

Ruff

Migratory birds are a mesmerizing and astonishing aspect of nature that never ceases to amaze us. These remarkable creatures embark on incredible odysseys, spanning thousands of miles annually, between their breeding grounds in the north and wintering grounds in the south. Their epic migrations are a testament to their remarkable adaptations and the formidable obstacles they overcome in an ever-changing world. From the tiniest songbirds to the mightiest raptors, migratory birds exhibit a vast array of shapes and sizes, and their movements are an indispensable part of numerous ecosystems worldwide.

The Northern Shoveler, with its distinctive bill that resembles a broad spatula, is a waterfowl species that never fails to capture the attention of birdwatchers and nature enthusiasts alike. This elegant bird is known for its remarkable feeding behavior, using its bill to filter out food particles from the water and upending underwater vegetation to access its prey.

| Bird Characteristic | Description |
|-------------------------|---|
| Common Name | Ruff |
| Scientific Name | Calidris pugnax |
| Colour(s) | Brown and white plumage with a distinctive ruff around the neck in breeding males |
| Average Length | 26-30 cm |
| Average Height | 20-27 cm |
| Weight | 65-190 g |
| Type of Bird | Wetlands |
| Origin Country(ies) | Europe, Asia |
| Month it comes to India | September |
| Location in India | Chilika Lake, Odisha |

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| IUCN status | Least Concern |
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Features

Ruffs are fascinating wading birds that are found in wetlands throughout Europe, Asia, and North America. These medium-sized birds have distinctive plumage during the breeding season, with males sporting colourful ruffs of feathers around their necks. This display is used to attract females and compete with other males for breeding rights. Females and non-breeding males have much plainer feathers that provide camouflage in their wetland habitats.



Ruffs are well adapted to life in wetlands, with long legs that allow them to wade in shallow water while foraging for food. : Ruffs typically stand at around 26-32 cm (10-13 inches) tall. They weigh between 70-150 grams (2.5-5.3 ounces), with males being larger than females. They have a length of around 28-32 cm (11-13 inches) and a wingspan of

52-60 cm (20-24 inches).

One interesting aspect of Ruffs is their ability to change their plumage depending on the season. During the non-breeding season, males lose their ruffs and revert to a much plainer plumage, while females and non-breeding males become even more camouflaged to blend in with their surroundings.

Habitat and Food

The Ruff (*Calidris pugnax*) is a wading bird species that inhabits a wide range of wetland habitats including marshes, wet meadows, flooded fields, and the shores of lakes, rivers, and estuaries.

During the breeding season, Ruffs prefer wetland habitats with shallow water and plenty of vegetation for nesting and courtship displays. The males have distinctive breeding plumage, which includes ornate feathers, neck ruffs, and ear tufts used to attract females during courtship displays. The females, in contrast, have drabber plumage and tend to blend in with their surroundings for better camouflage.



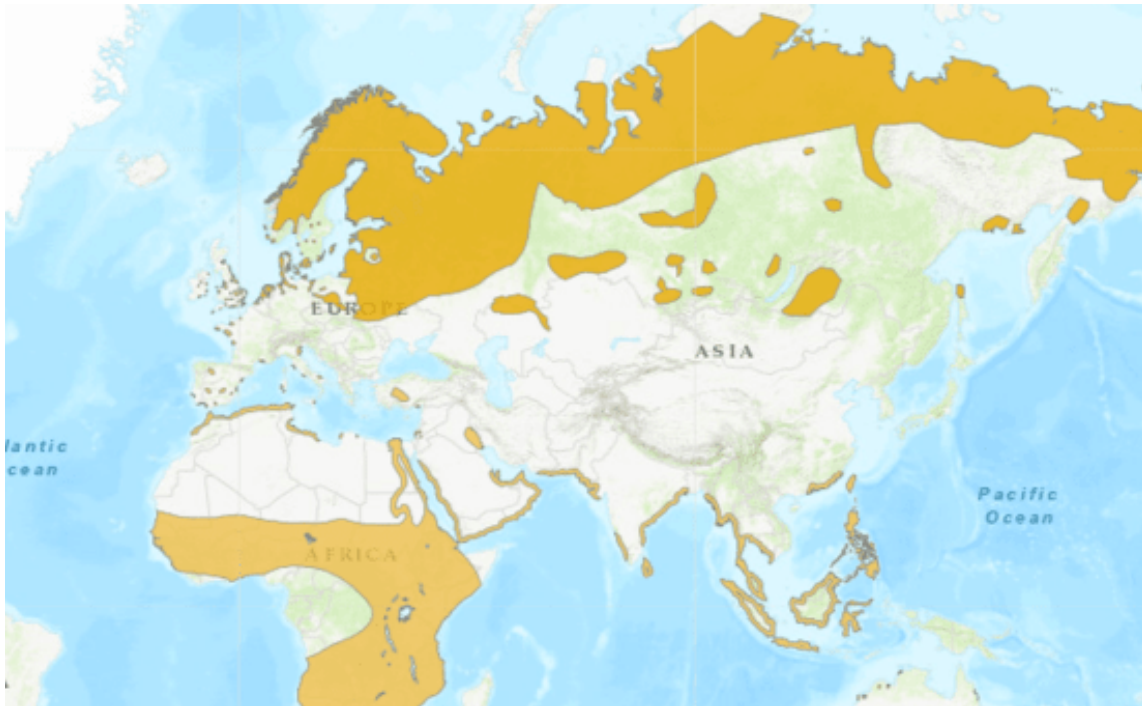
The Ruff's diet primarily consists of invertebrates such as insects, crustaceans, and mollusks, which they find in the mud and water of wetland habitats. They use their long beaks to probe the mud for prey and are also able to detect food through touch and sight.

