

"This is a great example for ornithologists of other states to follow"

Dr Asad Rahmani

Director
Bombay Natural History Society.



C. Sashikumar: Ornithologist with special interest in raptors. Co-author of *A Book of Kerala Birds and Shorebirds of Kerala*. Published several papers and notes on birds in various journals, survey reports etc. Editor of *Malabar Trogon* and member of the Editorial Board of *Indian Birds*. Principal Investigator of the project 'Along the Trail of Salim Ali - Travancore - Cochin Ornithological Survey 2009'. Major Research Programmes: Long term study on the Ecology and Breeding Biology of Crested Goshawk (since 1994). Monitoring the vulture population in Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary, Birds of Sacred Groves.

Praveen J: An active bird-watcher and moderator of KeralaBirder, a popular email discussion group on birds of Kerala. Coordinator of Kerala Bird Race and several bird surveys in Kerala. Contributing editor for the journal *Indian Birds* and Editorial board member of newsletter, *Malabar Trogon*. Interested in long term monitoring of endemic and threatened birds of Western Ghats.



Muhammed Jafer Palot: Currently with Zoological Survey of India, Western Ghat Regional Centre, Calicut, Kerala. Doctorate in Ecology of Wetland Birds. Published many research papers and scholarly articles on natural history. An active Field Biologist, has co-authored many books including *Shorebirds of Kerala*, *Mammals of Kerala*, *Butterflies of Kerala* and *Dragonflies of Kerala*. Founder - Secretary of Malabar Natural History Society (MNHS), an NGO at the forefront of nature conservation in Kerala.



P. O. Nameer: Assoc. Prof. (Wildlife), Kerala Agril. University, State Coordinator IBCN, AWC. Doctorate in Bird Communities. Coordinator of several Bird surveys and Bird Race. Co-author of Malayalam version of 'Birds of South India' and 'Mammals of India', and author of 'Checklist of Indian Mammals'. South Asian Coordinator for CBSG, IUCN.



