

MAKE THE MOST OF THURSDAY TO SUNDAY

## Let's wing it

With Wild Bird Day and October Big Day coming up, expert birders from Mumbai suggest tips for avian buffs to make the most of this ideal season

### WILD WORLD

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DID you know that on October Big Day last year, India ranked 10th globally for the number of bird species reported? This year with Bird Count India's (BCI) Wild Bird Day and October Big Day coinciding on October 17, we have a chance to boost our place in the global ranking.

While the Wild Bird Day by BCI is a day-long birding event celebrated by birders across India to observe and list as many species as they can, October Big Day is celebrated by global birders who document birds throughout the day and night. And the best part is that you don't need to be an expert to contribute. A love for nature combined with good observation skills, and spending as less as just 10 minutes in your balcony could do the trick.

All you've got to do is download the eBird mobile app. Stay put in your balcony or terrace and look out for interesting avian activity. Every species that you document on the app will automatically be added to the listings for the global October Big Day challenge.

"With the pandemic still around, a lot of the birding activity may occur closer to home but as a community, in the last few months, we have witnessed that incredible diversity can be right near our doorstep. As global birdwatching events gain momentum, combined with the onset of migration and the respite that birding offers from the WFH routine in these times, it is going to be a particularly fruitful Wild Bird Day," suggests Ashwin Viswanathan, research associate at Bird Count India.

Education researcher Adithi Muralidhar has been an avian enthusiast for as long as she can remember. But she took up the citizen science of birdwatching more seriously in 2006. "Birding brings me a lot of peace; it makes me more perceptive, and also helps brush up skills of observation," she shares. Muralidhar strongly feels that birding should not be restricted to any age group, "I am also a strong advocate of nature education

among children. Our centre under the Vignyan Pratibha Project, developed a learning unit for observing birds in your immediate environment. The aim is to observe birds in their natural environment, and develop the skills of observation, attention to detail and documentation; and more importantly, also rekindle our almost fading relationship with nature," she adds.

For Muralidhar, patience is crucial. "If you feel left out watching experienced birders sharing photos and a large number of sightings, don't be overwhelmed. There is nothing wrong if you spotted only five birds. All of us face trouble at the start. You needn't immediately head out to a birding hotspot if you are new to birding. You will need time to observe, make notes and identify the species. Adopt what we call 'patch birding', which is birding in the same area over a while."

Vasai-based naturalist Ramesh Shenai, who has been birding for six years, has documented over 79 species from his balcony in the past 200 days. These include greater flamingos, Vigors's sunbird, jungle myna, booted eagle, Peregrine falcon, painted stork, Eurasian spoonbill and bank myna among others.

"October surprises you with both passage and winter migrants. While the passage migrants do not migrate here, they make pit stops for rest. Their beauty is striking. Since the eBird app is easy-to-use, the experience should make it a thrilling one," he signs off.

ON October 17 and 18,  
all-day long  
LOG ON TO eBird.org

Inputs by Adithi Muralidhar,  
Teacher Plus

### Tips from the experts

- Keep your distance from the bird while observing.
- Do not harm the natural surroundings or trespass private property to observe the bird better. Seek permission first.
- Avoid being noisy. Do not feed the birds or play the calls of birds to increase proximity.
- Don't approach the nesting area. Never handle eggs. Be cautious while observing birds during the mating season.
- Wear dull-coloured clothing, and avoid dabbing on powders, creams, perfumes or lotions with a strong odour.
- While photographing birds, ensure you switch off the flash, especially near nesting sites.
- Observe behaviour such as feeding, flocking, flying, foraging, mating, nesting, preening, roosting, singing or calling, territorial display, hopping, wading or swimming.



Purple rumped sunbird.  
PIC/ADITHI MURALIDHAR;  
(right) Eurasian hoopoe.  
PIC/RAMESH SHENAI



Verditer flycatcher.  
PIC/RAMESH SHENAI



Indian spotted eagle.  
PIC/RAMESH SHENAI



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