This guide covers 138 birds found in Lahaul and Spiti district of Himachal Pradesh, which falls in the Indian Trans-Himalayan region. For ease of reference, the species have been sorted into the following 5 categories.

WETLAND BIRDS
High-altitude wetlands include lakes, ponds, streams, and marshy areas, and are used by birds for breeding, nesting, and feeding. Some important wetlands in Lahaul and Spiti are Chandra Tal and Suraj Tal Wetlands, some of which serve as important habitats for birds like Himalayan Snowcock, Brahminy Ducks, Choughs, etc. Several migratory ducks and waders may be seen in these areas in summer and in passage during spring and autumn.

BIRDS OF PREY
Birds of Prey or Raptors hunt and feed on other animals, including smaller birds. They have excellent eyesight, strong feet, sharp talons for hunting, and a hooked beak for tearing into flesh. A great diversity of raptors is found in the region, from huge Vultures (Lammergeier or Bearded Vultures and Griffons) to smaller and fast-moving Falcons (Eurasian Hobby and Eurasian Sparrowhawk).

GROUND FEEDING BIRDS
Ground feeders are a diverse group of birds that are primarily terrestrial and feed on the ground. Most of the birds found in the region fall into this category, from large birds like Pheasants, Pigeons and Crows to medium-sized Thrushes to small Wheatears, Accentors, and seed-eating Finches and Sparrows. This also includes birds like Redstarts, Chats, and Shrikes, which may perch low in a bush but find their prey (small insects and reptiles) on the ground, as well as birds found in scrub habitats like Larks and Pipits.

AERIAL FEEDING BIRDS
Aerial feeders like Swifts, Martins, and Swallows are insectivorous birds that hunt and feed in flight. They have pointed wings and can often be seen gliding gracefully through the air or performing acrobatics to catch insects. They are very fast in flight and prefer open areas and are sometimes seen near water.

ARBOREAL BIRDS
Arboreal birds are those whose life cycles are associated with trees and shrubs. Since the region is very sparsely wooded, most birds in this category are small Warblers, which feed on insects among the leaves of trees and shrubs. Orioles prefer the tops of trees, while flocks of White-eyes and Warblers can be seen in the bushes. Birds like Nuthatches, Woodpeckers, and Treecreepers can be seen in woody areas.

Migratory birds that visit Lahaul and Spiti during winter (October-March), from their northern breeding grounds in Europe or Central/East/North Asia.

Migratory birds that visit Lahaul and Spiti during summer (April-June) to breed.

Migratory birds that stop for a short time during a seasonal migration.

FEMALE ♀ MALE ♂ Gender symbols indicate where the male and female of the species look different. If no symbols are shown, it means that they look alike.

Size of each bird indicates the length from beak tip to tail tip. (br) indicates breeding plumage.

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COVER IMAGE Bearded Vulture by Shiv Kumar Thakur

