

# Birds of Vaduvor Bird Sanctuary, Tamil Nadu, India: an annotated checklist

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## Abstract

Waterfowls and allied species depend on wetlands that have been threatened by urban, industrial and agricultural expansions, which have jeopardized the integrity of this unique ecosystem. As a result, avifauna that exploits the wetlands has severely been affected. The Vaduvor Lake in Tamil Nadu, India is one such wetland that supports large number of migratory and resident birds. However, this lake has recently been identified as one of the Important Bird Areas (IBA) of India by Indian Bird Conservation Network, despite which so far no attempt has been made to study this wetland or the avifaunal species dependant on it. Hence, a study was conducted to comprehensively identify the status of birds utilizing the lake for various ecological purposes from April 2008 to September 2010. In total, 118 species of birds were found to utilize this lake, largely during September to April every year. Apart from the regular common migrants to Tamilnadu, the lake harbours near threatened bird species viz. Spot-billed Pelican (*Pelecanus philippensis*) Darter (*Anhinga melanogaster*), Painted Stork (*Mycteria leucocephala*) and Oriental White Ibis (*Threskiornis melanocephalus*). Vegetation in and around the lake consisted of *Acacia nilotica* (planted), *Prosopis chilensis*, *Azadirachta indica* and *Tamarindus indica* (natural) formed the prime breeding habitat. As most of the birds depend on the nearby paddy field for foraging, they were hunted or captured alive by the local and *Narikuravas* and sold in the Mannargudi fish-market. Hence, extensive awareness program targeting the local public, on the significance of the migratory birds and Vaduvor Bird Sanctuary is one of the main conservation action needed.

## Introduction

Waterfowls and allied species depend on wetlands that collect and store runoff and groundwater discharge, which is necessary to abate the effects of drought and flooding, sustain natural vegetation and crops, prevent erosion, and purify water. However, wetlands as wildlife habitats are suffering an accelerating degradation worldwide due to increase in human activities leading to urban, industrial and agricultural expansions that has jeopardized the integrity of this unique ecosystem. The impact of this habitat degradation has seriously affected the species dependent on wetlands; decline in bird populations resulting in many species being placed on threatened list. In India, wetlands receive comparatively little attention than the terrestrial ecosystems. Hence, an attempt was made to understand the status of the feathered visitors from April 2008 to September 2010 with following objectives:

- Identification of numerical and breeding status of waterbirds
- Identification of threats to waterbirds and the lake.

## Study area

The Vaduvor lake, situated at 10° 42' 19" N and 79° 18' 53" E, spreading over c.128 ha (1.28 sq.km) in Tiruvavur District, Tamil Nadu, India, is one such wetland that supports large number of migratory and resident birds. It was declared as a bird sanctuary by the Forest Department in July 1999. Vegetation of the lake consists of *Prosopis chilensis*, *Azadirachta indica*, *Tamarindus indica*, and *Acacia nilotica* including planting of *A. nilotica* by the forest department under the Sanctuary Management Programme. The Vennaru River is the main source of water in addition to northeast monsoon. The lake is surrounded by a large bund around the southern side, while on the northern portion, the bund is short as the elevation serves as natural bund. These

bunds help in holding the water upto a depth of c.2.5m in the lake. Nayvasal and Vaduvor are the two villages situated around the lake. Recently, this lake has been identified as one of the Important Bird Areas (IBA) of India by Indian Bird Conservation Network, despite no attempt has been made so far to study this wetland or its dependant avifaunal species.

## Methodology

Waterbirds of Vaduvor Lake were monitored from April 2008 to April 2010. Birds were counted using direct count method from selected vantage points following Bibby *et al.* (1992) and Sutherland (1997). Counts were made four times in a month during which birds were observed from 0600 to 1000hrs in the morning and 1600 to 1800hrs in the evening, being their most active periods of the day. No count was done during extreme weather conditions. The identification of birds was done using field guides (Ali, 2002), while Manakadan and Pittie (2001) was followed for the common and scientific names of birds of India. During the fieldwork, anthropogenic activities viz. hunting, illegal fishing and woodcutting (if any) were monitored and quantified (if possible) following Joshua and Johnsingh (1994). Formal and informal interviews were conducted with the people involved in the above said activities to get the general perception on the need for them to do this and find out alternative options if possible. Shannon and Weaver (1949) were followed to calculate the diversity of birds.

