

**STATUS OF THE CRITICALLY ENDANGERED INDIAN COURSER
(*Cursorius coromandelicus*) IN THE NORTHERN PROVINCE OF
SRI LANKA**

**Chaminda S. Wijesundara^{1*}, Dilan Chathuranga², Saumya Wanniarachchi³,
Nuwanthika Perera⁴, Tharangi Hettirarachchi¹, Supun Galappaththi¹,
Asela Weerawardhana¹, Gayani Weerakoon¹
and Packiyathan Rajkumar⁵**

¹Department of Zoology, Faculty of Science, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka

²Department of Zoology, Faculty of Science, University of Ruhuna, Sri Lanka

³School of Agriculture, Food and Ecosystem Sciences, The University of Melbourne, Australia

⁴Oklahoma Biological Survey, University of Oklahoma, USA

⁵Wetland Conservation Society, Jaffna, Sri Lanka

*chamindaw@sci.pdn.ac.lk

The Northern Province has a great diversity of habitats, which attract a large number of birds, both migrant and resident. The Indian Courser (*Cursorius coromandelicus*) is a rare resident bird species in Sri Lanka where it is considered critically endangered, even though globally it is classified as a least concern species. In Sri Lanka, it is found in the arid zone belt, mostly the coastal area extending from south of Mannar to the Jaffna Peninsula. The objective of the present study was to determine the status of the Indian Courser in the Northern Province. The distribution and abundance of this species were assessed using data collected from 2014 to 2018 on waterbirds of the Northern Province. The point count method was used to determine abundance, while binoculars (8 × 40, 10 × 42) and a spotting scope (25 × 50) were used for direct observations. Monthly counting was carried out between 0630-0830 h and 1530-1830 h. A total of 20 individuals were recorded from Vidathaltivu in Mannar and Delft Island in Jaffna: eight individuals from Vidathaltivu and 12 individuals from Delft inhabiting very dry barren plains and grassy patches. Anthropogenic activities that disturb these birds were not observed in either area. On Delft Island, they were recorded at a considerable distance from human settlements. Our findings reveal an extremely restricted range for this species in the Northern Province with very low abundance. The areas where this species was recorded are potentially very good avitourism destinations, given the extent of bird habitats and the presence of other rare and very rare bird species. Therefore, special attention should be given to protecting, monitoring, and conserving this species.

Keywords: Critically endangered, Delft Island, Indian courser, Northern Province