

लाल Munia

A book on city side bird photography

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Guide: Prasad Bokil

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Declaration

I declare that this written document represents my ideas in my own words, and where others' ideas or words have been included, I have adequately cited and referenced the original sources. I also declare that I have adhered to all principles of academic honesty and integrity and have not misrepresented or fabricated or falsified any idea/ data/fact/ source in my submission. I understand that any violation of the above will be cause for disciplinary action by the Institute and can also evoke a penal reaction from the sources which have thus not been adequately cited or from whom proper permission has not been taken when needed.

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Approval Sheet

The B.Des Project II titled “Creating a book on city side bird photography” by Arnesh Mandal, Roll Number 16U130017 is approved, in partial fulfilment of the Bachelor in Design Degree at the IDC School of Design, Indian Institute of Technology Bombay.

Guide

Chairperson

Internal

External

Date

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01 Introduction

The output of this P2 project is a book describing and explaining what city side bird photography is like and how one could get started in the same. Bird photography is an activity subsection of wildlife photography where one clicks photographs of birds. However, unlike wildlife photography, bird photography can be engaged in in the cities relatively more comfortably. The city in question is Kolkata, my hometown.

1.1 Objective

Through this project, I wanted to shed more light on bird photography, more specifically city side bird photography. It is a unique activity, even in different kinds of photography. The other objective of the project is to entice more people to engage in the activity and learn more about the city and the environment.

1.2 Motivation

A personal motivation for the project was my Dad and his love for the activity. I hoped to connect with my Dad through this and bring light to something he loves.

1.3 Background

Before this project, I have gone out to click pictures of birds once in a national park and a few times within Kolkata. From this experience, I had understood that the way one approaches photographing in a city is very different from a national park. Also, from the limited trips, I found a small but strong community around this activity.



02 Project

The first step I took was to understand bird photography by engaging in the activity myself. Over the six months, I went out 87 days to click pictures and interact with others in the field.

2.1 Primary Research

Approximately 261 hours of bird photography at different locations in the city was my primary source of research. I spent time taking pictures, interacting with photographers, and simply observing.

The second most important source was my extensive discussions with my Dad. We discussed locations, different species of birds, and how to shoot and edit. He helped me with locations, identifying birds, what kind of birds I can find and should try to spot, and how they behave. I helped him with my pre-existing knowledge of photography and editing.

As I found a community, I floated a form and conducted interviews with interested people to validate my findings and gain more insights. I gained access to a larger group of people through my Dad's friends, which he built after engaging in the activity himself for a few years.



A survey to understand why bird photography

I am trying to create something to introduce bird photography to new people. This survey is to help me do so. I will greatly appreciate any input. Thank you.

Name (optional)

Short answer text

Age

Short answer text

How long have you been engaging in bird *

☐ Less than a Year

☐ 1 year - 2 years

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Dedicated to Dr. Asit Kumar Mandal

2.2 Secondary Research

To understand what has already been done in the field, I looked up and read a few books and went through a paid online course that my Dad and others in the community found helpful.

- Wildlife Photography by Richard Bernabe.
- Capturing Wildlife Moments in India by Ashok Matindre.
- Sudhir Shivaram’s course on wildlife and bird photography.

I have looked up other books. However, I just glanced through them to get a rough idea of how they approached the idea.

I have looked at various blogs and websites for information, which will be mentioned in the reference section.

2.3 Insights

The observations and experiences led me to gain a few insights. Where is a good place to start? What kind of birds are easy to take pictures of. What kind of clothing to wear. What kind of ethics come into play. How should one behave when out on the field. I understood that smaller birds are harder to shoot, not only because they are small and hard to spot, but because of their smaller wingspan, they flap their wings faster and move faster.

Out of the stories I heard from Dad and the interactions with people, I learned that Red Munias are highly sought after and, more specifically, with kashful in the frame. I confirmed this through the form I floated. Out of 68 responses, 62 mentioned Red Munia as their favorite bird. I confirmed and gained new insights through the form, like the importance of gear. The age group engaged in the activity, etc.