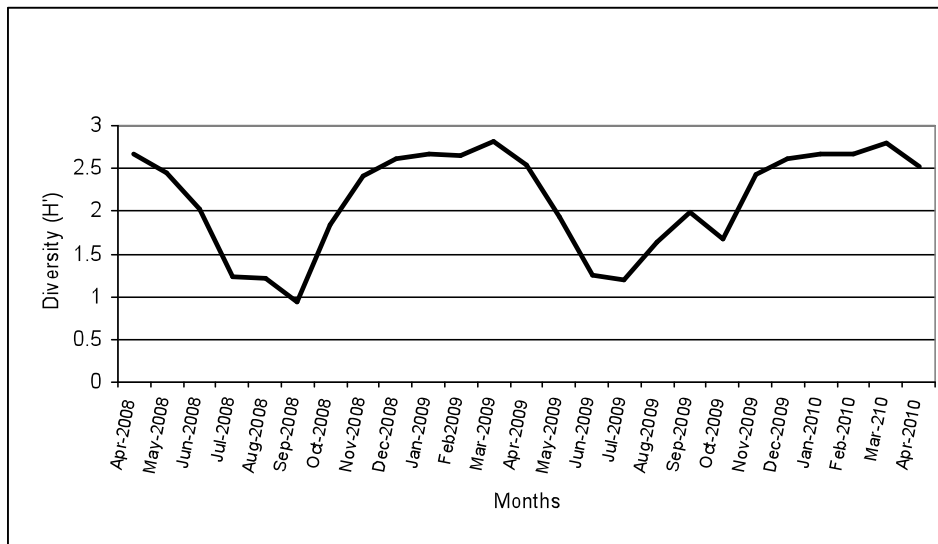
## Results and discussion

A list of birds recorded from Vaduvor Lake with common and scientific names, status, feeding habit, maximum number of individual sighted, and their occurrence in various months is given in the table (Table 1). The study reveals the occurrence of 118 species of birds belonging to 87 genera, 48 families and 18 orders. Among the 18 orders, Passeriformes dominated the list with 39 species of birds followed by Charadriiformes with 15 species, Ciconiiformes with 13 species, Anseriformes with nine species, Falconiformes with eight species, Coraciiformes with six species, Gruiformes and Pelecaniformes with five species each, Columbiformes and Cuculiformes with three species each, Galliformes, Strigiformes, Piciformes and Apodiformes with two species each, and Turniciformes, Podicipediformes, Psittaciformes Caprimulgiformes with one species each. Of the total 118 species of birds, 49 species were waterbirds and 69 species were terrestrial birds.

Although 118 species were listed from Vaduvor Lake, 16 species were sighted either in flight or outside the lake boundary, but not from the lake. Only, 102 species of birds were found within the lake boundary. Further study may confirm whether these 16 species utilize the lake or not. Of the total 118 birds, 26 species were migrants, 61 residents and 31 were resident migrants that make local movements. As far as food habits are concerned, insectivore dominated the list with 46 species and followed by piscivore (32 species), granivore (10 species), carnivore (10 species), omnivore (9 species), and frugivore (7 species).

Spot-billed Pelican, a globally near threatened (IUCN 2007) and resident species with local movements in India, was found thrice in the lake during the study period. On 24<sup>th</sup> June 2009, a maximum of 60 Spot-billed Pelicans were

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**Figure 1. Diversity of Birds in Vaduvloor Bird Sanctuary, Tamil Nadu, India**

recorded in this lake that highlights the importance of this lake. Similarly, a maximum of 218 painted storks, another near threatened (IUCN 2007) and resident bird with local movements were also observed in the same year. However, few pairs of Spot-billed pelicans were reported to breed in this lake during 1998-1999, no breeding activities of this species was observed during this study period. It was told by the local wildlife enthusiasts that the use of firecracker by the devotees during festival season in temples adjacent to the lake caused the pelican to desert its nesting activities during the above mentioned period. Oriental white Ibis, another near threatened bird (IUCN 2007) was also frequently recorded from this lake.

