

This field guide covers 170 bird species commonly found in the Shimla Wildlife Division, ie, the districts of Shimla, Sirmour and Solan in Himachal Pradesh. The region lies in the middle-elevation of the Western Himalayas (400 - 3500 m). For ease of use, bird species have been categorised as follows:

WETLAND BIRDS

Wetlands such as lakes, ponds, rivers, streams and marshland are used by birds to feed, nest and breed. Migratory wetland birds such as waders and geese may be seen during spring and summer, as well as in winter at lower elevations.

GROUND FEEDING BIRDS

A large number of birds feed from the ground, from large birds like pheasants and doves, medium sized babblers and thrushes and small buntings and finches. Although many birds, like laughingthrushes, chats, crows and sparrows will often perch on a branch or a low bush, they often come to the ground to feed on either live prey like arthropods / reptiles or seeds and grains.

AERIAL FEEDING BIRDS

This small group of birds is primarily insectivorous and feeds on their prey while in flight. While needle tails, swifts, swiftlets, martins and swallows are often seen in flight and rarely perched, bee-eaters and nightjars spend most of their time perched and take short bursts of flight once they spot their prey. All are graceful, fast and agile and can be seen performing complex acrobatics to hunt.

ARBOREAL BIRDS

Forming the largest group of birds, from cuckoos and woodpeckers to warblers and flycatchers, these birds have life cycles closely associated with trees and shrubs, depending on them for shelter, nutrition and nesting. This group of birds are found across most wooded areas that make up a majority of Shimla Wildlife Division.

BIRDS OF PREY

Birds of Prey or Raptors hunt or scavenge on other animals, often on other smaller birds. They are often capable of long flight times and use their excellent vision, sharp talons and downward-hooked beaks to hunt prey. Birds of Prey are primarily active by day, with the exception of owls which hunt at night.

♂ Male ♀ Female ♀ Female of hepatic (rufous) morph

Symbols indicate where the male and female of the species look different. If no symbols are shown, it means that they look alike.

🦅 Migratory birds that visit Shimla during the winter (September-March)

🦅 Migratory birds that visit Shimla during the summer months (April-July) to breed.

🦅 Birds that pass through northern India during their migratory flights from Central Asia or Himalaya to the Indian peninsula

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

Bird illustrations used with permission from "Birds of the Indian Subcontinent" by Richard Grimmett, Carol Inskipp and Tim Inskipp.



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COVER PHOTOGRAPH Himalayan Woodpecker by Chayant Gonsalves

Birds of Shimla Wildlife Division

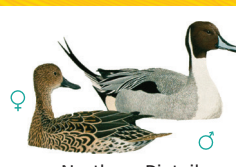
(Districts Shimla, Solan & Sirmour)

a pocket guide to 170 familiar birds

WETLAND BIRDS



Greylag Goose
75-90 cm



Northern Pintail
51-56 cm



Green-winged Teal
34-38 cm

DUCKS
feed on the surface of water bodies

WADERS
like Sandpipers, prefer marshy areas near the edges of water bodies



Ruddy Shelduck
61-67 cm



Common Sandpiper
19-21 cm



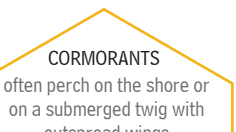
Common Greenshank
30-34 cm



Eurasian Woodcock
33-35 cm



Great Cormorant
80-100 cm



Little Cormorant
51 cm

CORMORANTS
often perch on the shore or on a submerged twig with outspread wings

KINGFISHERS
are small, striking birds that perch at a vantage point and dive into the water to fish



White-throated Kingfisher
27-28 cm



Common Kingfisher
16 cm



Crested Kingfisher
41-43 cm



White-breasted Waterhen
32 cm



Brown Dipper
20 cm

WATERHENS
are seen near vegetation by the edges of water bodies

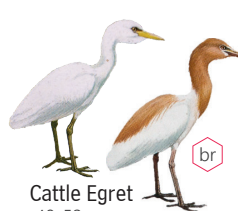
DIPPERS
are aquatic songbirds often seen perched on rocks in small streams



