

Red Wattled Lapwing

Vanellus indicus

Order: Charadriiformes

Family: Charadriidae

Genus: *Vanellus*

Species: *indicus*



STATUS

Resident/ Common

MORPHOLOGY

- Size: Slightly larger than the Partridge; more leggy and with a longer neck.
- Field Characters: A familiar plover, bronze-brown above white below, with black face, breast and crown and a crimson wattle or fleshy projection above and in front of each eye.
- Sexes alike.
- Pairs or small parties, in open country near water.

DISTRIBUTION

- Resident practically throughout the Indian Empire up to about 6,000 ft. in the Himalayas and peninsular hills.
- Three races are recognized, via., the larger and doubtfully paler Sind- Balachistau aigneri, the all-India-Ceylon indicus, and the Assam-Burma artonuchalis with somewhat different head markings.

HABITS

- The Red-wattled Lapwing is our commonest and most familiar plover
- It haunts open country, ploughed fields and grazing land, and is almost invariably present on the margins and beds of jheels and tanks whence the water has lately receded.
- Pairs or parties of 3 or 4 birds are also usually to be met with in forest glades and clearings.
- They are often a source of great annoyance to the *shikari*, ruining his stalk by their uncanny and ceaseless vigilance and giving away his presence to the *sāmbhar* or other quarry grazing in the open by their frantic calls and agitated behaviour.
- They seem to be quite as active and wide awake at night as during daytime.
- Its ordinary flight is slow, attained by deliberate flaps of the wings.
- The bird alights again after a short distance, usually running a few steps on doing so.
- When thoroughly scared, however, it is capable of considerable speed and much dextrous turning and twisting on the wing.

NESTING

- The season is principally between March and August.
- The nest is merely a natural depression or scrape in the ground, unlined, sometimes margined with pebbles.
- It is situated on waste or fallow land, more or less water-logged in the rains and with deep imprints of cattle hoofs. The drying-up beds of village tanks also offer suitable sites.
- The eggs—normally 4, broad at one end, abruptly pointed at the other—are some shade of stone or grey-brown in colour, blotched with blackish.
- They, as well as the newly hatched downy young harmonise with the soil to perfection and it is difficult to locate the eggs or chicks even in a circumscribed area except by patiently watching the movements of the parents.
- Both sexes guard the young assiduously and launch fierce attacks upon other birds and mammals straying into their proximity