1. Black Cutch (Senegalia catechu)

India's parched plains' nitrogen- fixing tree. Its thorny crown of small leaves and dark grey bark peel in long pieces. It has flat, pointy pods with pale yellow flower spikes. Because the heartwood extracts contain Kattha, an important ingredient in pan-masala, this tree is being over-exploited. Traditional medicine uses this tree extensively. Bees and butterflies pollinate it. Small birds like bayas and

munias use this tree's dense, thorny branches to nest. It hosts butterfly larvae such as Bright Babul Blue. African Babul Blue, Common Lineblue, Tailless Lineblue, and Anomalous Nawab.

© Dinesh Valke & Haneesh KM

2. Easter Tree (Holarrhena pubescens)

A tree with grevish-brown bark, pronounced lenticels (small tubercles), and milky latex is economically essential. Its anti-diarrhoeal properties are well established. It is exported as seed powder, bark powder, and herbal dietary supplements. Leaves are large, simple and arranged in opposite pairs. Flowers are white, mildly fragrant, that grow on the tips of branches. They turn cream-yellow when mature. Fruits are a pair of long thin pods joined on top and free at the tips. Winddispersed seeds have hair tuffs. The plant blooms during Easter, hence its English name. Common Crow, Atlas

© Dinesh Valke, Wikimedia Commons & Jan Smith

moth and Tussock moth caterpillars

3. Flame of the Forest (B

A grev-bark crooked tree that is used for windbreaks, nitrogen fixation, and soil erosion management. Three-leaflet leathery compound leaves are used to make plates and bowls. The English name comes from the clusters of orange-red flowers that resemble a forest on fire when in bloom. Flowers attract

for Dark Cerulean, Indian Sunbeam, Pea Blue.

birds, bees, and squirrels, mainly pollinated by sunbirds. They create Kesari, the Holi colour, which also dyes fabrics. The species name 'monosperma' refers to compressed pods with a single seed. This tree is a larval hostplant

and Gram Blue butterflies. © Balakrishna V, Dinesh Valke & Priti Choghale

4. Indian Coral Tree (Erythring variegata)



A nitrogen-fixing, ornamental tree with greenish-grey bark and conical prickles. Stout branches armed with black, curved prickles. Three diamond-shaped leaflets form one compound leaf. When leafless, brilliant red blossoms adorn the tree to attract pollinators like birds and squirrels for nectar. Pods contain poisonous seeds. Seeds and branch cuttings quickly propagate. They are used as live fences, support for pepper and betel vines, green manure and fodder. It is highly susceptible to plant galls and hosts Coral tree leaf roller moth.

© Rosa Say & Dinesh Valke

5. Indian Ash Tree



Typically found near bodies of water. Grey to dark brown bark with small irregular flakes. Leaves are alternately arranged, with a single leaflet at the end. Male and female flowers grow on separate branches and are small, greenish-yellow. They are primarily windpollinated, but bees also pollinate them. Clusters of oval-shaped fruits are seen when the tree is leafless. Wood is used in packaging and light construction. It produces dye, gum, tannin, fibre, fodder, and paper pulp. It is a larval host plant for

Moon moth

© Dinesh Valke & Dean Morley

the Moon moth.

6. Indian Elm (Holoptelea integrifolia)



vpically found along streams. The bark is brownish and covered in irregular flakes. Leaves are oval and alternately arranged. Male and female flowers grow on the same plant and are small, greenish-vellow to brownish. Bees and butterflies pollinate them. Papery, thin, circular brown fruit has an edible seed. Because female monkeys prefer to eat these fruits after giving birth, it is also known as Monkey Biscuit. Traditional medicine makes use of the bark and leaves. Wood is used to make tools and charcoal. The Plains Cupid butterfly uses

