

With new app, help keep track of bird species

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Pune: The next time you spot an unusual bird or take a weekend trip to an important birding spot, instead of merely taking a picture to upload on social media for likes from your friends, you could contribute to the collection of scientific information about the bird and, eventually, to its conservation.

At the ongoing Kirloskar Vasundhara International Film Festival (KVIFF), Ela Foundation, a city-based organisation for bird-watching enthusiasts, launched a cell-phone application here on Tuesday that will allow users to enter information about bird sightings into a database that can be used for scientific and ecological studies.

Satish Pande, director of the foundation, said that many amateur photographers and birdwatchers spot interesting birds, but none of this data is available to the scientific community. Many people make bird lists or take photographs, but there is no central inventory. With this app, birdwatchers from the remotest villages will be able to contribute their observations for science and conservation.

"One of the most important aspects of any such exercise is that the information provided should be authenticated. For this, a team of three or four experts will verify the information uploaded through the app before it is fed into the database," he added.

Users will have to register on the app and the account will then be verified before they can enter information. They will have to enter the locality and date of the observation and can also upload photographs of the birds, he added.

A list of the 566 bird species found in Maharashtra has already been entered into the app. Eventually, all birds found in India will be listed. The user will merely have to state the number of birds spotted and upload images. If the user has spotted a bird but is unsure of the species, he or she can upload just the photograph along with the date and place. Ex-

THE APP CAN DOCUMENT

- > A database of birds collected over several years
- > Locality-wise databases
- > Understand current population trends
- > Record important localities
- > The arrival and departure of migratory birds
- > Distribution of endemic and threatened birds
- > Nesting sites of apex predators like birds of prey and owls



To use the app

- Download it from www.birdwatch.elafoundation.org or www.elafoundation.org
- Register your mobile number and email id on the app
- Upload long bird-lists in excel format or enter individual observations on the app itself
- Enter the locality name and date of observation, upload photographs



perts will identify the bird from the photograph and add the information to the database, Pande said.

He clarified that the photographs will only be used to authenticate the observation and will not be put in the public domain.

The information fed into the database can provide vital data for various purposes. For instance, the arrival and departure time of migratory birds can be recorded and if there is a change in patterns due to phenomena like global warming, it can be added.

"At the end of every month, a report will be prepared on all the bird sightings recorded. The analysed data will be shared with government agencies like the forest and irrigation departments, local bodies or even the pollution control board," Pande said.