Grey Heron
90-98 cm



Indian Pond-Heron
42-45 cm



Cattle Egret
48-53 cm



Little Egret
55-65 cm



Great Egret
90-102 cm

EGRETS & HERONS
are medium to large sized birds with long legs and neck, and thick, sharp bills

GROUND FEEDING BIRDS



Hill Partridge
28 cm



Red Junglefowl
42-46 cm



Koklass Pheasant
58-64 cm (m), 52.5-56 cm (f)



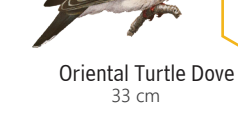
Kalij Pheasant
65-73 cm (m), 50-60 cm (f)



Rock Pigeon
33 cm



Oriental Turtle Dove
33 cm



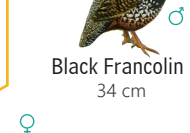
Spotted Dove
30 cm

PHEASANTS
are heavily-built, highly vocal birds that fly over short distances when disturbed

PIGEONS & DOVES
have stout bodies with short necks. They feed on the ground and also on fruiting trees



Black Francolin
34 cm



Kalij Pheasant
65-73 cm (m), 50-60 cm (f)



Rock Pigeon
33 cm



Oriental Turtle Dove
33 cm



Spotted Dove
30 cm



Eurasian Nutcracker
32-35 cm



Large-billed Crow
46-49 cm



Brownish-flanked Bush Warbler
12 cm



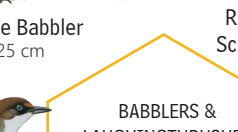
Jungle Babbler
25 cm



Rusty-cheeked Scimitar Babbler
