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From: Bill Harvey [mailto:billharvey@mantraonline.com]

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Bhindawas dry this winter

The sanctuary is in a sorry state. Apparently local villagers have indeed blocked the canals some kms away and they and 98% of the Sanctuary are dry. A couple of tiny pools in the middle and remnant pools along the western channel, all much competed for by people, buffaloes and birds, are all the open water remaining. Extensive burning of reeds and water hyacinth is in progress. I was told the Haryana CM has promised water within 10 days. I will not be holding my breath. The result is that one of the most important wetlands in Haryana will be next to useless this winter. Birds were around but mostly in much reduced numbers. The heronry still has a lot of activity and the pools were thronged with parent birds of the 10 breeding species. Also of interest were 120 Black-headed Ibis though only 20 Glossies, 24 Spoonbills still around, 8 Openbills and 2 Painted Storks. No sign of Sarus Cranes or Black-necked Storks and the nascent Great Cormorant colony in the eucalypts looked deserted. Waders and duck barely reached double figures although reasonable in variety (including 8 Avocets on Kildorth pond) and there were 3 young Pheasant-tailed Jacanas. The only (!) raptor was a Marsh Harrier and that was over the crops. Among landbirds plenty of Siberian and Hume's Lesser Whitethroats, Greenish and Blyth's Reed Warblers in the eucalypts, a juv Pied Cuckoo begging to Large Grey Babblers and a Common Hawk Cuckoo. New for the season for me was a Black Redstart and swallow species showed well including several Red-rumped. No sight nor sound of Sind Sparrows in their old nesting colony or along the bund. Where do they go?

At Kildorth a juv Oriental Turtle Dove was a surprise. Also a pair of Common Stonechats and a single Rosy Pastor in with the Bank Mynahs. Several Tree Pipits along the road plus Black Ibis, a Eurasian Curlew and a Woolly-necked Stork on the very flooded fields of Basai (also good floods nearer Sultanpur after yesterday's storm). Best bird of all was a European Roller near Sultanpur.

Inspite of the disappointment of Bhindawas the total was a reasonable 110 species which I assume counts towards our Worldbirdwatch weekend, Friday being the weekend in much of the world. Or does cultural imperialism rule even bird counts?

regards Bill