© Dinesh Valke, Kew, Brijesh EP

7. Pongam (Pongamia pinnata)



A fast-growing avenue tree with a large canopy of spreading or drooping branches. Because it grows near water sources and fixes nitrogen, it's used as a groundwater indicator. The bark is used in making ropes. All components of the plant are used in traditional medicine. Typical uses include; green manure, timber, and fish poison, Additionally, biofuel, lamp oil, soap, and insect repellant are made from seed oil. Honeybees pollinate light-scented flowers. Larval hostplant for Forget-me-not, Cerulean, Banded Awl butterflies, and Death's Head Hawkmoth caterpillars. Insect galls cause tubular projections on

© Karthikeyan S, Dinesh Valke, Priti Choghale

Hawkmoth Caterpillar

8. Soccer Ball Humming bird \ hawkmoth caterpillar

The drought-resistant tree seen near the forest edge or in open grasslands. The bark is riddled with deep longitudinal fissures. Leaves are velvety soft and placed in opposite pairs. They are repulsive to cattle. Flowers are fragrant, tubular, fleshy, and grow in clusters. Bees pollinate the flowers. Fruit is made up of several ovaries forming hexagonal faces. The almost round fruit has several faces, similar to a football, thus the English name. Traditional medicine makes use of parts of this tree. Morindone dye is made from the root bark. Wood is used in fine crafts. It is the larval host plant for

Dinesh Valke, Siddharth Machado & V.Shubhalaxmi

several Humming bird Hawkmoth



it as a larval host plant.

10. Red Silk Cotton Tree (E

seed oil.

Greater Death's Head



A south American invasive plant. It grows in a disturbed environment. Seed production creates dense thickets. In grazed or disturbed regions. it can shade and replace natural plants. Though an annual plant, seeds can lie dormant in the soil for years before germination. The silky, toothed leaves smell minty when crushed. Stingless bees pollinate little purple flowers, which also attract butterflies. The bristly fruit

9. Spinous Kino (Bridelia retusa)



A drought-tolerant tree with tough leathery leaves and sharp spines on young stems. The bark is grevish brown with no spines on the main trunk. Bees and flies pollinate tiny greenish-yellow blossoms. The fruit is round, fleshy, and thin-skinned. The fruits change from greenish to yellowish-red to purpleblack. Ripe fruits are edible. Flycatchers, Common 📜 Mynas, Red-vented Bulbuls, and Yellow-footed Green Pigeons are attracted to them. The tree is gathered in the wild for medicine, food, and high-quality timber. The Tasar Silk moth and Spotted Marumba Hawkmoth use it as a larval hostplant.

30 m 🌾 🎥 Jan-May

A large, flowering tree with thick, short spines on the bark of young trees. Usually, it has a straight trunk. When leafless, it flowers profusely. Prominent, red flowers attract bees, birds, monkeys and squirrels for their abundant nectar. Flowers are followed by pods which split open to release significant quantities of silky cotton embedded with tiny brown seeds to be carried by the wind. Timber is used mainly for making plywood and matchboxes, and match -sticks. It is the larval host plant of the Spotted Marumba Hawkmoth. Red Cotton Bugs feed on the

© Forest Kim Star, Dinesh Valke & V. Shubhalaxmi

WILDFLOWERS

11. American Mint

attaches to fur and clothing and thus aids in

-5 m 🌑 ╆ Feb-Jul

© Dinesh Valke, Siddarth Machado & V. Shubhalaxmi

12.Christ's Thorn 🥢



This climbing shrub has a vellowish-brown bark. and its branches having forked thorns make a compact bush. Dark green leaves are leathery and shiny. Small white flowers are fragrant and are pollinated by insects. Green. young fruits are sour and turn purplish to black when ripe. It is often planted as the live fence being thorny and hardy. Wood is used as firewood by villagers. Carissa hawkmoth lavs eggs on this plant.

