

# IMPORTANT BIRD AND BIODIVERSITY AREAS IN INDIA

## Priority sites for Conservation

Revised and updated 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition Vol. I



# **IMPORTANT BIRD AND BIODIVERSITY AREAS IN INDIA**

## **Priority sites for conservation**

**Second Edition: Revised and Updated  
Volume I**

**Asad R. Rahmani, M. Zafar-ul Islam and Raju M. Kasambe**

**Maps prepared by**

**Mohit Kalra and Noor I. Khan**

**Team Members**

**Noor I. Khan, Siddesh Surve, Abhijit Malekar and Nandkishor Dudhe**

**Significant Contribution to this edition**

**Anwaruddin Choudhury, Arvind Mishra, Ajai Saxena, Dhananjai Mohan, Himmat Singh Pawar, Intesar Suhail, Khursheed Ahmad, Neeraj Srivastava, P.O. Nameer, Manoj Nair, Mrutyumjaya Rao, Praveen, J., Sanjeeva Pandey, S. Subramanya, Satya Prakash**

**Editors**

**Gayatri Ugra and Maithreyi, M.R.**

**Layout and Design**

**V. Gopi Naidu**

With major sponsorship from  
**Pavillion Foundation, Singapore**

**Recommended citation:**

Rahmani, A.R., Islam, M.Z. and Kasambe, R.M. (2016) Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas in India: Priority Sites for Conservation (Revised and updated). Bombay Natural History Society, Indian Bird Conservation Network, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and BirdLife International (U.K.). Pp. 1992 + xii

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Bombay Natural History Society,

Hornbill House, Shaheed Bhagat Singh Road, Mumbai-400001, INDIA.

Telephone: 0091-22-28429477 and 0091-22-22821811. Fax: 0091-22-22837615.

Email: info@bnhs.org; websites: www.bnhs.org and www.ibcn.in

Bombay Natural History Society in India is registered under Bombay Public Trust Act 1950: F244 (Bom) dated 06<sup>th</sup> July 1953.

**ISBN:** 978-93-84678-02-9

**Cover Photographs:** Design and collage by Gopi Naidu conceptualized by IBA Team.

First published: 2004 by IBCN: Bombay Natural History Society.

Second Revised Edition: 2016.

Printed by Akshata Arts Pvt Ltd. 22, A to Z Industrial Estate, G. Kadam Marg, Lower Parel, Mumbai 400 013. Published by the Bombay Natural History Society, Hornbill House, Shaheed Bhagat Singh Road, Mumbai 400 001.

**Designed:** V. Gopi Naidu.

Available from IBCN and BNHS website as given above.

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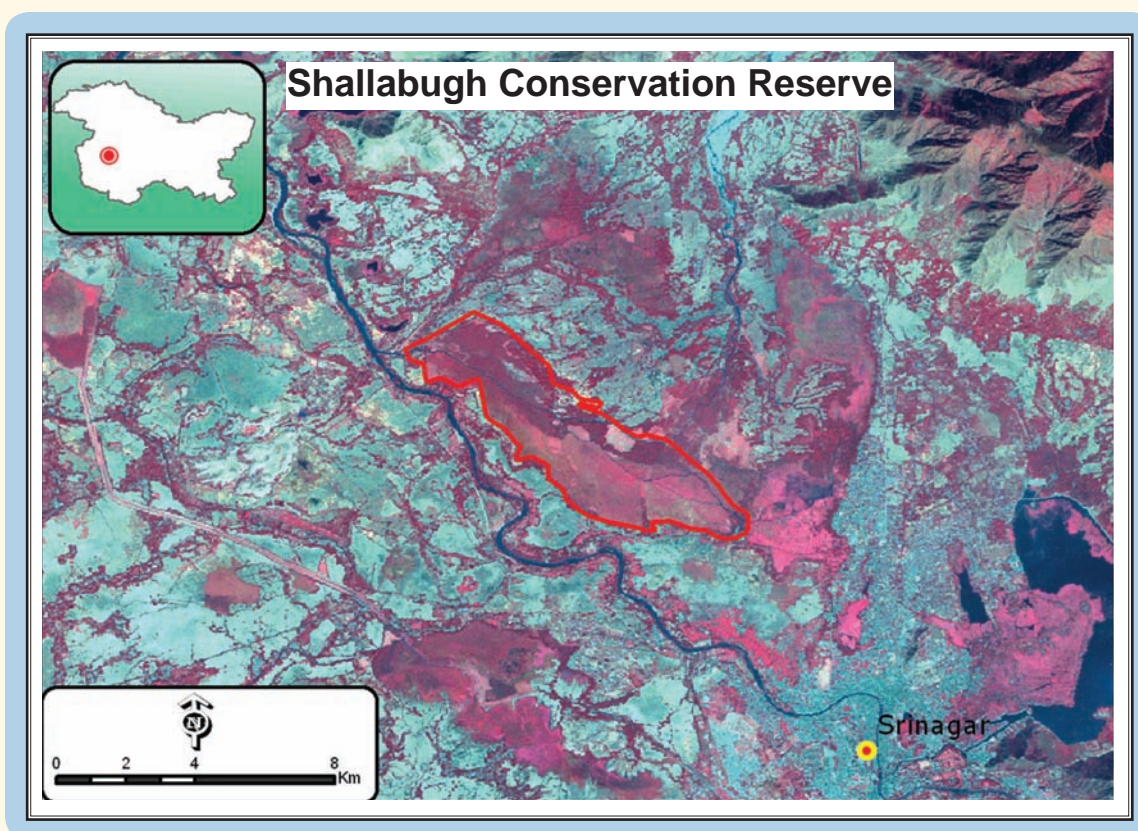
## SHALLABUGH CONSERVATION RESERVE

