A “National Symposium on Dryland Birds: Strategy for Conservation and Management” was organized by the Gujarat Institute of Desert Ecology (GUIDE) from 9 to 10 January 2015, at K.S.K.V Kachchh University, Bhuj, Kachchh in Gujarat. GUIDE, established in May 1995, is a premier research organization based in Bhuj carrying out various research activities in the field of Ecology and Environment.

The first day of the Symposium was devoted to technical sessions while an excursion was planned on the second day to an area called ‘Chhari Dhand’ situated approximately 80 km northwest of Bhuj. Chhari Dhand is famous for a variety of birds, many of which are migratory in nature, travelling long distances to reach there.

There were four technical sessions, each embracing a distinct theme. The first technical session was on “Dryland Scenario – Status and Distribution” which had two invited lectures and 9 oral presentations. The second technical session had the theme “Ecosystem Services of Birds” with two invited lectures and 9 oral presentations. The third technical session had two invited lectures and eight oral presentations on the topic “Issues and Threats to Birds”. The last technical session had deliberations on “Conservation and Management of Birds”. It contained two invited lectures and eight oral presentations. Most presentations were from Gujarat, however, there were also presentations from Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, and West Bengal. The absence of people from north-eastern states is a matter of concern and the organizers should try to reach these areas in the future events.

The list of dignitaries gracing the occasion include: Dr. J.A. Khan, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests & Chairman, Gujarat Biodiversity Board; Shri U.D. Singh, Chief Conservator of Forests, Kachchh Circle, Gujarat State Forest Department; Dr. A.P. Singh, Member Secretary, Gujarat Biodiversity Board; Dr. P.A. Azeez, Director, Salim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History (SACON); Shri R.V. Asari, Director, Gujarat Institute of Desert Ecology (GUIDE) and Dr. G.A. Thivakaran, Chief Principal Scientist, GUIDE.

Various avi-faunal issues were deliberated throughout the day during the course of the invited lectures and oral presentations.

Whereas Deomurari and Matieda provided a glimpse of the new generation of tools and techniques available for avian conservation, the lecture by Prof. K.K. Sharma guided the participants towards employing bioacoustics tools for identification and monitoring of birds. The presentation by Dr. J.A. Khan and Dr. A.P. Singh highlighted initiatives taken by the

Ilyas and Parveen from the Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) gave an account of the avian composition in and around the Pench Tiger Reserve, whereas David provided information about the dryland birds of northern Tamil Nadu. Chavda et al. studied populations of house sparrow (Passer domesticus) in Rajkot.
The last session began with an invited talk by Dr P.A. Azeez on unsung functional values of avian services. Narwade and Rahmani presented “Status and conservation of birds of southern tropical thorn forests of Great Indian Bustard (Ardeotis nigriceps) Sanctuary area, Deccan plateau of Maharashtra, India”. Chauhan et al. presented a case study highlighting people’s perception on the conservation of common birds. Among the other presentations were those of Gadhi et al. presenting the status of the Great Indian Bustard and the future conservation measures in Abdasa taluka of Kachchh district; Prajapati and Mahato who studied the flock size and activities of birds in Thol Sanctuary; and Suthar et al. who presented the conservation measures adopted for the highly vulnerable bird species Stoliczka’s bushchat (Saxicola macrorhyncha) through Biodiversity Management Committee (BMC) in Kachchh district.

The second day of the symposium was devoted to a visit to Chhari Dhandh. A dhandh is a large, shallow pond used to collect rainwater. Kachchh has 34 such dhandhs. Chhari Dhandh with an area of approximately 10 sq km is the largest among them. Chhari means salt-affected. This place is a paradise for bird-watchers, with around 370 bird species flocking the site in peak season.

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