

The Sultanpur Jheel (28°28' N, 76°55' E) of Gurgaon district is such a wetland which is a perfect abode for birds due to its hydrological and vegetative characteristics.

The dominant terrestrial vegetation in the Park consists of *Prosopis chilensis*, *Acacia nilotica*, and *Azadirachta indica*, and grasses such as *Vetiveria zizanioides* and *Erianthus ravennae*. Aquatic vegetation includes submerged vegetation like *Vallisneria spiralis*, *Hydrilla* sp., *Ceratophyllum demersum*; emergent plants such as *Typha angustata*, *Saccharum munja* and *Cyperus rotundus*; and rooted floating saprophytes are *Nymphaea stellata*, *N. nouchali* and *Ipomoea reptans* (Kalpavriksh 1994). The seasonal aquatic vegetation and open grasslands, dotted with manmade mud and grass islands provide excellent habitat for different species of birds to roost and rest.

A total of 112 wetland birds including 58 migratory species were recorded from SNP during 2014-16 (Banerjee and Prakash, 2016). The population of the waterfowls were highest during the winter months (December- January) and lowest in summer (May-June) when the lake became almost dry. Among winter birds, Common Teal (*Anas crecca*) was the most dominant wintering duck, whereas Ruddy Shelduck (*Tadorna ferruginea*) was the least recorded wintering duck in previous years. Common Crane (*Grus grus*) was the only wintering long-legged bird to this area. Indian Spot-billed Duck (*Anas poecilorhyncha*) was the most common resident duck found throughout the year in variable numbers.

Total 13 species of fish eating birds were recorded nesting colonially in the heronry during 2014-2016 (Banerjee and Prakash, 2016). Painted Stork (*Mycteria leucocephala*) was the most common long-legged bird nesting at the Park. But the nesting was found very irregular. In recent years, the number of nests was found fluctuating from 116 (2015) to 4 (2014) nests (Banerjee and Prakash, 2016). However Urfi et al. (2005) reported 96 and 57 nests in 2004 and 2005 respectively.

Other important heronry birds nesting in SNP, includes Asian Open-bill Stork *Anastomus oscitans*, Black-headed Ibis *Threskiornis melanocephalus*, Darter *Anhinga melanogaster*, cormorants and egrets. An irregularity in the nesting of these species was also observed in recent years. The reason could be the unavailability of food as there is hardly any fish stock remains after the dry season. The number of nests also depends on the water levels in the Park. Therefore, the unavailability of water affected the nesting of the heronry birds in 2016, when most of these birds left the heronry abandoned and Painted Storks nested after rain started in monsoon (Banerjee and Prakash, 2016)

SNP also hosts a good number of birds of prey. Total 23 species of Falconiformes were recorded from the Park during 2014-16 (Banerjee and Prakash, 2016). Among these 12 were wintering, nine species were resident and two were local migrant. Most of the resident species breeds within the Park

Most of the water of the lake is pumped from the river Yamuna during monsoon and winter. The invasive African Cat fish () comes into the Park along with this water which damages its ecosystem. It is an omnivorous and voracious predator and feeds on the native flora and on native fish fauna, which ultimately affect the food resource availability in the wetland.

Sultanpur National Park is like an island between agricultural fields and there is rampant use of pesticide, insecticides and rodenticides in the fields. The water from the surrounding agricultural fields comes into the Park and brings these chemicals to the lake. Birds from the Park also regularly forage in the fields and ingest the chemicals. Therefore, there is a high threat of mass mortality due to the chemical pollution. Such an incident of mortality has happened in January 2015 when total 47 water birds were found dead after feeding in a nearby chemically polluted field (Banerjee and Prakash, 2015).

There are several poultry farms around the Park which increase the risk of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza in the Park. During the outbreak of avian influenza in 2016 in Delhi and its nearby area, three Painted Storks, a Knob-billed Duck, a Spot-billed Duck and a Jungle Crow was found dead in the Park. Although the reason behind the death and the post-mortem reports were not revealed the possibility of avian influenza cannot be ruled out.

With these increasing urbanizations and threats it is necessary to frame and execute a management plan for the wetland and facilitate conservation efforts.

Table 1: Species of Global Concern (IUCN 2015) recorded from Sultanpur National Park

S. No.	Species	Status	Historical data*	Recent Records (2014-16)
1.	White-backed Vulture <i>Gyps bengalensis</i>	CR	.	--
2.	Long-billed Vulture <i>Gyps indicus</i>	CR	√	--
3.	Red-headed Vulture <i>Sarcogyps calvus</i>	CR	√	--
4.	Sociable Plover <i>Vanellus gregarious</i>	CR	√	--
5.	Egyptian Vulture <i>Neophron percnopterus</i>	EN	√	√
6.	Saker Falcon <i>Falco cherrug</i>	EN	√	--
7.	Black-bellied Tern <i>Sterna acuticauda</i>	EN	√	--
8.	Dalmatian Pelican <i>Pelecanus crispus</i>	VU	√	--
9.	Lesser Adjutant <i>Leptoptilos javanicus</i>	VU	√	--
10.	Lesser White-fronted Goose <i>Anser erythropus</i>	VU	√	--
11.	Greater Spotted Eagle <i>Aquila clanga</i>	VU	√	√
12.	Eastern Imperial Eagle <i>Aquila heliaca</i>	VU	√	√
13.	Indian Spotted Eagle <i>Aquila hastate</i>	VU	√	√
14.	Pallas's Fish Eagle <i>Haliaeetus leucorhynchus</i>	VU	--	√
15.	Sarus Crane <i>Grus Antigone</i>	VU	√	√
16.	Common Pochard <i>Aythya ferina</i>	VU	√	√
17.	Woolly necked Stork <i>Ciconia episcopus</i>	VU	√	√
18.	Kashmir Flycatcher <i>Ficedula subrubra</i>	VU	--	√
19.	Stoliczka's Bushchat <i>Saxicola macrorhyncha</i>	VU	√	--
20.	Finn's Weaver <i>Ploceus megarhynchus</i>	VU	√	--
21.	Falcated Duck <i>Anas falcata</i>	NT	√	--
22.	Ferniginous Duck <i>Aythya nyroca</i>	NT	√	√
23.	Spot-billed Pelican <i>Pelecanus philippensis</i>	NT	√	--
24.	Oriental Darter <i>Anhinga melanogaster</i>	NT	√	√
25.	Painted Stork <i>Mycteria leucocephala</i>	NT	√	√
26.	Black-necked Stork <i>Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus</i>	NT	√	√
27.	Black-headed Ibis <i>Threskiornis melanocephalus</i>	NT	√	√
28.	Lesser Flamingo <i>Phoenicopterus minor</i>	NT	√	--
29.	Lesser Fish-Eagle <i>Ichthyophaga hemialis</i>	NT	√	--