

Clean up Drive Helps Bird species Return to Mumbai After 80 Years!

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Last spotted in Mumbai in 1939, this year, the Great Bittern made a long-awaited comeback in the economic capital.

Clean-up drives help the environment and also restore the natural beauty lost to decades of urban development. In the case of Mumbai, a clean-up drive has brought back a rare bird after 80 years! Last year, we brought you the story

of how a beach clean-up resulted in the endangered Olive Ridley Turtles nesting on a Mumbai beach. And this time, nearly ten months later, a Great Bittern was spotted in Charkop, in Mumbai's Kandivali. The Great Bittern (or Eurasian bittern) belongs to the heron family of birds. These birds prefer living in the thick vegetation surrounding water bodies because they mainly feed on amphibians and small mammals, and reptiles such as crabs, shrimps, molluscs, frogs and shrimps. *They are also very shy, which is why you will spot them, if you are extremely lucky, in reed beds.*

Sources: Sudhir Gaikwad-Inamdar/ Facebook. The birds are so shy that if they catch a glimpse of you, they are known to point their bills towards the sky and freeze, hoping to be camouflaged by the reeds around them. Last spotted in Mumbai in 1939, this year, the Great Bittern made a long-awaited comeback in the economic capital. Although there was one more [report](#) in 2017 about a spotting of the Bittern, this sighting can only be a positive sign that it wasn't a one-off chance of the migratory bird's return, but potentially, a recurring phenomenon. Speaking to The Times of India, Neeraj Chawla, a passionate birder, said, "At around 8.15 am, we saw the Great Bittern come out to sit and preen in the sun. We went on clicking pictures for almost half-an-hour as it sat there undisturbed, cleaning its feathers. We also saw a Yellow Bittern; the latter is not rare but a treat to watch, nevertheless."

Mumbai residents, as well as NGOs, have been involved in cleaning the Charkop area as a part of an eco-conscious drive.

[Source:](#)

[Mili Shetty/ Facebook](#)

In June last year, they cleared about 6,000 kg of garbage, most of which, unsurprisingly, was plastic. The mangroves, despite bearing the 'reserved forest' tag were littered with plastic as Mumbaikars joined hands to clean up the mess. "For the longest time, we had been witnessing the unnecessary destruction of this natural area through recurring fires and hacked trees and needed to do something about it. So, we came together as a group and were supported by [the] authorities to ensure this important bird habitat is protected. Mumbai's ecology continues to be under threat, and we, as citizens, need to take up the mantle for ensuring cleaner air and healthy surroundings," Mili Shetty, who was leading the drive, told the Hindustan Times. United efforts like these have resulted in the mangroves being restored, and the best proof of this is in the incredible comeback of the Great Bittern! First published by

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(The

bird is not rare

across the world - Editor)