. Both species have white spots in their tails; the Eurasian's are visibly larger. Pale Crag-Martin has an unstreaked throat, paler underarms, and whitish underparts (throat to vent), whereas Eurasian Crag-Martin has darker underarms, streakings on the throat, paler breast, a darker belly and a vent.



Eastern Barn Owl *Tyto javanica* - Lahore, Punjab (19 January 2024)



Oriental Cuckooshrike *Coracina javensis* - Sheikh Kamal Wildlife Centre, Bangladesh (8 September 2021)



Pale Crag-Martin *Ptyonoprogne obsoleta* - Hingol National Park, Balochistan (27 January 2024)

© Muhammad Babar

© Sayam U. Chowdhury

© Rashid Asgher

★ “Red-rumped Swallow” *Cecropsis daurica* was split three ways,

1. **Eastern Red-rumped Swallow** *Cecropsis daurica* (✓)
2. **European Red-rumped Swallow** *Cecropsis rufula* (✓)
3. African Red-rumped Swallow *Cecropsis melanocrissus*

Range: The monotypic European Red-rumped Swallow is mainly distributed in western Baluchistan, the foothills of Hindukush-Himalayas up until Gilgit. Sporadic records are possible elsewhere, but it will become clearer with more observations. The polytypic Eastern Red-rumped Swallow has known distribution in Sindh and Punjab, with a possible overlap in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Azad Jammu & Kashmir with the European Red-rumped Swallow. Anecdotal records further prove the contact zone. More data is needed to understand the exact distributions of both species in Pakistan.

Remark: This interesting split resulted in a new addition to Pakistan but also presents a novel identification challenge, especially in areas where both species co-exist. The different subspecies of Eastern Red-rumped Swallow occurring in Pakistan further complicate the issue. Europeans show an incomplete rufous hind-neck collar as compared to the complete collar of Eastern species. Europeans usually show a bi-coloured rump (rufous and whitish), whereas Easterners have a uniform rufous rump, except in immature individuals. European is relatively less streaked with paler underparts.



Eastern Red-rumped Swallow *Cecropsis daurica* - Malir, Karachi, Sindh (5 January 2024). Note the heavily streaked underparts, darker lores and less extensive dull rufous cheeks breaking just at the nape.



European Red-rumped Swallow *Cecropsis rufula* - Shangla, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (25 March 2021). Note the bi-coloured rump, complete nape collar, paler underparts with indistinct thin streakings.

★ “Buff-bellied Pipit” *Anthus rubescens* split two ways,

1. **Siberian Pipit** *Anthus japonicus* (✓)
2. American Pipit *Anthus rubescens*

Range: Winter migrant to Gilgit-Baltistan with a few scattered records in the south from Kohat through the Indus Plains till Karachi.

Remarks: The possible confusion species in Pakistan is the Water Pipit *Anthus spinoletta* in winter. Pay attention to pinkish legs, prominent moustachial stripes, darker and greyer upperparts, bolder streakings below (Siberian) and usually darker legs, draber above, and ill-defined dark streakings below (Water). A deeper study on identification is recommended.



Siberian Pipit *Anthus japonicus* - Borith Lake, Gojal, Gilgit-Baltistan (2019)



Grey-crowned Goldfinch *Carduelis caniceps* - Shogran, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (25 August 2019)

★ “European Goldfinch” *Carduelis carduelis caniceps*, formerly a subspecies, is now redefined as a full-fledged species.

1. **Grey-crowned Goldfinch** *Carduelis caniceps* (✓)

Range: From central-western Baluchistan up across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, much of Gilgit-Baltistan and spreading eastwards to Azad Jammu & Kashmir.

Remarks: No confusion species exist in its range. Its whitish-pinkish pointed conical bill, red face, greyer upperparts, and black-and-yellow flash in the wings set it apart. There are potentially three subspecies that occur in Pakistan, with subtle morphological differences: *C. c.caniceps/paropanisi/subulata*

COMMON ENGLISH NAMES CHANGES

1. “MacQueen’s Bustard” becomes **Asian Houbara**
2. “Great Bittern” becomes **Eurasian Bittern**
3. “Cinereous Tit” becomes **Asian Tit**

SCIENTIFIC NAMES CHANGES

The following changes are a result of a series of studies sorting the taxonomic complexities of different groups of birds and improving our understanding regarding different species.

1. Little Ringed Plover “*Charadrius dubius*” becomes *Thinornis dubius*
2. Black Bittern “*Ixobrychus flavicollis*” becomes *Botaurus flavicollis*
3. Cinnamon Bittern “*Ixobrychus cinnamomeus*” becomes *Botaurus cinnamomeus*
4. Little Bittern “*Ixobrychus minutus*” becomes *Botaurus minutus*
5. Yellow Bittern “*Ixobrychus sinensis*” becomes *Botaurus sinensis*
6. Eastern Cattle-Egret “*Bubulcus coromandus*” becomes *Ardea coromanda*
7. Besra “*Accipiter virgatus*” becomes *Tachyspiza virgata*
8. Shikra “*Accipiter badius*” becomes *Tachyspiza badia*
9. Eurasian Goshawk “*Accipiter gentilis*” becomes *Astur gentilis*
10. Eurasian Jackdaw “*Corvus monedula*” becomes *Coloeus monedula*
11. Indian Bushlark “*Mirafra erythroptera*” becomes *Plocealauda erythroptera*
12. Bengal Bushlark “*Mirafra assamica*” becomes *Plocealauda assamica*
13. Thick-billed Flowerpecker “*Dicaeum agile*” becomes *Pachyglossa agilis*