Dinesh Valke, Satish Nikam & Andrew Hardcare

This delicate plant has slender grass-like leaves and beautiful trumpet-shaped rosy-white flowers with dark purple spots on the inside. The plant is a root parasite that obtains nutrients from the host's roots. It is known to parasitize approximately 40 flowering plants in India. The plant prefers to grow on grassy slopes when it rains. The flowers stand out among the grasses, making identification simple. The species name delphinifolia is derived from similar leaves of Delphiniums. The plant's juice is said to have healing properties for sores caused by moisture. © Dinesh Valke

14. Frilly Lepidagathis (

30 cm Sep-Feb



Found only in India and Pakistan, this ground -hugging plant grows on rocky surfaces and

can tolerate harsh, arid conditions. Squarish bristly, or hairless twig-like branches arise from woody stems. Long, thin, stalkless leaves have three veins that give them their species name. Pink spiny bracts and dense clusters of sepals cover the white flower, which is densely

silky hairy in the centre with light mauve spots and brown patches, a slightly notched upper lip, and three blunt lobes on the lower lip. The two-seeded fruit is oval and narrow. The herb is a traditional tonic.

© V. Shubhalaxmi

13. Common Sopubia

15. Giant Milkweed (Calotropis gigantea)





.5 –3 m 🌑 🎥 Jan-Dec

Common hardy plants that are seen growing in disturbed hotter habitats. They have broad, waxycoated succulent leaves with milky latex. Carpenter bees are exclusive pollinators of their waxy lavender blossoms. Each flower has five pointed petals and a raised stamen-holding pentagon crown in the centre. Each side of the crown has a paired pollinia hidden inside the dark tips. The bee forces its proboscis into the narrow gap between these tips for nectar by holding it with its legs. The pollinia are struck to the bee's leg when it extracts itself. The fruit is a pod, when dried, opens up to release flat seeds with silky hairs for wind dispersal. All parts of the plants are poisonous. but Plain Tiger butterflies and Painted Grasshopper use it as their food plant, causing them to become unpleasant. Stem is used to manufacturing ropes, carpets, fishing nets, and sewing thread.

Dinesh Valke, Satish Nikam & Isaac Kehimkar

16. Indian Sundew

This is an uncommon insect-eating plant. It grows on marshy shallow terrain, rocky, wet slopes, and wet mud on hills during monsoon. Only the youngest growth of older plants stands upright. The plant is yellowishgreen to maroon. Flowers have white. pink, orange, or purple petals. The flowers do not need to be pollinated by insects; they self-pollinate, forming a black ovoid seed in a self-bursting pod. Then, alternating

leaves act as tentacles. They are fringed with sparkling, globular, sticky liquid tips. Sticky liquid captures insects. The tentacles drown the prey in a digesting enzyme-laced liquid. Chemicals breakdown to digests prey. The skeletons are discarded. Carnivorous diets help them survive in poor soil.

© Siddarth Machado

17. Indian Pentanema (vicoa indica)



A sunflower relative that is uncommon, delicate, and slender, known to grow along forest pathways upto 1800 m

in the Himalaya. Here it is found among valleys. Leafy, cylindrical branches stalkless, 🛾 🦇 long, thin leaves. The leaf base clasps the main stem almost entirely. The plant could be accurately identified from this feature. Bright yellow flowers on thin stalks appear after the rains. Insects pollinate plants. Flowers are used in Pongal festival decorations in Tamil Nadu. Their common

English name is derived from the older Latin name Pentanema indicum.

18. Oriental Sesame 🔇



Monsoon-growing annual plant. Small bell-shaped bluish-purple flowers with one bright lip. White, pink, lavender and light purple flower colours are variable. The bright lip attracts bees, beetles, moths. butterflies, and flies. The dotted lines guide the pollinator. The pollinator's weight causes the flower's roof to meet the bee's back, where the stamens dust pollen. Fruits are tubular with black seeds. They split open when dried to disperse the seeds. Similar to commercial sesame. Sesamum in Latin means oil, liquid fat.

19. Silver-spiked Cockscomb (Celosia argentea)





This seasonal plant grows in large clusters along the roadside during the rainy season. Pinkish flower spikes stand out to attract bees, butterflies, and other insects. As the plant dries, tiny black seeds are released and germinate the following season. Flowers and seeds are used in traditional medicine. Tribals sell edible tender shoots as wild vegetables. The genus 'Celosia' is derived from the Greek word for burning and refers to the colourful blooms resembling a flame. The species name.