Regardless of years, diversity of birds reached its peak in March when almost all birds were with chicks (Figure 1). As

majority of the birds complete their breeding activities and leave the lake before the month of May and the lake goes dry completely between late April and early June, number of bird species showed a decreasing trend after March. The adjacent paddy fields serve as a good foraging ground for majority of the aquatic birds that predominantly feeds on insects, molluscs etc.

As the lake is situated on one side of the Trichy - Mannargudi main road, vehicular sound is a great threat to the breeding birds. Further, use of crackers by locals during festivals in the temples located adjacent to the lake, also a threat for the breeding birds. The Vaduvloor Lake is getting filled with silt every year and needs periodical desilting to increase the depth so as to retain and store water for longer periods of the dry months. Above all, as most of the birds depend on the paddy fields nearby for foraging, they are often hunted or captured alive by the local and *Narikuravas* and sold in the Mannargudi fish-market. (Figure 2). Hence, extensive awareness programme targeting the local public, on the significance of the migratory birds and Vaduvloor Bird Sanctuary is one of the main conservation action needed.

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**Figure 2. Man selling birds (Chestnut Bittern, a species not sighted in Vaduvloor Lake during the study period but recorded only in the Market) in the Mannargudi fish market**

**Table 1. List of birds recorded in Vaduvor Bird Sanctuary, Tamil Nadu, India**

S. No	Common Name	Scientific Name	Status	Food Habit	Observed Months (maximum number of individuals recorded with year)
	<b>Order: Podicipediformes</b>				
	<b>Family: Podicipedidae</b>				
1	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	R	P	Throughout (82, 2009)
	<b>Order: Pelecaniformes</b>				
	<b>Family: Pelecanidae</b>				
2	Spot-billed Pelican	<i>Pelecanus philippensis</i>	RM	P	June, July** (60, 2009)
	<b>Family: Phalacrocoracidae</b>				
3	Little Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax niger</i>	RM	P	Throughout (178, 2010)
4	Indian Shag	<i>Phalacrocorax fuscicollis</i>	RM	P	Jun** (2, 2009)
5	Great Cormorant*	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	RM	P	Jun-Aug** (28, 2008)
	<b>Family: Anhingidae</b>				
6	Darter	<i>Anhinga melanogaster</i>	RM	P	Jan-April, Oct-Dec (16, 2009)
	<b>Order: Ciconiiformes</b>				
	<b>Family: Ardeidae</b>				
7	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	R	P,I	Throughout (40, 2010)
8	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	RM	P	Throughout (15, 2010)
9	Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>	RM	P	Throughout (3, 2010)
