

Blue-tailed bee-eater

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

GREAT hornbill, oriental turtle dove, lesser black-backed gull, great eared nightjar, and green imperial pigeon were among the 189 species of birds spotted by 66 volunteer birders who took part in the 17th Kerala Bird Race.

Punchakkari wetlands, Aakkulam lake including NCESS campus, Veli lake and beach area, Kadinamkulam, Poovar, and forest areas Ponmudi-Kallar, Bonacaud, Palode, Kottoor, Arippa and IISER campus at Vithura were the hotspot sites explored by the birders.

Organised annually in the month of November to commemorate the birthday of Salim Ali, the first Indian to conduct systematic bird surveys across India, the Kerala Bird Race is organised by WWF India with local support from the Department of Museum and Zoo, Kerala Forests and Wildlife Department, HSBC and the nodal office of Christ University.

State director of WWF India, Renjan Mathew Varghese, hailed the event as



Lesser whistling ducks

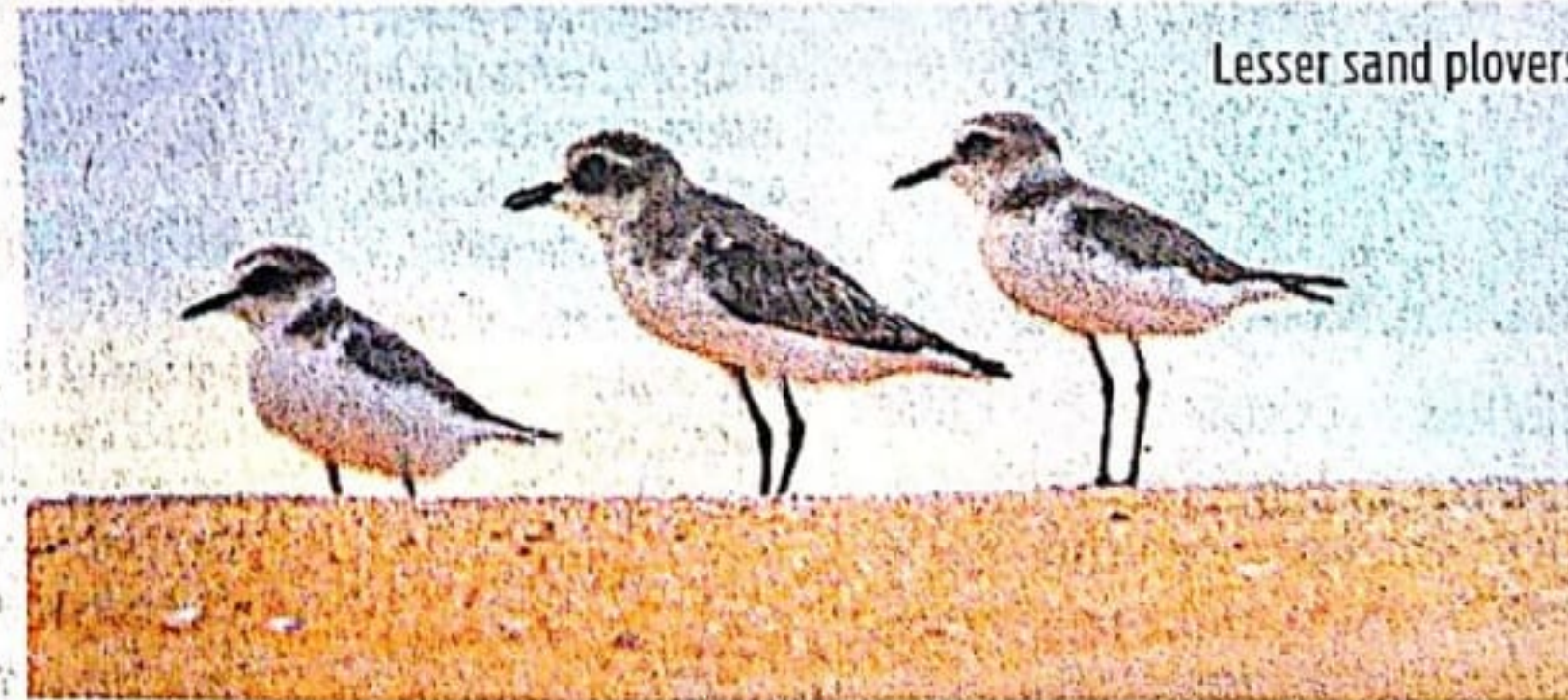


Spotted owl

189 SPECIES SPOTTED IN 17TH KERALA BIRD RACE



Lesser black-backed gull



Lesser sand plovers



Great Indian hornbill

a platform for birders to come together and visit the many birding hotspots in and around the city.

This, he said, helps bird enthusiasts the opportunity to assess the status of birds, mainly the listing of various species spotted during the event.

"It is high time we take solid

action on the ground to reduce anthropogenic pressures on these bird habitats and provide a safe haven for resident and migratory birds," Renjan said.

Participants, invited through the WWF India Volunteers network, underwent an orientation programme at Thiru-

vananthapuram Museum and Zoo Auditorium ahead of the event.

Teams of five to six members were formed for better coordination. It included a bird expert for accurately identifying birds and a photographer with experience in bird photography.



It is high time we take action to reduce anthropogenic pressures on bird habitats and provide a haven for resident and migratory birds

Renjan Mathew Varghese, state director of WWF India