60-75 cm 🌑 ৈ Aug-Dec

© Linda De Volder

20. Wild Okra (Abelmoschus tuberculatus)

argentea, means "silvery," referring shiny,



white bracts and tepals.

only in the Indian subcontinent. In Greater Mumbai, it was only recorded from Thane. It is visible on the hills when it rains. Large, vivid yellow flowers with a

reddish patch in the centre make the plant stand out. The species name- tuberculatus, refers to the minute tubercles on the fruits. Cattle and goats stay away from this shrub because of its bristly hair. Carpenter bees, honey bees, and butterflies are drawn to flowers. Given that it is a wild relative of the cultivated variety of okra, its resistance to

Bollworm and the Yellow Mosaic Vein virus makes it a potential candidate for gene transfer.

INSECTS



This vividly coloured brush-footed butterfly is notable for its caterpillar's defence and its pupa's enigmatic disguise as a dry curled leaf. To avoid detection, the caterpilla makes rolls of its droppings and bits of dry leaves strung together with silk threads and rests near these two rolls. The rolls are approximately the same length, thickness, colour and texture as the caterpillar, making them two very effective decoys to confuse the predator. The caterpillar rests along the half-eaten leaf margin, which often has a bare mid-vein.

Kadamba, Kaim, and Mussaenda are its larval foodplants.

Haneesh K.M., Brijesh EP & Budak

22. Great Orange Tip (



Largest among the group of White and Yellow butterflies. They are typically seen on these hills during the monsoon season. It gets its English name from its large white wings with orange tips. They may appear noticeable while flying. However, with its wings closed and perched on a branch, it becomes 'invisible' because pattern on the underwing resembles a dry leaf. The caterpillar has bright spots beneath its head that resemble a mini snake when raised and puffed up. This defensive posture is intended to frighten away small birds. It feeds on the thorny capers.

© Dany13 & LiCheng Shih

23. Hooded Grasshopper



A member of the short-horned grasshoppers group, which looks like a miniature dinosaur. Its thorax expands into a prominent pointy "hood" structure rimmed with yellow-orange, giving it the appearance of a leaf, thus the common English name. Their spine-studded hind legs protect against predators. The nymphs and adul

of this species are usually pale green. Monsoon forms are green while the dry season forms are brown or grey. They conceal in various environments with these colour variations. They do feed on tree leaves and can cause damage to teak and sandalwood. The female is larger.

a half-dozen concentric rings, with each ring

significantly higher when the nest is built

on a slope than the lower half. The

gueen, allied kings, and gueens

rule over minor and major workers

food, additionally these ants tend

aphids as cows and grow fungus

gardens hence their English name.

(soldiers). Seeds are stored as winter

decreasing in height. The uphill ring is always

© Vishwanath MK & V. Shubhalaxmi

24. Indian Harvester Ant (Pheidole sykesii)

2.4-3.8 mm EN O Mar-Oct

walls surrounding a central entrance keep the rain out of nests. Nests

granaries keep seeds dry to prevent germination—airtight passages keep

single tube less than 2.5 cm high (7.5 cm in the centre) and 4.5 cm wide to

these chambers waterproof. In flat, dry territory, nests range from a

store grain or brood (eggs, larvae and pupae). Their sophisticated

Forest Department (Alibaug Branch) as part of the Taloia Hill Watershed Reforestation Project (2020-2023). This is developed and published by iNaturewatch Foundation and This ant from India is known for building its complex nest. Concentric soil Birdwing Publishers.

© iNaturewatch Foundation 2023

conditions for wildlife, vegetation, soil, water, and ecotourism.



