

Migratory Birds of Pallikaranai Marsh

On 13th June 25, Birders felt happy to read a Newsline that the last remaining freshwater urban wetland in Chennai, India, the Pallikaranai Marsh has witnessed the arrival of more than 10,000 birds from 100 different species, including 70 migratory species, as a result of removal of some encroachments. In 2022, this was declared as a Ramsar site.

This biodiversity-rich Pallikaranai Marsh, locally known by the generic Tamil name '*kazhuveli*', which means a flood plain, drains an area of 250 km² of South Chennai, encompassing 65 wetlands through two outlets, Okkiyam Madavu and the Kovalam Creek, and falls into the Bay of Bengal. The topography of the Marsh is such that it always retains some storage, thus forming a classic wetland ecosystem.

Based on the study of sediments, it has been established that the Marsh is not less than 1000 years old. It is home to a wide array of species and there are 176 recorded species of birds.

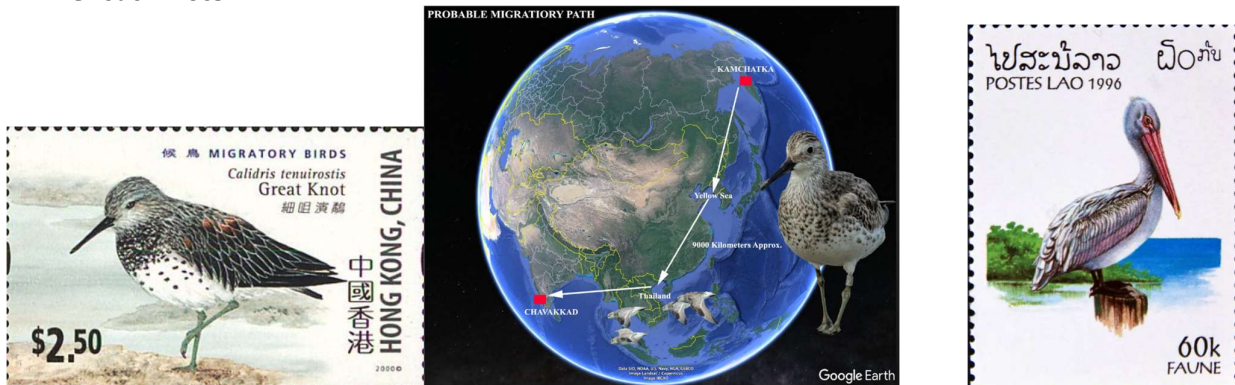
Pallikaranai is situated within the Central Asian Flyway. It is a significant migratory route that lures birds from Eurasia during their winter migration. The availability of food and a rich habitat makes Pallikaranai the preferred site for migratory birds such as the Garganey, Northern Shoveler, Eurasian Teal, Eurasian Wigeon, Ruff, and Western Marsh Harrier from as far as Siberia and Europe. Approximately 3,500 to 4,000 migratory birds visited the sanctuary in 2024, a remarkable rise from just 800 recorded in 2023. Some of the winter visitors to this Marsh are shown below:



Migratory Birds from Europe



Great Knots



Great Knot flies from Kamchatka, Siberia to Chavakkad, Kerala, India via Hongkong & Pallikaranai, traveling 9000 km.

Spot-billed Pelicans travel from Siberia to Chennai, via Laos

S Balasundaram, Chennai, India