

## Pong Dam Wetlands and Zoological Survey of India

With reference to the note by Muthamizh Selvan<sup>1</sup> regarding the Pong Dam, Himachal Pradesh, the claim for two new avian records (viz. Slender-billed Gull, *Chroicocephalus genei* and Ferruginous Pochard, *Aythya nyroca*) is not correct. Both species have already been reported by the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI)<sup>2</sup>. Proper review of the literature is essential before publishing, which would otherwise often lead to repetitions and unnecessary claims.

The ZSI is a century-old organization (established in 1916) mainly deals with the exploration, survey, inventorying and monitoring of faunal diversity in various states, ecosystems and protected areas of India (<http://zsi.gov.in>). It is the only taxonomic organization in the country involved in the study of all kinds of animals, from Protozoa to Mammalia, occurring in all possible habitats. Sixteen regional centres are working in different areas of the country within their respective jurisdiction. So far, faunal resources of various states and Union Territories in India, selected ecosystems and conservation areas have been explored and published in various forms such as State Fauna Series, Fauna of Freshwater Ecosystem, Fauna of Estuarine Ecosystem, Fauna of Conservation Areas, Occasional

Papers (309 volumes since 1982), Memoirs of ZSI (21 volumes since 1985), Handbooks (38 volumes since 1980), Technical Monographs (seven volumes since 1985) and Special publications (33 books). The departmental journal, viz. *Records of the Zoological Survey of India* (formerly *Records of Indian Museum*) deals with studies pertaining to taxonomy, faunistics, biology, ecology and population of any taxon and is one of the leading journals of Indian zoology.

Over four decades, the High Altitude Regional Centre (located at Solan) of ZSI is exploring and documenting the fauna of Western Himalaya (Himachal Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir). The outcome of the field surveys is available in the form of published articles/books



**Figure 1.** A flock of Bar-headed Goose at Pong Dam Wetland (photo: Anil Kumar).

([http://zsi.gov.in/regional\\_centres/harc\\_solan.html](http://zsi.gov.in/regional_centres/harc_solan.html)). Faunal diversity of the Pong Dam and its catchment area was documented by ZSI<sup>2</sup>, conducting ten extensive surveys during 1996–2002. This document provides information on different faunal groups (Table 1). The Pong Dam Wetland is a Ramsar site (no. 1211) and is also known as the Maharana Pratap Sagar, located at the base of Dhauladhar ranges in Kangra District of Himachal Pradesh. It is a man-made reservoir on River Beas, drained by five major streams, viz. Ava, Moul, Gaj, Baner and Dehar. It was declared as Wildlife Sanctuary on 1 June 1983. Pandey<sup>3,4</sup> also explored and documented the avian diversity of this sanctuary. Apart from the occurrence of a sizable number of aquatic birds, this wetland is the wintering home of about 10,000 Bar-headed Goose *Anser indicus* (Figure 1), (approximately 20% of the global population of this species)<sup>5</sup>.

**Table 1.** Summary of the faunal groups reported by ZSI in the Pong Dam and its catchment area<sup>2</sup>

Faunal group	Animals covered	Number of genera/families*	Number of species
Oligochaeta	Earthworms	09	12
Odonata	Dragonflies and damselflies	10	15
Orthoptera	Grasshoppers, crickets and grouse locusts	35	38
Lepidoptera	Butterflies	37	52
Pisces	Fishes	32	57
Amphibia	Frogs and toads	07	08
Reptilia	Lizards, snakes and tortoises	14	15
Aves	Birds	65*	412
Total species			609

\*Families.

1. Muthamizh Selvan, K., *Curr. Sci.*, 2010, **99**(12), 1642.
2. *Faunal Diversity of Pong Dam and its Catchment Area, Wetland Ecosystem Series 12*, Zoological Survey of India, Kolkata, 2009, pp. 1–138.
3. Pandey, S., *Tiger Pap.*, 1989, **16**(2), 20–26.
4. Pandey, S., *Biol. Conserv.*, 1993, **66**(2), 125–130.
5. Islam, M. Z. and Rahmani, A. R., *Important Bird Areas in India: Priority Sites for Conservation*, Indian Bird Conservation Network, Bombay Natural History Society and BirdLife International, UK, 2004, pp. xviii + 1133.

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