DC Books

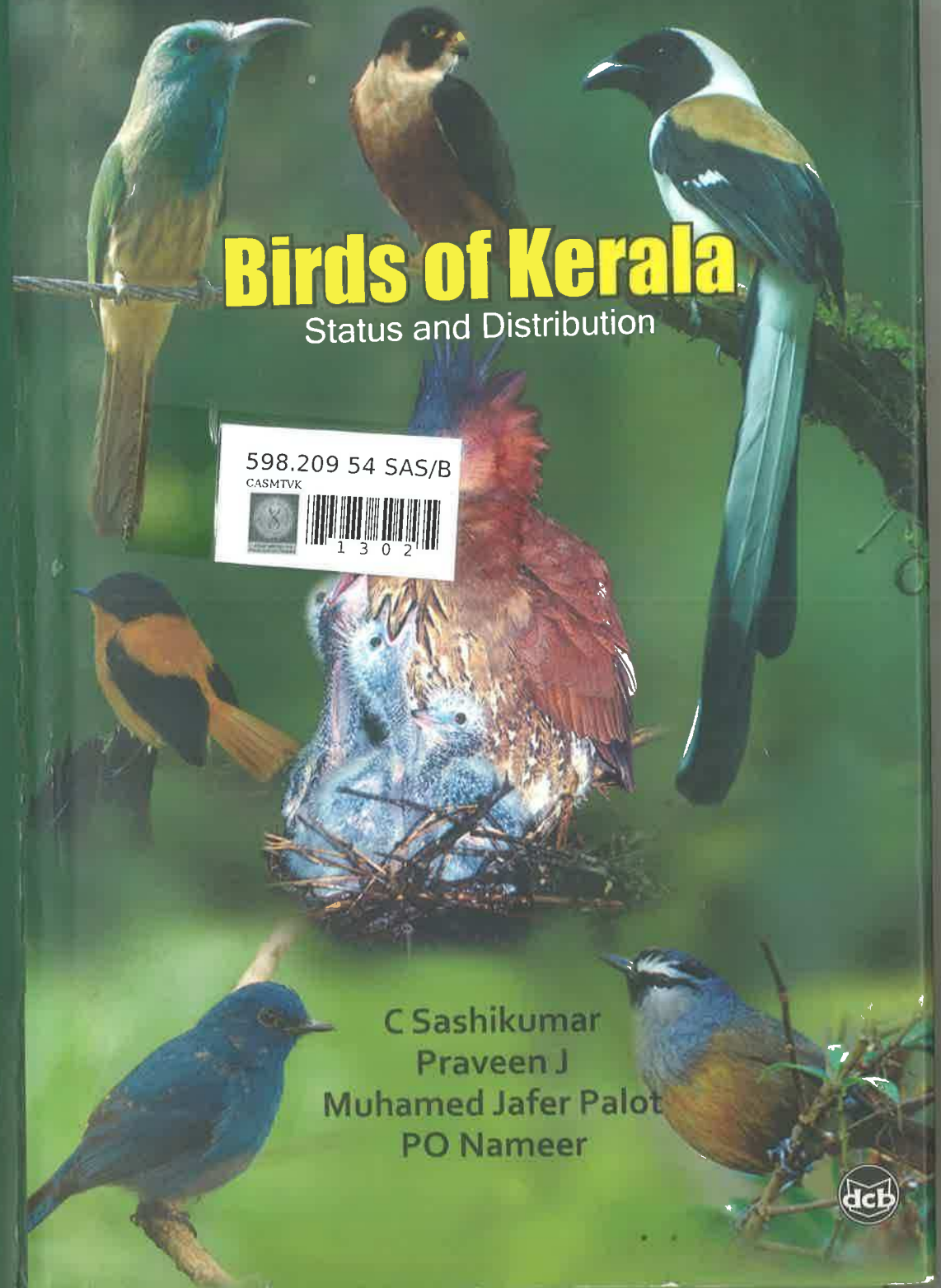
ISBN 978-81-264-2921-9



9 788126 429219

Birds of Kerala

Status and Distribution



Birds of Kerala

Status and Distribution

598.209 54 SAS/B

CASMTVK



1 3 0 2

**C Sashikumar
Praveen J**

**Muhammed Jafer Palot
P. O. Nameer**



English Language
Birds of Kerala

Ornithology/Reference
Editors: C Shashikumar, Praveen J,
Mohammad Jafer Palot and PO Nameer

Rights Reserved
First published 2011

Printed in India
DC Press Pvt.Ltd., Kottayam, Kerala

Publishers
DC Books, Kottayam 686001
Kerala State, India
Website: www.dcbooks.com
e-mail: info@dcbooks.com
Online Bookstore: www.dcbookshop.net

Distributors
DC Books-Current Books
Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Thiruvalla, Alappuzha, Kottayam,
Thekkady, Thodupuzha, Ernakulam, Cochin Airport, Aluva, Thrissur,
Irinjalakuda, Manjeri, Kozhikode, Kalpetta, Palakkad, Kannur,
Thalassery, Kanhangad, Bangalore, New Delhi, Dubai

Export Sales DC Press (P) Ltd., Kottayam, Kerala

No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any
form or by any means, without prior written permission of the
publisher.

ISBN 978-81-264-2921-9

DC Book: The first Indian Book Publishing House to get ISO
Certification

10640-4590-850

Cover photograph acknowledgments:

From left clockwise: Blue-bearded Bee-eater: CK Vishnudas; Shaheen Falcon: Kalyan Varma;
White-bellied Treepie: Anoop Anand A; Jerdon's Laughing-thrush: Sandeep Das; Nilgiri
Flycatcher: Arun KA; Black-and-Orange Flycatcher: Sandeep Das; Malay Night-Heron
(Centre): PK Uthaman

Birds of Kerala

Status and Distribution

Principal Editor
C Sashikumar

Associate Editors
Praveen J
Muhammed Jafer Palot
PO Nameer

Special Chapter
S Sathis Chandran Nair

Review Board
CA Abdul Bashir, KV Eldhose, E Kunhikrishnan
Manoj V Nair, L Namassivayan, KG Raghu,
PK Ravindran, Sathyan Meppayur,
B Sreekumar and PK Uthaman



We dedicate this book to the memory of Professor KK Neelakantan who guided a whole generation in Kerala to the wonderful world of birds.

KK Neelakantan
1923–1992

CONTENTS

Preface.....	11
Acknowledgements.....	15
A History of Ornithology in Kerala.....	16
Ornithologists in Kerala.....	18
Bird-ringing.....	25
Bird Research.....	25
Books.....	25
Bird Surveys.....	26
Wetland Birds and Asian Waterfowl Census.....	26
Nature Camps.....	28
Bird Photography.....	29
Keralabirder.....	29
Bird Tours.....	29
The Changing Landscape of Kerala.....	30
Consistency of Change.....	30
Biospherical Changes.....	30
Changing Landscapes.....	32
The Dynamic Landscape of Kerala.....	34
Western Ghats.....	35
The Midlands.....	44
The Coast.....	48
Conclusion.....	53
Climate of Kerala.....	54
An Overview of the Bird Communities of Kerala.....	55
Sholas and Grasslands.....	56
Mid-altitude Forests, Evergreen and the Moist Deciduous.....	59
Low-altitude Forests, Riparian Forests and Sacred Groves.....	61
Plantations.....	64
The Dry Zone, Dry Deciduous, Scrub Jungle and Meadowland..	67
The Villages, Plantations, Homesteads and Fields.....	69
The Towns and Cities—Gardens, Open Grounds, College Campuses.....	71
The Wetlands, Estuaries, Waterlogged Paddyfields, Backwaters and Reservoirs.....	72

