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Avifaunal Composition of Jawaharlal Nehru University Campus, New Delhi

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Abstract

The Jawaharlal Nehru University campus is a unique campus which habours not only the natural ridge ecosystem but also a huge avifaunal biodiversity. The survey was done for a period of three years from January 2013 to December 2016. Data was collected using line transects in different habitats all across the campus. A total of 114 bird species belonging to 19 orders and 52 families were identified during the study period, including 3 near threatened species, 2 vagrants, 3 summer visitors, 4 passage migrants, 26 winter visitors and 79 resident species. Of these, 47 species were insectivorous, 33 species were omnivorous, 14 species were carnivorous, 7 species were frugivorous, 6 species were gramnivorous, 4 species were herbivorous, 2 species were piscivorous and 1 species was nectarivorous. It was observed that the Jawaharlal Nehru University campus supported very rich and diverse avian fauna assemblages all year round due to the presence of the ridge ecosystems. Long-term conservation programmes must be adopted in order to protect the natural ecosystems and bird diversity present in the campus. \odot

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Introduction

The ornithological history of Delhi, the capital of India, is relatively old. The foremost inventory of bird species in Delhi is made by Basil-Edwardes (1926)¹ who reported 204 species and sub-species. Thereafter there are many ornithologists²⁻⁷ who

worked on similar lines. Apart from this, Kalpavriksh (1991)⁸ recorded 444 species in Delhi and its surrounding areas and Satya (1993)⁹ revealed 101 species remarkably affected both positively and negatively by urbanization in Delhi.

There are huge lands under university campuses

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supporting half the biodiversity of urban biota¹⁰. But the conservationists till now have ignored these areas and have not utilized these areas for conservation purposes. One such area is the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) campus situated in the southern part of Delhi, (Lat 28°32'15.42"N, Long 77° 9'52.24"E). It is built on the Aravali Hill Ranges which extends upto Gujarat. The campus area encompasses around 400 ha. The unique feature of the campus are the vast areas of undisturbed ridge ecosystems which it still holds. These are connected with the adjoining Sanjay Van forest which again represents the ridge ecosystem. A previous study in ridge systems alone by Gaston (1978)¹¹ revealed 167 bird species. As Delhi comes under the subtropical belt, it experiences a semiarid climate. The temperature varies from 45 °C in summer to 1°C in winter¹². The average rainfall is around 611 mm¹². The campus has good areas of dense thorny deciduous species and fleshy evergreens. Though the vegetation is mainly xerophytic¹³, it does support a diverse variety of fauna. In addition to the ridge forest vegetation, the campus represents different habitats like small check-dams, gardens with ornamental shrubs, avenue trees along the roadsides etc. which are abode for the avifauna.

Though there have been many bird watching activities in the campus, none of data is published. This will be the first published inventory of the bird species found in the JNU campus. This inventory will not only bring out the baseline information on the bird species diversity supported by the campus, but also highlight about their presence and conservation status. This data can be further used by the campus authorities and city planners for planning developmental activities. This information will also come in handy to the conservationists for creating awareness for bird conservation in the campus.

Materials and Methods

This work is an effort of compilation of observations done from 2013 to 2016 i.e. three years. Line transects were laid in different habitats of the campus area such that data representing all the habitats present in the survey area could be collected. The survey was carried out from 06:00 hrs to 10:00 during non rainy and non windy days. Survey was done twice a week in each season to get the data of seasonal variation. The birds feeding habits were also noted. Observations were done using a 8x42 binocular (Bushnell). Birds were identified using Grimmett et al. (1999)¹⁴ and Ali and Ripley (1995)¹⁵. Birds were classified according to their presence status (season-wise) as residents (R), Passage migrants (PM), Summer visitors (SV) or Winter visitors (WV), Vagrant (VA) (Table 1). The conservation status of the birds recorded are also mentioned in Table 1. Further, they were also classified according to their feeding habits into different guilds like Granivorous (GR), Frugivorous (FR), Omnivorous (O), Insectivorous (I), Carnivorous (C), Nectarivorous (NI), Piscivorous (PI), Herbivorous (H) (Table 1).

