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## Jerdon's Courser: chalking out a survival strategy

Staff Reporter

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*Jerdon's Courser habitat is at Sri Lankamalleswara Sanctuary, Kadapa*

*Last count of the bird carried out in the year 2000-01 pointed to 32 pairs*

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HYDERABAD: A comprehensive Species Recovery Programme (SRP) for the critically endangered Jerdon's Courser (*rhinoptilus bitroquatus*), the last known habitat of which is at Sri Lankamalleswara Sanctuary, Kadapa is on the anvil. The SRP is being prepared by Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) and State Forest Department.

The draft SRP, outlining methods to achieve long-term survival of Courser in its natural habitat is being prepared in a workshop titled 'Conservation of Critically Endangered Jerdon's Courser' in twin cities. Given the critically-endangered status of the Courser, SRP would be approved without any hitch by Government of India, BNHS officials said.

The last count of Jerdon's Courser, which was carried out way back in 2000-01, pointed towards presence of 32 pairs of birds at the sanctuary. However, loss of scrub jungle, ideal habitat of a Courser, since then is most likely to have reduced the numbers of this rare nocturnal bird even further.

"In the SRP, we will set milestones and strive to achieve them within a time-frame. Ideally, it should be a 10 to 15 years' programme by the end of which we should be able to see some increase in the numbers.

### Funds

The Central Government is keen to fund SRP's for critically endangered species," told BNHS Director Asad R. Rahmani.

Broadly, the components of SRP will include protecting and managing the Courser's habitat, making locals aware of its significance, taking up new research to conserve and hasten its numbers, census of the habitat outside known range of Jerdon Courser and above all, declaring the Courser as the State bird.

Presently, the Indian Roller (Paala Pitta) is the State bird and BNHS officials felt that because of the bird's rarity, Courser should be made the State bird.

"Till a few years back the national animal of India was lion before it was changed to tiger. We have to work towards declaring Courser as the State bird," Dr. Rahmani said.

The workshop was organised by BNHS in association with U.K.-based Darwin Initiative and Royal Society for the Protection on Birds, U.K.

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