



Declining Harriers Birds in India

Harrier birds, a migratory raptor species that regularly visits India, are declining in the country. Disappearing grasslands are one of the major reasons behind the declining population of the migratory species.

- There are **16 species of harriers** distributed worldwide throughout tropical and temperate regions, and six of these species migrate to India from central Asia and neighbouring areas during the winter.
- India has one of the largest roosting sites in the world for **Pallid Harriers** and **Montagu's Harriers**.
- Major changes in the number of harrier birds have been observed at the **Rollapadu Bustard Sanctuary** in Andhra Pradesh's Kurnool district.
- In Hessarghatta on the outskirts of Bengaluru, Western Marsh Harriers declined significantly, leaving the area nearly deserted.

Reasons for Decline

- A combination of factors including **changes in breeding areas, changes in their wintering areas and migratory routes** could all affect the migratory birds' numbers.
- **Loss of grasslands**, either to urbanisation or to agriculture has been one of the major reasons for the decline of the migratory species in the country.
- **Excessive use of pesticides in farms** in and around the roosting sites could also be a reason for the lowered population counts. In crops such as cotton, the use of pesticides kills grasshoppers, the harriers' primary prey, and could lead to mortality of the birds themselves as they are on the top of the food chain.

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