

Project Update - May 2016

1. About 58 wetlands in the district of Warangal were sampled intensively from the August 2015 - February 2016. At each wetland, wetland bird diversity data was collected along with some environmental data. Each wetland was visited thrice during the duration. The original proposal mentioned three sampling districts. However, due to logistics reasons, I have decided to sample intensively in one area than spread over a larger place. That said, plans to cover a bigger spatial extent are underway.
2. About 42,244 birds belonging to 76 species were counted during the three sampling occasions. The mean and the median species richness is 32 species per lake. The most widely occurring species (detected in all 57 wetlands) included pond heron *Ardeola grayii*, white-throated kingfisher *Halcyon smyrnensis* and red-wattled lapwing *Vanellus indicus*. In contrast, bar-headed geese *Anser indicus*, Eurasian curlew *Numenius arquata* and Pacific golden plover *Pluvialis fulva* were counted only once during the sampling period. The two most abundant resident species (count >3000) were Eurasian coots *Fulica atra* and little cormorants *Microcarbo niger*. The most abundant migratory birds were garganeys *Spatula querquedula* (2266) and pintails *Anas acuta* (1752). The highest number of species found at a lake was 55 and the lowest was 15. Of all the 76 species recorded, 45 were resident and 31 were migratory species.
3. Since the sampling was done during the start and peak of the migratory season, I plan to go back and sample the wetlands during non-migratory period i.e. in August-September.
4. I have trained two research assistants in bird identification and bird sampling. We had seven volunteers come and help us with sampling for certain time period where they were trained in bird sampling as well.
5. During my course of stay in the field, I talked to villagers/fisherman at every lake to know more about the systems. Building rapport was important as I plan to engage with these systems on a long-term basis. We are in the process of zeroing in schools to conduct environmental awareness programmes. I have communicated with environmental scientists at a regional college to know more about the functioning of the wetlands. This is an ongoing process and will continue till I find suitable local people who would be willing to form a strong network. I visited multiple government departments to get any extra data on the wetlands, a process that is very slow and tedious but helped me make contacts.
6. My team geo-referenced and mapped all the wetlands sampled and also the extent of vegetation and water extent. Preliminary analyses is underway.





Landscape around wetlands



Left: Bird sampling. Right: Wetland in the morning.