Census of Black-Necked Crane in Ladakh

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Why in News?

Ladakh's State Bird, the endangered Black-necked Crane, has recorded an increase in population in a year, said the UT administration.

Key Census Highlights

- **Key breeding site** – Chushul recorded the highest count (16), followed by Tso Kar and Kargyam (15 each) and Korzok (14) - the four major sites held about 56% of all birds counted across the Changthang range.
- **Significant Growth** – The population increased by nearly 25%, rising from 87 birds in 2025 to 108 birds in 2026.
- **Population Trends** – The 2026 count included 86 adults and 22 juveniles, compared to 70 adults and 17 juveniles recorded in 2025.
- Adult numbers grew about 12% a year between 2021 and 2025.
- **Conservation efforts** – Protection of nesting sites from dogs, with credit to Environment Protection Force personnel and local communities.
- BNHS has sterilised over 2,950 free-ranging dogs.
- **Cultural aspect** – India’s first Black-Necked Crane Festival was held in Ladakh in August 2026.

Black-necked Crane

- **Scientific name** – Grus nigricollis.
- **Local name** – Chathung-thung in Ladakh, also called the Tibetan crane.
- **Habitat** – Breeds in high-altitude marshes and lakes of the Tibetan Plateau and eastern Ladakh.
- It has been the *State Bird of Ladakh* since 2021; earlier, of erstwhile Jammu & Kashmir.
- Ladakh is its **only breeding area in India**.
- Only **alpine species** among the world’s 15 cranes.
- **Appearance** – Mostly grey, with a black head and neck and a red crown.
- **Conservation Status**
  - IUCN – **Near Threatened** (downgraded from Vulnerable in 2020).
  - Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 – **Schedule I**.
  - CITES – **Appendix I**.
- **Threats** – Feral dogs damaging eggs and chicks; habitat loss from settlements and

construction.



Quick facts

Tso Kar Wetland Complex
• **Location** – Changthang region, Leh district, Ladakh. • **Type** – High-altitude wetland complex in the Trans-Himalaya. • **Ramsar Site** – Designated as India's 42nd Ramsar Site in December 2020. • **Significance** – One of India's key breeding grounds for the black-necked crane. • **Other birds** – Bar-headed goose, great crested grebe, brown-headed gull, ruddy shelduck.

Reference

[The Tribune| Black-necked Crane Population Rises to 108]

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