

The Sunderbans – important wintering area for waders

The **Great Thick-knee** *Esacus recurvirostris* is one of the few wader species which stays in the Sunderbans all year and may even breed in the area. It has been observed feeding on fiddler crabs in the Sunderbans, restricting this wader to a limited area around the mangroves and shorelines along the beaches, where plenty of crabs can be found.



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digit-notes.hp.infoseek.co.jp/meda1tdori.html

The **Mongolian or Lesser Sand Plover** *Charadrius mongolus* is widely distributed across Eastern Asia from the Himalayas to north eastern Siberia. Breeding grounds are entirely above or beyond the tree-line. The plover winters on coasts and estuaries, mostly around the Indian Ocean and South West Pacific. It is a common and widespread wader in the Indian Sunderbans from September until April or May. Estimated wintering birds in the Indian Sunderbans: 10,000.

The **Grey-headed Lapwing** *Vanellus cinereus* has been recorded in high numbers in the Sunderbans. The total population of this Eastern Asian breeding lapwing is not known, but believed to be 25,000 – 100,000 birds. It is the largest of the Palearctic lapwings migrating from Eastern China to the Sunderbans.



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Ralph Martin - www.birding.de.vu

The most common and also the smallest of the waders breeding entirely in the Arctic is the **Little Stint** *Calidris minuta* which is regularly recorded in the Sunderbans in January. It nests from June to August in high-arctic tundra and winters in a widespread area from Africa to India and Bangladesh. The Sunderbans are the easternmost wintering area of this species. Estimated wintering birds in the Indian Sunderbans: 5,000.

Pacific Golden Plovers *Pluvialis fulva* tend not to congregate and only rarely form loose flocks for roosting – hence they are difficult to count. They all seem to scatter evenly throughout the area along the margins of the channels and creeks. For that reason there is little or no knowledge of the preferred wintering areas for this species. It is a powerful migrant, breeding in the northern Siberian tundra. Estimated wintering birds in the Indian Sunderbans: 3,000.



Andrej Maximov



Ralph Martin - www.birding.de.vu

Similarly the **Curlew Sandpiper** *Calidris ferruginea*, breeds only in northern Siberian tundra, but is a common non-breeding visitor from West Africa to New Zealand. It winters in the Sunderbans from September to April. Many non-breeders remain in the area all year.

The **Terek Sandpiper** *Xenus cinereus* is a rather short-legged sandpiper with a long upcurved bill. The Sunderbans appear to be of high significance, as high numbers use the mudflats as a wintering area, mostly not much aggregated with other waders. It feeds along the channels and mudflats. The breeding grounds are widespread over Siberia and the European part of Russia. Estimated wintering birds in the Indian Sunderbans: 2,200.



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Yamamoto Hiroshi

The very rare and globally severely threatened **Spoon-billed Sandpiper** *Eurynorhynchus pygmaeus*, breeds only in far north eastern Siberia. It might occur irregularly on the outer islands and sandbanks of the delta, where single observations have been reported by local birdwatchers. Observations in neighbouring Bangladesh suggest that the species prefers the outer islands and sandbanks, which undergo constant changes within the dynamics of the Ganges delta.

A very significant bird for the Sunderbans in wintertime is the **Whimbrel** *Numenius phaeopus*. It breeds all around the high northern latitudes of the globe and appears in the delta around September. It forms only small flocks and mostly does not aggregate with other waders. Return passage to the breeding grounds is chiefly between March and May. Estimated wintering birds in the Indian Sunderbans: 3,800.



Andrej Maximov

Common Redshanks *Tringa totanus* are wintering in a wide area along the coasts from Northern Africa to Indonesia. The channels and islands of the Sunderbans provide sufficient food resources for them before leaving back to the breeding grounds from February to April. Redshanks nest in a broad band from Europe to North China. Estimated wintering birds in the Indian Sunderbans: 3,900.



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