

# Condé Nast Traveller

GOA  
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# BIRD WATCHING IN GOA

Home to an array of avifauna, **Kanchan Wadhwa** tells you how to maximise your Goan birding experience

Goa is home to an abundance of lush vegetation and hence, to more than 420 species of birds, many that are endangered. If you still need another leg-up, Goa is slated to host its first bird festival from 11 to 13 November, 2016. The following are prime spots to see a variety of birds—especially in the cooler months.

## Dr Salim Ali Bird Sanctuary

Named after the legendary Indian ornithologist, this sanctuary is home to a number of species that flock here to nest in the swampy mangroves. Some of the water birds found here are the terek sandpipers, temminck's stint and the purple heron. And when you've had your fill of the beautiful life, a leisurely canoe ride through this fragile terrain will be just what you need.

## Carambolim Lake

Haven to a number of aquatic and herbivorous birds, the lake and its surrounding forest have been declared a protected habitat by the state. Birders in the know keep a look out for the purple swamphen, the northern pintail and the oriental darter amongst others.

## Saligao

The birds around Saligao's perennial spring include the Indian peafowl, the orange-headed thrush, the greenish warbler and the purple sunbird. An avian wonderland that needs to be moved up on your itinerary.

## Bhagwan Mahavir Wildlife Sanctuary

When it comes to watching the rarest of bird species, you don't have to travel to the ends of the earth. Southern Goa should do quite nicely. Some of these exotic migrants include



the Ceylon frogmouth, Malabar trogon and the white-bellied woodpecker.

## Bondla Wildlife Sanctuary

Bird-watching is really all about watching a species more interesting to the watcher than man. And the birds over here are interesting, at the very least. Although this is one of the smallest sanctuaries in Goa, it's home to an astonishing variety of birds like the Malabar grey hornbill, the hair-crested drongo and blue-faced malkoha.

## Mhadei Wildlife Sanctuary

Visitors to this region should know that it's designated as a Global Biodiversity Hotspot, as well as an area of high endemism by Conservation International. The camp has been declared an International Bird Area as well because of the presence of globally-threatened species like Nilgiri wood-pigeon, Malabar

parakeet, Malabar grey hornbill, grey-headed bulbul, rufous babbler, white-bellied blue-flycatcher and crimson-backed sunbird (as a bonus, you could spot the Bengal Tiger as well.)

## Cotigao

This sanctuary is known for its tall trees, some of which reach 100ft in height. Wildlife enthusiasts can make their way to the watchtower positioned 80ft above a watering hole. Here they can spot the celebrities of the bird world: the white-bellied woodpecker, velvet-fronted nuthatch, heart-spotted woodpecker, white-eyed eagle, rufous woodpecker and the Malabar crested eagle. June to October is the best season to see the Malayan night heron in Cotigao; the flycatcher, a forest bird is mostly seen between September and March.

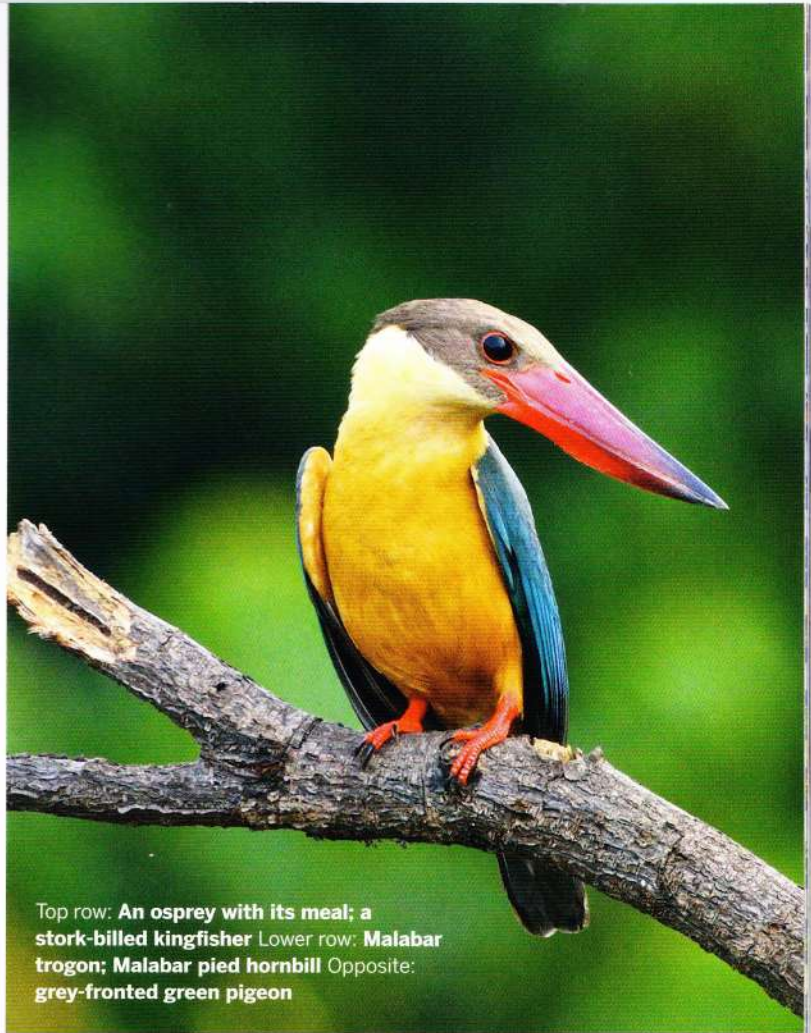
## Curtorim

If you love waterfowl and waders, head to Curtorim between November and March. Located on the banks of the Zuari River, Sonbem lake in Maina-Curtorim, has emerged as a major bird watching spot. The best thing is you don't have to play statue for hours to spot rare wetland birds like the red wattled lapwing, white throated kingfisher, the white-breasted waterhen and river tern.

## Morjim Beach

Swoop down to this sparsely-inhabited beach in Northern Goa to spot the slender-billed gulls, the Caspian terns, lesser and the white-bellied Sea-eagle. **T** *Birding and photography tours start at ₹11,500 per person and include visits to multiple sanctuaries. Visit [www.goa-tourism.com/birding.htm](http://www.goa-tourism.com/birding.htm) for more details on its 4-day trips.*





Top row: An osprey with its meal; a stork-billed kingfisher Lower row: Malabar trogon; Malabar pied hornbill Opposite: grey-fronted green pigeon

