



Dr. L. Krishnan

BIRDING

Born on 26 th May 1946 in Ernakulam, Dr. L. Krishnan obtained his Bachelor's Degree in Zoology from the Maharajas College in 1966 and Masters Degree from the Department of Marine Biology and Oceanography of CUSAT in 1968. After working as lecturer in Zoology at Gokhale Centenary College, Ankola, North Kanara for one year he joined for Ph. D. at the Department of Aquatic Biology and Fisheries, University of Kerala and took his Doctorate Degree in 1975. After working in the Department of Fisheries, Govt. of Kerala for one year Dr. Krishnan entered into ARS Service of ICAR and got posted in ICAR-CMFRI, Kochi as Scientist – S1 and did research and teaching in various positions and superannuated in May 2008 as Principal Scientist. In between he also served for some time in ICAR-CIBA where he specialized on aquaculture, induced breeding and larval rearing of brackish water fishes and integrated farming. After rejoining CMFRI Dr. Krishnan specialized in the breeding of marine ornamental fishes and headed the Marine Hatchery in Kochi as its OIC. He was also actively involved in marine finfish cage culture which was a novice idea in India. He got his training in breeding and culture of Mulletts in Hawaii, USA under the PGPM of CMFRI. Two research fellows have taken Ph. D. under his guidance. He was a Consultant to Govt. of Iran on Mullet breeding and culture. He was also a trained HR Expert and served as HRD Co-ordinator of CMFRI. After retirement Dr. Krishnan served as Consultant in IGNOU for three years where he developed the PG Diploma Course in Fish Products. Afterwards he served as the Head of an Institution "Fish For All" at Poompuhar, Tamilnadu coming under the M.S. Swaminathan Research Centre for nearly four years.

The observation of birds in their natural habitat as a hobby, is the real definition of birding. Beginning with the spotting of a bird, listening to its calls, observing its habits, knowing its common and scientific name, capturing and storing its image, a curiosity to know about its habitat, are the chain of events in this hobby which will make you spend your time fruitfully and at the same time enjoying it. Thus, birding keeps you engaged and interested as you progress. Birding helps you to be closer

to nature, understand the importance of biodiversity in an environment and know the importance of birds in ecology. Kerala has a rich population of birds. With its rich flora, abundance of rivers, estuaries and lakes, forests and even protected habitats, the state allows regular visits of migratory birds from other countries. It is observed that nearly 150 types of migratory birds visit Kerala every year.



Birding does not need much investment in terms of money. The patience to wander around and a good, persistent observation capacity are the basic needs. However, a good binocular and a camera with binocular lenses, if affordable, adds a lot to this hobby. Stalwarts like Dr. Salim Ali have contributed a lot to understand the life histories of these adorable feathery friends. You can observe birds from the comforts of your apartment or house, or outside in your own garden or in a public park. The diversity of these feathery beauties increases in and around paddy fields, near water bodies or in uninhabited stretches of lands. Mangroves and swampy areas attract a wide variety of water birds. Open areas with coconut trees in our villages attract parrots and wood peckers.

If you really want to experience the pleasure of birding, reach near a water body early in the morning before sunrise. Here the birds are very active till the sun reaches its prime position. These water bodies abound in bird species such as ducks, egrets, cormorants, king fishers, terns, fish eating eagles, storks, swamp hens etc. Water birds like a heron or a stork with their exotic plumes can be observed standing like stilts on one leg, sometimes in low water and observing the water with patience and concentration. Suddenly with a swift motion, they reach water with their sinuous head and come out with a live fish in their beak which they swallow with a quick gesture.

The brightly plumed kingfisher with its strong beak sits on a low branch and suddenly, like a missile, dart into the water and catch a passing fish. The jacanas can be seen walking steadily on top of water lily leaves with a nimble balancing act with the help of their long-webbed toes. The black sinuous headed cormorants with their shiny, oily black plumes, dive down and disappear into the water, and all on a sudden surface at a distance with fish in their beak. Ducks in different hues and sizes wade happily in search of fishes.



Little Egret



Cormorant

During migratory season, a birder can observe exotic birds like pelicans, flamingoes and painted storks in mangrove swamps like Kandakkadavu (near Chellanum) and Kadamakkudy.



