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The World's Biggest Bird-a-thon comes to India!

During the four days between 15 and 18 February, more than a thousand birdwatchers throughout India will come together to document as many birds in as many locations across the country as possible.

*Over one lakh birdwatchers globally participate in the annual **Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC)**, and last year India was the third highest contributing country worldwide, and discovered more species than any other!*

In 2018, Indian birdwatchers combined to contribute the most bird checklists from any country excluding United States and Canada, while also finding a fantastic 839 species – fourth highest in the world, after Colombia, Ecuador and Brazil.

The most common birds reported in India were Rose-ringed Parakeet in the north, Red-vented Bulbul in the east, northeast and central region, and House Crow in the south.

GBBC is a fun event attracting those new to birding, young and old. Lots of local birdwatching walks and talks are planned across the country for the public to join in. As Shashank Dalvi, acclaimed birdwatcher and researcher, said, ***"It is exciting to see people across the country taking up birding and issues related to their conservation. I'm looking forward to watching birds and talking about them with other birders as part of this year's event"***.

There is a serious side to GBBC as well, with the power of citizen science helping to answer questions about whether birds in India are doing well or declining. Soma Ateesh, eminent birder from Delhi and NCR, stressed that ***"Through citizen science initiatives such as the GBBC, it is vital to get people outdoors watching birds, and documenting the different species, locations and numbers; this is a wonderful exercise in monitoring birds and offering a snapshot of the state of India's birdlife in Feb each year"***.

Over 100 campuses are expected to take part in the sister event "[Campus Bird Count](#)" – an effort to regularly monitor birds that make their home in educational and institutional campuses. Outside



protected areas such as national parks and wildlife sanctuaries such habitats are becoming increasingly important for our wildlife.

In India, the GBBC is coordinated by [Bird Count India](http://www.birdcount.in), an umbrella group of a large number of birding, nature and conservation organisations. Anyone is welcome to participate in the GBBC, further details of which are available at www.birdcount.in/events/gbbc/. The basic activity is to list all bird species seen at a particular location over a period of 15 minutes or more, at any time during the four days, and upload the list to the bird recording platform eBird www.ebird.org/india. This can be repeated as often as is possible.

More information about the GBBC, Campus Bird Count, and other associated events in India can be found at www.birdcount.in. 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/2jFW85a> and use in publicity for GBBC 2019. 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 provides information on bird monitoring. Read about us at www.birdcount.in.

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