Asian Houbara *Chlamydotis macqueenii* - Rajanpur, Punjab (20 January 2021)



Asian Tit *Parus cinereus* - Islamabad (12 February 2016)



Little Bittern *Botaurus minutus* - Larkana, Sindh (14 July 2021)



Black Bittern *Botaurus flavicollis* - Sialkot, Punjab (January 2017) © Tahir Abbas Awan



Cinnamon Bittern *Botaurus cinnamomeus* - Dera Ismail Khan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (19 July 2021)



Eurasian Bittern *Botaurus stellaris* - Langh Lake, Sindh (29 December 2018)



Yellow Bittern *Botaurus sinensis* - Langh Lake, Sindh (27 July 2021) © Yasir Pechuho



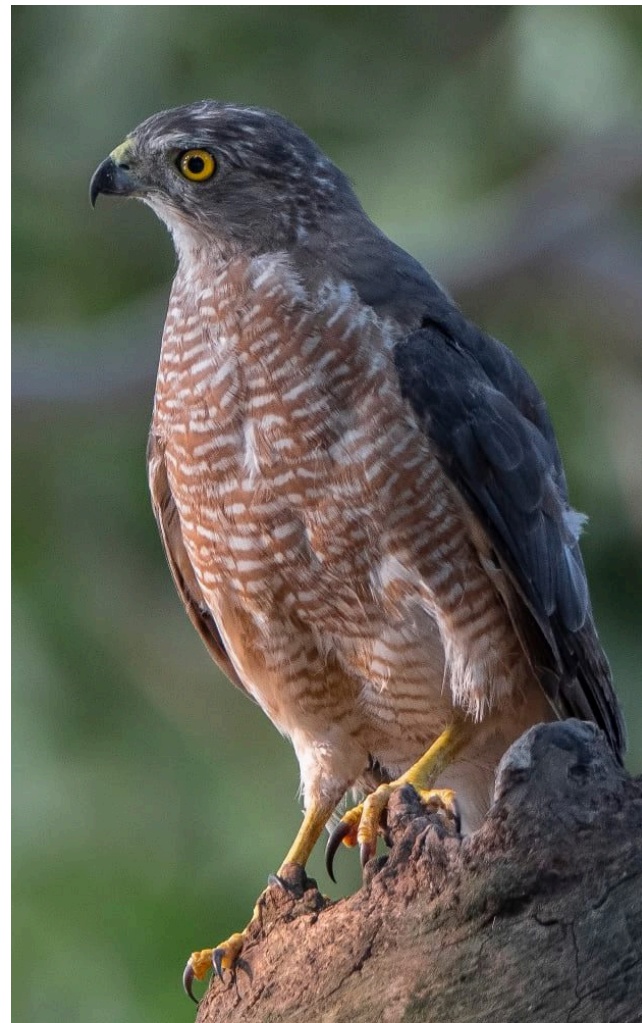
Eastern Cattle-Egret *Ardea coromanda* - Swat Valley, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (3 July 2022)



Thick-billed Flowerpecker *Pachyglossa agilis* - Margalla Hills, Islamabad (30 March 2021)



Eurasian Jackdaw *Corvus monedula* - Abbotabad, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (10 November 2018) © Saud Randhava



Shikra *Tachyspiza badia* - Sialkot, Punjab (8 August 2020) © Azmat Raza



Besra *Tachyspiza virgata* - Margalla Hills, Islamabad (November 2016)

© Jamal Leghari

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© Sikandar Nawaz Khan

© Umer Farooq

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Birds Without Borders: The Kazakhstan-Pakistan Bird Migration Nexus

Andrey Gavrilov and Aizhan Tashimova

At the Shakpak (Chokpak) Pass, located in southeastern Kazakhstan, between the Talas Alatau and Karatau mountain ranges of the Western Tien Shan (42°31'49.8"N 70°36'20.5"E), bird migrations have been studied since 1966. It is one of the Important Bird Areas (IBA), as massive seasonal migrations of 290 bird species pass through it. The number of migrants is estimated at thousands annually. Over the years, more than 1.6 million birds of 236 species have been captured and ringed here. From which a total of 3115 ring recoveries were received, both locally and internationally. Of these, 1164 are from 23 other countries.

Stationary Heligoland-type traps and mistnets are used to catch birds in the Shakpak Pass. The team divides the work among themselves; some check the traps and collect birds from there, others check the mistnets, and others are directly engaged in bird ringing. For example, a Long-legged Buzzard *Buteo rufinus* flew into a trap on October 16, 2024. Our employee Alexander Puchkov brought the bird, and our supervisor Andrey Gavrilov ringed, determined the age, and measured it. After that, we took a picture and released Buzzard. And so, on November 1, it was caught (later released) in Pakistan, which means the bird flew 1193 km in 17 days! (see Fig.1)



© Aizhan Tashimova / Shakpak Ornithological Station



© Aizhan Tashimova / Shakpak Ornithological Station

Figure 1. Long-legged Buzzard *Buteo rufinus*, ringed on 16 October 2024 at the ornithological station on the Chokpak Pass. The same bird was caught in Dera Ismail Khan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa—released later.