The Shoreline, Beaches and Islands.....	77
Conservation.....	80
Site Descriptions.....	90
Descriptions of Sites Frequently Referred to in the Text.....	90
Description of Protected Areas.....	102
Species Accounts: Methodology and Notes.....	109
Nomenclature.....	109
Style and Format.....	109
Citation.....	110
Data Compilation.....	110
Information Sources.....	111
Documenting Species Accounts.....	114
Analysis.....	116
Criteria for Inclusion.....	116
Interpretation.....	117
Species Accounts: The Main List.....	120
Species Accounts: The Secondary List.....	710
Appendix 1: Checklist of the Birds of Protected Areas and Reserve Forests of Kerala.....	742
Appendix 2: Survey Locations of Sálím Ali's Travancore-Cochin Survey.....	760
Travancore State.....	760
Cochin State.....	766
Appendix 3: Glossary.....	768
Appendix 4: Useful Contacts.....	772
Bibliography.....	773
Index of Scientific Names.....	815
Index of English Names.....	824
Additional Information.....	826

List of Tables

Table 1: Threatened birds of Kerala.....	85
Table 2: Western Ghats endemic birds recorded in Kerala.....	86
Table 3: Important Bird Areas.....	87
Table 4: Site descriptions.....	90
Table 5: Protected areas in Kerala.....	102
Table 6: Abbreviated names of main contributors.....	113
Table 7: Site referees for checklist review.....	115
Table 8: Some significant counts of Painted Storks.....	161
Table 9: Some significant counts of Openbill-Storks.....	163
Table 10: Some significant counts of White-necked Storks.....	166
Table 11: Some significant counts of Lesser Whistling-Duck.....	177
Table 12: Major flocks of gulls during the north Kerala Water Bird Census, January, 2006.....	343
Table 13: Known hosts of Parasitic Cuckoos in Kerala.....	399
Table 14: Yellow Wagtails ringed at Edanad (Mathew & Sekhar, 1964).....	517
Table 15: Field Identification of Pipits.....	528
Table 16: Field Identification of <i>Acrocephalus</i> and <i>Hippolais</i> Warblers.....	618
Table 17: Field Identification of Leaf Warblers.....	628

List of Figures

Figure 1: Trend of Purple Moorhen counts (AWC, Kerala).....	282
Figure 2: Fluctuations in the Populations of six species of Bulbuls at Aralam WLS- A comparison (Sashikumar <i>et al.</i> , 2005)..	548

Maps

Kerala State: Physical.....	31
Kerala State: Vegetation.....	36
Northern Kerala: Places referred in the text.....	88
Southern Kerala: Places referred in the text.....	89
Kerala State: Protected Areas.....	103
Kerala State: Political	709

List of Families/Subfamilies in the main list

Family	Group	Page No
PODICIPEDIDAE	Grebes	120
PROCELLARIDAE	Petrels and Shearwaters	121
PHAETHONTIDAE	Tropicbirds	122
PELECANIDAE	Pelicans	123
SULIDAE	Boobies	126
PHALACROCORACIDAE	Cormorants, Shags	127
ANHINGIDAE	Darters	133
FREGATIDAE	Frigatebirds	136
ARDEIDAE	Hérons, Egrets and Bitterns	139
CICONIIDAE	Storks	160
THRESKIORNITHIDAE	Ibises and Spoonbills	170
PHOENICOPTERIDAE	Flamingos	174
ANATIDAE	Swans, Geese and Ducks	176
ACCIPITRIDAE	Hawks, Eagles, Buzzards, Old World Vultures, Kites and Harriers	195
PANDIONIDAE	Osprey	251
FALCONIDAE	Falcons	252
PHASIANIDAE	Pheasants, Partridges, Quails	259
TURNICIDAE	Buttonquails/Bustardquails	272
RALLIDAE	Rails, Crakes, Moorhens, Coots	274
OTIDAE	Bustards	285
JACANIDAE	Jacanas	287
ROSTRATULIDAE	Painted-Snipes	290
HAEMATOPODIDAE	Oystercatcher	291
CHARADRIIDAE	Plovers, Dotterels, Lapwings	294
SCOLOPACIDAE	Sandpipers, Stints, Snipes, Godwits and Curlews	305
RECURVIROSTIDAE	Ibisbill, Avocets and Stilts	329
DROMADIDAE	Crab-Plovers	331
BURHINIDAE	Stone-Curlews and Stone-Plovers	331
GLAREOLIDAE	Coursers and Pratincoles	333
STERCORARIIDAE	Skuas and Jaegers	336
LARIDAE	Gulls, Terns and Noddies	338
PTEROCLIDIDAE	Sandgrouse	724