The Taloja Hill Watershed includes the hills surrounding Taloja pond and the

Owe dam. It got its name because of its proximity to Taloja Jail. It's a watershed

zone since it collects precipitation that eventually flows into Taloja pond. The

area is close to Kharghar, Navi Mumbai, Sector 35-G. The Panvel Forest

Department owns a section of it. In 2020, the iNaturewatch Foundation

reforested 7.3 ha, of hill with help of local community members. They planted

around 8,000 saplings through a CSR project of DCB Bank Ltd. The three-yea

project ended in March 2023. The reforestation project resulted in better

This field guide is sponsored by DCB Bank Ltd. in collaboration with Maharashtra State

















iNaturewatch Foundation

www.inaturewatch.org

www. birdwingpublishers.com



Front & Back cover Photo © Geetesh Patil

upto 6.5 cm \mathbf{Q} Jun-Aug

Thev are called iewel bugs or metallic shield bugs because of their bright iridescent colours. They are also called shield-backed bugs because the last part of their thorax forms a shield over the abdomen and wings. The membranous underwings contrast with the rigid and fused upper wings. This feature distinguishes them from most bugs and may cause them to be mistaken for beetles. These are sapsucking insects with straw-like mouthparts. The eggs are laid in rows and appear like coppery beads. Female adult bugs care for nymphs. They are commonly seen during rain. They smell like stink bugs when disturbed.

© Ninad Bhosale & V. Shubhalaxmi

26. Painted Grasshopper (

4.3-6.1 cm **O** Jun-Oct

A member of the family of short-horned grasshoppers. They are well-known for their vibrant colours and for feeding on the toxic leaves of Giant Milkweed. When threatened, wingless nymphs can squirt an unpleasant liquid to ward off the predator, whereas adults secrete foam under their leg joints. Bright colours warn predators to stay away because they store plant toxins in their bodies, which can lead to an unpleasant encounter. Because they are repulsive, they rarely fly and may sit fearlessly on the plant. The eggs are laid in "pods" (each pod contains 70–200 eggs) inside the soil during the monsoon months.

© Siddharth Machado & V. Shubhalaxmi

27. Red Helen (Papilio helenus)

8 -11.5 cm **O** Sep-Oct

In Navi Mumbai's Taloia Hills, this swallowtail was seen for the first time in 2021. This monsoon migrant butterfly is rarely seen in this area. The butterfly has a vigorous weaving flight. The hindwing's red crescents give it its English name. The butterfly's hind wing has red spots on the underside but not on the top during the wet season. They are often seen mud-puddling near streams. Its larval hostplant is *Citrus* limon. The caterpillar looks similar to that of Common Mormon.



28. Slender-scaped Carpenter Bee

1.3-3.3 cm 🗸 Mar-Jun

This solitary bee is more often seen hovering around flowers of Giant milkweed, which it pollinates. They drill nest holes in dry wood like bamboo poles, and fallen trees, hence the common English name. They make a tubular nest with one entrance and numerous tunnels; they use their formidable mandibles to drill. Most species in this genus / are black or mostly black with yellow or white

fine fur, making them difficult to identify. Some males have greenishyellow thorax fur like females. Carpenter bees have shiny abdomens, cannot be confused with bumblebees that have hairy abdomens. Also, high altitude cold places have bumble bees and no carpenter bee. Woodpeckers shrikes, and bee-eaters feed on carpenter bees, including mantids and robber flies.

29. Spotted Antlion

2-15 cm **Q** Nov-May

The larvae's little conical pits are more abundant than the long-winged adults along dusty dirt roadways. Ants and other small prey fall into these pits and are consumed by the larvae. These pits act like a trap where the soft soil on the slopes makes the prey's escape difficult. Hence the English common name. Adult antlions look like dragonflies but they have long hooked antennas and fold wings around their bodies. They are active during dusk and dawn. They feed on pollen, nectar, and tiny arthropods. They get attracted to light

© Satish Nikam & Alexey Sergeev

during the night.

and beauty. They are also called as fasting moths since they don't have mouth parts. During their month-long caterpillar stage, they are voracious They soon die after egg-laying. Tasar silk is commercially extracted from the caterpillar's silk cocoon. The cocoon hangs from hostplants like a cream-coloured egg. Unlike Mulberry Silkmoths, Tasar Silk caterpillars are not reared indoors instead their cocoons are collected from the wild. Ain, Jungli Badam, Sal, and Indian Jujube are their hostplants.