Birds of Lahaul & Spiti - a pocket guide to 138 birds of the trans-Himalaya

Birds of Lahaul & Spiti

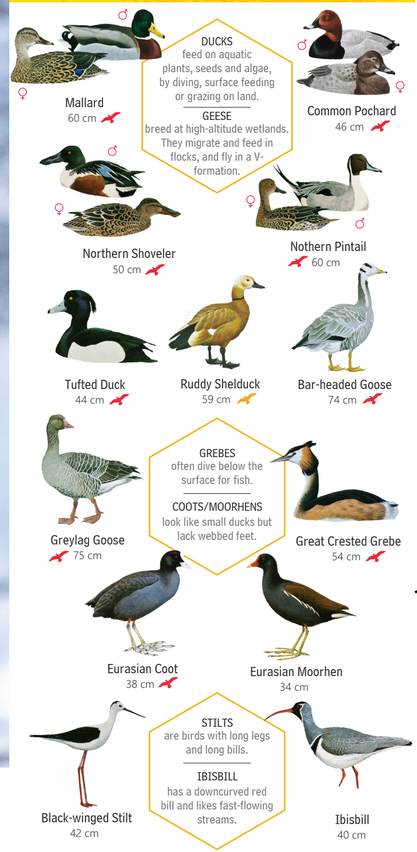
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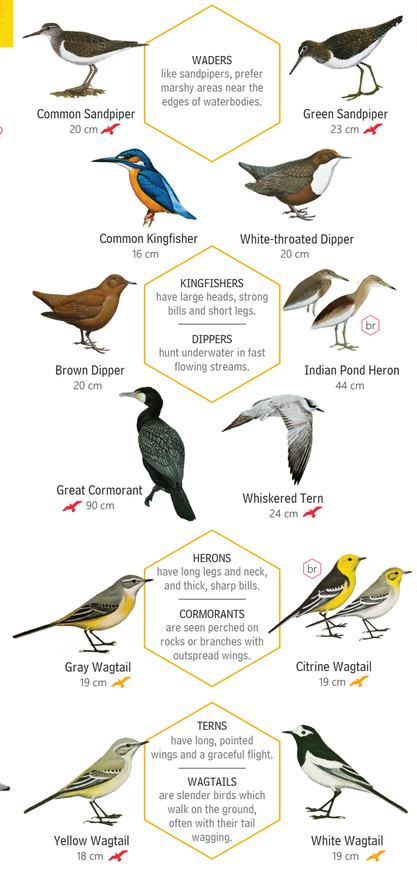


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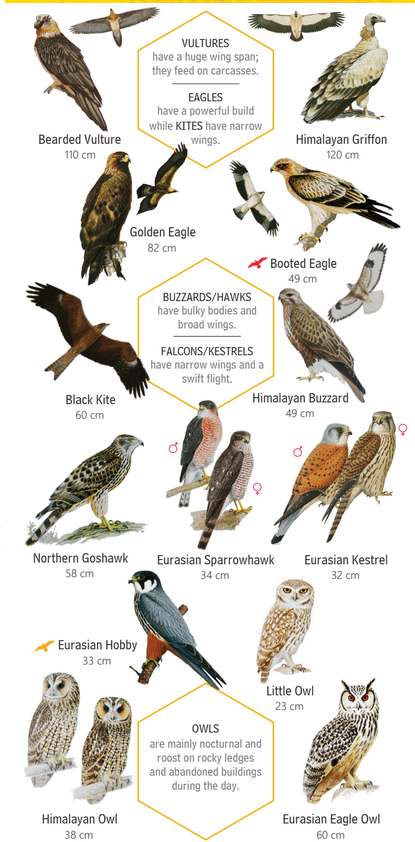
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WETLAND BIRDS

