

Saunders's tern

Prelims: Current events of national and international importance

Why in News?

Recently, a Saunders's tern was sighted at the Adyar Estuary, Chennai, marking the first record of this bird in the city.

- It is a small, ground-nesting marine bird found on coastal sandbars and mudflats.
- **Scientific name** - *Sternula saundersi*.
- It is also known as the ***black-shafted tern***.
- **Family** - This bird species belongs to the family ***Laridae***.
- **Habitat** - Found on ***coastal sand bars and mudflats***, and sometimes on the ***open ocean***.
- **Distribution** - It is sparsely resident along the shores of the ***north-western Indian Ocean*** including southern Somalia, Arabian Peninsula, Socotra, Pakistan, Andaman and Nicobar Islands and northern Sri Lanka.
- **Morphology** - It has a yellow bill and neat black head markings in breeding plumage, and a dark bill and messier head markings in non-breeding plumage.
- It is a ***close relative*** of the little tern, least tern, yellow-billed tern, and Peruvian tern.
- In breeding plumage, Saunders's Tern can be identified by the fact that the small white patch on its forehead is squared off and doesn't extend behind the eye.
- In non-breeding plumage, the two species may be indistinguishable.



- **Diet** - Comprises many kinds of marine animals, such as small fish, crustaceans, and mollusks.
- **Breeding** - It nests on the ground up to 2 km inland on uncovered sandy sites, shingles, or dried mud.
- The species breeds on the sandbars of ***Adam's bridge***, (located between India's Pamban Island and Sri Lanka's Mannar Island) is a chain of natural limestone shoals.
- **Conservation Status - IUCN** - Least Concern.

References

1. [The Hindu | Saunders's tern](#)
2. [eBird | Saunders's tern](#)