

Black Necked Crane

Black Necked Cranes are Asian cranes breeding in remote parts of the Tibetan plateau. They are also known as 'Trung-Trung Karmo' and migrate from Tibet and China's Xinjiang province to Arunachal Pradesh in India, every winter.

Black Necked Cranes - Key Facts	
Official State Bird	UT of Ladakh, India
Geographical Location	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• breed at altitudes of 2,600 to 4,900 metres.• High-altitude wetlands and marshes.• In summers, found at altitudes between 3,000 and 5,000 meters
Conservation Status	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• IUCN Red List - Vulnerable• Wildlife Protection Act 1972 - Schedule I• CITES - Appendix I

Black Neck Cranes

About the Bird

1. Scientific name - *Grus nigricollis*.
2. These medium-sized alpine cranes, weighing about 5 kg each and standing about 115 cm tall.
3. The body plumage is pale grey/whitish and has a characteristic black neck. The upper long neck, head, primary and secondary flight feathers and tail are completely black. A conspicuous red crown adorns the head.
4. Both the sexes of Black Necked Crane are almost of the same size, but the male is slightly bigger than the female.
5. The juveniles have a brownish head and neck, and plumage is slightly paler than that of an adult.

Habitat of the bird

1. Meadows are the favourite habitat of Black-necked cranes. They breed exclusively in alpine meadows, where they can feed on roots, insects, snails, fish, frogs, small birds and rodents. They breed at an altitude of 2,600 to 4,900 m.
2. To protect themselves from predators, black-necked cranes nest in marshes where the water is about 30 cm deep.

Breeding of Black Necked Cranes

1. The high altitude wetlands of the Tibetan plateau, Sichuan (China), and eastern Ladakh (India) are the main breeding ground of the species; the birds spend winter at lower altitudes.
2. It breeds and can be spotted in the Sangti Valley in West Kameng district, Chug valleys and Zemithang provinces of Arunachal Pradesh during winters.
3. Black Necked Cranes also breed in Ladakh and Bhutan.

Geographical location

1. Black Necked Cranes are endemic to China's Tibetan Plateau. The largest populations of the bird are in China with smaller numbers extending into Vietnam, Bhutan, and India.
2. In summer, they are mainly found at altitudes between 3,000 and 5,000 meters.
3. About two thirds of the birds spend the winter in the valleys of Yarlung Tsangpo River and south-central Tibet Autonomous Region.
4. The remaining population winter in Yunnan and Guizhou Provinces and a small number are known to winter in Bhutan.

Significance

1. The bird is revered by the 1 lakh-strong community of Monpas (major Buddhist ethnic group of Arunachal Pradesh) as an embodiment of the sixth Dalai Lama (Tsangyang Gyatso).
 - Monpas inhabit the West Kameng and Tawang districts, and are essentially Buddhists who follow the Mahayana sect.
2. The Union territory of Jammu and Kashmir in India considers it as the state bird.
3. Black-necked Cranes are iconic birds tibetian plateau.
4. These are of great spiritual and cultural significance to Tibetan Buddhism
5. Black-necked Cranes are integral to the landscape's biophysical ecosystem.

Conservation Status of Black Necked Cranes

1. The black-necked crane is protected by Schedule 1 of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, That is one of the highest protection schemes given to wild animals.
2. In 2020, a re-assessment of the crane's population led its status to change from Vulnerable to Near Threatened Species by IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature).

What is Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972?

- This schedule covered endangered species, which need rigorous protection and therefore, the harshest penalties for violation of the law are under this Schedule.

Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 provides for the safeguard and protection of the wildlife (flora and fauna) in the country in order to ensure environmental and ecological security.

IUCN Red List

- The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species is the world's most comprehensive inventory of the global conservation status of biological species (Animal, fungus and plant species).

Threats to the Bird

1. Damage to the eggs and chicks, caused by feral dogs
2. Loss of habitat due to human pressure on the wetlands. Read more on Human-Wildlife Conflict on the linked page.
3. Increased grazing pressure on the limited pastures near the wetlands is leading to the degradation of the wetland habitat.

Initiatives for Conservation of Black Necked Cranes

1. Worldwide Fund for Nature-India (WWF-India) in collaboration with the Department of Wildlife Protection, Jammu & Kashmir has been working towards the conservation of high altitude wetlands, with black-necked cranes as a priority species in the Ladakh region.

- In Arunachal Pradesh, WWF is working for the conservation of the small wintering population.