Possibly a 2-year bird

In addition, 25 more birds were found (captured) in Pakistan in various years and ringed in Kazakhstan at the Shakpak pass: Yellow-eyed Pigeon *Columba eversmanni*: 1, Oriental Turtle-Dove *Streptopelia orientalis*: 6, Rosy Starling *Sturnus roseus*: 1, Common Starling *S. vulgaris*: 12, Rook *Corvus frugilegus*: 1, Spanish Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis*: 4. So, our Long-legged Buzzard is the first raptor ringed in Kazakhstan, which spends the winter in Pakistan.

It should be noted that various species of birds that winter in India fly through the territory of Pakistan. The use of modern telemetry methods (in particular, GPS/GSM tracking) has shown that such species as the Eurasian Honey-Buzzard *Pernis apivorus*, Long-legged Buzzard *Buteo rufinus*, Steppe Eagle *Aquila nipalensis*, Demoiselle Crane *Anthropoides virgo*, and others stop here (Fig. 2).

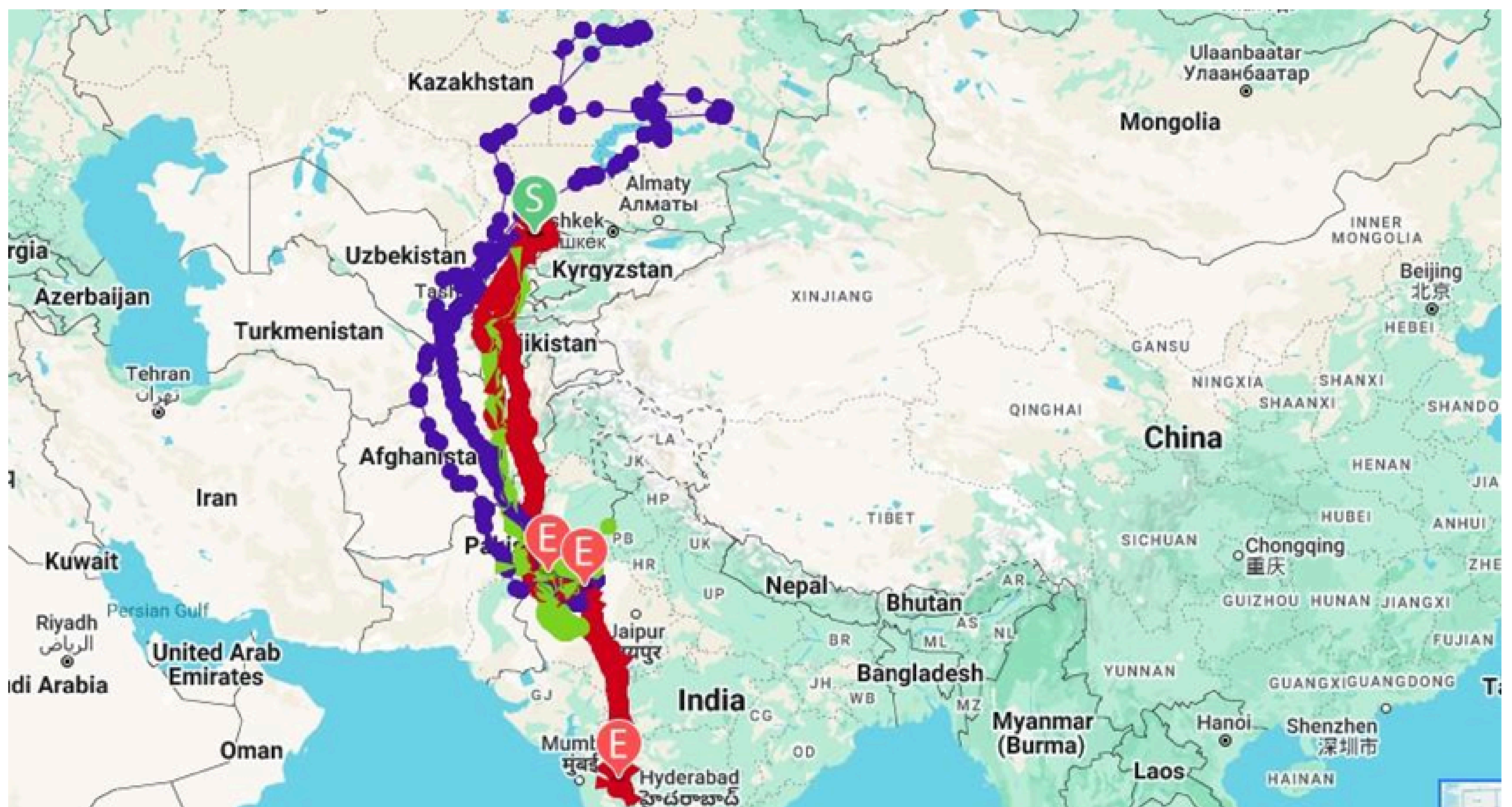


Figure 2. GPS tracks of various bird species tagged in Kazakhstan. Track show the importance of Pakistan for wintering and passage migrants.

Acknowledgement:

The editorial team of Daanger is thankful to Salman Ali for helping with preliminary information on the caught buzzard. We are also thankful to Kordian Bartoszuck, Alyona Kapyonkina, and Igor Karyakin for helping us connect with researchers studying these incredible birds in Kazakhstan.

