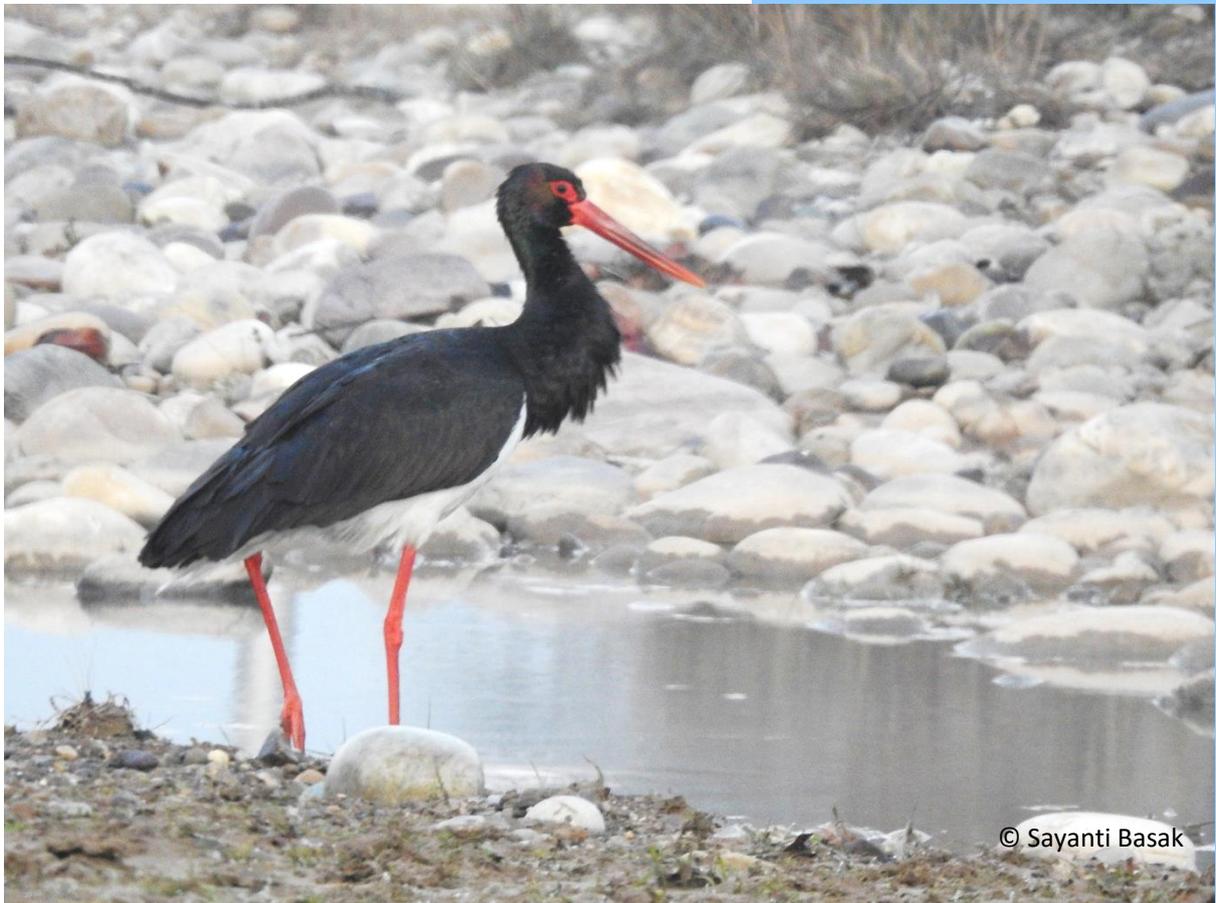


Report on ONLINE TRAINING WORKSHOP ON  
“Birds of Ganga Basin” for *Ganga Praharis* from Uttar  
Pradesh



**Report on ONLINE TRAINING WORKSHOP ON  
“Birds of Ganga Basin” for *Ganga Praharis* from Uttar Pradesh**

**Date: 11<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> May, 2020**

*“...while man is recklessly unleashing new insults on his environment, background monitoring of populations is essential to detect the threats as they develop and before they become catastrophes apparent to all”- Matthews (1967)*

