

ASIAN WATERBIRD CENSUS INDIA NEWSLETTER

JULY 2026

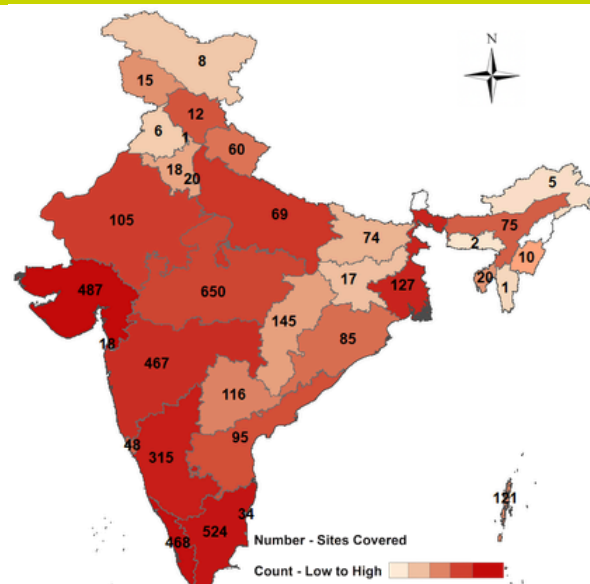


Picture credit: Nikita Mishra

Celebrating 40 Years of Citizen Science in Action

The Asian Waterbird Census (AWC) 2026 marked the 40th edition of the Asian Waterbird Census and the 60th anniversary of the International Waterbird Census (IWC). Since 1987, the AWC has mobilized thousands of volunteers across India to monitor waterbird populations and wetland health.

Jointly coordinated by Wetlands International South Asia (WI-SA), the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) and Bird Count India with the voluntary support of State Coordinators and endorsement from the National Biodiversity Authority. The census generates critical baseline for assessing waterbird populations and monitoring long-term trends across South Asia, identifies priority conservation sites, informs conservation action, and promotes citizen participation in wetland conservation.



Glimpses from AWC India 2026

The AWC India 2026 was conducted from 3–18 January 2026, with observations from December 2025 to February 2026 compiled to represent the annual waterbird census.

Based on data shared up to June 2026, the census covered more than 4,000 wetlands across 32 States and Union Territories. The highest site visits were from Madhya Pradesh (650), Tamil Nadu (524), and Gujarat (487).

The census documented over 8 million individuals representing 165 species of waterbirds and wetland-dependent birds. Gujarat recorded the highest abundance (~5 million; 150 species), followed by Kerala (~0.7 million; 120 species) and Tamil Nadu (~0.4 million; 124 species).

The census documented 28 Globally Threatened and 15 Near Threatened species on the IUCN Red List, including 15 of the 20 priority species identified under the National Action Plan for Conservation of Migratory Birds and their Habitats along the Central Asian Flyway (2018–2023).

In the Press...

Assam: Two-day Asian Water Bird Census 2026 conducted at Pobitora by 12 enumeration teams. [The Assam Tribune](#)

Bihar: Kosi River Region Emerges As Migratory Bird Hotspot. [ETV Bharat](#)

Kerala: Asian Waterbird Census 2026 records 60% jump in Kollam's waterbird count. [The Hindu](#)

Maharashtra: Over 3,700 migratory birds recorded in Asian Waterbird Census. [The Times of India](#)

New Delhi: 9,000+ birds counted along Yamuna floodplains during waterbird census. [The Times of India](#)

Odisha: Chilika hosts 11.32 lakh birds this winter, 5,000 more than last year. [The New Indian Express](#)

Uttar Pradesh: Asian Waterbird Census 2026: Aquatic birds counted in Jodhpur Jhal wetland in Mathura. [The Statesman](#)