Islamabad – District of Rich Birdlife

Anssi Kullberg

Islamabad has a rich and diverse avifauna consisting of more than 400 species; the various checklists vary slightly in their acceptance or rejection of a number of rare vagrants and in their embracing of the many recent taxonomic changes. Out of the over 400 species, around 300 can be considered regular (observed at least once a year). A keen birdwatcher can rely on seeing more than 200 species within a year, and an account of 100 species within a day is not impossible if the observer visits both Rawal Lake and the Margalla Hills the same day, especially during the migration periods. The remaining 100+ species consist of vagrants (or rarities) as well as species that have sadly vanished.

Islamabad's avian richness is due to the two most significant features of the city's surroundings: the Margalla Hills and Rawal Lake. Islamabad's avifauna, subsequently, consists of four distinct faunal groups:

1) **South Asian generalists and widespread Oriental species.** Most of the common birds of Islamabad gardens belong to this group, which consists of both residents and summer visitors.

2) **Himalayan foothill species inhabiting mostly the Margalla Hills.** Many of the most interesting and range-restricted species of Islamabad belong to this category. While they appear common in the suitable habitat, they are the most peculiar species that Islamabad can boast of, as many of them are Western Himalayan endemics. This category is replenished with higher Himalayan montane species wintering and on passage when the conditions get too harsh in higher altitudes. They are the so-called altitude migrants.

3) **Winterers and passage migrants coming from Central Asia and Siberia.** This category covers most of the waterfowl and waders occurring at Rawal Lake, but also a number of passerines and other birds found in various habitats.

4) **Open dryland, savanna, and steppe birds,** such as many larks and raptors. While some of these birds have found refuge on agricultural and pastoral lands and continue to thrive, this group is most clearly declining in Islamabad's avifauna because the habitats are being rapidly lost, replaced by construction and urban development.



Kalij Pheasant *Lophura leucomelanos*



Black-rumped Flameback *Dinopium benghalense*



Plum-headed Parakeet *Psittacula cyanocephala*



Grey Bushchat *Saxicola ferreus*

The two most significant reasons for why many birds in Islamabad are declining are habitat loss and hunting and/or persecution by man. Habitat loss has affected the above-mentioned open, arid, and semi-arid habitats, though lots of bushland and agricultural land remain. An even more radical loss has taken place in original mature deciduous woods, especially the mature semi-open oak woodland that once covered much of the area, supporting both woodland and savanna species. Wherever old trees of the native deciduous species persist in larger patches, the avifauna is extraordinarily rich and diverse. Unfortunately, reforestation has favoured non-native species and pine, and while these also support forest birds, the selection of species is scarcer.

While Rawal Lake is a man-made reservoir, it has, over time, become a very important magnet for birds. It still attracts considerable numbers of cormorants, ducks, waders, and gulls, especially in winter. At the same time, in the summer months, it serves a wide range of herons, egrets, terns, bee-eaters, and swallows. Numerous passerines and other birds, both resident and migratory, depend on the lush vegetation on the remaining unconstructed patches of Rawal Lake shores. The constant and expansive construction of the shores has reduced wetland habitats to such an extent that the more demanding species—such as Grey-headed Swamphen *Porphyrio poliocephalus* and Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*—are now only occasional visitors. More adaptive species, however, seem to have increased in numbers as they continue to adopt Rawal Lake as a natural habitat. This is true, for example, with Little Cormorant *Microcarbo niger*, White-breasted Waterhen *Amaurornis phoenicurus*, Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* and Black-crowned Night-heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*.

Sadly, hunting and other forms of persecution have all but decimated many of the most iconic large birds of the Islamabad area, including vultures, storks, cranes, darters and falcons. All of these groups were still relatively regular and common in the past, while they now only occur as occasional visitors. The loss of more than 90% of the vulture populations of the Subcontinent due to the use of diclofenac as a veterinary medicine for cattle decimated all the lowland vulture species of Islamabad, too, and left only stragglers, mainly of the mountain species. In addition to vultures, all other large soaring birds have declined massively, likely due to a combination of shooting and habitat loss. It is particularly alarming that some once common passage migrants, such as Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea*, Bar-headed Goose *Anser indicus*, Demoiselle Crane *Anthropoides virgo*, Black Stork *Ciconia nigra*, White Stork *Ciconia ciconia*, and Spotted Eagle *Clanga* sp, are now very rare and irregular. Superstition has sadly affected all the larger owls, leaving only two smaller species—the Spotted Owllet *Athene brama* and Asian Barred Owllet *Glaucidium cuculoides*—as relatively common.

Not all the changes are easy to explain. The notable decline in the numbers of Indian Roller *Coracias benghalensis* and all shrikes except Long-tailed Shrike *Lanius schach* may indicate a reduction in the numbers of large insects, especially dung beetles, although simultaneously Black Drongo *Dicrurus macrocercus*, Eurasian Hoopoe *Upupa epops* and Long-tailed Shrike *Lanius schach* seem to continue to thrive. Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* has notably disappeared from the list of regular and common birds, while Black-shouldered Kite *Elanus caeruleus* is still there, despite the two species both hunting similar prey (rodents) in similar habitats (open fields). Excessive hunting wiped out almost all pheasant species from the vicinity of Islamabad, but protection efforts have reversed the situation in the case of the last remaining member of the group, namely Kalij Pheasant *Lophura leucomelanos*, one of Islamabad's iconic species, which is now again common on the Margalla Hills. Similar efforts to reintroduce Cheer Pheasant *Catreus wallichii* did not bear fruit, and the species is unfortunately extirpated in Islamabad.