Learning and the dissipation of knowledge should be a continuous process, especially in COVID-19 pandemic crisis, which has halted a multitude of activities for humans across the world. Our feathered friends, the Ganga Praharis, however, have no such restrictions. Therefore, with the constant endeavour of involving stakeholders for biodiversity conservation of Ganga, the Wildlife Institute of India – NMCG had organised a three-day online workshop on “**Birds of Ganga River**” for the *Ganga Praharis* from Uttar Pradesh. The Ganges in Uttar Pradesh holds special significance, as it is the main source of irrigating large agricultural tracts, supporting the Narora Atomic Power Station, and the cradle of ancient civilisations that arose in the State. The city of Prayagraj (confluence of Ganga, Yamuna, and Saraswati), is one of the holy sites where the Kumbh Mela is celebrated in a cycle of approximately 12 years. Around 200 *Ganga Praharis* have been trained from the State, who with their enthusiasm, support the conservation of Ganga’s biodiversity. This workshop was conducted with the aim of involving and encouraging *Ganga Praharis*, without whose support and steadfast efforts in the face of uncertainties, Ganga biodiversity conservation would not be possible. Such active initiatives can aid in building capacity and awareness for the biodiversity conservation of the Ganga River. The workshop was inaugurated Dr. Sangeeta Angom, Scientist and Training coordinator, NMCG WII of the Ganga Biodiversity Conservation Phase II. A total of 49 Ganga Praharis from different districts of Uttar Pradesh had participated the webinar.

**Day 1**

**Date: 11<sup>th</sup> May, 2020**

**Speaker: Mr. Goura Chandra Das “Identification and Monitoring of waterbirds in the Ganga River”**

Mr. Goura is a PhD scholar at the Wildlife Institute of India. He began his talk by explaining about the definition of waterbirds. He discussed different criteria like plumage colour, beak pattern and type of habitats preferred through which we can identify them. Preferred habitat

type of some of the rare, endemic, and threatened (RET) species of breeding water birds viz. Oriental darter (*Ahinga melanogaster*), Indian Skimmer (*Rhynchops albicollis*), River Tern (*Sterna aurantia*), River lapwing (*Vanellus duvaucelii*), Great thick-knee (*Esacus recurvirostris*), Sarus Crane (*Antigone antigone*) and Black-bellied tern (*Sterna acuticauda*) were discussed.



A pair of Sarus Cranes (*Antigone antigone*), a Vulnerable species (IUCN 2006)

## Day 2

**Date: 12<sup>th</sup> May, 2020**

**Speaker: Dr. Gopi G.V. “Monitoring techniques of Water Birds”.**

Dr. Gopi G.V. is a senior scientist at the Wildlife Institute of India. His field of research focuses primarily on the ecology and dynamics of wildlife populations, especially in the context of management and conservation problems. Dr. Gopi began by explaining the various population counting techniques used for birds and why monitoring of birds is important. Waterbirds are defined as “species of bird that are ecologically dependent on wetlands”. This is the definition used by the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands. Waterbirds are well-known indicators of the quality of certain types of wetlands. The 1% criterion of the Ramsar Convention, whereby any site which regularly holds 1% or more of a waterbird population at any given time, qualifies as a wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands. This criterion is also used by BirdLife International in the identification of Important Bird Areas

(IBAs) in wetlands throughout the world. People's participation, at a mass scale, especially local communities like *Ganga Praharis*, dedicatedly engaged in biodiversity conservation of Ganga, can aid the long-term monitoring of birds by providing crucial information which underpins the conservation of waterbirds and their wetland habitats.

Dr. Gopi spoke about the Sarus crane (*Antigone antigone*), a Vulnerable species of bird, mostly found in agricultural fields and associated wetlands in India, is dependent on local support for its conservation. Many water bird species, such as the Pink-headed duck (*Rhodonessa caryophyllacea*) and the migratory, Siberian Crane (*Leucogeranus leucogeranus*) have been driven to near extinction in India. Both the species are listed as Critically Endangered according to the IUCN Red List. The last Siberian Crane in India was seen in the year 2002 in Keoladeo National Park, Rajasthan. The various techniques for population monitoring of wetland birds are: total count or sample counts, point count or line transect, and capture-recapture methods. Monitoring of breeding populations of water birds can be done by total counts. While doing the population monitoring the habitat attributes also need to be recorded. A mosaic of aquatic habitats is important for supporting a variety of aquatic fauna. The thumb rule for wetland conservation- inlet and outlet of water, should be functioning for the proper ecological balance and hydrological regime of the wetland. Dr. Gopi emphasized how local support can help us gain an insight into the changing trends of birds, both migratory and resident. Proactive participation by the *Ganga Praharis* and local forest department can help to prevent many bird mortalities in densely populated areas.

