



STATE ACTION PLAN

for Conservation of Avian Diversity,
their Ecosystems, Habitats & Landscapes in Gujarat



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FOREWORD

Gujarat, with its spectacular landscapes including the shoreline, gulfs, mountains and desert, hosts an equally impressive diversity of birdlife. However, these ecosystems and species are very fragile and vulnerable from the climate change perspective and other human-induced threats. The State is also known for rapid development, industrialisation and economic growth. Striking a balance between biodiversity conservation and economic growth is imperative for a healthy society but is also extremely challenging.

The Gujarat State Action Plan for the Conservation of Avian Diversity, their Ecosystems, Habitats & Landscapes is a road map for bird conservation in the State with prescriptions that are in synergy with economic growth, health and development. Each of the 15 Programmes highlights issues of importance for bird conservation and strategies to address them. The strategies aim to integrate bird conservation with the policies and activities of State line departments and civil society organisations through a holistic and ecological approach.

My sincere thanks to all who contributed their time and effort to discuss vital issues related to bird conservation in the State and help prepare this document. I also request the State government and the larger society to implement the suggestions outlined in the SAP, collaboratively.

Virendra Rambahal Tiwari

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We thank the former Director-in-Charge, SACON, Dr. Muralidharan and the current Director Wildlife Institute of India, Mr. Virendra R. Tiwari for support during the preparation of the report.

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We are especially grateful to Mr. Devvratsinh Mori, Member of the Gujarat State Board for Wildlife, for his knowledgeable views and for sharing his stunning photographs of birds and their habitats in Gujarat for this Action Plan. Our sincere thanks to all photographers for their contributions in making the State Action Plan visually appealing. We especially thank Mr. Nayan Khanolkar and Mr. Dharmendra Khandal for sharing so many of their beautiful photographs.

We wish to acknowledge Ashish Pittie's 'Bibliography of South Asian Ornithology' for the historical perspective on ornithological studies in Gujarat. State of India's Birds (2020) provided much of the information on the key species and the issues related to their conservation. Land Use/Land Cover information for Gujarat was obtained from the Natural Resources Census Project of National Remote Sensing Centre (NRSC), ISRO, Hyderabad, India.

At SACON, we are especially grateful to Dr. Jayapal Rajah, for guiding us through the entire process of drafting the Action Plan and for preparing the structure of the Plan and devising the formula for prioritising species for the State. We also thank him for innumerable discussions regarding bird taxonomy, distributions, conservation issues and other support. We thank Mr. Vigneshwaran S. for designing the template. We thank all faculty, staff and students at SACON for discussions and for facilitating the preparation of the State Action Plan.

PREAMBLE

State Action Plans for Conservation of Avian Diversity, their Ecosystems, Habitats & Landscapes (SAP), were visualised as an essential first step towards implementing the VPP (2020–2030) that was developed by MoEFCC, Government of India and SACON.

Gujarat with a largely semi-arid and arid climate has among the most unique habitats and associated biodiversity in the country. This is also evident from the birdlife in the State, with reports of around 600 resident and migratory bird species. The northern end of the Western Ghats, Kachchh district, the long shoreline with two gulfs and several important wetlands in urban areas are ecologically remarkable and also very vulnerable to human-induced changes. These habitats are also particularly threatened by the effects of climate change. The Gujarat SAP synergises with other schemes and Plans in the State (e.g. CAMPA, AMRUT, Amrut Darohar, MISHTI, among others) to effectively protect these biodiverse but imperilled habitats. The SAP also highlights policies that conflict with particularly unique habitats and biodiversity and, where some realignment of strategies is required. These have been highlighted in the 15 Programmes, under strategic approaches required to address issues. Some issues to be addressed which are of great significance and urgency to meet international commitments to combat the effects of Climate Change, are repeated over programmes (e.g. Green Energy, Wastelands, Tourism).