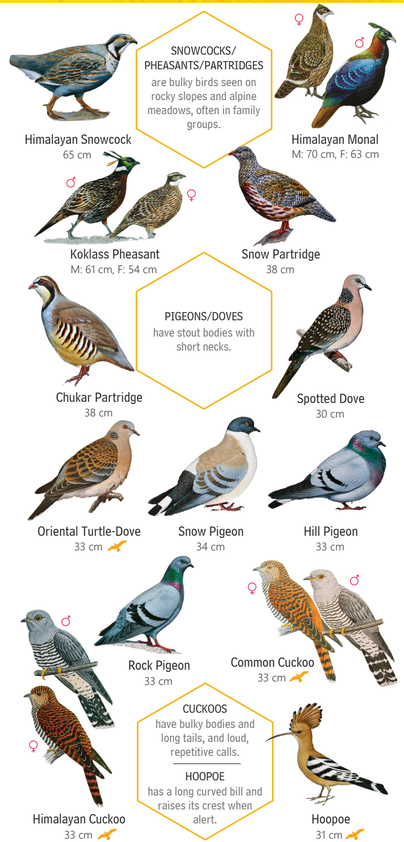


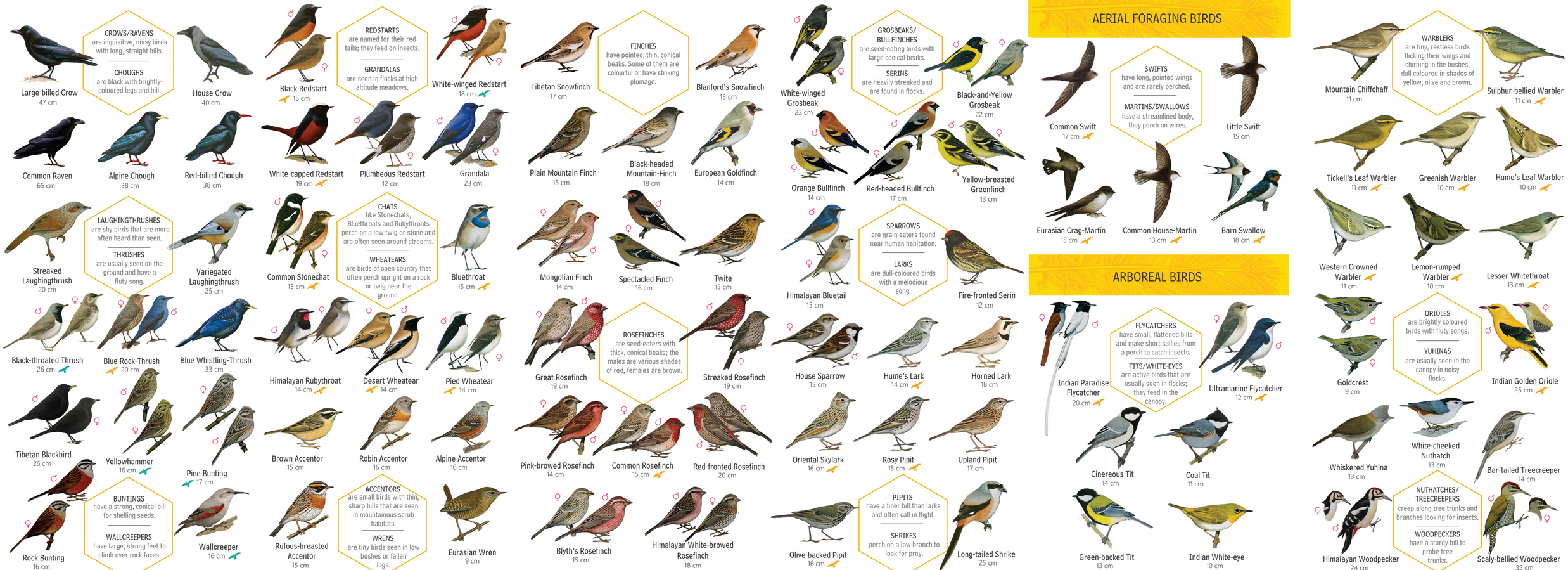


BIRDS OF PREY



GROUND FEEDING BIRDS




CROWS/RAVENS
are inquisitive, noisy birds with long, straight bills.
CHOUGHS
are black with brightly-coloured legs and bill.
Large-billed Crow
47 cm
House Crow
40 cm
Common Raven
65 cm
Alpine Chough
38 cm
Red-billed Chough
38 cm
REDSTARTS
are named for their red tails; they feed on insects.
GRANDALAS
are seen in flocks at high altitude meadows.
Black Redstart
15 cm
White-winged Redstart
18 cm
White-capped Redstart
19 cm
Plumbeous Redstart
12 cm
Grandala
23 cm
FINCHES
have pointed, thin, conical beaks. Some of them are colourful or have striking plumage.
Tibetan Snowfinch
17 cm
Blanford's Snowfinch
15 cm
Plain Mountain Finch
15 cm
Black-headed Mountain-Finch
18 cm
European Goldfinch
14 cm
GROSBEAKS/ BULLFINCHES
are seed-eating birds with large conical beaks.
SERINS
are heavily streaked and are found in flocks.
White-winged Grosbeak
23 cm
Black-and-Yellow Grosbeak
22 cm
Orange Bullfinch
14 cm
Red-headed Bullfinch
17 cm
Yellow-breasted Greenfinch
13 cm
AERIAL FORAGING BIRDS
SWIFTS
have long, pointed wings and are rarely perched.
MARTINS/SWALLOWS
have a streamlined body, they perch on wires.
Common Swift
17 cm
Little Swift
15 cm
Eurasian Crag-Martin
15 cm
Common House-Martin
13 cm
Barn Swallow
18 cm
LAUGHINGTHRUSHES
are shy birds that are more often heard than seen.
THRUSHES
are usually seen on the ground and have a fluty song.
Streaked Laughingthrush
20 cm
Variegated Laughingthrush
25 cm
CHATS
like Stonechats, Bluethroats and Rubythroats perch on a low twig or stone and are often seen around streams.
WHEATEARS
are birds of open country that often perch upright on a rock or twig near the ground.
Common Stonechat
13 cm
Bluethroat
15 cm
Mongolian Finch
14 cm
Spectacled Finch
16 cm
Twite
13 cm
Himalayan Bluetail
15 cm
SPARROWS
are grain eaters found near human habitation.
LARKS
are dull-coloured birds with a melodious song.
Fire-fronted Serin
12 cm
Black-throated Thrush
26 cm
Blue Rock-Thrush
20 cm
Blue Whistling-Thrush
33 cm
Himalayan Rubythroat
14 cm
Desert Wheatear
14 cm
Pied Wheatear
14 cm
ROSEFINCHES
