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India takes part in World’s Largest Birdwatching Event

From 12 to 15 February, hundreds of birdwatchers from all over India will be looking for birds, recording what they see and sharing the information online. They will join over 100,000 other bird enthusiasts from all over the world in the annual Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC).

Last year almost 1,000 birdwatchers in India compiled more than 7,000 lists totalling 735 species - the second highest of all participating countries. Indian birders also constituted 6 of the top 10 birders globally for number of checklists submitted, and 4 of the top 10 for number of species seen. House Crow, Common Myna, Asian Koel and Black Drongo were the commonest species reported in India.

GBBC uses the power of citizen science to help answer questions about whether birds in India are doing well or declining, with a wealth of data captured for later analysis. It also provides a fun forum for those new to birding, young and old, to get out and enjoy the environment and learn how they can easily contribute to our collective understanding of birds and conservation planning for the future.

For fourteen-year-old Arya Vinod from Kerala, this is her third GBBC. According to her, "Apart from the excitement of participating in a global activity for birds, I like to take part because my hope is that the information gathered will lead to conserving our previous natural heritage for future generations."

In India, the GBBC is being coordinated by Bird Count India, an umbrella group of a large number of birding, nature and conservation organisations. "Events like these generate a wealth of information about the natural world and how it is changing; information at a scale that is unimaginable without the participation of citizens across the country. Such data has now become very valuable as we seek to understand and address issues relating to climate change at various scales.", said Dr V B Mathur, Director of the Wildlife Institute of India (a member of the Bird Count India partnership).

A number of local events are being planned to accompany GBBC 2016. Around 150 campuses are taking part in the 'Campus Bird Count’ - an effort to document birds that make their home in educational and institutional campuses. Many local bird walks have been arranged for the public to spread interest and awareness in our birds and other wildlife.

Anyone is welcome to participate in the GBBC. The basic activity is to list all bird species seen in a particular location over a period of 15 minutes or more, at any time during the four days, and upload the list to the global bird recording platform eBird at www.ebird.org/india.

More information about the GBBC, Campus Bird Count, and other associated events in India can be found at www.birdcount.in, the website of the Bird Count India partnership. The global GBBC is organised by Cornell University and the Audubon Society in the USA.

Some high resolution photos are freely available to download from <http://bit.ly/1K97gUJ> and use in publicity for GBBC 2016. In all instances, please ensure the appropriate photographer is credited.

## About Bird Count India

Bird Count India is a consortium of organisations and groups working together to increase our collective knowledge about bird distributions and populations. The partnership conducts periodic bird-related events and activities, offers support and resources to birding groups for conducting their own events, and by provides information on bird monitoring.

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