

Bengal Florican

The Bengal florican, also known as the Bengal bustard, is a bird species that is native to the Indian subcontinent, Cambodia, as well as Vietnam. The IUCN Red List classifies it as Critically Endangered since there are so few individuals left. It is the sole member of the *Houbaropsis* genus. The topic has a very high chance of being asked as a UPSC Prelims Environment and Ecology Question or as a Current Affairs Question, as it has been in the news recently.

About Bengal Floricans

Physical Features

From the head as well as neck upto the underparts, a male Bengal florican is all black. It has a long, lanky crest on to its forehead and extended display feathers on its neck. The upper side is beige, with fine dark vermiculations but also black arrowhead marks, and a wide white pattern that runs from the wing coverts towards the remiges. Excluding the dark main remiges, the male's wings seem completely white during flight. The beak and iris are both dark, and the feet and legs are of yellow colour. The female has a buff-brown back that is identical to the male's, a dark brown head, and slender dark stripes along the side of the neck. Its wing coverts are slightly lighter and have fine black barring than the remiges. Young Bengal Floricans resemble to female Bengal Floricans very much. They are usually a quiet birds. The lesser florican (*Sypheotides indica*) is really the only bird that looks even remotely like adult male Bengal floricans.

Habitat

There are two distinct populations of Bengal floricans. One stretches throughout Uttar Pradesh, Nepal's Terai, India's Assam and Arunachal Pradesh, as well as historically, Bangladesh. The other is found in Cambodia and adjoining regions. Bengal floricans like to live in open high grassland areas with dispersed plants. The birds could most easily be seen in the morning hours and evenings, particularly during the mating season, which spans from March to August, while most population surveys are undertaken. Males are significantly more prominent than cryptically coloured females, especially during March and May, when they put on their magnificent courtship show. They also prefer high grasslands rich in sugarcane plants.

Status and Conservation

The Bengal florican is indeed the world's rarest bustard species, found only in small patches of grassland dispersed over South and Southeast Asia. It is well known that agricultural expansion for intensive farming, specifically for dry period rice production, has become increasingly endangered. In Southeast Asia, poaching is still a concern. India is home to 85 percent of the world's population. In recent decades, the population has declined considerably. Its global situation is perilous, and the IUCN Red List upgraded the species from Endangered to Critically Endangered in the year of 2007.