



NIKHIL DEVESAR/SANCTUARY

Peter Jackson, Former Chairman of IUCN's Cat Specialist Group, was one of the first to recognise the potential of Sultanpur, originally a marshy land, as an area that attracts numerous species of birds. The shallow *jheel* provides an ideal environment for many rare migrants as well as local resident species. Sultanpur is indeed a fragile ecosystem that stands like a sentinel at the edge of the huge, sprawling metropolis of New Delhi.

Flora and fauna

This 144 ha., capsule-sized *jheel* is a shallow, brackish lake fringed with numerous reeds and aquatic plants *acacia* trees, shrubs. The lake against this refreshing greenery attracts diverse species of birds throughout the year. The penetrating rays of sunlight that reach the floor of the lake, make it

Bar-headed Geese, ducks are among a host of species that frequent Sultanpur during the winter, they are seen here in tens of thousands.

ideal for zooplankton and various aquatic species like fish to thrive. Crustaceans abound along the edges and frogs and toads may be seen around the lake as well. Oft, especially at dawn, grey or blue-grey nilgai are seen treading the banks of the lake to quench their thirst. Sultanpur is, however, essentially a bird sanctuary, a birdwatcher's paradise with over 255 species. Winter migrants flock in from as far away as Siberia. Ducks and geese are some of the main migrants. The dainty Demoiselle Cranes, one of the star migrant species, the smallest of all cranes, are frequently seen during the latter half of the day. Pelicans, Bar-headed Geese, Ruddy Shelducks, mallards, pochards, gadwalls and teals are a host of migratory species that join the equally fascinating residents. The watchtowers and hideouts around the lake are the best way to enjoy some of the most spectacular bird formations without disturbing the birds.

Best season

September to February is a good

time to visit for birdwatching. Indigenous species of water birds are normally known to feed and nest around September-October, while the migrants visit around November.

Accommodation

Accommodation is available at the Rosy Pelican complex run by Haryana Tourism. There are family cottages as well as individual rooms available. Tel. 0124 2375242. One can also stay at one of the numerous hotels, lodges or guest houses in Delhi and plan a day trip to the Sultanpur *jheel*.

How to get there

By Air: Delhi airport (46 km.) is the nearest to the sanctuary.
By Rail: The Sultanpur railway station is only four kilometres from the lake.
By Road: One can take the Haryana Roadways bus from Delhi to Gurgaon, from where you can get a Chandu bus to Sultanpur. The *jheel* is located on the Gurgaon-Farrukhnagar road, a short drive away from the Delhi-Jaipur highway. Taxis are also available from Delhi or Gurgaon.