S/N	Common name	Scientific name	IUCN status	Visitng status	Feeding guild		
	I. Accipitriformes				•		
	1. Accipitridae						
1	Black Kite	Milvus migrans (Boddaert, 1783)	LC	R	0		
2	Black-winged Kite	Elanus caeruleus (Desfontaines, 1789)	LC	R	С		
3	Booted Eagle	<i>Hieraaetus pennatus</i> (Gmelin, 1788)	LC	WV	С		
4	Eurasian Sparrowhawk	Accipiter nisus (Linnaeus, 1758)	LC	WV	С		
5	Oriental Honey-buzzard	Pernis ptilorhynchus (Temminck, 1821)	LC	R	С		
6	Shikra	Accipiter badius (Gmelin, 1788)	LC	R	С		
	II. Anseriformes						
	2. Anatidae						
7	Common Teal	Anas crecca (Linnaeus, 1758)	LC	WV	Н		
8	Indian Spot-billed Duck	Anas poecilorhyncha (Forster, 1781)	LC	R	0		
	III. Bucerotiformes						
	3. Upupidae						

Table 1: Bird species sighted at JNU campus, their IUCN conservation status, visiting

9 10	Common Hoopoe Gadwall 4 Bucerotidae	<i>Upupa epops</i> (Linnaeus, 1758) <i>Anas strepera</i> (Linnaeus, 1758)	LC LC	R WV	I H
11	Indian Grey Hornbill IV. Caprimulgiformes	Ocyceros birostris (Scopoli, 1786)	LC	R	0
12	5. Apodidae Little Swift V. Charadriiformes	<i>Apus affinis</i> (Gray, 1830)	LC	R	I
13	Indian Thick-knee	Burhinus indicus (Salvadori, 1865)	LC	R	I
1/	Red-wattled Lapwing	Vanellus indicus (Boddaert, 1783)	IC	B	ı.
15	Yellow-wattled Lapwing 8 Recurving	Vanellus malabaricus (Boddaert, 1783)	LC	R	I
16	Black-winged Stilt	Himantopus himantopus (Linnaeus, 1758)	LC	WV	С
17	Common Greensbank	Tringa nebularia (Gunnerus, 1767)	IC	\\/\/	C
18	Common Sandniner	Actitis hypoleucos(Linnaeus, 1758)		W/V	c
10	Green Sandniner	Tringa ochronus (Linnaeus, 1758)		\\/\/	ĩ
15	VI. Ciconiiformes	ninga ocinopus (Linnaeus, 1750)	LU		
20	Painted Stork VII. Columbiformes	Mycteria leucocephala (Pennant, 1769)	NT	R	ΡI
01		Columba livia (Omolia, 1700)		D	
21	Common Pigeon	Columba IIVIa (Gmelin, 1789)		к р	GR
22	Loughing Dovo	Streptopella decaocio (Filvaluszky, 1636)		n D	CP
23	Red Collered Dave	Streptopelia seriegalerisis(Limiaeus, 1700)			uп
24	Spotted Dove	Streptopella l'anquebanca(Rennalli, 1004)			
20	Vellow-footed Pigeon	Treron phoeniconterus (Latham 1790)		R	FR
20	VIII. Coraciiformes	neron proencopierus (Lainam, 1750)	20	11	
27	White-throated Kingfisher	Halcyon smyrnensis (Linnaeus, 1758)	LC	R	I
	13. Coraciidae				
28	Indian Roller	Coracias benghalensis (Linnaeus, 1758)	LC	R	I
	14. Meropidae				
29	Green Bee-eater	Merops orientalis (Latham, 1802)	LC	R	I
30	Blue-tailed Bee-eater	<i>Merops philippinus</i> (Linnaeus, 1766)	LC	SV	I
	IX. Cuculiformes				
	15. Cuculidae				
31	Asian Koel	<i>Eudynamys scolopaceus</i> (Linnaeus, 1758)	LC	R	0
32	Common Hawk-Cuckoo	<i>Hierococcyx varius</i> (Vahl, 1797)	LC	R	0
33	Greater Coucal	Centropus sinensis (Stephens, 1815)	LC	R	С
34	Sirkeer Malkoha	Taccocua leschenaultii (Lesson, 1830)	LC	R	0
	X. Falconiformes				
	16. Falconidae				
35	Eurasian Hobby	<i>Falco subbuteo</i> (Linnaeus, 1758)	LC	WV	0
	XI. Galliformes				
	17. Phasianidae				
36	Grey Francolin	Francolinus pondicerianus (Gmelin, 1789)	LC	R	Н
37	Indian Peafowl	Pavo cristatus(Linnaeus, 1758)	LC	R	0
	XII. Gruiformes				
	18. Rallidae				
38	Common Moorhen	Gallinula chloropus (Linnaeus, 1758)	LC	R	0

