

A REPORT ON THE INDIAN BIRDS OF NORTHERN WETLAND WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO CONSERVATION OF SARUS (*GRUS ANTIGON ANTIGON*)

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ABSTRACT

Indian is among twelve mega diverse countries divided in ten bio-geographical zones inhabiting most of its flora and fauna. North Indian plains are well known for their wetlands that nourish variety of flora that is endemic and fauna exotic as well as native. Sarus (*Grus antigon antigon*), is a native bird of Indian subcontinent that is found in major wetlands of the country. North Indian wetlands are the 'hotspot' of this highest-flying bird. In recent past, studies have shown the significant decrease of the number of these birds. Our report show that the decrease in number is some what related with the north Indian agricultural practice and rural economy. The fertile lands of wetlands are being used to cultivate paddy and farmers encroach their habitat and degrade the quality of water. The study is indicative of the new line of research on Sarus.

Key words: Sarus Crane; hot spot; wetlands; agricultural practice; water quality

INTRODUCTION

North India is the 'hotspot' of Sarus crane (*Grus antigon antigon*) and is well known habitat of most of the exotic migratory birds. Sarus crane has recently joined other birds in the endangered list of Indian birds and it is estimated that around 8000-10,000 individuals exists today. The Indian Sauras is native bird of Uttar Pradesh and is also found in state of Jammu Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Gujrat, Bihar, West-Bangal, Assam, Chattishgarh and Maharastra. The Northern India especially the villages of district Mainpuri, Etawah and Etah are considered as the 'hotspots' of Sarus Cranes. Recent Evidences indicates that Mainpuri district has the highest population of Sarus followed by Etawah district. It is estimated that 2500-3000 cranes live in just these two district of Uttar Pradesh and because of their native place it has also got a status of state bird of Uttar Pradesh. The count of Sauras cranes in all India managed by Wildlife Institute of India (1999-2000) shows that over 90% of population lives in unprotected areas, mostly in crop fields and marshlands. It has been evident that habitat loss is

evidently the biggest pressure on crane populations; other anthropogenic interventions like egg lifting are impeding growth of Suras population.

MATERIAL & METHODS

Survey of habitat : Two districts, viz., Mainpuri and Etawah of Uttar Pradesh were surveyed in the month of December, January and February (Fig 1). These months were selected for the survey because of the migration of birds from west to India. LSJ (Sauj), LCH (Chinory), LSN (Sarsai Nawar) and LHT (Hasil Tal) lakes were monitored from 6: O' Clock till the dark. The data was collected for various physical, biological and social parameters. In the survey we counted the number of Sarus and observed the presence of other migratory birds.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The bird surveyed in the Northern wetlands are presented in Table1 from Mainpuri and Etawah District (Fig.1).

Birds of Northern Wetlands (SITE ETAWAH AND MAINPURI)

White Stork (*Ciconia ciconia*)

A long legged, long necked, egrets like bird which is pure white except for the black wings. sexes alike occur generally in winter in solitary state or in pairs near the marshes, lakes and ponds. The white stork is supposed to be the firm enemy of locust as it takes heavy toll of locusts and its eggs. Nesting season of this bird is May to July.

Painted Stork (*Mycteria leucocephala*)

Commonly known as Janghil in the rural areas. A typical large stork with long heavy yellow bill slightly curved near tip with waxy yellow face. Plumage white, sexes alike. Occur near lakes, ponds and marshes feed upon fishes, frogs and snakes through out India. Nesting season of the bird is between August and January. Both sexes share all the domestic duties.

Whitenecked Stork (*Ciconia episcopus*)

A glistening black stork with conspicuous white neck and black 'skull cap'. Long red legs heavy blackish bill, sexes alike. Occur near water-logged areas, lakes and river