25 cm



White-throated Laughingthrush
28 cm



Striated Laughingthrush
28 cm



Chestnut-crowned Laughingthrush
28 cm



Variegated Laughingthrush
24 cm



Streaked Laughingthrush
20 cm



Black-throated Thrush
26.5 cm



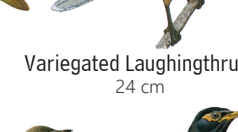
Common Myna
25 cm



Grey-winged Blackbird
28 cm



Spotted Forktail
27-28 cm



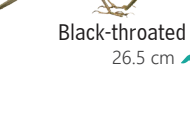
Blue Whistling-Thrush
33 cm



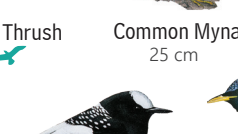
White-capped Redstart
19 cm



Blue-capped Redstart
15 cm



Black-and-yellow Grosbeak
22 cm



Spot-winged Grosbeak
22 cm



Green Bee-eater
16-18 cm



Blue-tailed Bee-eater
23-26 cm



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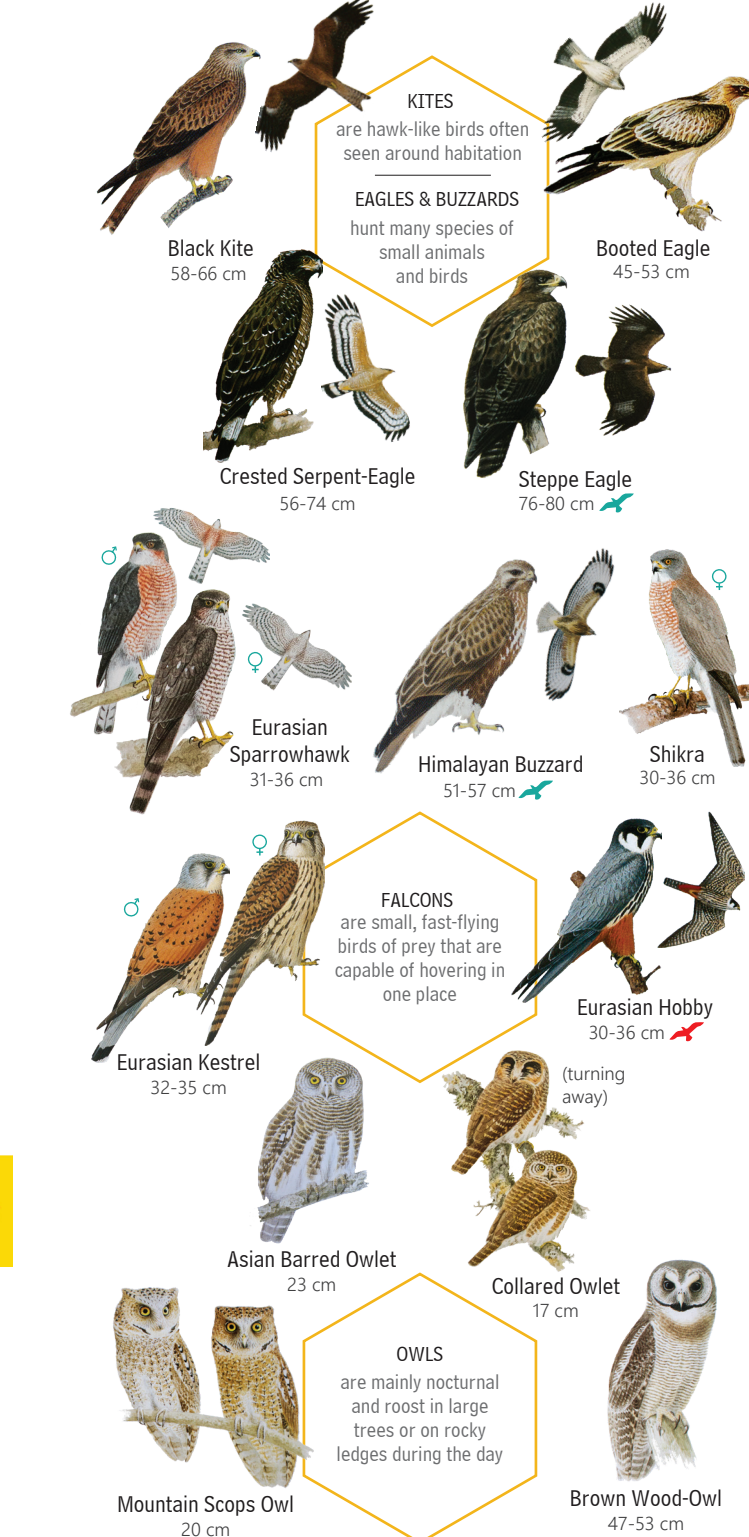
