

Birders document 168 species in Konni forests

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A survey conducted to monitor and identify the dynamics of bird populations in the Konni Forest Division in Pathanamthitta has documented as many as 168 bird species.

The survey, carried out by the Konni Forest Division in collaboration with Pathanamthitta Birders from February 22 to 25, also recorded the presence of the Sri Lanka Bay Owl and Sri Lanka Frogmouth in the Konni

forest region for the first time. Additionally, seven species of owls, 11 species of predatory hawks and eagles, three species of nightjars, and eight species of woodpeckers were documented.

Among the noteworthy findings were sightings of several rare species such as the Blue Faced Malkoha, Sri Lanka Frogmouth, Legge's Hawk Eagle, Black Eagle, Great Eared Nightjar, Sri Lanka Bay Owl, Brown Fish Owl, Spot-bellied Eagle Owl, Blue Bearded Bee Eater, and Dollar Bird. The presence of various migratory birds, including the Thick-billed Warbler, Greenish Warbler, Large-billed Leaf Warbler, Wood Sandpipers, Common Sandpiper, Green Sandpiper, Yellow Wagtail, Grey Wagtail, and Black Baza, was also documented.

According to Hari Mavelikkara, who coordinated the survey, the remarkable observation was the presence of the dry habitat-loving species Blue-faced Malkoha from almost all base camps. He noted,

“Perhaps because there is very little evergreen forest in this division, the State bird Great Hornbill could not be seen.”

The survey marked the second comprehensive study on bird populations in the Konni forests. The first survey was conducted during 2018-2020 in conjunction with the creation of the Kerala Bird Atlas.

Teams comprising bird watchers from different States, wildlife photographers, and forest officials camped in the Mannaparapara, Naduwathumuzhi, and Konni ranges, which were subdivided into twelve zones for enabling field-level survey.

Ayush Kumar Kori, Divisional Forest Officer in Konni led the initiative. “A detailed and scientific report will be prepared using the survey results, which will be used in policy-making for forest conservation activities. It

is also planned to repeat the survey annually in the coming years,” the official said.