

Indian Pond Heron

Prelims: Current events of national and international importance | Species

Why in news?

Citizen-science data from Visakhapatnam suggests that pond herons & cattle egrets may be undertaking regular seasonal journeys along the East coast, reviving a 30-year-old mystery from Chennai.

- It is a ***small heron*** that is common in most aquatic habitats, also known as Indian pond heron or paddy bird.
- **Scientific name** - *Ardeola grayii*.
- **Family** - Ardeidae (Heron, egrets, and bitterns).
- **Habitat** - Common in wetlands, ponds, paddy fields, and even near human settlements.
- **Distribution** - It is found widely across the Indian subcontinent, Sri Lanka, Burma, and southern Iran.
- **Appearance** - They appear stocky with a short neck, short thick bill and buff-brown back.
 - **Non-breeding plumage** - Streaked olive-brown, blending with surroundings.
 - **Breeding plumage** - Reddish-brown back, buff-brown body, sometimes red legs.
 - **In flight** - Distinctive white wings, underparts, and tail contrasting with darker body.
 - Excellent camouflage leads to folk beliefs of being “semi-blind” or “short-sighted”.



- **Behavior** - Semi-colonial breeders; nests built in trees/shrubs, often with other wading birds.
- **Diet** - The primary food includes ***crustaceans (like Shellfishes)***, aquatic insects, fishes, tadpoles, leeches, also feeds on insects in grasslands and garbage heaps.
- **Conservation Status**
 - **IUCN Red List** - Least Concern.
 - **Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972** - Schedule IV.

References

1. [The Hindu | Scientists track pond herons mysterious night flights](#)
2. [Thai National Park | Indian Pond Heron](#)