About the Initiative

The New Forest - the IFS training campus - an area which houses the FRI and its sister institutions including the Indira Gandhi National Forest Academy (IGNFA) is also home to a rich biodiversity. These flora and fauna become a part of our neighbourhood while we are at the campus. The campus is also adorned with heritage buildings, museums, nurseries and a beautiful landscape. This initiative is aimed at making us more familiar with our neighbourhood.

The KYC (Know your Campus) initiative started by the IFS 2019 batch in this lockdown period shall come out with a campus related topic each day.

If you are a baby in the field of bird-watching, then this issue is just for you. If you are a pro you will still enjoy it.
Some of the most frequently located birds are the birds of prey which are often referred to as raptors.

Many of us have often interchangeably called predatory birds with strongly hooked bills, sharp talons (claws) and keen eyesight and hearing as BAAZ, KITE, EAGLE, GIDDH and so on.

Identifying birds of prey is not easy but here are some tips that will help you identify and differentiate among them.

Birds of prey come in a huge variety of shapes and sizes. Their size, wing shape, flight pattern and prey choice are key for identification.
LETS GET THE BASICS RIGHT

**VULTURE**
- Large Wingspan
- Head partly/fully devoid of feather
- Straight wings, Fingered at end
- Scavenging bird, Soar high in sky
- Common species found in India: Egyptian, Indian, Slender-billed, Griffon Vultures

- Wingspan: 1.8-2m
- Height: 90-110cm

**EAGLE**
- Large heffy built
- Broad wings rounded end
- Fan-type tail
- Strong bill and Flatened head
- Common species found in India: Spotted, Steppe, Tawny, Serpent Crested Eagle

- Wingspan: 1.5-2m
- Height: 60-80cm

**BUZZARD**
- Medium-large raptors
- Fingered, slight forward tipped wing
- Fan-type tail
- Common species found in India: Oriental Honey Buzzard

- Wingspan: 1.1-1.3m
- Height: 51-57cm

**HARRIER**
- Large, slender
- V-shape wing when soaring
- Long tails, Long thin legs
- Common species found in India: Marsh harrier, Pallid Harrier, Pied Harrier

- Wingspan: 1.1-1.3m
- Height: 40-50cm

**KITE**
- Fingered backward pointed wings
- Forked Tail
- Opportunistic hunters and Scavenging food habits
- Common raptors.
- Common species found in India: Black Kite, Brahminy Kite, Black-winged and Black-Eared Kite

- Wingspan: 1.3-1.5m
- Height: 50-60cm

**FALCON**
- Medium-size birds
- Long pointy and curved wings
- Swift flight
- Common species found in India: Indian Hobby, Kestrel, Merlin and Peregrine

- Wingspan: 0.6-0.9m
- Height: 30-45cm

**ACCIPTER/HAWKS**
- Medium Size, Rounded Head
- Fingered backward facing wings
- Hunt by sudden dashes from concealed perch, tall tail
- Common species found in India: Shikra, Sparrow-hawk, Goshawk

- Wingspan: 0.55-0.65m
- Height: 30-40cm
Let's Look closely at commonest of all: the Black Kite

Scientific Name  *Milvus migrans*

Most populous species of raptor, with about 6 million in the world. Most often seen gliding and soaring on thermals (hot upward wind) as they search for food.

Despite their name, they aren’t actually black although they can look black from a distance. They are really dark brown with some lighter markings. They are commonly know as Cheel.

Unlike most other raptors, black kites can form large flocks, especially during plagues of grasshopper.

In the large cities of India, they get a lot of their food from garbage heap and even steal food out of the hands of people. Black kites are also attracted to smoke and fires because they catch prey escaping the fire.

**OTHER KITE SPECIES FOUND IN INDIA**

- Brahminy Kite
- Black-Winged Kite
- Black Eared Kite

**DID YOU KNOW?**

Andean Condor is the largest flying raptor and 5th largest flying bird in the world.

New World vulture

Max wingspan- 3.3 m
Wt - 11-15 kg
Found in Andes Mountain South America and adjacent Pacific.
Feeling Sleepy then we will end with a small quiz to test how much have we learnt

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As top predators, they are important for healthy ecosystem functioning, and by protecting them many other species are safeguarded.

They play important role controlling populations of rodents and other small mammals that can damage crops and lands and transmit diseases to humans, domestic livestock and pets. They play scavenging role by clearing the decaying carcasses.

Birds of Prey are facing challenges like threat from pesticides, illegal hunting, electrocution from power lines, collision from wind turbine. Conservation of raptors is need of the hour.

Hope that now when you spot a Raptor in the campus or elsewhere you can broadly identify it. As for the black kite, it’s urban presence makes it easy to be seen. Let’s be to observe this lovely raptor the next time we see.