10	Large Egret	<i>Casmerodius albus</i>	RM	P	Throughout (18, 2010)
11	Median Egret	<i>Mesophoyx intermedia</i>	RM	P	Throughout (16, 2010)
12	Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	RM	I	Throughout (162, 2010)
13	Indian Pond-Heron	<i>Ardeola grayii</i>	R	P,I	Throughout (216, 2009)
14	Black-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	R	P	Throughout (80, 2008)
	<b>Family: Ciconidae</b>				
15	Painted Stork	<i>Mycteria leucocephala</i>	RM	P	Jan-April, Oct-Dec (218, 2009)
16	White-necked Stork*	<i>Ciconia episcopus</i>	R	P	Jul** (2, 2008)
	<b>Family: Threskiornitidae</b>				
17	Glossy Ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>	RM	P	Jan-April, Oct-Dec (16, 2010)
18	Oriental White Ibis	<i>Threkiornis melanocephalus</i>	R	P	Jan-April, Oct-Dec (150, 2009)
19	Eurasian Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>	RM	P	Jan-April, Oct-Dec (29, 2010)
	<b>Order: Anseriformes</b>				
	<b>Family: Anatidae</b>				
20	Lesser Whistling-Duck*	<i>Dendrocygna javanica</i>	M	P	Nov** (2, 2008)
21	Bar-headed Goose*	<i>Anser indicus</i>	M	P	Jan** (16, 2008)
22	Eurasian Wigeon	<i>Anas penelope</i>	M	P	Nov-Jan (2, 2008)
23	Spot-billed Duck	<i>Anas poecilorhyncha</i>	RM	P	Jan-April, Oct-Dec (18, 2008)
24	Northern Shoveller	<i>Anas clypeata</i>	M	P	Nov-Jan (420, 2010)
25	Northern Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>	M	P	Nov-Jan (6, 2009)
26	Garganey	<i>Anas querquedula</i>	M	P	Nov-Jan (807, 2009)
27	Common Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>	M	P	Nov-Jan (6, 2009)
28	Common Pochard	<i>Aythya nyroca</i>	M	P	Nov-Jan (4, 2009)
	<b>Order: Falconiformes</b>				
	<b>Family: Accipitride</b>				
29	Black-Shouldered Kite	<i>Elanus caeruleus</i>	M	C	Jan-Mar (2, 2009)
30	Black Kite	<i>Milvus migrans</i>	R	C	Throughout (6, 2008)
31	Brahminy Kite	<i>Haliastur indus</i>	R	C	Throughout (6, 2010)
32	Western Marsh-Harrier*	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	M	C	Jan, Feb* (1, 2010)
33	Pallid Harrier*	<i>Circus macrourus</i>	M	C	Jan, Feb* (2, 2008)
34	Pied Harrier	<i>Circus melanoleucos</i>	M	C	Sep* (2,2008)
35	Shikra	<i>Accipiter badius</i>	R	C	Throughout (4, 2009)
36	Osprey*	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	M	C	Nov-Dec (1, 2009)
	<b>Order: Galliformes</b>				
	<b>Family: Phasianidae</b>				
37	Grey Francolin	<i>Francolinus pondicerianus</i>	R	G	Throughout (2, 2009)
38	Indian Peafowl	<i>Pavo cristatus</i>	R	O	Nov-Jan (2, 2009)
	<b>Order: Turniciformes</b>				
	<b>Family: Turnicidae</b>				
39	Common Buttonquail	<i>Turnix suscitator</i>	R	G	Throughout (1, 2008)
	<b>Order: Gruiformes</b>				
	<b>Family: Rallidae</b>				
40	White-breasted Waterhen	<i>Amaurornis phoenicurus</i>	R	I	Throughout (4, 2008)
41	Water Cock*	<i>Gallix cinerea</i>	M	I	Dec-Feb* (2, 2009)