© Satish Nikam, V. Shubhalaxmi

REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS

.48 m **O** Oct-May

© Vijay Ismavel

32. Common Skink (Eutropis carinata)

29 cm 🖸 Aug-Sep

A sleek ground lizard having a long tail that is half the size of its and deserts to scrub forests, parks, gardens in homes and cities. It is active during day and can often be seen basking or foraging in leaf litter 🗨 🧪 on the ground. It primarily feeds on crickets, caterpillars, beetles. earthworms, and even small vertebrates. It lays 2-20 eggs in a hole dug by itself or under fallen logs.

30. Tasar Silk Moth (

Emperor Moths are known for their size feeders, but during two weeks as adults they do not feed.

t is the most common, non-venomous freshwater snake in India. A good swimmer, with its body covered by keeled scales and a checkered pattern, hence the English name. t is often seen in Taloja pond. When alarmed, this snake raises its head and expands its neck skin to resemble a cobra hood. Though not venomous, it can deliver a painful, inflammatory bite. They primarily consume frogs, fish, and tadpoles. Extremely active, aggressive, and agile snake.

body. It is found in a wide range of habitats, from rain forests

it is also semi-urban, especially in towns with big gardens. Mucus and lipid-rich skin secretions help them retain moisture which they apply on themselves. When the temperature rises, they sweat, pant, and lighten their skin. They can be spotted in bathrooms during dry periods. During mating, they whip their body liquids into a semi-globular foam nest. The nest is frequently built on a tree branch over water, rocks, moist ground, or a grass clump. Eggs are laid inside the foam nest. On hatching, tadpoles drop in the water below the foam nest. Tadpoles feed on microorganisms and algae. They grow into adults within 55 days.

34. Indian Bull Frog (

31. Checkered Keelback (Fowled piscator)



revolving eyes, a grabbing curly tail, and a use their sticky tongues to catch insects.

Dinesh Valke

33. Indian Tree frog (

5-8 cm O Jun-Aug

Typical moist-deciduous forest frog. However

Brian Gratwicke & V. Shubhalaxmi

17 cm \vec{Q} Jun-Aug

monsoon. During the breeding season the male is vellowish. while the female is greenish. Mostly solitary and nocturnal, inhabiting holes and bushes near permanent water courses and pools. Feeds on insects and crabs that are harmful to agriculture, proving beneficial to paddy cultivation. However, it can feed on anything it can swallow, like mice, shrews, small birds, toads and even snakes. Females are larger than males. The species suffered heavy commercial exploitation as the legs were exported, affecting the status of the species, which was stopped after the ban in 1987.

© Vivek Philip & Sushil Saurav

35. Indian Chameleon



A unique tree-dwelling lizard with large, tongue with a club-shaped sticky tip. Fingers and toes are opposite, making holding easier. It can change colour and blend seamlessly with its environment, making it "invisible." The change in body colour occurs with change in temperature of the surrounding. Like leaves, its movement is slow while bobbing or swinging. It can independently move its eyeballs in all directions. Thev

36. Oriental Rat Snake (

.6-2 m **Q** May-Jun

A common, agile, non-venomous snake found throughout India. It feeds on rodents, lizards, and young birds. It is excellent

nature's pest control for rodents. Good climber, swimmer and can move fast at short distance. Known for their combat dance between males, they entwine around each other and stand erect with half of their bodies off the ground. They are capable of giving painful bites if mishandled.

37. Russell's Viper



It is one of the four venomous snakes commonly found in India. This ambush predator stays still until it strikes the prev.