39 40	Eurasian Coot White-breasted Waterhen	<i>Fulica atra</i> (Linnaeus, 1758) <i>Amaurornis phoenicurus</i> (Pennant, 1769)	LC LC	R R	0 0
	XIII. Passeriformes				
41	19. Acrocephalidae Blyth's Reed-Warbler	Acrocephalus dumetorum (Blyth, 1849)	LC	РМ	I
42	20. Alaudidae Ashy-crowned Sparrow-Lark	Eremopterix griseus (Scopoli, 1786)	LC	R	0
	21. Campephagidae				
43	Small Minivet	Pericrocotus cinnamomeus(Linnaeus, 1766	6)LC	R	Ι
4.4	22. CISticolidae	Prinia appialia (Sylvan 1822)		D	
44	Common Tailorbird	Orthotomus sutorius (Poppant 1760)		n D	÷
46	Grey-breasted Prinia	Prinia bodgsonii (Blyth 1844)		B	i
40	Plain Prinia	Prinia inornata(Sykes 1832)		B	i
77	23 Corvidae		20		•
48	House Crow	Corvus splendens (Vieillot 1817)	IC	R	0
49	Large-billed Crow	Corvus macrorhynchos(Wagler 1827)	I C	VA	õ
50	Bufous Treepie	Dendrocitta vagabunda (Latham, 1790)	LC	R	õ
	24. Dicruridae				•
51	Black Drongo	Dicrurus macrocercus(Vieillot, 1817)	LC	R	I
	25. Emberizidae				
52	Chestnut-breasted	Emberiza stewarti (Blyth, 1854)	LC	VA	0
	Bunting				
	26. Estrildidae				
53	Red Avadavat	Amandava amandava (Linnaeus, 1758)	LC	R	0
54	Indian Silverbill	Euodice malabarica (Linnaeus, 1758)	LC	R	0
55	Scaly-breasted Munia	Lonchura punctulata (Linnaeus, 1758)	LC	R	GR
	27. Fringillidae				_
56	Common Rosefinch	Carpodacus erythrinus (Pallas, 1770)	LC	WV	0
	28. Hirundinidae			1407	
57	Barn Swallow	Hirundo rustica (Linnaeus, 1758)	LC	VV V	
	Wire-tailed Swallow	Hirundo smithii (Leach, 1818)	LC	SV	I
58	Long-tailed Shrike	Lanius schach (Linnaeus, 1758)	IC	R	1
00	30 Leiotrichidae		20		•
59	Common Babbler	Turdoides caudata (Dumont, 1823)	LC	R	0
60	Jungle Babbler	Turdoides striata (Dumont, 1823)	LC	R	Ĩ
61	Large Grev Babbler	Turdoides malcolmi (Svkes, 1832)	LC	R	0
	31. Motacillidae				
62	Citrine Wagtail	Motacilla citreola (Pallas, 1776)_	LC	WV	I
63	Grey Wagtail	Motacilla cinerea(Tunstall, 1771)	LC	WV	I
64	Tree Pipit	Anthus trivialis (Linnaeus, 1758)	LC	WV	I
65	White Wagtail	Motacilla alba(Linnaeus, 1758)	LC	WV	I
66	White-browed Wagtail	Motacilla maderaspatensis (Gmelin, 1789)	LC	R	I
67	Yellow Wagtail	Motacilla flava(Linnaeus, 1758)	LC	WV	I
	32. Muscicapidae				
68	Brown Rock Chat	Cercomela fusca (Blyth, 1851)	LC	R	I
69	Black Redstart	Phoenicurus ochruros (Gmelin, 1774)	LC	WV	0
70	Bluethroat	Luscinia svecica (Linnaeus, 1758)	LC	WV	1
71	Indian Robin	Saxicoloides fulicatus (Linnaeus, 1766)	LC	R	1
72	Oriental Magpie-Robin	Copsychus saularis (Linnaeus, 1758)	LC	R	1
73	Pied Bushchat	Saxicola caprata (Linnaeus, 1766)	LC	R	1
74	Red-breasted Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula parva</i> (Bechstein, 1792)	LC	WV	I.

