



Terns and Egrets. Image by Dr. Isha Pallava

Bird Migration and Related Studies in India

S Sivakumar

The World Migratory Bird Day is celebrated on the second Saturday of May and October to create mass awareness of migratory birds, their habitat, the challenges they face and their conservation needs.

BIRD migration is a regular movement between their breeding range, located in the northern hemisphere, and wintering grounds in the southern hemisphere to overcome extreme weather conditions. Apart from such a long-distance migration, some move for shorter distances like the Himalayas to central plains and southern peninsular or may move from higher altitudes to lower hill ranges or plains (Altitudinal migration).

Migration is an amazing natural phenomenon. Though there are a lot of studies on bird migration, many questions about migration are yet to be resolved. It is proven that migratory birds use the Earth's magnetic field, celestial bodies such as stars and the moon, and landmarks such as mountain ranges, coasts, etc. for navigation. Some birds cross the entire distance non-stop, and most of the birds use multiple sites in between, called stopover sites. A medium-sized wader called Bar-tailed Godwit (*Limosa lapponica*) travels non-stop from Alaska to Tasmania, crossing a distance of 13,500 km in 11 days.

Duck species such as Northern Pintail (*Anas acuta*), Northern Shoveler (*Spatula clypeata*), Green-winged Teal (*Anas crecca*), terns such as Caspian Tern (*Hydroprogne caspia*), Greater Crested Tern (*Thalasseus bergii*), Whiskered Tern (*Chlidonias hybrida*), gulls such as Heuglin's Gull (*Larus heuglini*), Brown-headed Gull (*Chroicocephalus brunnicephalus*), sandpipers, plovers, flycatchers, wagtails, etc. are some of the major bird groups or species that migrate to India from different parts of the world.

Ancient Literature and Modern Bird Migration Studies

Our forefathers had a keen observation of bird migration and recorded their observations in old literature, several hundred years before the start of scientific bird migration studies. The Sangam Tamil poets and the Sanskrit poet Kalidasa compared



Lesser Sand Plover