

Maha Pakshi Ganana 2011- A Report

The Maha Pakshi Ganana was organized in the state of Maharashtra in the period from 21st January to 30th January this year. In a span of 10 days, surveys were held across the state to count birds. In addition to carrying out a census of the various bird species found in the state, the Maha Pakshi Ganana also aims to introduce the common man to the joys of bird-watching.

The 2011 Ganana saw participation across all age groups, school children and adults participated with equal gusto. Many of the participants were first-timers. Maharashtra's avian diversity was displayed through 13 districts and 34 tahsils. A multitude of habitats were surveyed including dams, mudflats, forests, freshwater reservoirs, urban environs, mangroves and beaches. Fifteen institutions across Maharashtra participated in the activity, including four schools. 115 reports were received from almost 200 participants who helped make this census a big success. 308 different bird species were recorded. The total number of birds recorded was 59,386.

Two Critically Endangered species of the Gyps vulture were noted- the Long-billed vulture was spotted at Nashik, where as the Oriental White-rumped Vulture was spotted at Nashik and Sindhudurga. The Endangered Crimson-backed Sunbird was seen at Chandoli National Park, Sangli. The Broad-tailed Grassbird, listed as Vulnerable in IUCN's Red List, was recorded at Diva, Thane. The majestic Sarus Cranes along with the Pallas's Fishing Eagle were seen at Gondia. The Darter bird was spotted at Jalgaon which also saw the highest number of birds counted during the census-30,562. Jalgaon was followed by Nashik (8581) and then Sangli (6077) and Thane (5587). In addition to these, Nearly Threatened birds like the Malabar Pied Hornbill, Painted Stork, Ferruginous Pochard and Pallid Harrier were also identified through the survey.

A huge diversity of bird species- 153 to be exact- was observed at Hatnur dam at Jalgaon with a total of 18,928 birds that included close to 12,300 Common Coots and more than 800 Northern Pintails. The Waghur dam was second, with 103 species in its tally that included 1800 Northern Pintails in addition to 400 Eurasian Wigeons. The third spot was also bagged by Jalgaon-Meharun Lake dam saw 100 different species of birds.

The Maha Pakshi Ganana was organized by Maharashtra Pakshi Mitra and coordinated by Mr. Sharad Apte. The Ganana report has been compiled by Mr. Apte and Sahila Kudalkar, Yashwant Yuva Fellow, Sahyadri Nisarga Mitra.

This campaign provided an opportunity for the common man to study birds- besides identification and counting, participants were encouraged to observe the bird's behavior and it's interactions with its ecosystem. Birds are efficient indicators of the health of our planet. It is

hoped that by involving larger numbers into this activity, we will be able to effectively work towards the conservation of not just our avian friends but also the entire environment.