

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 (Herons, 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 <u>crustaceans (like Shellfishes)</u>, 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

