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MP's badlands turn perfect perch for Indian skimmers

Deshdeep Saxena | TNN | Mar 23, 2016, 08:18 AM IST



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Number of Indian skimmer, a bird on the verge of extinction, has touched the figure of 439 this year, highe... [Read More](#)

Bhopal: Efforts of foresters, who risk their life to protect fragile eco-system of national Chambal ghariyal sanctuary from sand mafia, have yielded results.

Number of Indian skimmer, a bird on the verge of extinction, has touched the figure of 439 this year, highest in the last one decade. Number of Gangetic dolphins has also gone up from

71 to 78 in the river falling under Chambal sanctuary. Chambal carries the biggest population of Indian skimmer (*Rynchops albicollis*) in the world. In the last year's

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Two days after the sanctuary superintendent JP Sharma survived a murderous attack from sand mafia right in front of the sanctuary, a forest guard was murdered in Gwalior on March 6, while he was chasing the mafia men.

District forest officer BP Titare said, "Growing number of birds and dolphin is an achievement in the sense that the whole staff here work under tremendous pressure. Influence of sand mafia is huge in the region." "Indian skimmers are easily recognized birds with their black and white plumage, black head cap, white face and collar and distinctive long, thick, bright orange bill with a yellow tip," said range officer RK Sharma. Once flying in a large part of south East Asia, Indian skimmer is one of the three species belonging to the skimmer family- Rynchopidae. It is vanishing fast from Myanmar Vietnam and Cambodia because of loss of habitat and its number has shrunk in Nepal, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

"Very small flocks of Indian skimmer are found in patches of Ganga, Yamuna, Ghagra and Son rivers in India. Chambal is the biggest habitat with largest population in the world," added Sharma, who is also research officer in the sanctuary.

From 555 in 1994, the number dwindled to 332 in 2003 in Chambal. In 2011, it went down further to 224. Next year in 2012, it went up to 301 only to go down to 258 in 2013.

"The only island which was nestling ground of the bird located in the threat zone of sand mafia zone has seen total migration of the birds. It was a flock of about 54 birds," said the range officer.

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