Though most of the changes in Islamabad's avifauna have been negative—the decline of many once common birds due to human activities—there are also cases of the reverse. Unsurprisingly, most of the increasing bird species of Islamabad are species that have benefitted from the new habitats people have created. The extensive urban gardens of Islamabad have helped many South Asian species of lush environments expand their range westwards. Islamabad indeed represents a western bulwark for such species as Oriental Magpie-robin *Copsychus saularis*, Black-rumped Flameback *Dinopium benghalense*, Indian Pied Starling *Gracupica contra*, Chestnut-tailed Starling *Sturnia malabarica*, Jungle Babbler *Argya striata*, Spotted Dove *Spilopelia chinensis* and Coppermith Barbet *Psilopogon haemacephalus*. One of the most spectacularly increased birds in the area is the Brown Rock-chat *Oenanthe fusca*, which was still very rare in the 1990s, but is now abundant and ubiquitous in the Islamabad area. Indicatively, this bird happens to like construction sites.

By coincidence, Islamabad has also become a safe haven for some Asian songbirds that have declined massively in East and Southeast Asia due to the excessive pet bird trade. Oriental Magpie-robin *Copsychus saularis*, Indian White-eye *Zosterops palpebrosus* and Red-billed Leiothrix *Leiothrix lutea* continue to be abundant in the forested parts of Islamabad, while these same species are being trapped into local extinction in many other parts of Asia. Even Islamabad's four species of parakeets are still thriving and doing relatively well; elsewhere in Asia, parrot populations are in critical decline due to pet trapping.

A New Book Project

More than twenty years ago, a fellow Finnish diplomat to Islamabad, Mikko Pyhälä, published a comprehensive account of the bird species occurring in Islamabad Capital Territory, *Birds of Islamabad: Status and Seasonality* (WWF Pakistan 2001). He drew material from the seminal Roberts book as well as a few pre-existing annotated checklists of birds occurring in Islamabad—mostly compiled by foreign expats—while the book was also based on his own experiences of birding in Islamabad during his posting in the 1990s.

While Pakistan has a number of active local birdwatchers (most of whom appear to be photographers), there has been a lack of cooperative effort to collect and compile accumulating and regular faunistic data in one place and make it available for the public. This has resulted in a patchy understanding of Pakistan's avifauna, a reliance on foreign observers, and a focus on rarity records instead of good and commensurable information on what is most important: the occurrence of regular species and changes in their status, range and abundance. Pyhälä's account is therefore an irreplaceable source of how birdlife in the Islamabad area was in the 80s and the 90s. Although it relies on a limited number of observers (many of whom are expats and including Pyhälä himself), these observers were methodical and systematic in dating and locating their records, making the data useful.

In 2002, Cornell University introduced an online service for collecting and saving bird observations worldwide, eBird. This service quickly revolutionized not just the easy field notes and preservation of individual birdwatchers' observations, wherever they were—but it also made all this massive amount of data easily available for anyone: birdwatchers as well as scientists and protectionists. Local reviewers continue to curate incoming checklists and observations, filtering out erroneous or fraudulent input. While the data provided by countless observers is not without errors, this does not do much harm, as the most valuable data does not concern highly unusual rarities but rather the steady flow of data on the presence and absence of regular species—something that is far less likely to be distorted by false records than the hunt for rarities.

To get an idea of what has changed in Islamabad's avifauna—something that would have previously required decades of dedicated studies by professional biologists—we now only need to compare Pyhälä's data on the 80s and 90s with the data accumulated in eBird in the last twenty years. This is what my forthcoming book is attending to do: constituting an update to Pyhälä's work by using primarily the data that has been saved and compiled in eBird. To make the new book attractive, I am also planning to include Pakistani photographers' photos of at least all the common and regular species. Contributions will be welcome, but since the book is written and published pro bono without any funding, we cannot offer money for the photos published. Every photo published will, of course, be credited to the photographer.

Karachi's Goose Year

Shibil Alizada

Armed with binoculars and a camera, I see four silhouettes slicing through the morning haze, their wings catching the light. Aang-ank aang-ank aang-ank—their calls echo like a chorus, a playful procession against Karachi's pastel sky. As they glide closer, the truth reveals itself: Greylag Geese *Anser anser*, improbable visitors finding rest in this concrete jungle. The marsh teems with life. White Wagtail *Motacilla alba* darts like tiny arrows, their tails flicking in rhythm. A Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* bobs gracefully, its yellow plumage a splash of sunlight on the water's edge. On a sun-warmed rock nearby, a Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris* whistles its tune—an uptick, Pip-it pip-it? My dad squints, mistaking it for a lark. I smile as he debates the ID of this species with me. The moment, fleeting and magical, reminds me how nature can triumph in the unlikeliest of places.

The Greylag Goose *Anser anser*, a familiar sight in the United Kingdom, conjures images of wooded parks, serene urban reservoirs, and sprawling wetlands. Its range stretches from the gentle landscapes of the UK to the icy edges of Siberia, its migratory routes weaving through Central Europe, West Asia, and the Indian subcontinent. While known to winter in the heart of Central India, its presence in Pakistan is a rarity, limited to the Indus plains and riverbanks.