42	Purple Moorhen	<i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i>	R	I	Throughout (2, all the years)
43	Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	RM	I	Throughout (3, 2009)
44	Common Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	RM	P	Throughout (165, 2008)
	<b>Order: Charadriiformes</b>				
	<b>Family: Jacanidae</b>				
45	Pheasant-tailed Jacana	<i>Hydrophasianus chirurgus</i>	R	O	Jan-April, Oct-Dec (59, 2010)
	<b>Family: Charadriidae</b>				
46	Yellow-wattled Lapwing	<i>Vanellus malabaricus</i>	R	I	Throughout (8, 2009)
47	Red-wattled Lapwing	<i>Vanellus indicus</i>	R	I	Throughout (12, 2009)
	<b>Family: Scolopacidae</b>				
48	Black-tailed Godwit*	<i>Limosa limosa</i>	M	I	Oct-Dec (48, 2010)
49	Bar-tailed Godwit*	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>	M	I	Oct-Dec (26, 2009)
50	Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>	M	I	Oct-Dec (6, 2008)
51	Common Greenshank*	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>	M	I	Oct-Dec (4, 2009)
52	Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>	M	I	Oct-Dec (4, 2009)
53	Marsh Sandpiper*	<i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>	M	I	Oct-Dec (4, 2008)
54	Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>	M	I	Oct-Dec (2, 2009)
55	Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	RM	I	Oct-Dec (4, 2009)
	<b>Family: Recurvirostridae</b>				
56	Black-winged Stilt*	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>	R	I	Oct-Dec (48, 2009)
	<b>Family: Laridae</b>				
57	Gull-billed Tern	<i>Gelochelidon nilotica</i>	M	P	Nov-Dec (4, 2008)
58	Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>	RM	P	Nov-Dec (2, 2009)
59	Black-bellied Tern	<i>Sterna acuticauda</i>	R	P	Nov-Dec (1, 2009)
	<b>Order: Columbiformes</b>				
	<b>Family: Columbidae</b>				
60	Blue Rock Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>	R	G	Throughout (2, 2008)
61	Little Brown Dove	<i>Streptopelia senegalensis</i>	R	G	Throughout (1, 2010)
62	Spotted Dove	<i>Streptopelia chinensis</i>	R	G	Throughout, 6, 2009)
	<b>Order: Psittaciformes</b>				
	<b>Family: Psittacidae</b>				
63	Rose-ringed Parakeet	<i>Psittacula krameri</i>	R	F	Throughout (4, 2008)
	<b>Order: Cuculiformes</b>				
	<b>Family: Cuculidae</b>				
64	Pied Crested Cuckoo	<i>Clamator jacobinus</i>	RM	I	Nov-Dec, Jan-Feb (3, 2009)
65	Asian Koel	<i>Eudynamis scolopacea</i>	R	F	Throughout (4, 2008)
66	Greater Coucal	<i>Centropus sinensis</i>	R	O	Throughout (1, 2009)
	<b>Order: Strigiformes</b>				
	<b>Family: Tytonidae</b>				
67	Barn Owl	<i>Tyto alba</i>	R	C	Throughout (1, all the years)
	<b>Family: Strigidae</b>				
68	Spotted Owlet	<i>Athene brama</i>	R	C	Throughout (3, 2008)
	<b>Order: Caprimulgiformes</b>				
	<b>Family: Caprimulgidae</b>				
69	Indian Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus asiaticus</i>	R	I	Throughout (1, all the years)
	<b>Order: Apodiformes</b>				
	<b>Family: Apodidae</b>				
70	Asian Palm Swift	<i>Cypsiurus balasiensis</i>	R	I	Throughout (4, 2008)
71	House Swift	<i>Apus affinis</i>	RM	I	Throughout (4, 2009)
	<b>Order: Coraciiformes</b>				
	<b>Family: Alcedinidae</b>				
72	Small Blue Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>	RM	P	Throughout (6, 2009)
73	White-breasted Kingfisher	<i>Hacyon smymensis</i>	R	P	Throughout (6, 2010)
74	Lesser Pied Kingfisher	<i>Ceryle rudis</i>	R	P	Throughout (18, 2009)
	<b>Family: Meropidae</b>				
75	Small Bee-eater	<i>Merops orientalis</i>	R	I	Throughout (8, 2008)
	<b>Family: Coraciidae</b>				
76	Indian Roller	<i>Coracias benghalensis</i>	R	I	Throughout (2, 2009)
	<b>Family: Upupidae</b>				
77	Common Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>	RM	I	Throughout (1, 2008)
	<b>Order: Piciformes</b>				
	<b>Family: Capitonidae</b>				
78	Coppersmith Barbet	<i>Megalaima haemacephala</i>	R	F	Throughout (1, 2008)
	<b>Family: Picidae</b>				
79	Lesser Golden-backed Woodpecker	<i>Dinopium benghalense</i>	R	I	Throughout (2, 2008)
	<b>Order: Passeriformes</b>				

