



Great Indian Bustard *Ardeotis nigriceps* घोराड

Critically Endangered Species

Size: M- 122 cm F - 92 cm

Filed Character: A heavy ground bird reminiscent of a young ostrich. Deep buff above finely vermiculated with black, white below with broad black gorget on lower breast. Conspicuous black-crested crown. In flight the white outstretched neck and underparts, black crown and gorget, and a large whitish patch near tip of wings prominent. Sexes alike, female smaller. Pairs or parties, on open plains and about cultivation.

Distribution: In past it had its refuge throughout the Indian Union (excepting W.Bengal and NE India) south to Karnataka, Pakistan but since last two decades its distribution range has shrunk rapidly. It's a resident and local migrant species.

Habits: Affects open sparse grass and scrub plains country interspersed with cultivation. usually 3 or 4 loosely together, but scattered droves of 25 to 30 recorded. It is a good runner and heavy in take-off, but once launched flies strongly with steady rhythmical flapping of the broad wings. Narrowing of its habitat due to spread of cultivation and persecution by shikaris has reduce the species to near extinction.

Food: Grains and shoots of various crops, locusts, centipeds, lizards etc.

Call: A bark or bellow - something like *hook*. Male polygamous. When in puffed-out strutting display with drooping wings before his hens, utters a deep, far-reaching moaning call.

Nesting- Season - Undefined, chiefly March to September. **Eggs** - a singleton, rarely two, drab or pale olive-brown, faintly blotched with deep brown. Laid in a shallow depression at base of a bush. Only the female incubates.

Photographs by: © Devesh Gadhavi

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