But here they were—against all odds—on the tropical coastal fringes of Karachi. It felt almost surreal. Not in the quiet marshes of the Indus but in the shadow of a bustling McDonald's drive-thru. The absurdity of the setting made the encounter even more magical, a vivid reminder of how wildlife, against the backdrop of human sprawl, continues to find its way to unexpected places.



One of the Greylag Geese *Anser anser* on the shrub-laden mounds due of construction debris

The Greylag Geese are a friendly and sociable species, often at ease around humans. They don't seem to mind people watching them, which makes spotting them a treat for birders. However, this trusting nature can also be their downfall. Hunting waterfowl is a popular sport locally, and their lack of fear makes them easy targets for hunters. This has led to a significant decline in their numbers, which is a huge loss for these gentle birds. When news of the geese's rare appearance in Karachi broke, it spread quickly. The press took notice, and soon the story gained widespread attention. Crowds began flocking to the small lagoon near Seaview to catch a glimpse of the unexpected visitors. But just days into the excitement, alarm bells rang. Nets were discovered near the lagoon, and the geese had vanished. Panic rippled through birding groups. Where had the geese gone? Had they fallen prey to poachers? Or worse, been captured to become the exotic pets of some wealthy landowner? Amid the growing concern, the owners of the nearby McDonald's branch stepped in to help protect the geese. They installed cameras around the lagoon to monitor the geese's habitat and prevent any poaching or hunting activity. It was amazing to see people come together to ensure the safety of these special visitors.

Although disaster was averted and very soon the geese were spotted elsewhere, this crisis highlights a greater issue: Karachi's dwindling biodiversity and its ecosystems. If these Greylag Geese—symbolic of nature's resilience—could not find safety, what hope remains for other migratory species like Shelducks, Teals, Pintails, and Garganeys? These birds rely on Karachi's wetlands as critical pit stops during their long journeys, yet unchecked hunting and a lack of conservation effort put their survival at risk.

The arguments between conservationists, poachers, and policymakers rage on, but the question remains: Do we have the collective will to act? This isn't just about the Greylag Geese—it's about the survival of Karachi's ecological heritage. If we fail to protect these habitats, we risk turning our city's waterways into barren wastelands, devoid of life. The presence of these geese was an extraordinary phenomenon—a glimpse of what Karachi could be, a place where wildlife and urban life could coexist. But their plight is a stark reminder that nature's wonders are fragile and fleeting. If we do not act now, we stand to lose not just these majestic birds but a part of Karachi's natural soul.

Forgotten Birds: Black-necked Stork

Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus

M. Akram Awan

The Black-necked Stork *Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus* is among the tallest birds of the Indian Subcontinent, which may stand up to 5 feet with a wing span of 7.5 feet, and its range extends to Southeast Asia and Australia. Its ground colour is white with a black neck, wing covert band and tail. It has a slightly recurved, massive black bill and red legs. Genders are alike, but males have dark eyes and females have yellow eyes. Juveniles are brown and have black legs.

This stork is classed 'near-threatened' by IUCN. It is widespread in the Subcontinent in small, scattered populations but is extremely rare in Pakistan. For known historical records of this species in Pakistan, see Table 1.

Table 1: Summarizes the known observations of Black-necked Stork *Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus* in Pakistan, including locations, dates, observers, references, and remarks.

Sr. No.	Locations	Date & Observer	References	Remarks
1	Lower (Southern) Sindh	Beginning of the 20th Century	Ticehurst, 1923	Not Uncommon in Lower Sindh, rare in Upper Sindh.
2	Sohan (Soan?) river, Islamabad	4th December 1910 (H. Whistler)	Whistler, 1930	An adult was seen and one immature was shot.
3	Jalalpur, Jehlum, Punjab Saltrange	24th February 1921	Waite, 1951	A pair was seen.
4	Lal Suhanra Lake, Bahawalpur, Punjab	Between 1960-70 (Multiple observers)	Roberts, 1991	Occasional visitor, one individual was captured for Bahawalpur zoo in early 1960's.
5	Indus Delta, Sindh	1964 (Holmes and Wright)	Roberts, 1991	A few birds.
6	Manchar Lake, Jamshoro, Sindh	August 1965 (Holmes and Wright)	Roberts, 1991	1 adult and 3 immatures were seen.
7	Head Marala, Sialkot, Punjab	September 1966 (E. Fernando)	Roberts, 1991	A group of 8 birds.
8	Head Marala, Sialkot, Punjab	April 1967 (E. Fernando)	Roberts, 1991	2 birds were observed.
9	Lal Suhanra Lake, Bahawalpur, Punjab	30-31 January 1968 (T.J. Roberts)	Roberts, 1991	A pair was documented.
10	Lal Suhanra Lake, Bahawalpur, Punjab	1970 (T.J. Roberts)	Roberts, 1991	1 bird was recorded.
11	Indus Delta, Sindh	Late 1970's	Roberts, 1991	Few bred in the mangroves.
12	Haleji Lake, Thatha, Sindh	25th January 1986 (Dan Edge)	eBird, 2024	2 birds were observed.
13	Haleji Lake, Thatha, Sindh	March 1986 (Khan Muhammad Khan)	Roberts, 1991	A pair was observed for 10 days, one bird was also photographed.
14	Head Marala, Sialkot, Punjab	12th January 2010	Chaudhry et al, 2012	2 birds were seen.