IN-JK-17

<b>IBA Site Code</b>	: IN-JK-17	<b>Altitude</b>	: 1,580 msl
<b>District</b>	: Srinagar	<b>Precipitation</b>	: 550 mm + snowfall
<b>Coordinates</b>	: 34° 10' 00" N, 74° 42' 00" E	<b>Temperature</b>	: -2 °C to 35 °C
<b>Ownership</b>	: State	<b>Biogeographic Zone</b>	: Himalaya
<b>Area</b>	: 700 ha	<b>Habitats</b>	: Freshwater Swamp, Himalayan Secondary Scrub

**IBA CRITERIA** : A4iii (>20,000 waterbirds)

**PROTECTION STATUS** : Wetland Conservation Reserve.



### GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Close to Srinagar city in the Kashmir Valley lie the Shallabugh marshes. They are fed by the Sindh river and local snowmelt. The depth of the water varies from 0.3 to 2.0 m, and the water level fluctuates considerably according to the rainfall and snowmelt. Large areas of the lake dry up between September and March.

The area has extensive reedbeds of *Phragmites communis* and *Typha angustata*, and rich growth of *Nymphaea candida* and *N. stellata* on open water. *Lemna* sp. forms mats over the surface in some areas, while adjacent areas have willow plantations and paddyfields. The area is thus of great importance for waterfowl.

Islam & Rahmani (2008) have proposed Shallabugh

Conservation Reserve as a Ramsar Site as it qualifies for Ramsar Criterion 5 (wetland regularly supports 20,000 or more waterbirds) and Criterion 6 (wetlands regularly supports 1% of the individuals in a population of one species or subspecies). It is Ramsar Wetland Type O (permanent freshwater lake).

### AVIFAUNA

The area is an important staging and wintering ground for migratory Anatidae, and breeding area for a variety of waterfowl, particularly Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*. Over 150,000 ducks and geese have been recorded at one time (Rashid Naqash, *pers. comm.* 2003). The site qualifies for A4iii criteria. Detailed studies have not been conducted, but





Thousands of waterbirds congregate at Shallabugh and use this wetland as a stop-over during the migration

the available information shows that it attracts species such as Common Teal *Anas crecca*, Northern Pintail *A. acuta*, Eurasian Wigeon *A. penelope*, Mallard *A. platyrhynchos*, Garganey *A. querquedula*, Gadwall *A. strepera*, Northern Shoveller *A. clypeata*, Common Pochard *Aythya ferina*, White-eyed or Ferruginous Pochard *A. nyroca*, and Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina*. Many species breed in the extensive marshes, but detailed records are not available. More recent records of sightings of huge concentrations of these species in 2008–2009 at the end of January and

throughout February in Shallabugh Wetlands are available (Khursheed Ahmad, *unpubl.*).

During a recent visit of IBCN members headed by Dr. Asad Rahmani to Shallabugh Wetland on February 23, 2012, a population of nearly 500,000 waterfowl was recorded.

A similar number of birds was estimated during the recent Asian Waterfowl Count conducted by the Wildlife Department in February 2012 in Shallabugh Wetland Reserve (Rauf Zargar, *pers. comm.* 2012).

#### OTHER KEY FAUNA

The only major mammal is the Common Otter *Lutra lutra* which is found in almost all the large wetlands of the Kashmir Valley. Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes* and Golden Jackal *Canis aureus* are found in the surrounding agricultural land and forests. These marshes are also rich in fish fauna, but not much specific information is available.

#### LAND USE

- Agriculture
- Fisheries

#### THREATS AND CONSERVATION ISSUES

- Siltation
- Agricultural intensification and expansion
- Use of fertilizers and pesticides
- Illegal grazing and encroachment



It is important to make local communities, particularly children, interested in wildlife. Bringing them to IBAs such as Shallabugh can generate interest



ASAD R. RAHMANI

There has been a steady increase in the number of waterfowl, thanks to effective protection by the J&K Wildlife Department. Shallabugh Conservation Reserve is a good example of such protection

Like other wetlands of the Kashmir Valley, Shallabugh suffers from overfishing, infestation by weeds, and pollution. Besides the usual anthropogenic pressures and threats, biomedical waste from the Sher-e-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences disposed of in Anchar ends up in Shallabugh. However, the entire wetland is protected as a conservation reserve by the Department of Wildlife Protection, Government of Jammu & Kashmir.

The surrounding areas are almost entirely agricultural. The principal threats are siltation, eutrophication, and encroachment for agriculture. Fertilizer run-off from the adjacent agricultural land has greatly increased the rate of

eutrophication. Pesticide pollution through runoff from the agricultural lands may pose a serious threat to the breeding and wintering waterbirds. This needs investigation.

#### KEY CONTRIBUTORS

Rashid Y. Naqash, Khursheed Ahmad, Intesar Suhail.

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