It blends into its open grassy habitat so well that it is difficult to spot. Thus, people sometimes step on them while working in field, and get bitten. Feeds mainly on rodents. Young vipers are often cannibalistic. Although capable of striking incredibly fast, studies have shown that they are hesitant to bite and will try to hide from or hiss loudly towards a potential threat. Vipers give birth to live young.

38. Ashy Prinia (P

13 - 14 cm 🔿 May-Jun This small bird is commonly seen in open, grassy areas with shrubs. Their best habitats are urban

gardens, meadows, and farms. Its small size, bright colours, and vertical tail make it easy to spot. It eats insects. Its wings generate a sound like "electric sparks" when it flutters. The nest is built on low bushes, composed of leaves strung together with webs, lined with hair, and has a side entrance. It lays shiny, round eggs. Eggs hatch in about 12 days. Both male and female incubate eggs and feed the chicks. Brood parasites include plaintive and grey-bellied cuckoos. Adults often pretend dead when cats endanger their nest.

© Raghu Peethambaran & Mike Prince

39. Greater Coucal (Ce



A cuckoo that is not parasitic and car be found in jungles, farms, and cities They are slow fliers and are frequently seen clambering through vegetation or walking on the ground in search of insects, eggs, and nestlings of other birds. In many parts of their range, they have a familiar deep resonant call

that is associated with good omens. During courtship, male coucals feed females. Inside dense vegetation, a deep cup-shaped nest is constructed. Both sexes participate in nest building. In 15-16 days, the eggs hatch.

A small bird with long tail feathers in the

40. Green Bee-eater (Merops orientalis)

16-18 cm 🗳 Mar-Jun

© Hafiz Issadeen

centre. Juveniles are duller and lack long tail feathers. Farmlands, forests, and sparsely populated areas are its common habitats. It zigzags to catch flying insects and then returns to its perch to eat them. They eat other insects as well including bees. Both sexes have a similar appearance. During courtship, the male feeds the female a bee or dragonfly. Both parents dig a tunnel nest on mud bank and raise their young after laying four to seven eggs. During winter bee-eaters huddle up in small groups on a branch or wire to keep warm.

It is a common city park bird. This longtailed pigeon gets its English name for the white-spotted black patch it has on its nape. Juveniles lack neck markings and are duller

than adults. When disturbed, it takes off with an explosive flutter of wings and a swift, side-to-side rolling action. They feed on grass seeds, grains, fallen fruits, and insects. They nest in low vegetation in a frail twig cup and lay two white eggs. Nests are sometimes built on the ground or on structures. Parents build, incubate, and feed the young. Eggs hatch after 13 days and fledge after two weeks.

© David Curtis

42. Indian Robin (Copsychus fulicatus)



41. Indian Spotted Dove (

28 -32 cm 🔿 Jan-Dec

This small dark bird could be easily identified from its hopping gait with a cocked tail and is often seen in pairs in open, dry, grassy, scrub forest habitats. They feed primarily on insects but are known to take frogs and lizards, especially when feeding young. Males and females look different. During the breeding season, the male sings and displays by lowering and spreading its tail feathers and strutting around the female. displaying the sides and fluffing it's under tail

feathers. Nest is a shallow cup of grass, rootlets and rubbish lined with feathers or hair, built with a discarded tin or pot, a hole in the wall or an earth bank. They lay 3-4 eggs which may hatch within

10-12 days.

© Soumyadeep Chatterjee & Jaffar Hussain

43. Long-tailed Shrike (La



This bird favours dry open habitats and is seen prominently atop a bush or on a wire and glides down to catch lizards, large insects, small birds, and rodents. It has a screaming and grating calls. It can also mimic calls of other birds, squirrels, and puppies. Thorny twigs, rags, and hair form a deep, loose nest made in thorny trees. Both sexes incubate three to six eggs.