75	Verditer Flycatcher 33. Nectariniidae	<i>Eumyias thalassinus</i> (Swainson, 1838)	LC	PM	Ι
76	Purple Sunbird 34. Oriolidae	Cinnyris asiaticus (Latham, 1790)	LC	R	NI
77	Indian Golden Oriole 35. Passeridae	Oriolus kundoo (Sykes, 1832)	LC	SV	FR
78	Chestnut-shouldered Petronia	Petronia xanthocollis(Burton, 1838)	LC	R	GR
79	House Sparrow 36. Phylloscopidae	Passer domesticus (Linnaeus, 1758)	LC	R	GR
80	Common Chiffchaff	Phylloscopus collybita (Vieillot, 1817)	LC	WV	0
81	Greenish Warbler	Phylloscopus trochiloides(Sundevall, 1837)	LC	PM	1 I
82	Hume's Leaf Warbler 37. Pycnonotidae	Phylloscopus humei (Brooks, 1878)	LC	WV	Ι
83	Red-vented Bulbul	Pvcnonotus cafer (Linnaeus, 1766)	LC	R	0
84	Red-whiskered Bulbul	Pvcnonotus iocosus (Linnaeus, 1758)	LC	R	0
85	White-eared Bulbul 38. Rhipiduridae	Pycnonotus leucotis (Gould, 1836)	LC	R	FR
86	White-browed Fantail	Rhipidura aureola (Lesson, 1830)	LC	R	I
	39. Stenostiridae				
87	Grey-headed	Culicicapa ceylonensis (Swainson, 1820)	LC	WV	I
	Canary-Flycatcher				
	40. Sturnidae				
88	Asian Pied Starling	Gracupica contra (Linnaeus, 1758)	LC	R	0
89	Bank Myna	Acridotheres ginginianus (Latham, 1790)	LC	R	0
90	Brahminy Starling	Sturnia pagodarum (Gmelin, 1789)	LC	R	0
91	Common Myna	Acridotheres tristis (Linnaeus, 1766)	LC	R	0
92	Rosy Starling	Pastor roseus (Linnaeus, 1758)	LC	PM	I
	41. Sylviidae				
93	Lesser Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia curruca</i> (Linnaeus, 1758)	LC	WV	I
95	Yellow-eyed Babbler 42. Turdidae	Chrysomma sinense (Gmelin, 1789)	LC	R	I
96	Black-throated Thrush 43. Vangidae	Turdus atrogularis (Jarocki, 1819)	LC	WV	0
97	Common Woodshrike	Tephrodornis pondicerianus (Gmelin, 1789)	LC	R	1
	44. Zosteropidae				
98	Oriental White-eye XIV. Pelecaniformes	Zosterops palpebrosus (Temminck, 1824)	LC	R	0
	45. Ardeidae				
99	Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i> (Linnaeus, 1758)	LC	R	I
100	Indian Pond-Heron	Ardeola grayii (Sykes, 1832)	LC	R	С
101	Intermediate Egret	Ardea intermedia (Wagler, 1829)	LC	R	С
	46. Threskiornithidae				
102	Black-headed Ibis	Threskiornis melanocephalus (Latham, 179	0)	NT	R C
103	Red-naped Ibis	Pseudibis papillosa (Temminck, 1824)	LC	WV	С
	XV. Piciformes				
	47. Megalaimidae				
104	Brown-headed Barbet	<i>Psilopogon zeylanicus</i> (Gmelin, 1788)	LC	R	FR
105	Coppersmith Barbet	Psilopogon haemacephalus (Muller, 1776)	LC	R	0
	48. Picidae				
106	Eurasian Wryneck	Jynx torquilla (Linnaeus, 1758)	LC	WV	1
107	Lesser Goldenback	Dinopium benghalense (Linnaeus, 1758)	LC	R	1
108	Yellow-crowned	Dendrocopos mahrattensis (Latham, 1801)	LC	R	I
	Woodpecker				
	XVI. Podicioediformes				

	49. Podicipedidae				
109	Little Grebe	Tachybaptus ruficollis (Pallas, 1764)	LC	R	I
	XVII. Psittaciformes				
	50. Psittacidae				
110	Alexandrine Parakeet	<i>Psittacula eupatria</i> (Linnaeus, 1766)	NT	R	FR
111	Plum-headed Parakeet	Psittacula cyanocephala (Linnaeus, 1766)	LC	R	FR
112	Rose-ringed Parakeet	Psittacula krameri (Scopoli, 1769)	LC	R	FR
	XVIII. Strigiformes				
	51. Strigidae				
113	Spotted Owlet	Athene brama (Temminck, 1821)	LC	R	С
	XIX. Suliformes				
	52. Phalacrocoracidae				
114	Little Cormorant	Microcarbo niger (Vieillot, 1817)	LC	R	ΡI

IUCN Status: LC-Least Concern, NT-Near Threatened, Visiting status: R-Resident, WV-Winter Visitor, SV-Summer Visitor, PM-Passage Migrant, VA-Vagrant, Feeding guild: GR-Granivorous, FR-Frugivorous, O-Omnivorous, I-Insectivorous, C-Carnivorous, NI-Nectarivorous, PI-Piscivorous, H-Herbivorous

Results

A total of 114 bird species belonging to 19 orders and 52 families were observed in three years duration (Table 1). Among the total birds reported, 79 species (69%) were residents, 26 species (23%) were winter visitors, 4 species (4%) were passage migrants, 3 species (3%) were summer visitors and 2 species (1%) were vagrant (Fig. 1).