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Picture credit: Dhruv Verma

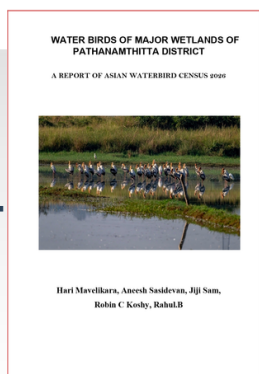


Picture credit: Dr. P. Sathiyaselvam

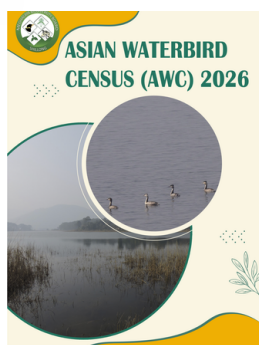


Picture credit: Dr. Raju Kasambe

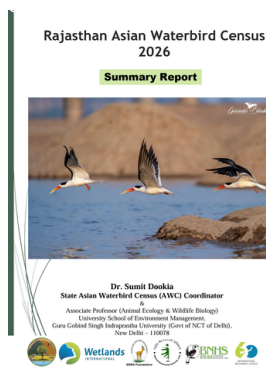
AWC India 2026 State Reports



The AWC 2026 in Pathanamthitta District, **Kerala**, recorded 3,766 waterbirds representing 49 waterbird species across 10 major wetlands. Although bird abundance declined from 2025, species richness remained stable, with 18 migratory species. Karingali Puncha emerged as the district's most important wetland, supporting 1,434 birds of 38 species. The census also documented two Near Threatened species, Black-tailed Godwit and Asian Woollyneck.



The AWC 2026 at Umiyam Lake, **Meghalaya**, recorded 140 individual waterbirds representing 13 species. The Great Crested Grebe was the most abundant species (55 individuals), followed by the Great Cormorant (25) and Little Cormorant (24). The census highlighted the continued presence of diverse migratory and resident waterbirds, underscoring the need for sustained monitoring and conservation of Umiyam Lake and its catchment.



The Asian Waterbird Census 2026 in **Rajasthan** covered 31 key wetland sites, including Sambhar Lake and Keoladeo National Park. A total of 122 waterbird species were recorded, highlighting the ecological importance of these wetlands as critical wintering and stopover sites along the Central Asian Flyway. Notable observations included Lesser Flamingo, Eurasian Coot, Great Cormorant, and Northern Shoveler.



The AWC 2026 in **Ladakh** recorded 31 waterbird and wetland-dependent species (1,053 individuals) across 12 wetlands. The census documented the Common Pochard, Northern Lapwing, and the first-ever record of the Lapland Longspur in Ladakh. Habitat assessments also identified key threats, including solid waste, habitat fragmentation, unregulated tourism, and feral dogs, emphasizing the need for strengthened wetland management and long-term monitoring.

For more information visit the Wetlands International South Asia [website](https://www.wetlands.org) or contact awc@wetlands.org



Produced by: Wetlands International South Asia

Launch of Asian Waterbird Census (India) - eBird Project

The AWC 2026 marked the launch of the eBird AWC Project, introducing a dedicated AWC portal integrated with eBird to streamline digital submission of census observations. The platform improves data quality, simplifies validation, and strengthens long-term waterbird monitoring.

Future updates will also integrate wetland habitat assessment, enabling participants to submit habitat information alongside bird checklists, ensuring timely submission of complete census data and supporting more effective wetland conservation.

AWC 2026 meetings

The Pre-Census Coordinators' Meeting was held on December 2025, attended by 19 State and National Coordinators, reviewed lessons from previous census cycles, introduced the eBird AWC Project, and finalized the implementation strategy for AWC 2026.

The Post-Census Coordinators' Meeting, with representatives from nine States and Union Territories, reviewed data submission progress, discussed field experiences, and measures to strengthen partnerships, enhance digital data collection, and improve reporting efficiency. A dedicated eBird AWC Project review meeting was also held with the Regional Coordinators to share experiences from the first year of implementation and identify improvements for future census cycles.

A heartfelt thank you to the invaluable support of our dedicated volunteers, local groups, Bird Count India and other partner organizations for making AWC 2026 a success