

# Winged Winter Waders!!!

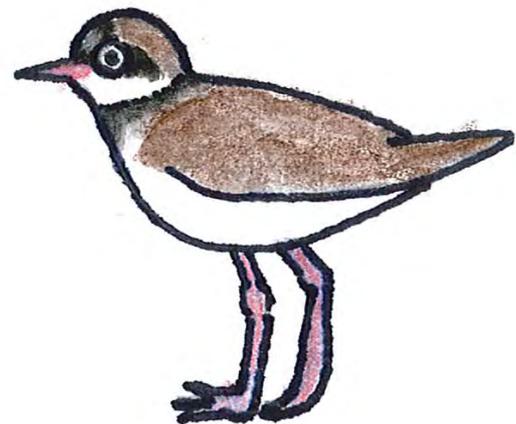
I bet most of you dream of wading into cool waters be it a stream in the forest, swimming pool or the lovely sea shore (in some cases even a drain while going after a ball) in this summer heat while sitting in your homes, schools or offices (even exams!). The ‘Winged winter waders’ are birds that do exactly that; they wade into cool shallow waters be it by the sea shore or pond in search of worms, bugs and little crab-like animals (crustaceans) and fly down to India from as far as the Arctic to visit us every winter.

The region of south Asia is home to approximately 82 different kind of waders; some of which loved the region so much they don’t move too far away (residents and local migrants) while some cannot bear the summer heat and fly all the way to the Arctic and Siberia in search of cooler climes (migrants or winter visitors).

In this article, I will introduce you to some of the common groups of waders both resident and migrant.



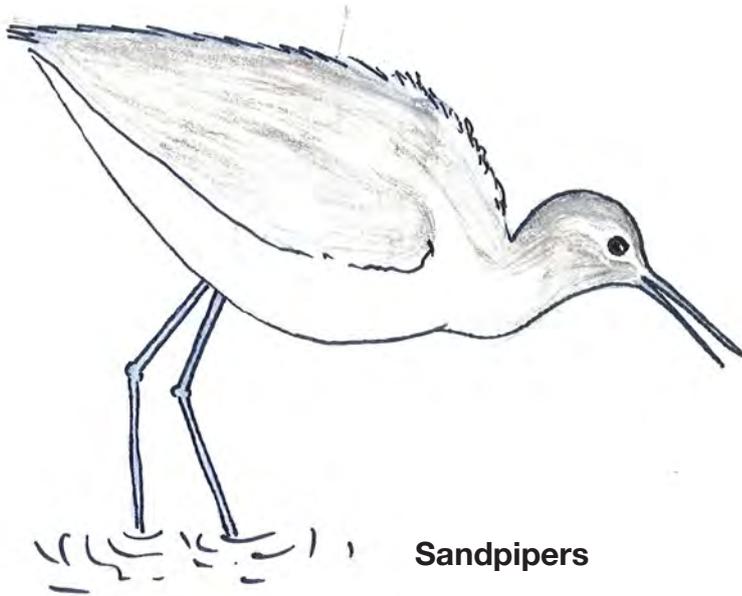
**Red Wattled Lapwing**



**Plovers**

**Plovers:** These birds have large eyes as compared to their body size and this is because they primarily feed using their sight. These birds seem to be perpetually playing the game of statue amongst them; this is because they hunt by a method called run-stop-run. This literally means they run a few steps, stop for a few moments and run again and this method is used to flush out insects that will move when the birds run.

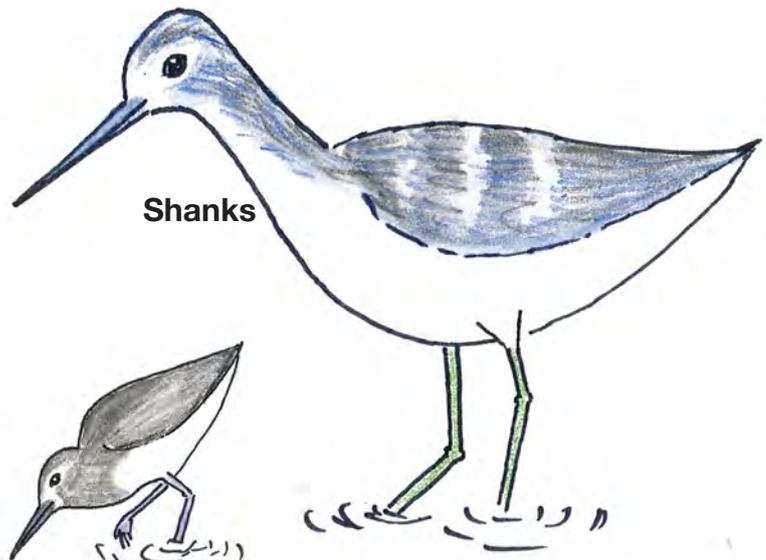
**Lapwings:** These birds are larger plovers seen near water bodies and even in short grassy plains in semi-urban areas. Most of these birds are local migrants and residents. One of the common lapwings in southern India is the Red Wattled Lapwing *Vanellus indicus* with its characteristic call which sounds very much like a high pitched voice saying “Did you do it?”



**Sandpipers**

**Sandpipers:** These are dainty birds with smaller eyes and have more of a ballerina look about them. They have different ways to find food depending on the environment they find themselves in. One such method is called tactile (meaning touch) method. They use a sewing action where their bill acts like a needle poking into the mud and waiting to touch the wriggle of a worm.

**Shanks:** Shanks are also a group of sandpipers and are commonly seen in smaller groups as compared to stints or godwits.