The study reported birds with diverse food habits. The highest observed bird species were insectivorous (47 species, 41%), followed by omnivorous (33 species, 29%), carnivorous (14 species, 12%), frugivorous (7 species, 6%), gramnivorous (6 species, 5%), herbivorous (4 species, 4%), piscivorous (2 species, 2%) and the least were nectarivorous (1 species, 1%) (Fig. 2). According to the IUCN status, 3 species (3%) were near threatened and the rest 111 species (97%) were least concern (Fig. 3).

Delhi is reported to support 434 avifaunal species

belonging to 17 orders and 59 families¹⁶. Thus, the campus accounts for 26% species, 89% orders and 88% families of birds of Delhi. The present study recorded a little lower bird species than that recorded by (Prakash and Manasvini, 2013)¹⁷ (132 species) in a similar habitat of the southern ridge of Delhi. The bird species recorded in the JNU campus is comparatively more than that reported in areas with similar vegetation structure and composition like Aravali Hill (72 species)¹⁸, New campus of J.N.V. University, Jodhpur, Rajasthan (68

species)¹⁹. This high species diversity is because of ample number of thorny trees and shrubs which attract large numbers of birds²⁰. The species like *Acacia leucophloea, Albizzia lebbeck, A. mollis, Alstonia scholaris, Azadirachta indica, Bauhinia variegata, Bombax ceiba, Caryota urens, Cassia fistula, C. siamea, Ficus religiosa, F. elastica, Leucaena leucocephala, Mangifera indica, Prosopis juliflora, Syzygium cumini* etc. are commonly found in the campus.

The fruits and flowers of shrubs like Agave americana, Carrisa spinarum, Hibiscus rosa sinensis, Lantana camara, Zizyphus nummularia support diverse varieties of birds. This is also the reason for such high diversity of birds in the campus. Three near threatened bird species, namely Psittacula eupatria, Threskiornis melanocephalus and Mycteria leucocephala are also recorded from the study area. The former two species are resident and are found frequently and abundantly in the area, whereas the later species is found only during the winter season but at a lower frequency rate. The species is mainly restricted only to the water reservoir in Paschimabad. This is a good indicator as the reservoir is near to the residential guarters of JNU, indicating that this species is human tolerant. Similarly, near threatened species such as Buceros bicornis and Psittacula eupatria were sighted in tea estates of Assam²¹ and Ploceus philippinus was sighted in the homegardens of Assam²². Both these sites are closely associated with human habitation and have high human activity in them, but still have good sightings of species of conservation importance. The study area not only supports the least concerned species, but also highly endangered species. Not only this, the campus also has recorded resident (79 species), migratory (33 species) and vagrant (2 species) species which indicates good and healthy ecosystem¹⁷. Thus, this study depicts the importance of semi urban habitats in biodiversity conservation. Another reason for high bird diversity in the JNU campus may be because the human disturbance and habitat modification is less in this area as compared to the other areas of the Delhi region. In addition to this, small water bodies are found in and around the ridge ecosystems which makes the area more suitable for different species of birds to survive and thrive on.

Through this paper, it can be highlighted that the campus area of JNU is still preserving the natural ecosystem which hardly can be seen in other ridge areas of Delhi as most of them are under immense anthropogenic pressure. Being an educational institute, there is a lot of scope to improve and conserve this highly biodiverse area through awareness programmes and institutional policies. It can therefore be concluded that JNU campus is a role model for conservation of fast vanishing ridge ecosystems. It can also be stated that these ecosystems are very crucial for the survival and continuity of the avifaunal diversity in the campus. Similar kind of studies can be taken up in other university campuses in and around Delhi. This will help in preparing a base line data and further help in conservation.



Fig. 2: Classification of bird species recorded in JNU campus according to their feeding guilds



Fig. 3: IUCN status of bird species recorded in JNU campus

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