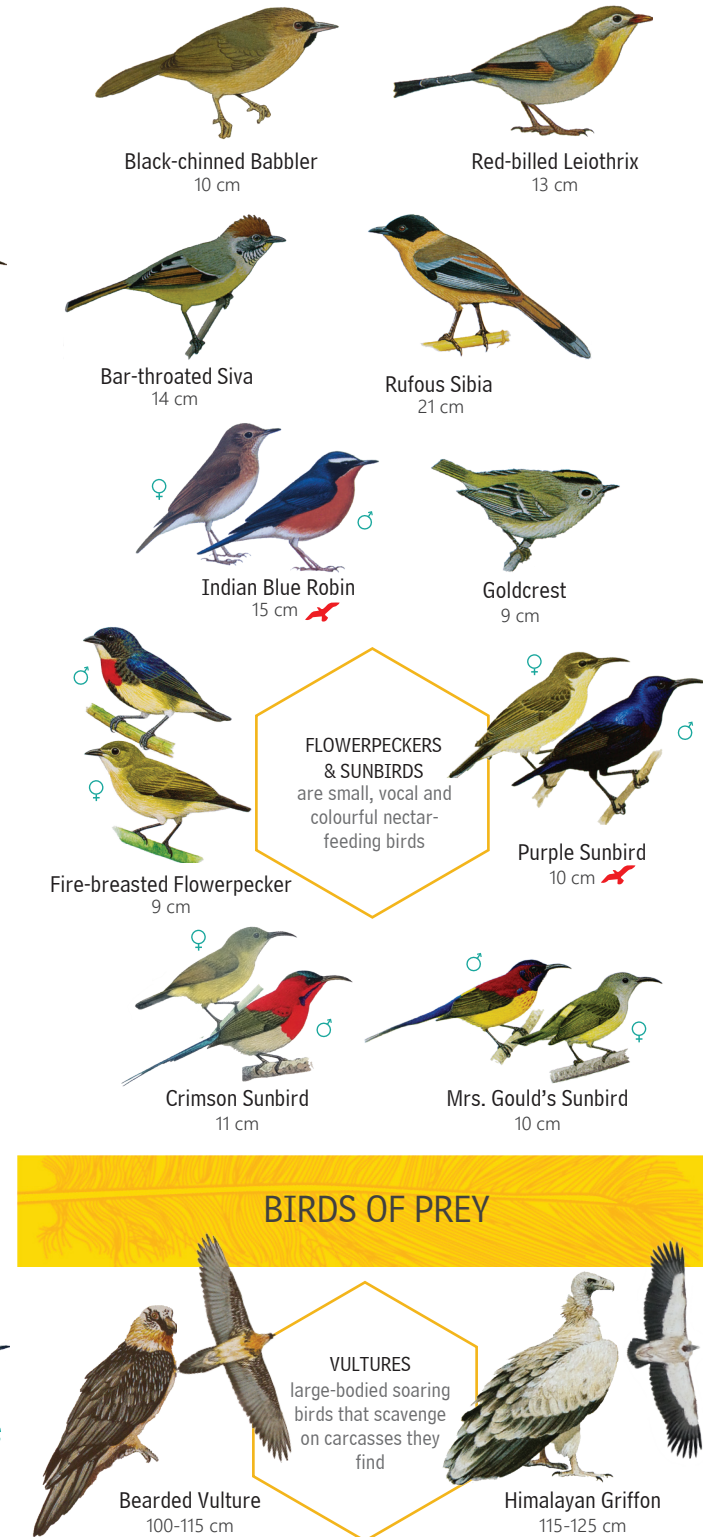
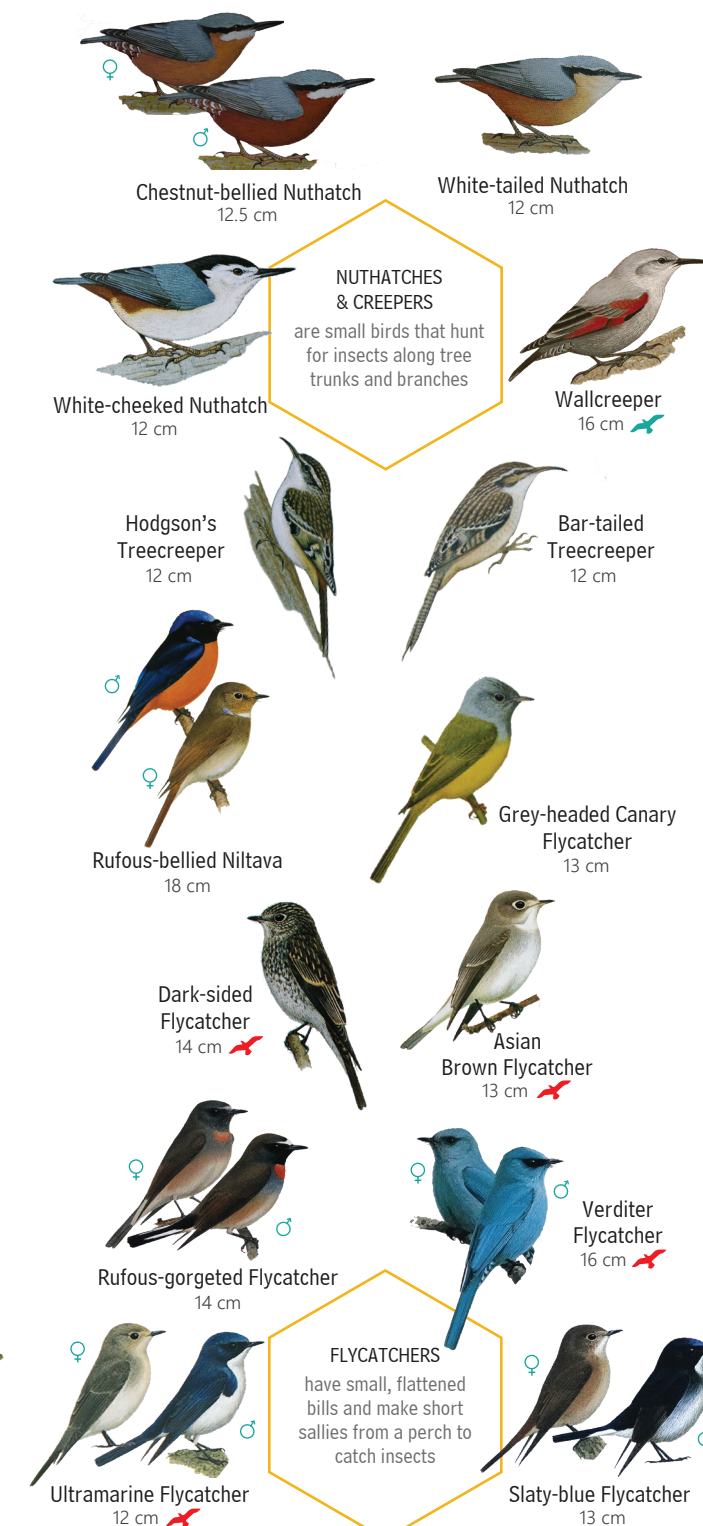
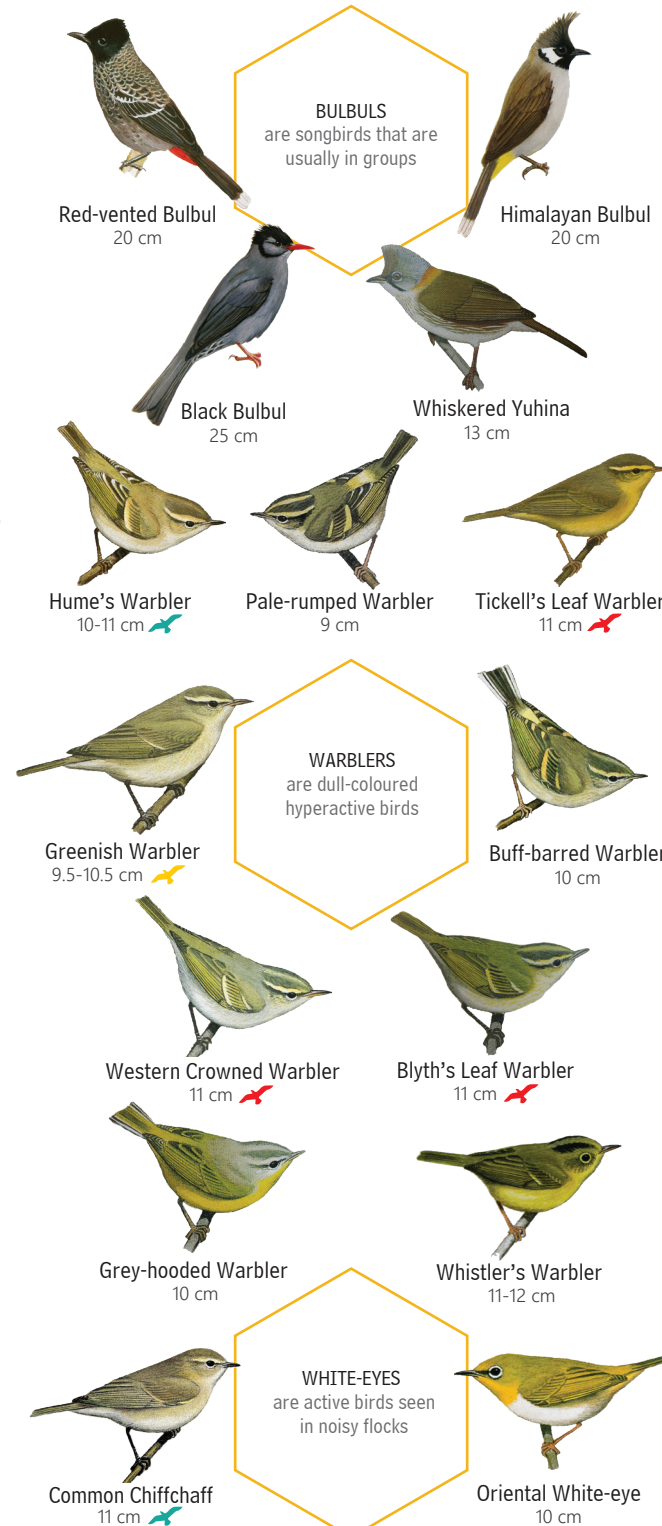
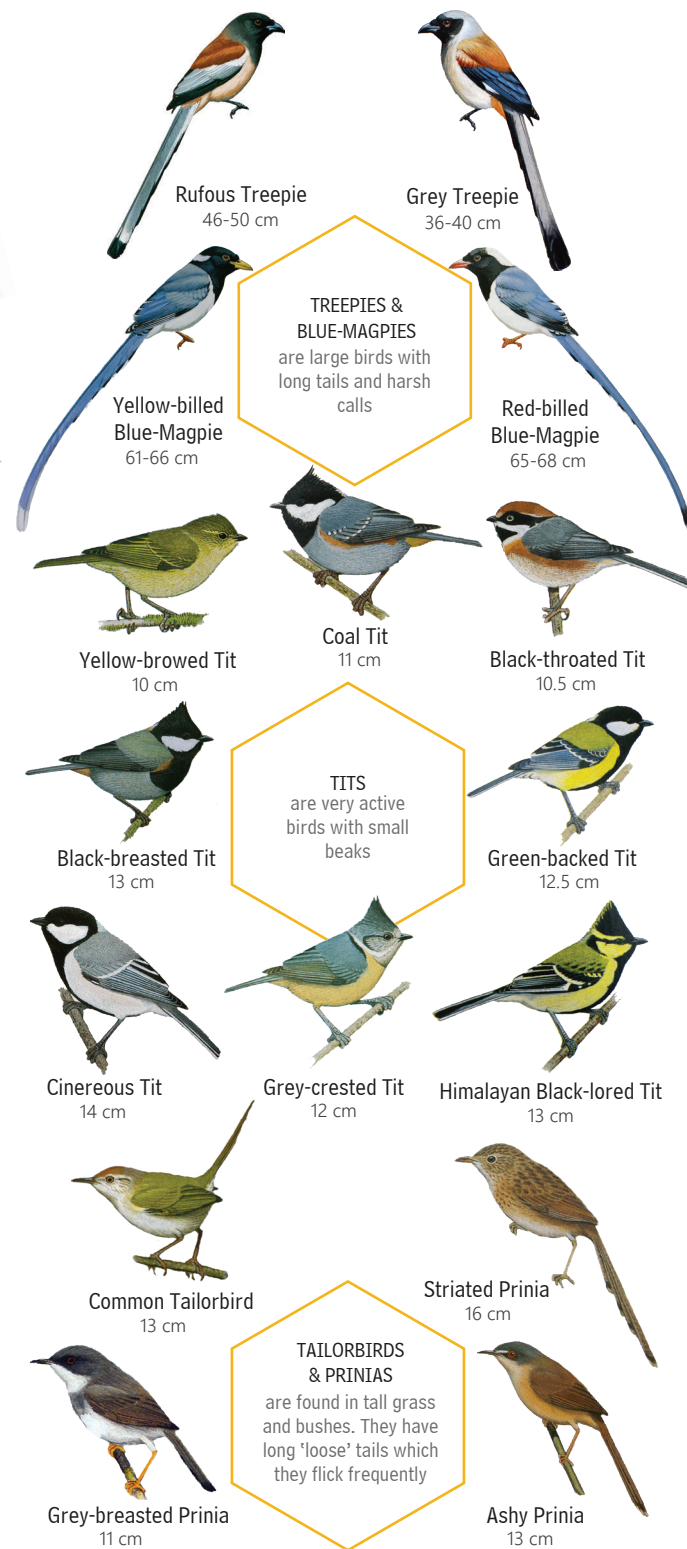
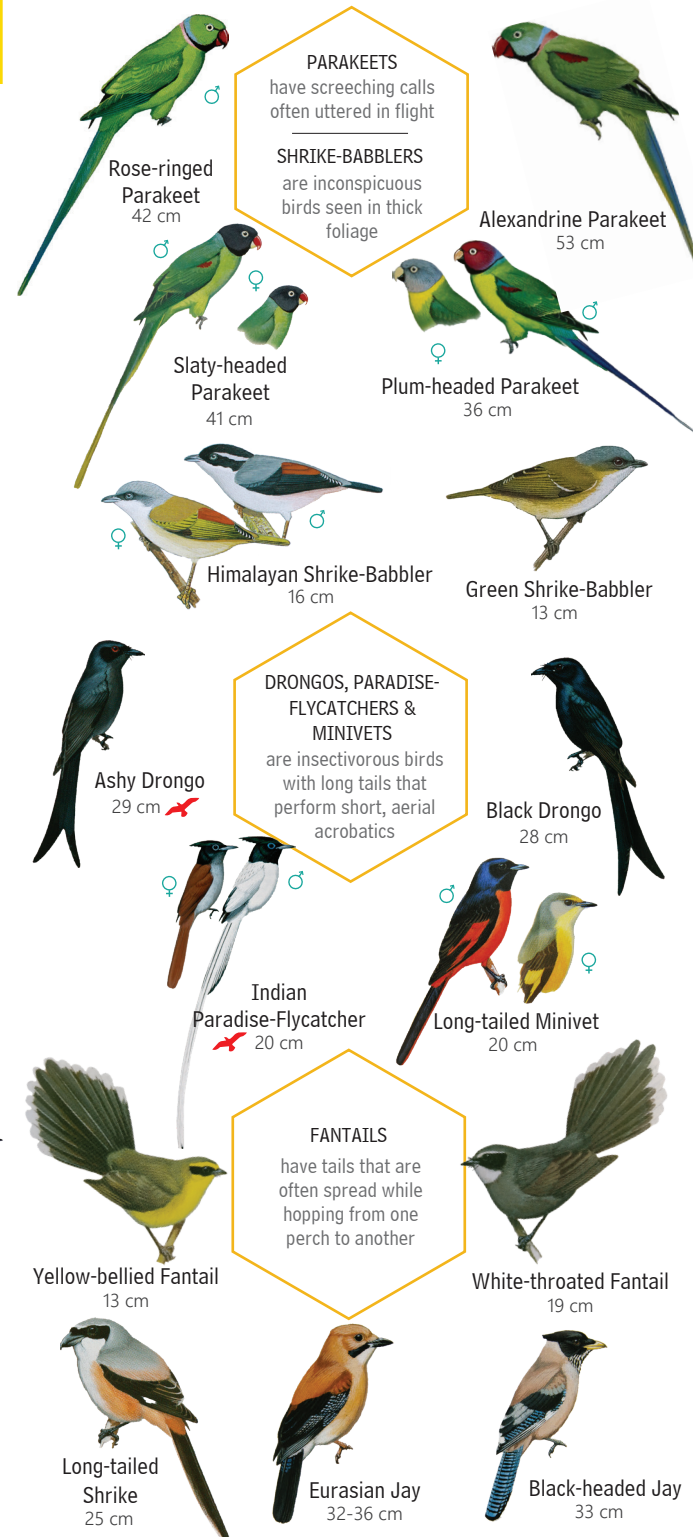
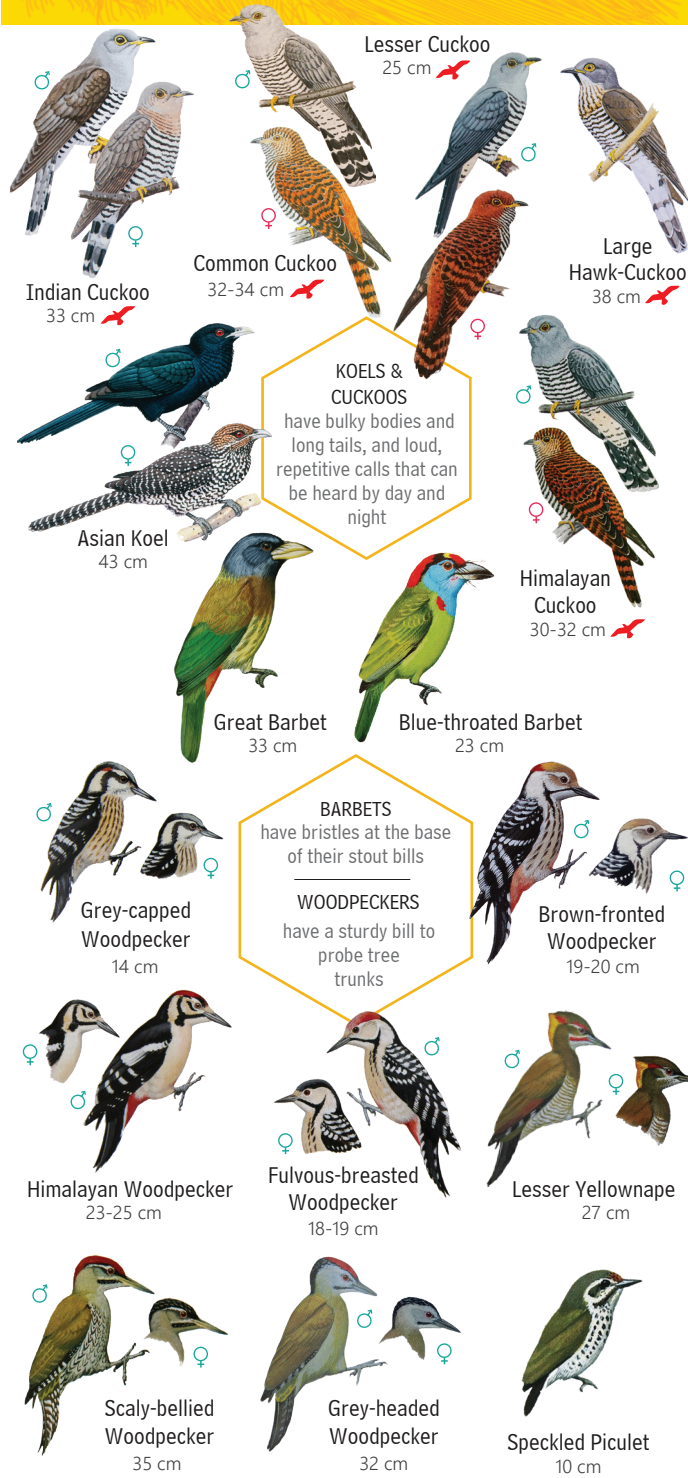
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ARBOREAL BIRDS