### **Day 3**

**Date: 13<sup>th</sup> May, 2020**

**Speaker: Ms. Shuchismita Das on "Birds of Ganga Basin".**

Ms. Shuchismita Das is working as a Project Fellow in the NMCG-WII collaborative project. Her field of interest is avian ecology. During the talk, she spoke about the basic ecology of the different resident and migratory bird species found in the Ganga Basin. She also explained the various identification features of different that can aid people in identifying birds easily. Some of the resident waterbird species that were described during the talk were: Black-bellied Tern (*Sterna acuticauda*), Sarus Crane (*Antigone antigone*), Indian Skimmer (*Rhynchops albigollis*), River Tern (*Sterna aurantia*), River Lapwing (*Vanellus duvaucelii*), Painted Stork (*Mycteria leucocephala*), Black-necked Stork (*Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus*), Asian Woolly-necked Stork (*Ciconia episcopus*), Asian openbill Stork (*Anastomus oscitans*), Lesser Adjutant Stork (*Leptoptilos javanicus*), and Greater Adjutant Stork (*Leptoptilos dubius*). The migratory bird

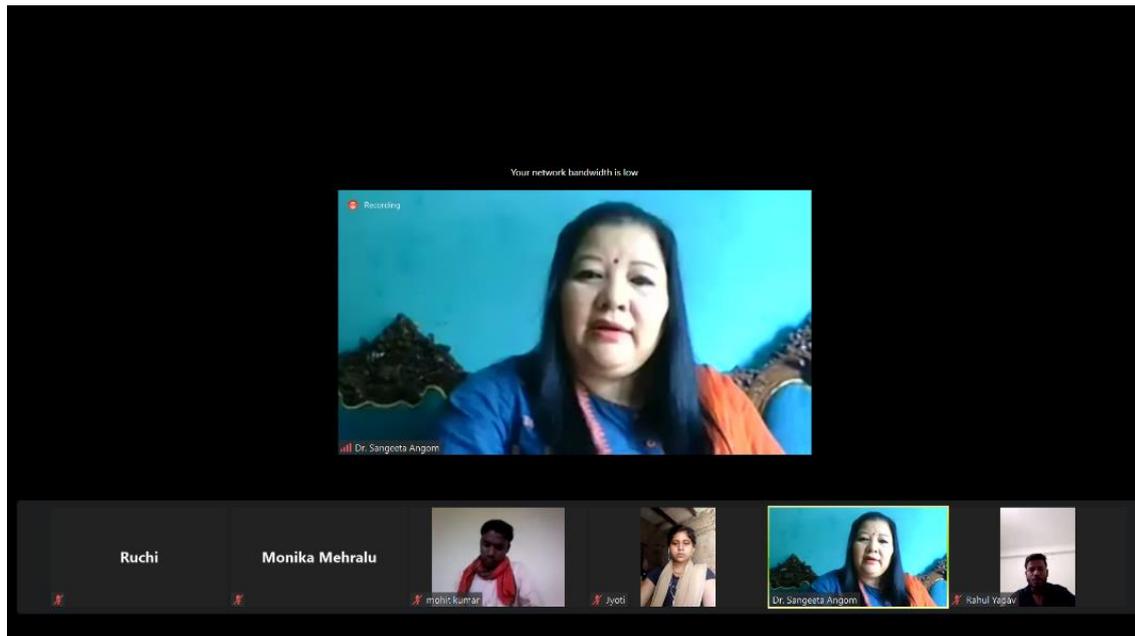
species discussed were: Bar-headed Goose (*Anser indicus*), Common Teal (*Anas crecca*), Red-crested Pochard (*Netta rufina*), Eurasian wigeon (*Mareca penelope*), Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*), Northern Shoveler (*Spatula clypeata*), Northern Pintail (*Anas acuta*), and Tufted Duck (*Aythya fuligula*). She also highlighted the importance of birds in human lives as natural pest controllers, scavengers, pollinators, and ecosystem engineers. Juveniles of migratory birds such as ducks and geese feed on mosquito larvae, thus controlling the mosquito population.