There are also popular locations inside the city like Ravindra Sarobar. Which is a big park surrounding a lake and know for various migratory birds like the Asian-paradise flycatcher, Painted stork, Ruby Throat, and more. However, the location being a park in the middle of the city, we had a lot of company. People are kayaking on the lake, casual fishers on the bank, joggers. It's a lively and beautiful place to be; however, we have to be more careful photographing as we were sharing the space with others.

Luckily for us, bird photographers, most of our active hours are in the early morning when most people are waking up. Also, because there is an established community of photographers, we never found ourselves being restricted in our camera use. I once encountered a bypasser encouraging me to click his picture. After all, I do look like a child with a massive camera.

The city itself has a few mindful infrastructures and keep the birds in mind. In the Rajarhat area, there are signposts along the ECO Park road, asking people not to blow the horn as it's a place birds make nests. There is also a bird sanctuary right at the edge of Kolkata called Chintamani Kar Bird



Asian Paradise
Flycatcher,
Rabindra Sarovar

2.4 Brief

Shed light on city side bird photography and entice more people to get into bird photography.

2.5 Medium

I decided to make a book, both digital and physical, as I felt this was the easiest way to convey the information and give me an opportunity to print or showcase my Dad's and my photographs. Which would serve the purpose of showing what is possible and make people feel the beauty they are missing out on. I thought of other media such as film and blog to convey the information but ultimately decided to stick to book format to ease conveying information, convenience, and situational limits.

2.6 Tone & Content

I tried to write the book in a very direct way that posed no filter and tried to replicate how I would tell a friend a story. I incorporated my experiences to bring uniqueness to the book and maintain the tone.

In the book, I talk about how the experience of photographing birds in the city is different from national parks. There are many stereotypes with the bird



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photography activity that do not apply to the city side; I tried to talk about them.

I then talk about the city and its culture and what one can expect to find if then try the activity for themselves in the city. This then moves to Red Munia, which is a significant bird in Kolkata. As Red munias breeding season is right when it is Durga Puja season, making it perfect for Kolkata. With the bloom of Kash-ful and red munias turning red from the usual gray. It is the perfect setup. I tried to express why I and many others loved this bird and also a bit about how this bird lives its life.

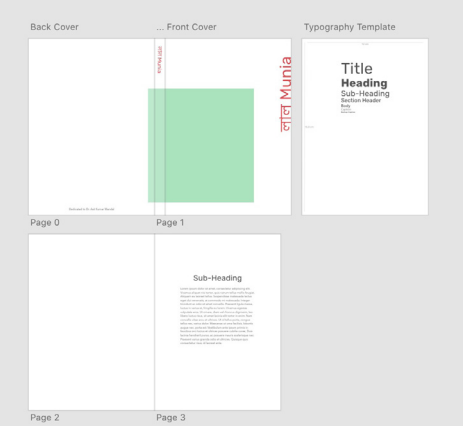
2.6 Layout & Typography

A small and wide book with a substantial neck was the aim of my book proportions. I went for a ratio of 1.4, length being 190, and width 135 mm. With around 50 pages, I had a decently sized neck to play with.

I used two libre fonts, both serif, Cormorant Garamond, for its higher contrast as the heading

font and Merriweather for the body text. I also used Cormorant Garamond because, during my photography sessions, I came across a bird named Cormorant quite often and had a unique behavior of basking in the sun. I used a type scale with 1.4 as the modifier and 10 points as the base size. I used a 4 column grid as my base to structure my content.

I kept the images as the most essential element of the book. As that is essentially what the book is about and what ultimately will encourage people to get into bird photography. I also tried using images that, in some sense, related to the chapter title, e.g., How to get started has a bird prepping to jump and fly.



03 Distribution

To start with, I will share the digital copy of the book with the community of bird photographers in kolkata and let it spread as it needs.

Other than that I will try to publish the book on pixel's website under types of bird photography.

I will also print this book but for now just for my bookshelf.

04 Summary

I spent hours to click pictures of birds, understanding the city, and interacting with people to understand bird photography. Then validate the information through secondary research and forms. With the information collected, I created a book with the objective to shed light on city side bird photography and entice people to engage in the same.

05 Reference

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