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### BOOK REVIEW

#### A HOLISTIC LOOK ON BIRDS IN URBAN AREAS

S. Suresh Ramanan & Lalit Upadhyay

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## A HOLISTIC LOOK ON BIRDS IN URBAN AREAS

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Birds are the prominent representative of the animal kingdom in urban areas and some of them live in close association with humans. It is generally believed that certain birds did acclimatize and adapt to living along with humans. Researchers have proved that rapid changes in urban areas do have an impact on these birds. One good example is the common House Sparrow. Despite the well-known implications, much of the research has been carried out in North American and European countries. There is a need for long term studies on this aspect of avifauna. In this scenario, this book is an excellent summarization of the research done, so far.

This 511 paged book, with 24 chapters is divided into six sections. The first and last sections contain the introduction and conclusion chapters written by the editors Enrique Murgui, Spain and Marcus Hedblom, Sweden. Chapters in the second section narrate about large-scale abundance pattern and adaptation of birds in urban areas across the globe. Meanwhile, chapters 5, 6 and 7 also look at the evolutionary adaptations in birds due to urban conglomerates. Chapter 4, written by two Chinese authors from the Zhejiang Museum of Natural History, is indeed remarkable for its details about the changes in avifaunal diversity in China - one of the rapidly urbanized countries of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Chapter 5 may provide a valid explanation of how exotic birds can be successful in urbanized areas. After reading this chapter, I could perceive some more reasons for the predominance of the Common Myna in Indian cities.

The third section of this book deliberates on the fundamental approaches for understanding bird ecology i.e. in spatial and temporal scale. While chapter 8 discusses the influence of urban factors on bird diversity and it concludes on the need for repeated studies for understanding the influence of urban factors on bird community. It appeared to me that the authors were stressing on the need for long term research. The editors understood it; for next chapter deliberates on 'The trends in Long Term Urban Bird Research'. This is followed by a review chapter on different methods for estimating abundance of urban birds and the subsequent chapter

discuss on 77 bird atlas developed in 66 different European towns. Due credits to the editors for this cogent arrangement of chapters.

The fourth section deliberates about the human and bird interaction - starting with the effect of pollution on birds (chapter 12 and 13), human's role in synurbization (chapter 14) and finally on ecosystem services from urban birds (chapter 15). Chapter 13 on Light pollution needs to be highlighted here. The chapter details on the need to manage it efficiently, for its impact can be deleterious for birds.

The fifth Section has 8 chapters that brief on the urban bird habitats; with chapters 16 and 17 specifically narrating the urban habitat prevalent in African and Australian metropolis. Quite differently, chapter 18 reviews the global research on the diversity and



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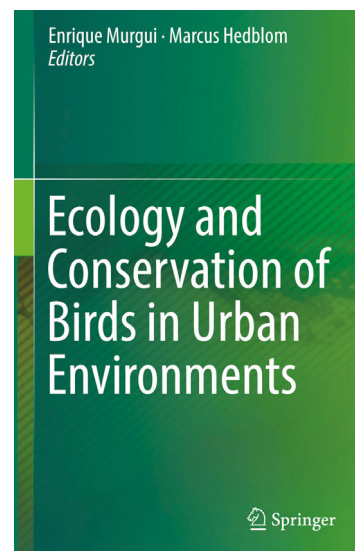
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adaptation of birds in urban residential complexes. This chapter emulates the theme of the book very well. The authors stress on the need for field actions as well as coordinated research to conserve urban bird diversity. In this juncture, I am reminded of the Dr Eugene Schieffelin attempts in 1890's to protect urban bird diversity in New York which turned out to be havoc. Incidents like these stress on the need for coordinated research. In chapter 19, the author uses the term 'Urban Wastelands' which in Indian context refers to a dump yard or landfill. On the contrary, Peter J. Meffert from Germany refers to abandoned warehouses and vacant plots as wastelands and he narrates the significance of these short duration habitats for urban birds. Recently, bird's feedings on the fruits of *Lantana camara* and thereby indirectly aiding in the dispersal has caught the attention of ecologists (Carrión-Tacuri et al. 2012; Thabethe 2014). And chapter 20 focuses on the invasive plant species in North America and their influence in birds' breeding and feeding behaviour. Chapters 21 and 22 are case studies from Italy and Barcelona and chapter 23 is a combination of

a case study from Sweden. Furthermore, chapter briefs on the management of green areas to maintain and enhance bird ecosystem services. The editors effectively summarize the key points in the concluding chapter. Further, they highlight the research gaps in urban bird ecology and also list out some effective conservation strategies. I would be thoughtless if I did not point out that this book is both well written and scholarly. It offers a lucid account on urban birds and it will be handy for researchers.

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