

Dogs, a major threat to migratory birds at Mamachi Wadi Beach, India



Lesser Sand Plover *Charadrius mongolus*. © Akash Mhadgut.

Mamachi wadi is a beach located at 19.4727 & 72.7618 on the western coast of Maharashtra in Virar west. The habitat includes sandy shore, wetland, grassland, swamp, introduced Casuarina (suruchi), and mangroves. It is a well-known birding hotspot in the

Thane region of Maharashtra with annual winter visitors in large numbers.

The Lesser Sand-Plover *Charadrius mongolus* Pallas, 1776 breeds in northern Himalaya and spends winters on coasts of the Indian

subcontinent (Grimmett et al. 2011). It can be identified by the colour of its legs, which is usually greyish-black or black as compared to yellow-green or greenish-grey on Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii* Lesson, 1826.



Feral dogs with the injured Lesser Sand Plover. © Akash Mhadgut.

Some variation does exist, especially among young individuals, Lesser sometimes showing greenish-grey legs and Greater not infrequently have greyer legs (Hirschfeld et al. 2000). Other than that Lesser Sand Plover has a shorter bill and slight bulge at the tip (eBird.org).

On 2 January 2022 around

1500 h we had a walk to watch winter migratory birds at Mamachi Wadi beach. We observed a feral dog chasing the flock of plovers & sandpipers, unluckily one Lesser Sand Plover got caught by those feral dogs where they grabbed the bird into their jaws and started competing with each other. When they put the bird on the ground it lay still with its wings open and as the dogs lost interest the bird tried to escape. But due to the damaged wing it was unable to fly by which the dogs caught it again. After some attempts the dog left the bird and moved on. But due to internal injuries the bird was unable to fly by which it was exposed to many other predators easily.

Migratory birds need to feed as much as possible on their feeding grounds and if it's a breeding ground they need to breed and search for nests. Feral dogs are major threats to these birds as they injure or kill the birds and feed

on their eggs & young ones and pose a threat to breeding or wintering grounds of migratory birds in India.

References

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Hirschfeld, E., C.S. Roselaar & H. Shirihai (2000). Identification, taxonomy and distribution of Greater and Lesser Sand Plover. *British Birds* 93:162–189.

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