are seed-eaters with thick, conical beaks; the males are various shades of red, females are brown.
Great Rosefinch
19 cm
Streaked Rosefinch
19 cm
House Sparrow
15 cm
Hume's Lark
14 cm
Horned Lark
18 cm
ARBOREAL BIRDS
FLYCATCHERS
have small, flattened bills and make short sallies from a perch to catch insects.
TITS/WHITE-EYES
are active birds that are usually seen in flocks; they feed in the canopy.
Indian Paradise Flycatcher
20 cm
Ultramarine Flycatcher
12 cm
Tibetan Blackbird
26 cm
Yellowhammer
16 cm
Pine Bunting
17 cm
Brown Accentor
15 cm
Robin Accentor
16 cm
Alpine Accentor
16 cm
Pink-browed Rosefinch
14 cm
Common Rosefinch
15 cm
Red-fronted Rosefinch
20 cm
Oriental Skylark
16 cm
Rosy Pipit
15 cm
Upland Pipit
17 cm
Cinereous Tit
14 cm
Coal Tit
11 cm
BUNTINGS
have a strong, conical bill for shelling seeds.
WALLCREEPERS
have large, strong feet to climb over rock faces.
Rock Bunting
16 cm
Wallcreeper
16 cm
ACCENTORS
are small birds with thin, sharp bills that are seen in mountainous scrub habitats.
WRENS
are tiny birds seen in low bushes or fallen logs.
Rufous-breasted Accentor
15 cm
Eurasian Wren
9 cm
Blyth's Rosefinch
15 cm
Himalayan White-browed Rosefinch
18 cm
PIPITS
have a finer bill than larks and often call in flight.
SHRIKES
perch on a low branch to look for prey.
Olive-backed Pipit
16 cm
Long-tailed Shrike
25 cm
Green-backed Tit
13 cm
Indian White-eye
10 cm
WARBLERS
are tiny, restless birds flicking their wings and chirping in the bushes, dull coloured in shades of yellow, olive and brown.
Mountain Chiffchaff
11 cm
Sulphur-bellied Warbler
11 cm
Tickell's Leaf Warbler
11 cm
Greenish Warbler
10 cm
Hume's Leaf Warbler
10 cm
Western Crowned Warbler
11 cm
Lemon-rumped Warbler
10 cm
Lesser Whitethroat
13 cm
ORIOLES
are brightly coloured birds with fluty songs.
YUHINAS
are usually seen in the canopy in noisy flocks.
Goldcrest
9 cm
Indian Golden Oriole
25 cm
Whiskered Yuhina
13 cm
White-cheeked Nuthatch
13 cm
Bar-tailed Treecreeper
14 cm
NUTHATCHES/ TREECREEPERS
creep along tree trunks and branches looking for insects.
WOODPECKERS
have a sturdy bill to probe tree trunks.
Himalayan Woodpecker
24 cm
Scaly-bellied Woodpecker
35 cm