In the past few decades, environmental degradation of the river system due to rampant loss of vegetation cover, uncontrolled urbanization, population and extensive farming on the floodplains has critically damaged the nesting and feeding grounds of birds. Use of chemical pesticides in agriculture fields and increased river traffic with mechanized boats/vessels are great deterrent to the bird population. This has apparently reduced the number and diversity of the migratory birds in the Ganga basin especially in Bihar in the last couple of decades. Habitats like the mid-Channel Islands, channel between islands, and braided channel, mudflat area, etc. with low human activities are preferred roosting and feeding sites for a multitude of species of waterbirds. Attacks by feral dogs, trampling of bird nests by cattle, illegal poaching and bird trappings are also some of the major threats to the avian fauna along the Ganga River.

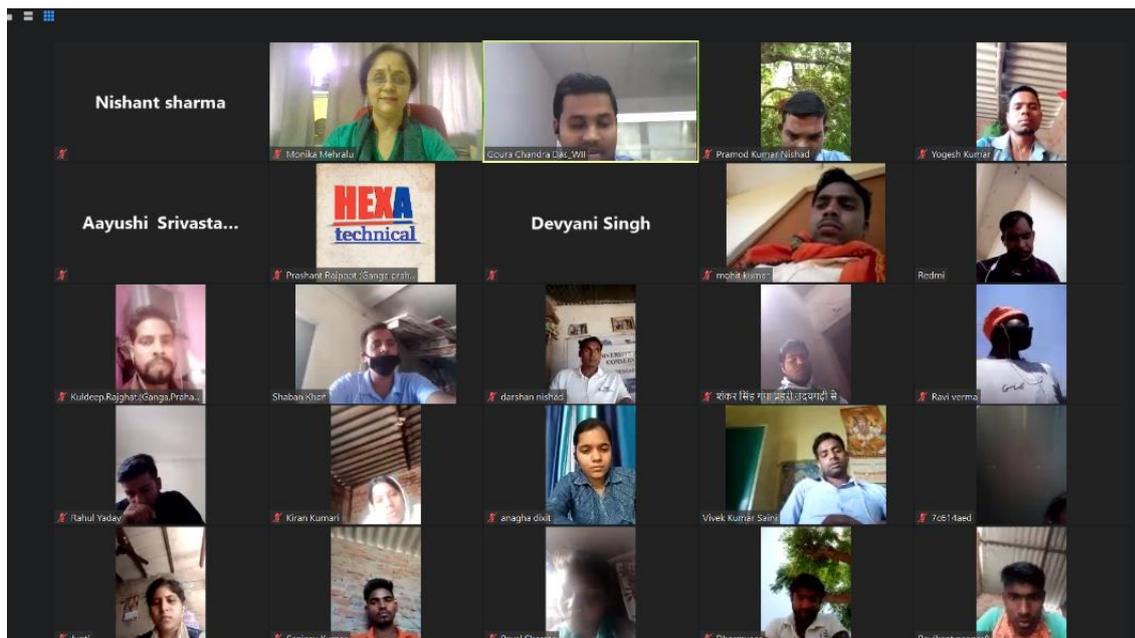
#### **PROGRAMME SCHEDULE**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Session</b>	<b>Resource Person</b>
<b>Day 1 (11<sup>th</sup> May, 2020)</b>		
1100-1110	<b>Welcome Address</b>	Dr. Sangeeta Angom
1110-1200	Identification & Survey protocol of Waterbirds	Mr. Goura Chandra Das
1200-1230	Group Discussion	
<b>Day 2 (12<sup>th</sup> May, 2020)</b>		
1100-1230	Monitoring of Waterbirds	Dr. Gopi G. V
1230-1300	Group Discussion	
<b>Day 2 (13<sup>th</sup> May 2020)</b>		
1100-1230	Birds of Ganga Basin	Ms. Shuchismita Das
1230-1250	Group Discussion	
1250-1300	<b>Vote of Thanks</b>	Ms. Monika Mehralu

## Photograph of the Webinar



(A) Inaugural address by Dr. Sangeeta Angom



(B) Mr. Goura Chandra Das presentation on Identification & Survey protocol of Waterbirds



**(C) Dr. Gopi G.V presentation on Wetland birds and their Monitoring**



**(D) Ms. Shuchismita Das presentation on birds of Ganga Basin**