There had been no breeding records of Black-necked Stork from Pakistan for about 50 years, and it is now considered to be a straggler from India to Sindh and Punjab, mainly after breeding season. It inhabits large marshes, rivers, freshwater lakes, saltwater pools, sometimes coastal mudflats and mangroves. The diet of this stork includes fish, herps, aquatic birds and invertebrates, turtle eggs, etc., just like other Ciconiids. The species is commonly seen feeding solitarily, in separated pairs, or in small family groups, within visual range.



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An adult male Black-necked Stork *Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus*

Acknowledgement:

The editorial team of Daangeer is grateful to Kit Day for providing a picture of Black-necked Stork for this note. The picture was taken in Bharatpur, Rajasthan, India, on 9 March 2024. No photograph of this bird could be obtained from Pakistan.

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Bird Artist Profile

Dr. Ahsan Qureshi

Dr. Ahsan Qureshi is an amateur wildlife artist dedicated to promoting nature and wildlife conservation through his art. His work often features the diverse fauna of Pakistan, showcasing a wide range of species worldwide. His art aims not only to capture the beauty of wildlife but also to raise awareness about conservation. He has participated in various exhibitions around the world, including Artists for Conservation Foundation (Canada), Susan Kathleen Black Foundation (Wyoming, USA), World Pheasant Association (UK) and many more.

Through his artistic endeavours, Dr. Ahsan seeks to inspire others to appreciate and protect the environment, making a significant contribution to wildlife conservation efforts. Dr. Ahsan's inspiration to combine his medical career with wildlife art stems from a profound appreciation for nature and a desire to advocate for conservation. His background in medicine provides him with a unique perspective on the interconnectedness of health and environmental sustainability.

Through his art, he seeks to highlight the urgent need for wildlife preservation, using his creative skills to communicate the beauty and fragility of nature. Participating in exhibitions worldwide allows him to reach a broader audience, fostering awareness about wildlife issues. His work not only reflects his artistic talent but also serves as a platform to inspire others to engage in conservation efforts, demonstrating that art can be a powerful tool for advocacy in the realm of environmental protection.



Dr. Ahsan Qureshi is sketching in the field.

Dr. Ahsan's extraordinary masterpieces can be checked out at Artists for Conservation Foundation Canada: <http://www.artistsforconservation.org/artists/1489>
A few of his paintings are portrayed below, covering multiple subjects of Pakistan's birdlife.



"The Flush" - Oil on Canvas | Portraying Chukar *Alectoris chukar*



"The Migration" - Oil on Canvas | Featuring a flock of Bar-headed Goose *Anser indicus*



(Left-to-Right) Oil on Canvas. Featuring pairs of three native pheasant species of the mountains of Pakistan in their natural habitat. Koklass Pheasant *Pucrasia macrolopha* | Western Tragopan *Tragopan melanocephalus* | Kalij Pheasant *Lophura leucomelanos*

Bird Count Initiatives

Editorial Team

Asian Waterbird Count 2025

Every January, thousands of dedicated volunteers across Asia and Australasia participate in the Asian Waterbird Census (AWC), a citizen science initiative aimed at surveying wetlands and counting waterbirds. Since its inception in 1987 in the Indian subcontinent, the AWC has rapidly expanded to cover vast regions of Asia, extending from Afghanistan in the west to Japan, Southeast Asia, and Australasia in the east. This growing network now spans the entire East Asian-Australasian Flyway and a significant portion of the Central Asian Flyway. The AWC is an essential part of the global waterbird monitoring effort, the International Waterbird Census (IWC), coordinated by Wetlands International. Operating alongside other regional programs in Africa, Europe, West Asia, the Neotropics, and the Caribbean, the AWC plays a critical role in enhancing global efforts to understand and protect waterbird populations.

How to Participate?

Create an eBird account on the eBird mobile app. Follow the guidelines given on the Wetlands International Official website (including counting protocols and tips). Share the eBird checklists with eBird Handle: *AsianWaterbirdCensus*

Duration: 4-19 January 2025

For more information, visit the official webpage: <https://bit.ly/3W46P6x>

Winter Bunting Count 2024-25

The Winter Bunting Count (also known as the Bunting Count) is a joint citizen science initiative spearheaded by the Japan Bird Research Association and the Hong Kong Bird Watching Society (HKBWS), with support from a variety of groups and organizations across East, Southeast, and South Asia.

The initiative has been held for two consecutive years while approaching its 3rd edition now. The 2022-23 count engaged participants from seven countries, and in its second year, the initiative welcomed three additional nations, bringing the total number of participating countries to ten: Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, Hong Kong, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Thailand, and Vietnam. In this important project, Pakistan has yet to take part. Till now, 18 species of buntings have been documented in Pakistan, one of them, the Yellow-breasted Bunting *Emberiza aureola* is Critically Endangered (IUCN). It is a great opportunity to contribute meaningful data from Pakistan in the 3rd Winter Bunting Count.

How to Participate?

Create an eBird account on the eBird mobile app. Record any bunting species (and species other than buntings) on your checklists. Share the eBird checklists with eBird Handle: *HKBWS Landbird*

Duration: 1 October 2024 to 30 April 2025

We strongly recommend adding as much evidence as possible to the eBird checklists in both events. Try to discuss identifications on various social media platforms if any bird photo is hard to identify before uploading to eBird checklist. Make sure to turn on the “live track” in eBird App while birding and counting. And feel free to reach out to the editorial team of Daanger for any queries.



