

Lesser Florican

The Lesser Florican (*Sypheotides indicus*), often referred to as the likh or kharmore, is indeed the smallest bustard and the sole member of the *Sypheotides* genus. It's endemic to the Indian Subcontinent, wherein it lives in tall grasses and is well known for the males' rainy season leaping breeding demonstrations. The male has characteristic extended head feathers that reach behind the neck and striking black and white mating plumage. During the summers, these bastards are mostly found in northern and central India, but they are more extensively scattered throughout India in the wintertime. It is a highly endangered species. Hunting and habitat deterioration are the top threats. 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 Lesser Floricans

Taxonomy

The two little bustard subspecies have been dubbed "floricans." Previously, the genus *Sypheotides* comprised of *Houbaropsis bengalensis* (or Bengal florican) too, 2 small species with opposite sexual size dimorphism. Even though the 2 genera are evolutionarily related, the tarsus is lengthy in *Sypheotides*, and also the seasonal plumage change in males has resulted in the retention of the distinct genus.

Physical Features

The head, neck, and lower regions of a breeding male are all black. His throat, though, is white. Approximately three four-inch-long ribbon-like plumes emerge from beneath the ear-coverts on both sides of the head, curving up and ending up in a spatulate point. White V-shaped markings go across the back and scapulars. The white wing coverts. The male's wing usually has some white even after the mating season is over. Females are slightly bigger than males. In non-breeding plumage, females as well as males are buff, having black streaks and darker marks on the head and throat. The back is black, speckled, and barred. The buff streaks on the neck and upper breast fade as they approach the belly button. On the inner-web, the males' outer primaries are slender and notched. The iris is of yellow colour, and the leg is of pale yellow colour. The neck of young birds has a prominent U-shaped marking near the throat.

Habitat

Earlier, the species was much more common across much of the Indian Subcontinent, though not in Sri Lanka. It primarily breeds in India's central and western regions. Although grasslands are its natural habitat, it can also be found in cotton and lentil plantations. The species is known to travel in reaction to rainfall, and its presence at certain areas might be inconsistent, with vast numbers appearing unexpectedly during certain seasons. Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, some places in southern Nepal, as well as parts of Andhra Pradesh are just the main breeding regions now.

Behaviour and Diet

These bustards can be seen in dense grassland or crop fields, both singly or in couples. They can fly faster than that of other bustards and resemble ducks in flight. Worms, millipedes, lizards, toads, and bugs such as grasshoppers, winged ants, and hairy caterpillars are among the tiny vertebrates and invertebrates that lesser floricans eat. They have also been observed eating shoots and seeds, as well as plants and berries. With the exception of newly migrated birds, who feed all day, floricans tend to feed in the mornings and evenings or nights.