BIRDS OF PREY

OWLS

are mainly nocturnal and roost in large trees or on rocky ledges during the day

VULTURES

large-bodied soaring birds that scavenge on carcasses they find

FALCONS

are small, fast-flying birds of prey that are capable of hovering in one place

FLYCATCHERS

have small, flattened bills and make short sallies from a perch to catch insects

WHITE-EYES

are active birds seen in noisy flocks

TAILORBIRDS & PRINIAS

are found in tall grass and bushes. They have long 'loose' tails which they flick frequently

FANTAILS

have tails that are often spread while hopping from one perch to another

WOODPECKERS

have a sturdy bill to probe tree trunks

BARBETS

have bristles at the base of their stout bills

WARBBLERS

are dull-coloured hyperactive birds

TREESIES & BLUE-MAGPIES

are large birds with long tails and harsh calls

BULBULS

are songbirds that are usually in groups

PARAKEETS

have screeching calls often uttered in flight

SHRIKE-BABBLERS

are inconspicuous birds seen in thick foliage

DRONGOS, PARADISE-FLYCATCHERS & MINIVETS

are insectivorous birds with long tails that perform short, aerial acrobatics

FLOWERPECKERS & SUNBIRDS

are small, vocal and colourful nectar-feeding birds

EAGLES & BUZZARDS

hunt many species of small animals and birds

KITES

are hawk-like birds often seen around habitation