SoIB (2020) was crucial for information related to bird species in the State. Since the preparation of this document, SoIB (2023) was released with updates and new species of key importance to the State. A staggering 39% of the 942 bird species from India assessed in the update, show population declines. From Gujarat, 413 birds were assessed in SoIB (2023) of which 333 have insufficient long-term data, 250 have insufficient current data and 89 are of high conservation concern. This underscores the importance of research and data in identifying threats and the urgency of implementing strategies highlighted in this State Action Plan for bird conservation.

Part A of the SAP describes the biogeography and biodiversity of the State. Part B highlights the major issues related to bird conservation in the State with strategic approaches and timelines (Short-term: 4 years, Medium-term: 4–7 years and Long-term: >10 years) to address these. The issues and strategies were identified after consultations with various stakeholders. Since the policies of several line departments in the State overlap with the identified issues, these departments have also been listed as executing and financing agencies. The State Forest Department is identified as the chief executing agency to coordinate with other line departments that are identified under each issue in the SAP.

FOREWORD	V	Preamble	IX
Acknowledgements	VII	Acronyms & Abbreviations	XII

PART-A: DESCRIPTION OF BIRDS AND THEIR HABITATS IN GUJARAT



BIOGEOGRAPHY AND BIODIVERSITY OF GUJARAT

Geography	02
Biogeographic Zones, Provinces and Ecoregions	07
Protected Areas	08
Floral and faunal diversity in Gujarat	10
Key local NGOs involved in bird monitoring and conservation	11
Key Universities and Colleges in Teaching Biodiversity Conservation	12

AN OVERVIEW OF AVIFAUNA OF THE STATE

History of State ornithology	13
Description of bird diversity in the State	13
Major bird species of conservation significance in the State	14
A literature review of the ecology and conservation of birds and their habitats in the State.	15



PART-B: ISSUES AND STRATEGIC APPROACHES

18	CONSERVATION OF RARE, ENDANGERED & THREATENED (RET) BIRD SPECIES OF INDIA AND IMPLEMENTATION OF SPECIES RECOVERY PLANS (SRPS)	86	CURBING ILLEGAL TRAFFICKING OF BIRDS	
30	CONSERVATION OF IMPORTANT BIRD & BIODIVERSITY AREAS OUTSIDE THE PROTECTED AREA NETWORK	92	CONSERVATION OF AVIAN DIVERSITY IN URBAN AREAS	
36	CONSERVATION OF PROTECTED AREAS (PAS) WITH HIGH AVI-AN DIVERSITY	102	SURVEILLANCE AND MONITORING OF AVIAN DISEASES	
42	CONSERVATION OF AVIAN DIVERSITY AT THE LANDSCAPE LEVEL	108	NATURE EDUCATION AND AWARENESS FOR CONSERVATION OF AVIAN DIVERSITY, THEIR ECOSYSTEMS, HABITATS AND LANDSCAPES	
52	CONSERVATION OF INLAND AQUATIC ECOSYSTEMS WITH HIGH AVIAN DIVERSITY	114	CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAMME FOR PROTECTION AND MONITORING OF AVIAN DIVERSITY, THEIR ECOSYSTEMS, HABITATS AND LANDSCAPES	
62	CONSERVATION OF COASTAL AND MARINE ECOSYSTEMS WITH HIGH AVIAN DIVERSITY	120	MAINSTREAMING CONSERVATION OF AVIAN DIVERSITY WITH OTHER SCHEMES AND PROGRAMMES OF THE STATE	
70	CONSERVATION OF MIGRATORY BIRDS	122	IMPLEMENTATION OF INTERNATIONAL PROTOCOLS AND CONVENTIONS IN BIRD CONSERVATION	
78	IMPACTS OF DEVELOPMENTAL PROJECTS AND OTHER AN-THROPOGENIC ACTIVITIES ON AVIAN DIVERSITY AND HABITAT	128	ANNEXURES	155 REFERENCES



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