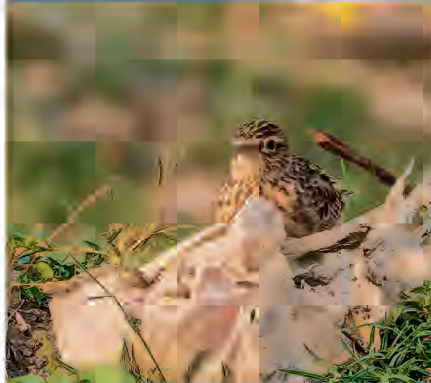




**Save Nature** (Clockwise from left) Wading birds Jack snipe and ruff foraging in plastic, jungle cat at a garbage dump, bull frog swimming with plastic, oriental skylark and ruddy shelduck exposed to a ruined habitat ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



**ON INSTAGRAM**

#InOurFilth instagram project curated by Cara Tejpal and Prachi Galange of Sanctuary Nature Foundation invited photographers from across India to submit images that illustrated the impact of garbage on the nation's wild species. The images show wild animals in polluted surroundings. For example, a tiger cub at Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve picks up a plastic, gunny bag, a lion-tailed macaque in Valparai rips into a plastic packet filled with curry, a wild elephant at Siliguri scavenges for food at a garbage heap, and a checkered keelback catches a meal in a filthy waterbody in Dharwad, Karnataka. Visit the instagram page @sanctuaryasia

# Wildlife over waste

A social media campaign featuring photographs of birds amid plastic pollutants tweeted with #saynotoplastic, highlighted the life-threatening side of the material

:: K JESHI

A stunning photograph of a shot-eared owl stares at you from the Yamuna bank. Look closer and the background piled with plastic waste comes into view.

This tweet by Goldy Rajiv Santhoji (@gold-sant) with the hashtag #saynotoplastic is part of an initiative by World of Wilds (@WorldofWilds) and Wildlife Trust of India (@wti\_org\_india), started on Earth Day to highlight plastic pollution in the wild.

Goldy who founded World of Wilds platform on Twitter last year in October says the objective is to

keep the conversation going on wildlife and treasure and conserve the beauty of flora and fauna. He is thankful to Vivek Menon and Rupa Gandhi of Wildlife Trust of India for their support in the campaign. "We want to reach out to the younger generation. One of our followers Samarrth Khanna, a 19-year-old along with his friends has created a natural habitat, a mini forest out of wasteland."

Samarrth's (@SamarrthK) photograph of the rare and elusive jungle cat can be seen feeding on trash and leftovers from a garbage dump next to a forest near Ranthambore Na-

tional Park. "I also spotted the jungle babblers referred to as the seven sisters often seen in a group of five or seven. The babblers are curious, aggressive and talkative birds. I saw them foraging an empty chips pack-

et. How do plastics end up in restricted forest zone?," asks Samarrth who is an ecologist. "What we need is responsible handling of plastic wastes and care for Nature with a sense of belonging."

Arun Kamath (@incognito) posts a Eurasian curlew foraging on plastic waste on the river bank and draws attention to the fact that "plastic is killing more than 1.1 million seabirds and animals every year." His photograph of the Red headed ibis clicked at Yamuna base at Amirpur, Faridabad exposes the enormity of damage done by plastics. "It is disheartening...the kind of havoc we have wreaked on the environment," says Arun who works with a logistics firm in Gurugram and is a hobbyist who goes bird watching over the weekends. "Most birding hotspots along the NCR have turned into an eye sore. Reduce, reuse, recycle and replace plastic with eco-friendly alternatives, is the way forward."

Vivek Raghuvanshi (@vivekramkaran) captures a rarely seen bull frog swimming along with plastic bags and an Indian robin (male) perched amidst a growing mound of plastic cups. "It is alarming. The waste can choke birds and marine life." Hemant Kirola (@kirola\_hemant) talks of how birders spotted uncommon birds along Manjawli near Yamuna. "Lesser short-toed lark, Hume's short-toed lark, common shelduck, and grey plover can be seen here. Now the habitat is ruined."

Goldy points out that eight million tonnes of plastic waste escapes into the ocean from coastal nations with rivers playing the role of conveyor belts. "Annually, the amount of plastic choking the seas is equivalent to setting five garbage bags full of trash at every foot distance along the coastline around the world, according to *National Geographic* figures. When plastic flows down the river, it breaks into micro particles and makes its way to the food cycle."

Goldy says a visit to the Yamuna was as a wake-up call to speak up against plastic pollution. "The river is reduced to a drain. Birds like waders flock the river base to feed on crustaceans like crabs and lobsters and other small organisms that breed there. Birds are still coming, but for how long?"