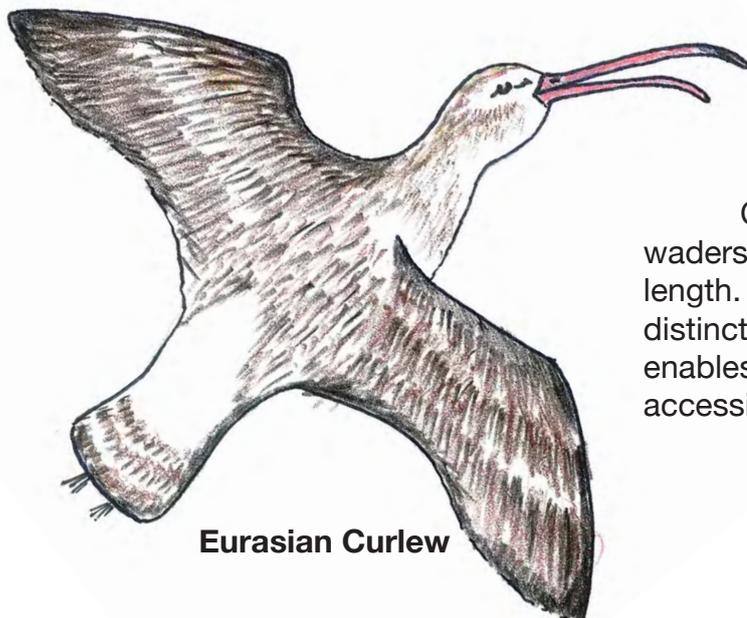


**Shanks**

**Stints:** Stints are among the smallest of the sandpipers and all the stints seen in India are winter visitors. One of the smallest of the waders (only 13cm long) the Little Stint *Calidris minuta* is a long distance migrant and flies all the way from the Arctic to winter in India.

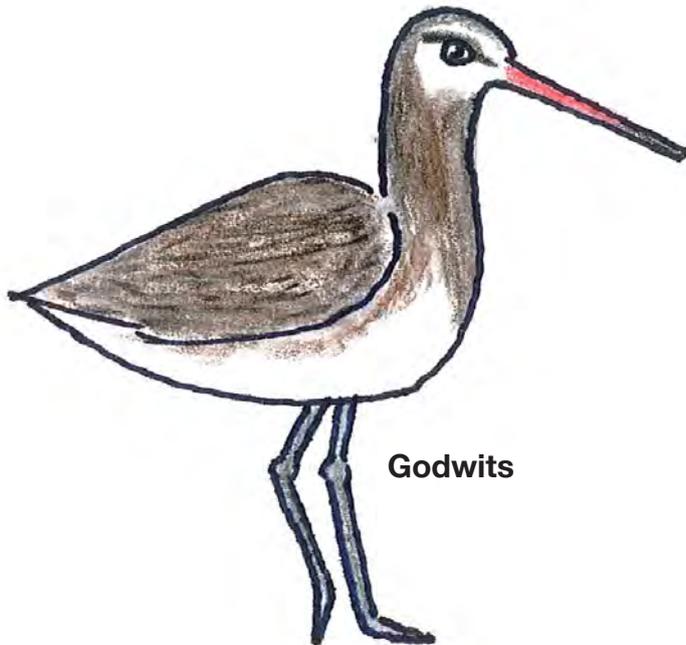


**Stints**



**Eurasian Curlew**

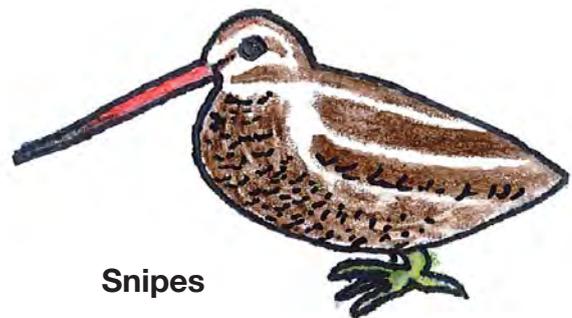
**Curlew/Whimbrel:** Both birds are large waders, the Eurasian Curlew going upto 58cm in length. They are easily recognised by their size and distinctive down-curved long bill. This unique bill enables them to reach invertebrates that are not accessible to other waders.



**Godwits**

**Godwits:** Godwits are also winter visitors in India and fall in the size bracket between a curlew and the shanks. These birds are seen in colossal numbers at Chilika wetland in Odisha – a haven for all kinds of wetland birds.

**Snipes:** These birds have some of the most beautiful patterns in the wader world but are also one of the most secretive. Most other waders are very easy to find but snipes are the kings and queens of hide and seek. They have a stocky build with long bills and many of them are nocturnal. Their bill tips are highly sensitive which they use to pick out earthworms.



**Snipes**

Five quick and easy tips to bird-watching!!!

Bird identification	Description
Shape	Different birds groups have different shapes, so it is helpful to narrow what bird you are looking at by observing the shape (pigeon, myna, sparrow, crows all have different shapes).
Size	The next clue is to estimate the size by comparing the birds to the common birds you know. e.g. the bird is bigger than a sparrow but smaller than a crow. This will narrow it down further.
Colours	Birds are one of the most colourful animals in the natural world so use the colours to your advantage when identifying them. Initially, you may find it hard to remember specific details like colour of the eye etc, but with practice you will get there.
Habitat	Where did you see the bird? In a tree, on a rock, near a river or near the sea? This can help greatly when you are trying to identify a bird.
Flight pattern	I know this sounds a little crazy, but bird groups have different flight patterns. Kites and vultures soar and do not flap their wings as often as mynas and attention to such detail can help you when it counts.