COLUMBIDAE	Pigeons and Doves	360
PSITTACIDAE	Parakeets and Hanging Parrots	375
CUCULIDAE	Cuckoos, Malkohas and Coucals	382
TYTONIDAE	Barn Owl, Grass Owl, Bay Owl	404
STRIGIDAE	Owls, Owlets	408
PODARGIDAE	Frogmouths	423
CAPRIMULGIDAE	Nightjars	427
APODIDAE	Swifts, Needletail-Swifts, Palm Swift	432
HEMIPROCNIDAE	Tree-Swifts	442
TROGONIDAE	Trogons	444
ALCEDINIDAE	Kingfishers	446
MEROPIDAE	Bee-Eaters	454
CORACIIDAE	Rollers	460
UPUPIDAE	Hoopoes	465
BUCEROTIDAE	Hornbills	466
CAPITONIDAE	Barbets	473
PICIDAE	Woodpeckers, Wryneck, Piculet	479
PITTIDAE	Pittas	494
ALAUDIDAE	Larks	495
HIRUNDINIDAE	Swallows and Martins	501
MOTACILLIDAE	Wagtails and Pipits	511
CAMPEPHAGIDAE	Cuckoo-Shrikes, Minivets Flycatcher-Shrike, Woodshrikes	529
PYCNONOTIDAE	Bulbuls and Finchbills	537
IRENIDAE	Ioras, Chloropsis, Fairy Bluebird	549
LANIIDAE	Shrikes	555
MUSCICAPIDAE		
TURDINAE	Thrushes, Shortwings, Robins, Forktails, Wheatears	560
TIMALIINAE	Babblers, Laughingthrushes	586
SYLVIINAE	Cisticolas, Prinias, Warblers, Leaf Warblers	607
MUSCICAPINAE	Flycatchers	635
MONARCHINAE	Monarch-Flycatchers and Paradise- Flycatchers	648
RHIPIDURINAE	Fantail-Flycatchers	652

PARIDAE	Tits	653
SITTIDAE	Nuthatches	655
DICAEIDAE	Flowerpeckers	658
NECTARINIIDAE	Sunbirds and Spiderhunters	661
ZOSTEROPIDAE	White-eyes	666
EMBERIZINAE	Buntings	667
FRINGILLIDAE	Finches, Grosbeaks	668
ESTRILDIDAE	Munias	670
PASSERIDAE		
PASSERINAE	Sparrows and Snowfinches	677
PLOCEINAE	Weavers	679
STURNIDAE	Starlings and Mynas	681
ORIOLIDAE	Orioles	691
DICRURIDAE	Drongos	695
ARTAMIDAE	Wood Swallows	703
CORVIDAE	Crows, Jays, Treepies, Magpies	704

Foreword

I enjoy writing a foreword or a review as it gives me a chance to read the manuscript or the book in detail. It is a pleasure to write the foreword of *Birds of Kerala: Status and Distribution* as it is a well-written book with lots of details which we require these days for taking specific management initiatives.

Kerala is a blessed state, 'Gods Own Country' as the advertisement of Kerala Tourism Department would say. Ornithologically, it is blessed in two ways: good literature on birds has already been available for many years, including Dr Sálím Ali's book *Birds of Kerala* (1969) (first edition came out in 1953 as *Birds of Travancore and Cochin*) and its subsequent reprint in 1984 and revised and enlarged version in 1999 (published by little-known Sálím Ali Wild Wings Trust and Kerala Forest Department), and secondly, a group of enthusiastic ornithologists and bird watchers. I consider the four authors of this fascinating book as some of the most talented and technically-sound ornithologists of India. By producing this book, they have developed a bench-mark standard for other ornithologists and other states to follow.

The book describes 453 species of birds, and an additional 49 species that could also occur occasionally as strays. The earlier book *Birds of Kerala* had listed only 379 species, so more than 100 species have been added to the checklist of birds from this small state of India. Unlike the so-called revised edition of *Birds of Kerala* (1999) which had many mistakes and disputable records, in this book, the four authors have meticulously mentioned all the new records and given reference(s) wherever appropriate. The bibliography contains about 900 references, which further proves thorough research done by the authors.

The first chapter Ornithology of Kerala is fascinating to read and sets the tone for the rest of the book. It also proves the erudition and meticulous research which the authors have done. The chapter The Changing Landscape of Kerala by Dr Sathis Chandran Nair is wonderful and gives great details of habitat, topography and biogeography of the state. I also enjoyed reading the chapter An Overview of the Bird Communities in Kerala.

It is sad to know that many dryland bird species such as the Yellow-wattled Lapwing, Stone Curlew, bush-quails, larks and Grey Francolin are declining in Kerala. They can survive in marginally agricultural areas but not in intensively cultivated areas. Perhaps intensive agriculture has resulted in their decline. However, the most worrisome aspect is the status