During the non-breeding season, Ruffs migrate to warmer regions, such as sub-Saharan Africa, where they may overwinter in a variety of wetland habitats, including marshes, swamps, and estuaries. During this period, their diet may shift to include a wider range of food sources, such as seeds and small fish.

Migration

Ruffs are migratory birds that travel to India from their breeding grounds in northern Europe and Asia. These birds breed in wetlands and marshes across a vast range that extends from Scandinavia and Russia to eastern Siberia. During the autumn migration, ruffs undertake a long journey, flying southwards to reach their wintering grounds in Africa and

South Asia.



Ruffs usually arrive in India in the months of September and October, and stay until March or April. They can be found in a range of habitats across the country, including wetlands, marshes, paddy fields, and other agricultural fields. Some of the states where ruffs are commonly observed in India include Gujarat, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, and Punjab, among others.

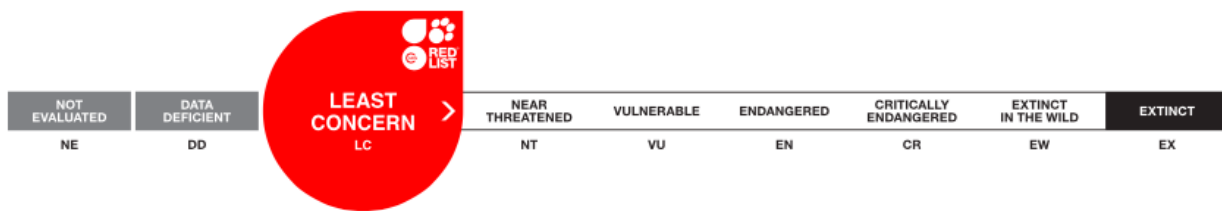
The purpose of ruffs coming to India is primarily for feeding and resting during their long migration. The wetlands and agricultural fields in India provide an abundance of food sources for these birds, such as insects, invertebrates, and seeds. Additionally, these areas also provide a safe resting place for the birds during their journey.

Ruffs generally leave India in the months of March and April, as they begin their return journey to their breeding grounds in northern Europe and Asia. During their migration, ruffs face a range of threats, including habitat loss and degradation, hunting, and climate change. Conservation efforts are critical to protect the habitats these birds rely on, both during their migration and in their breeding and wintering

grounds.

IUCN Status

The Ruff is listed as “Least Concern” on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. This means that the population of Ruff is relatively stable and not currently facing any major threats that could cause significant declines in its numbers.



However, despite being listed as Least Concern, the Ruff still faces a range of threats that could impact its long-term survival. These threats include habitat loss and degradation, hunting, and climate change. The species is also susceptible to disturbance and displacement during its migration and wintering periods, as it relies on a network of wetland habitats along its flyway.

To address these threats, various conservation measures have been implemented to protect the Ruff and its habitat. These include the establishment of protected areas, such as national parks and wildlife sanctuaries, that provide critical habitat for the species. Additionally, efforts are being made to promote sustainable land-use practices and reduce hunting pressure on the species.

The Ruff is also a target species for several international conservation initiatives, such as the African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement (AEWA) and the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP). These initiatives aim to coordinate conservation efforts across the Ruff’s range, from its breeding grounds in northern Europe to its wintering

grounds in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.