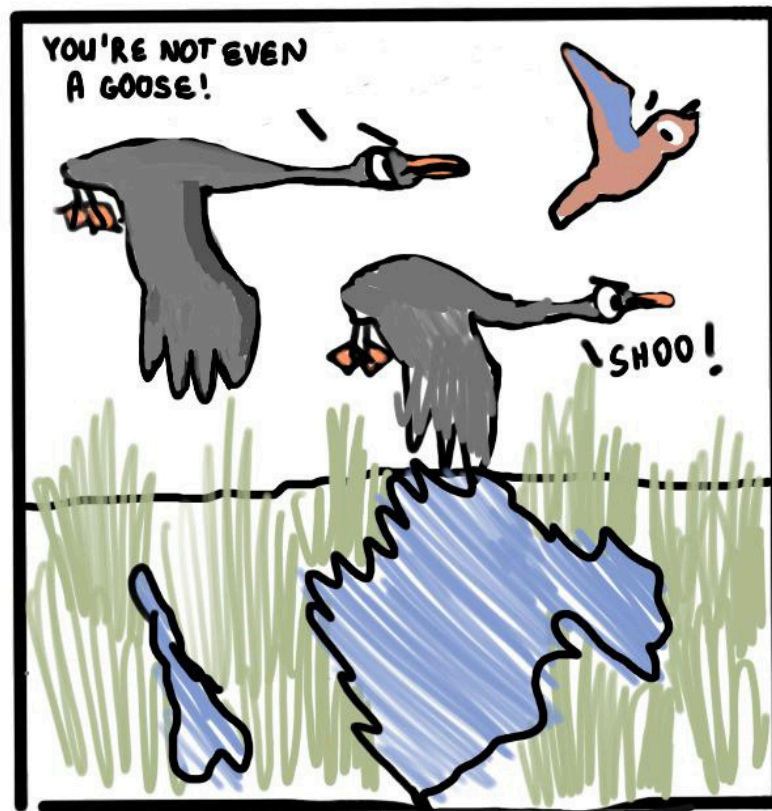
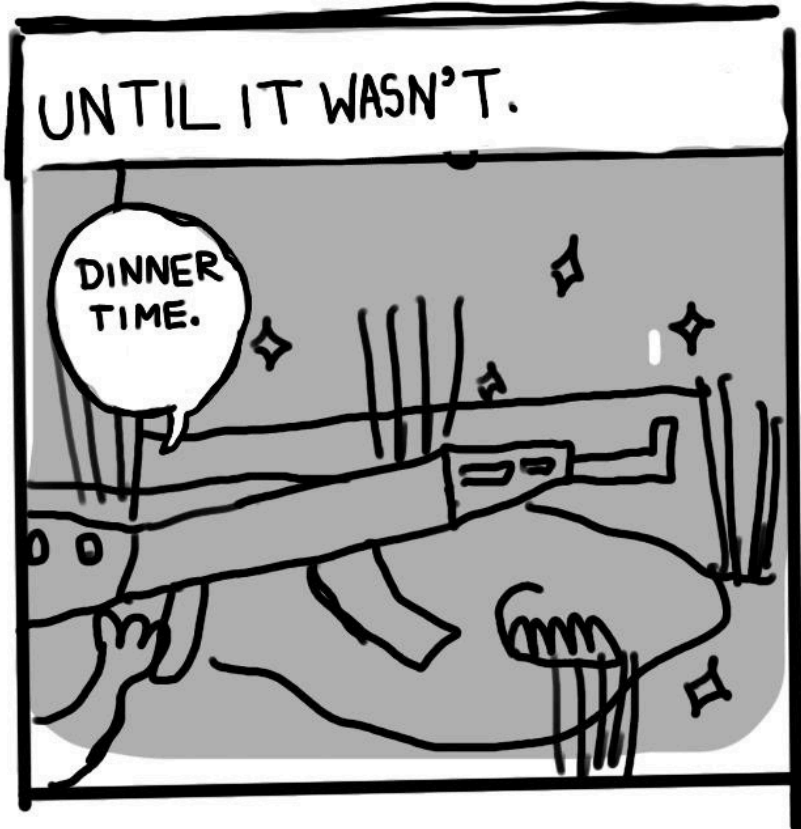
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Editorial team observing a male Rock Bunting *Emberiza cia* in Naltar Valley, Gilgit-Baltistan - 6 July 2024

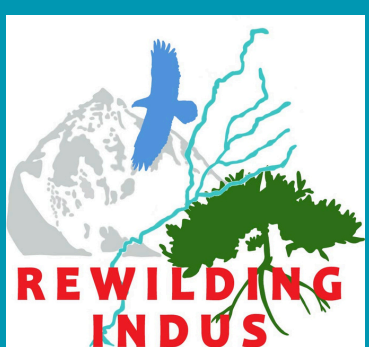
Comic Section

Shibil Alizada

GREYLAG GEESE & THE McALGAE BURGER



shibil Alizada



Rewilding Indus (RI) is a body of like minded individuals concerned with the crippling loss of biodiversity in Pakistan. This young initiative is a collective effort towards making a dent in Wildlife Research and Conservation in Pakistan. *Daangeer: A Quarterly Analysis of Pakistan's Birds* has been made possible through RI's technical support.