

This guide covers 137 birds found in the high altitude (4500 - 6000 m) desert of the Indian Trans-Himalayan region, ie, the districts of Lahaul and Spiti in Himachal Pradesh, and Leh and Kargil (Ladakh) in J&K. 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 Ladakh are Tsokar, Tsomoriri, Pangong and Hanle, some of which are breeding grounds of the endangered Black-necked Cranes. Several migratory ducks and waders may be seen in Spiti and Ladakh 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 and Griffons) to smaller and fast moving falcons (Eurasian Hobby and Peregrine Falcon).

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; medium sized thrushes and mynas, to small wheatears, accentors and seed-eating finches and sparrows. This also includes birds like redstarts, chats, shrikes and rollers which may perch low in a bush, but find their prey (small insects/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 and tits which feed on insects among leaves of trees and shrubs. Orioles prefer the tops of trees while wrens may be seen around shrubs near water.

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

FEMALE   Birds that have been recorded from Ladakh but not from Spiti

Size indicates the length of the bird from beak tip to tail tip;  indicates breeding plumage.

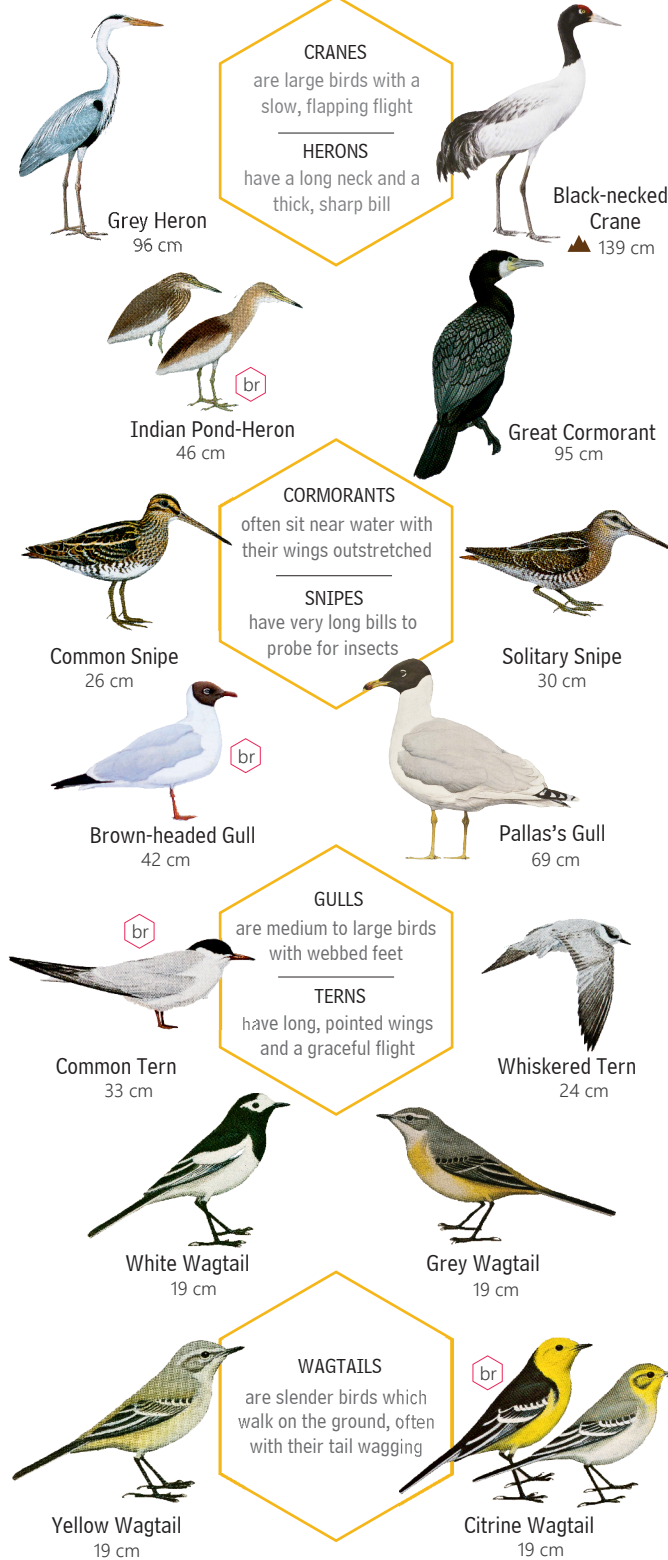
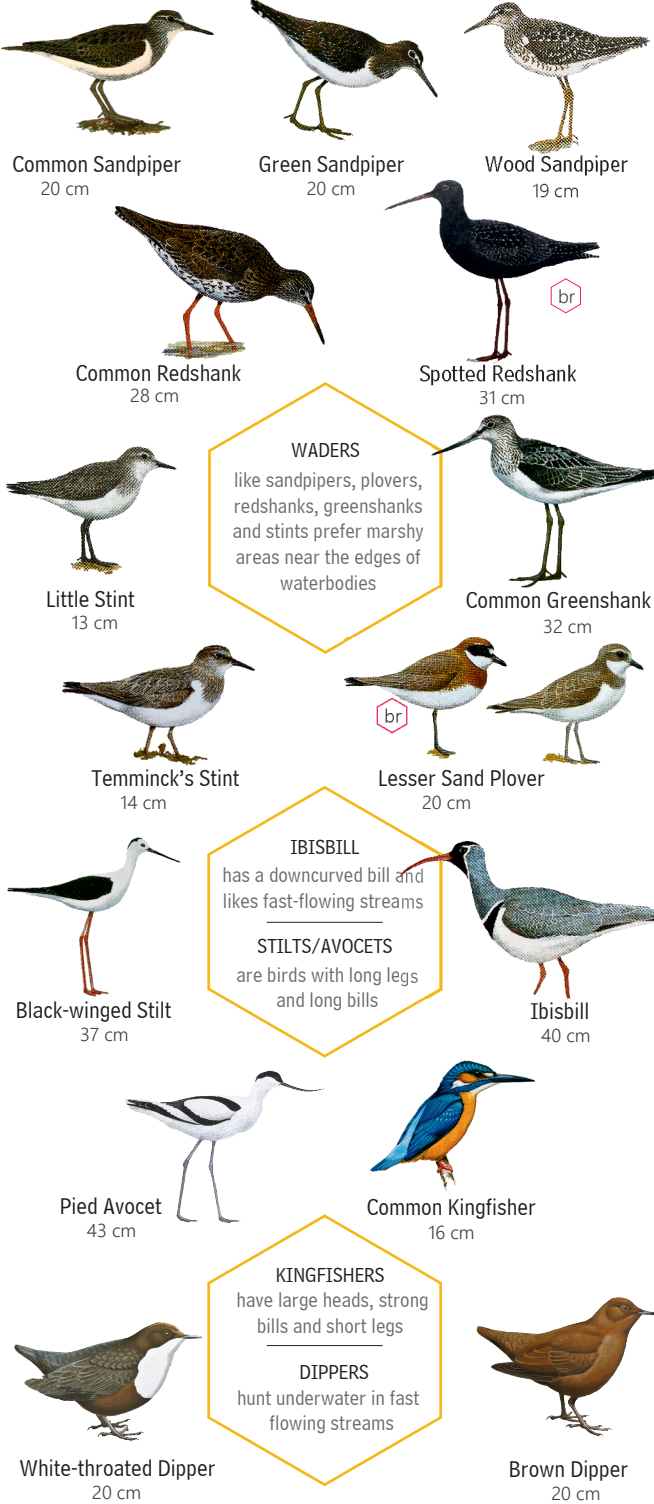
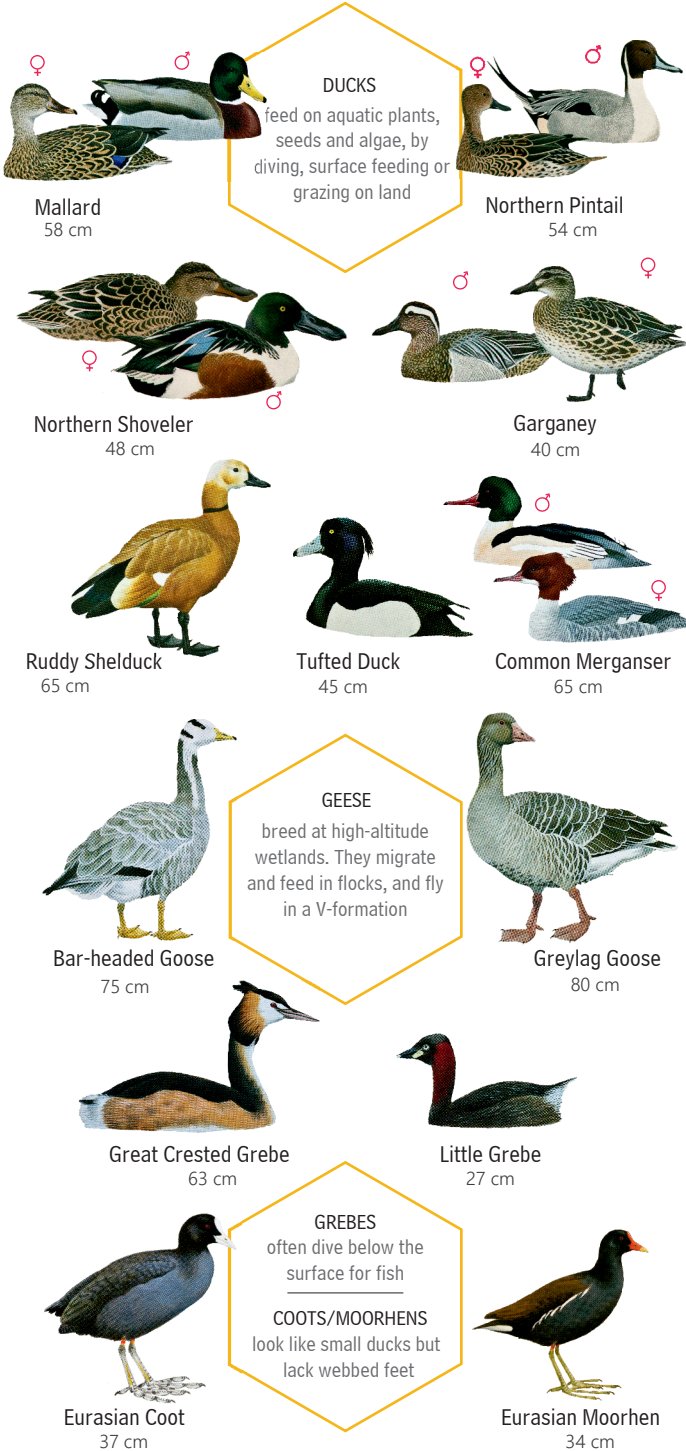
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BIRDS of SPITI and LADAKH

Birds of Spiti and Ladakh - a pocket guide to 137 birds of high altitudes

a pocket guide to 137 birds of high altitudes

WETLAND BIRDS



BIRDS OF PREY



GROUND FEEDING BIRDS

