Bird species at higher elevations

Prelims: *Current events of National and International Importance| Environment*

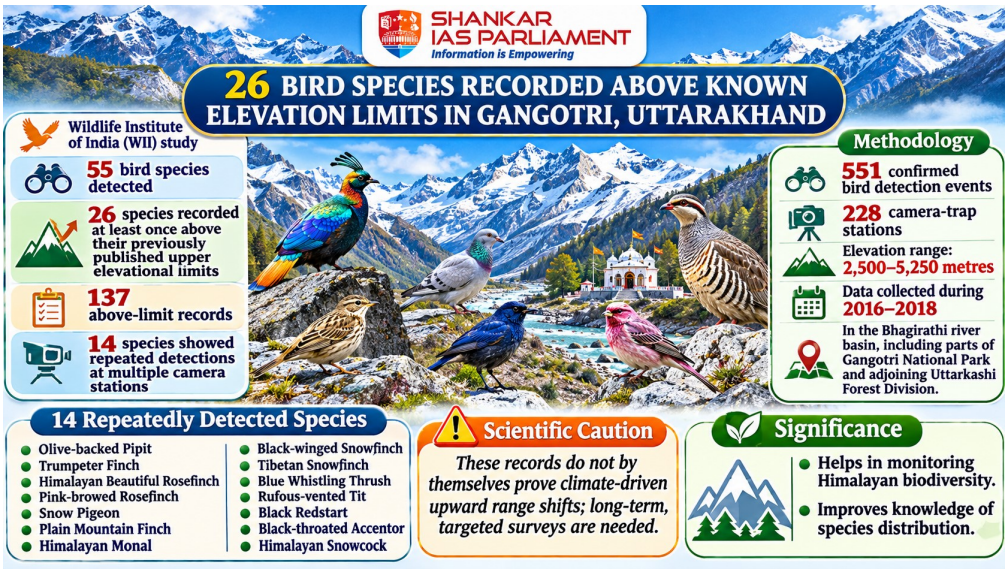
Why in News?

A study by scientists from the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) found that 26 out of 55 bird species detected in Uttarakhand's Gangotri landscape were recorded at least once above their previously published upper elevational limits.

- **Publication & Survey Scope-** Published online on November 19, 2026, in *Environmental Monitoring and Assessment*, the study analyzed 551 confirmed detections across 55 species from 228 camera-trap stations (2,500–5,250 m) in the Bhagirathi river basin (including Gangotri National Park and parts of Uttarkashi Forest Division) between 2016 and 2018.
- **Above-Limit Detections-** The 26 species accounted for **137 records** above their published maximum elevation limits.
- **Largest Elevation Exceedances-** The Red-wattled Lapwing had the largest reported exceedance (3,286 m above its published limit), followed by the Brahminy Starling (2,466 m).
- **Out-of-Range Detections-** Some records fell outside mapped IUCN geographic ranges, with the Tibetan Snowfinch showing the largest reported distance (1,258.62 km).
- **14 Species with Repeated Detections**
- Fourteen species had repeated above-limit detections (at least two records across at least two camera stations)–
    - Himalayan Monal
    - Himalayan Snowcock
    - Snow Pigeon
    - Olive-backed Pipit
    - Trumpeter Finch
    - Himalayan Beautiful Rosefinch
    - Pink-browed Rosefinch
    - Plain Mountain Finch
    - Black-winged Snowfinch
    - Tibetan Snowfinch
    - Blue Whistling Thrush
    - Rufous-vented Tit
    - Black Redstart
    - Black-throated Accentor

Study Limitations & Context

- **Incidental Sampling-** Camera traps were primarily set up for large mammals and ground-dwelling Galliformes, and small birds may not consistently trigger them.
- **Climate & Range Caveats-** Researchers noted that single or few extreme records require verification and do not by themselves prove climate-driven range shifts; longer-term, broader surveys and refined baseline data are needed.



Reference

[The Hindustan Times| Bird species at higher elevations]

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