Kingfisher

The sight of spotted pelicans nesting on top of coconut trees and nursing their chicks is a rare feast for the eyes of a birder. These huge birds can also be seen wading and swimming in the pond land catching fish with their bag like mouth. The sight of a tall and stout painted stork with its brightly painted beak standing upright on the branch of a tree, like a soldier on watch, is really awesome. The local youth in Kandakkadavu speak proudly of these migratory birds and guide you to spot the birds.

Kadamakkudy near Cheranellur, with abundant pokkali rice fields is a great spot to view water birds, as you walk lazily along narrow bunds of the ponds. You can boast of sighting the black beaked ibis birds foraging for food in the marshy grass. The wide array of heron species in varying plumage makes you wonder

Pelican with Chicks



Ibis and a Painted Stork





Wood Pecker



Nesting Parrots

struck. Flocks of stilts, ducks and the brightly coloured swamp hens enthrall you. The sights of little cormorants and darters swimming in groups and at times perching on poles drying their wings is a great treat for the eyes and a good chance to photograph them. Many birders from various parts of our country visit this area equipped with zoom lensed cameras and tripods to capture these winged beauties. Frequent sightings of fish-eating eagles and Brahminy kites hovering above, is common. You can walk for hours observing these winged wonders.



Swamp Hen



Ducks

A good birder can easily spot the black beautiful drongos, the robins, the colorful crested bulbuls, the noisy mynas, the timid doves, the chirpy sparrows, the exotic coloured sunbirds and many more winged beauties, if he takes a stroll along a silent road early in the morning. With luck, one can even be rewarded with the sight of the elusive koel with its melodious cooing. I have many a times spotted a small hawk waiting to pounce on smaller birds with its shrewd eyes, while staring into my vacant backyard.

A visit to a sea beach like Vypin can reward you with the sights of flocks of sea gulls, terns and sand plovers.

A visit and a good walk inside a bird sanctuary like Thattekad may enable you to spot rare birds like the Ceylonese frog mouth. This area boasts of two types of migratory birds, forest based and water based. Migratory birds visit Thattekad between October and February. Around 322 varieties of birds visit this sanctuary. This sanctuary came into existence because of the efforts of the doyen Dr. Salim Ali. Our country boasts of nearly 1200 species of birds of which 61 are endemic. There are ample opportunities for an avid birder to satisfy his interest by visiting sanctuaries such as Bharatpur bird sanctuary in Rajasthan, Sultanpur sanctuary in Haryana, Salim Ali sanctuary in Goa, Kumarakom bird sanctuary in Kerala, Vedanthangal bird sanctuary in Tamil Nadu, Chilka Lake bird sanctuary in Orissa, Mangalavanam bird sanctuary in Kochi etc.

A birder should carefully follow the following ethics while observing the winged beauties.

- Never endanger the welfare of the birds. Keep a safe distance from them while observing or photographing them.
- Never trespass into private property while birding. Respect the rights of others while wandering.
- Never disturb nesting birds.
- If possible keep records.
- Be a silent and patient observer.

Prerequisites of a birder

Inculcate an interest to learn more about the winged friends. Be an early bird and reach the birding spot before sunrise. A cap, a small book and pencil, some snacks and a water bottle, a small tube of insect repellent, all packed in a back pack will enable you to enjoy the hobby. A good pair of binoculars can be of great use to watch and enjoy the birds and their behavior. A good



healthy. The whole-hearted attention that a birder devotes for the hobby gives you enough peace of mind and complete relaxation. Birding instills in you an awareness of the environment and the understanding of the need of its protection from man made causes. There are immense opportunities for a birder to join groups like the Cochin Natural History Society which is Cochin based.

Happy birding !!!

camera is an added asset, and investing on a good one – you will never regret. There are so many accessories to be used with a camera to get a perfect shot. Some apps for the help of the birder to be used with a smart phone are plenty and can be downloaded. E Bird is an internationally acclaimed bird app which not only helps you identify your bird but also helps you to share your data related to its location, it's photograph, and it's availability in nearby areas. E Bird makes it easy to record the birds you see in the field and links your observation with online data base of bird research used by birders around the World. E Bird is an important app linking birders globally. It helps you to know about hotspots, and it's GPS enabled location plotting ensures accuracy and also enables you to record preserve and track your birding trip.

Birding has other advantages. The early morning walks in search of birds make you fresh and



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