	<b>Family: Alaudidae</b>				
80	Red-winged Bush-Lark	<i>Mirafr erythroptera</i>	R	I	Throughout (1, 2008)
81	Eastern Skylark	<i>Alauda gulgula</i>	R	I	Throughout (1, 2008)
	<b>Family: Hirundinidae</b>				
82	Wire-tailed Swallow	<i>Hirundo smithii</i>	RM	I	Oct-Mar (4, 2010)
83	Common Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	RM	I	Oct-Mar (4, 2010)
84	Red-rumped Swallow	<i>Hirundo daurica</i>	RM	I	Oct-Mar (6, 2008)
	<b>Family: Motacillidae</b>				
85	White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	RM	I	Nov-Jan (6, 2008)
86	Large Pied Wagtail	<i>Motacilla maderaspatensis</i>	R	I	Throughout (8, 2008)
87	Yellow Wagtail*	<i>Motacilla flava</i>	RM	I	Dec-Jan (2, 2010)
88	Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>	M	I	Nov-Jan (2, 2010)
89	Paddyfield Pipit	<i>Anthus rufulus</i>	R	I	Nov-Jan (2, 2010)
	<b>Family: Campephagidae</b>				
90	Common Woodshrike	<i>Tephrodornis pondicerianus</i>	R	I	Throughout (2, 2009)
	<b>Family: Pycnonotidae</b>				
91	Red-whiskered Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus jocosus</i>	R	F	Throughout (4, 2009)
92	Red-vented Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus cafer</i>	R	F	Throughout (6, 2010)
	<b>Family: Laniidae</b>				
93	Brown Shrike	<i>Lanius cristatus</i>	M	I	Sep-Jan (2, 2008)
94	Rufous-backed Shrike	<i>Lanius schach</i>	R	I	Nov-Jan (1, 2009)
	<b>Family: Turdinae</b>				
95	Indian Robin	<i>Saxicoloides fulicata</i>	R	I	Throughout (5, 2010)
	<b>Family: Timaliinae</b>				
96	White-headed Babbler	<i>Turdoides affinis</i>	R	I	Throughout (16, 2010)
	<b>Family: Sylviinae</b>				
97	Ashy Prinia	<i>Prinia socialis</i>	R	I	Throughout (4, all the years)
98	Paddyfield Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus agricola</i>	RM	I	Nov-Dec (2, 2009)
99	Blyth's Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus dumetorum</i>	RM	I	Nov-Dec (5, 2010)
100	Common Tailor Bird	<i>Orthotomus sutorius</i>	R	I	Throughout (12, 2009)
101	Greenish Leaf-Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochiloides</i>	M	I	Nov-Dec (4, 2008)
	<b>Family: Monarchinae</b>				
102	Asian Paradise-Flycatcher	<i>Terpsiphone paradisi</i>	RM	I	Throughout (2, 2010)
	<b>Family: Dicaeidae</b>				
103	Tickell's Flowerpecker	<i>Dicaeum erythrorhynchus</i>	R	F	Throughout (2, 2010)
	<b>Family: Nectariniidae</b>				
104	Purple-rumped Sunbird	<i>Nectarinia striata</i>	R	N,I	Throughout (2, 2010)
105	Purple Sunbird	<i>Nectarinia asiatica</i>	R	N,I	Throughout (2, 2010)
	<b>Family: Estridiidae</b>				
106	White-rumped Munia	<i>Lonchura striata</i>	R	G	Throughout (6, 2008)
107	Spotted Munia	<i>Lonchura punctulata</i>	R	G	Throughout (8, 2008)
108	Black-headed Munia	<i>Lonchura malacca</i>	R	G	Throughout (8, 2009)
	<b>Family: Passerinae</b>				
109	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	R	G	Throughout (6, 2010)
	<b>Family: Ploceinae</b>				
110	Baya Weaver	<i>Ploceus philippinus</i>	R	G	Throughout (6,2009)
	<b>Family: Sturnidae</b>				
111	Rosy Starling*	<i>Sturus roseus</i>	M	F	Dec-Jan (16, 2008)
112	Common Myna	<i>Acridotheres tristis</i>	R	O	Throughout (20, 2009)
	<b>Family: Oriolidae</b>				
113	Eurasian Golden Oriole	<i>Oriolus oriolus</i>	RM	O	Nov-Jan (2, 2008)
114	Black-headed Oriole*	<i>Oriolus xanthornus</i>	R	O	Dec (2, 2008)
	<b>Family: Dicruridae</b>				
115	Black Drongo	<i>Dicrurus macrocercus</i>	R	I	Throughout (6, 2009)
	<b>Family: Corvidae</b>				
116	Indian Treepie	<i>Dendrocitta vagabunda</i>	R	O	Throughout (4, 2009)
117	House Crow	<i>Corvus splendens</i>	R	O	Throughout (12, 2009)
118	Jungle Crow	<i>Corvus macrorhynchus</i>	R	O	Throughout (4, 2008)
	*sighted outside the lake or while in flight near the lake				** sighted only once

R = Resident, M = Migrant, RM = Resident-Migrant, I = Insectivore, G = Granivore, O = Omnivore, N = Nectarivore, P = Piscivore, F = Frugivore, C = Carnivore, Throughout = Observed almost all the months of the year