© Imran Shah & Lip Kee

44. Little Cormorant (/

Cormorants are fish-eating aquatic birds. Their beaks are adapted to catch fish underwater. Since it lacks oil glands, it is often seen with wings spread for drying purposes. Males flutter their wings with their heads back and bill elevated in courtship. They then drop the beak, and feeds the female after partnering. Their nest is a stick platform on trees or coconut palms, built by both parents. The clutch size is of two to six eggs. Within 15 to 21 days, the eggs hatch. Young birds are ready to fly after a month. © Thangarai Kumaravel & Vijav A Ismavel

45. Red-whiskered Bulbul (

50 cm 🗖 Nov-Feb

Farmland and open area with bushes and shrubs are this bird's preferences. They are often heard rather than seen, however they often perch prominently. especially in the mornings when they call from treetops. The cheek's red patch gives them their English name. They feed on insects, fruits, and nectar in groups. They are an important seed dispersal agent. The male's courtship display includes head bowing, tail extending, and drooping wings. Rootlets, bark, and leaves line the fork-nest cup. Three eggs hatch in 12-14 days. Before the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972, it was a popular

© Pradeepkumar Devadoss & Mike Prince

A sparrow-like bird with spotted breast. Often

46. Scaly-Breasted Munia (

17-20 cm **Q** Jul-Oct

seen in small groups among grassland and thrives on the edge of urban areas. They form flocks of as many as 100 birds and roost communally among fields and bushes. Individuals communicate with calls and various notes. They feed mainly on seeds as well as berries. Sexes are similar, but male has darker markings on the underside and a darker throat than female. Juvenile birds are plain brown. As a courtship dance, the male or female play with nest material and fly around in a zig-zag path. Parents build the nest as well as incubate eggs. The nest is a rounded 🛮 🕍 mass of grass built 2-5 meters up in a bush or a small tree. They lay four to six eggs, and hatch in 10 to 16 days.

Shadab Ishtiyak & Budgora

47. White Throated Kingfisher (Halcvon smyrnensis)

26-28 cm **Q** Jan-Aug

A common resident, easily distinguished by its large, bright, reddish-orange bill. It is usually seen singly near ponds and lakes and away from the water body also. They feed on a wide range of prey, including small reptiles, crabs, small rodents, fish, frogs, and insects. During the breeding season, the males call loudly and display their tail feathers by flicking them and exposing the white feathers. The nest is a horizontal tunnel dug in a stream or earthcutting mud bank. They lay 4-7 round white eggs, which hatch within 20–22 days. It is a state bird of West Bengal.

48. Indian Hare (Le

40-70 cm **Q** Jan-Dec

We do not have rabbits in our country, instead we have hares. Forests, jungles, and farms are their habitats. Prefer hills and rocky depressions. In summer, it feeds mainly on flowers, seeds, and

> crops; while in monsoon it prefers short grasses. It may sometimes eat animal waste. Females outweigh males. One to eight offspring are born after 41–47 days of gestation. New born pups have complete fur and eyes are open. The female gives birth in a grass hollow. She hides her babies in deep vegetation and nurses them for 2–3 weeks. Young hares are odourless and can remain still when hiding. They start breeding after one year

of their birth. © Roger Wasley

49. Indian Grey Mongoose (Ur

36–90 cm **O** Mar-Oct

They have short legs, pointed noses. small ears, five toes with non-retractable claws, and long fluffy tails. Most species burrow in forests, scrublands, and farms near humans. Omnivores, they devour tiny mammals,

birds, reptiles, eggs, and fruits. For food, they can even attack venomous snakes They do have some immunity from snake venom, as the venomous

bite is neutralised by their blood glycoprotein. Males are bigger and remain solitary except during the breeding season. Two to four pups are born after a 60-day gestation period. Blind and helpless at birth, the young grow in a short time and stay with their mother for six months. Young mature at 6-9 months.

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TALOJA HILL **FOREST** Dr. V. Shubhalaxmi

A Pocket Field

There are 193 species of plants, 84 insects, 6 amphibians,

6 reptiles, 77 birds and 10 mammals recorded from Taloja Hill Forest. Of these, 49 species are covered in this field guide (20 flora and 29 fauna)

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