

# AS MANY AS 86 BIRD SPECIES FOUND IN TAMIL NADU FOUND TO BE IN 'RAPID DECLINE', SAYS NATIONWIDE REPORT

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According to birders, Indian rollers, which used to be common in open fields, have become hard to spot nowadays. Photo: File | Photo Credit: G. KARTHIKEYAN

An analysis of the State of India's Birds (SOIB) 2023 report shows nearly 110 species of birds recorded in Tamil Nadu are currently facing a state of decline nationwide.

As many as 86 species found in Tamil Nadu, including birds such as garganey, northern shoveler, common sandpiper, and common teal, are under "rapid decline". This has been highlighted by the Salem Ornithological Foundation (SOF) in a Tamil Nadu-specific report using the data in the SOIB 2023 report.

What elicited surprise among researchers, according to S.V. Ganeshwar, founder-director of SOF, is that species "taken for granted" by the birding community have been categorised as declining. "Indian rollers are very casually seen everywhere in the open fields. But their population is declining nationwide," he says.

Aravind A.M., an avid birder, says Indian rollers, which are not common in Chennai but are spotted widely in outer areas and towns, have become hard to spot nowadays. He had spotted the birds in Vellore quite regularly since 2012. In 2017, he once saw a congregation of 60 rollers, with males engaging in mating displays and rolls for females perched on coconut trees, in Vellore. "In the last three to four years, seeing even one pair has become difficult," he says.

"Within Chennai, one species that is not being sighted as commonly as earlier is the rufous treepie," Mr. Aravind adds.

With urbanisation and rapidly changing landscapes, a detailed regional report is important to understand the bird patterns, says Mr. Ganeshwar. The trends assessed in the SOIB report were primarily carried out using data uploaded to eBird, a citizen portal for birders and researchers. Mr. Ganeshwar noted that out of 451 species in Tamil Nadu, there are long term trends available only for 39 species. "This is extremely low," he adds.

The SOF report says going by Tamil Nadu trends, the conclusive long-term and current annual

trends are available only for a very small number of species.

“This is exactly why the excerpt document was based on the India trends, where a larger number of species was analyzed. Maybe in the future, as more birders continue to contribute information to eBird, the data deficiencies will be lessened, and we will have more of the State’s bird species analysed,” the report reads.

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