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### Calcutta Weather

**Temperature**  
 Min : 22.00°C (+1)  
 Max : 32.70°C (+1)

**Rainfall** : 0.00 mm  
**Relative Humidity**:  
 Max : 97.00% Min : 43.00%  
**Sunrise** : 5:43 AM  
**Sunset** : 4:59 PM

**Today**  
 Mainly clear sky. Maximum temperature likely to be around 32°C.

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## Yes, the birds have landed! Reward for lake warriors

**Sanctuary Santragachhi**

A STAFF REPORTER



The warriors of Santragachhi Jheel received their first reward on Thursday morning — specks in the horizon that soon turned into a flock of Lesser Whistling Ducks in a languorous fly-past before landing on a clean sheet of water.

Birding enthusiast Prosenjit Dawn, who counted around 60 ducks in the flock, said it was a big relief to see the winged guests make themselves comfortable in the cleaned-up portions of the lake. "A few ducks had come and sat on the hyacinth over the past two days, but they didn't stay more than 10 minutes. Today's flock stayed put," he told **Metro**.

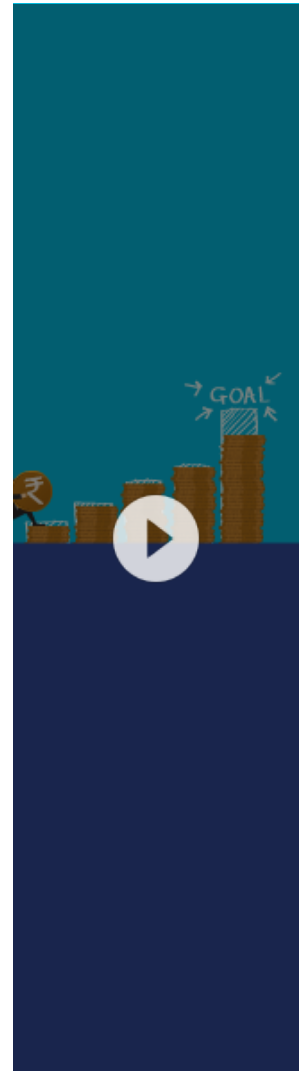
The first group of 17 birds arrived at 7am. The rest touched down around 10am. "When I went there again at 5.30pm, I could hear their synchronised tweets," said Dawn, whose home is a 10-minute walk from the lake.

For former cricketer Arun Lal, one of those behind the citizens' initiative to save the lake as a winter habitat of migrant wildfowl, the sight that greeted him on Thursday wouldn't have been any less satisfying than the first four off his bat in a big match.

Lal has been a regular at Santragachhi since the cleaning of the lake began with funds, manpower and equipment entirely mobilised by a group of nature lovers. "As citizens, we have a responsibility to do something to conserve nature," he had said a week ago.

Fellow activist Mudar Patherya said the arrival of the birds was the "best news of all" for nature lovers after nine days of toil.

Given the state of the lake until a week ago and the forest department's failure to start removing the hyacinth, they had feared that Santragachhi Jheel would not be able to host the wintering ducks this year.



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The transformation after only nine days of a concerted citizens' campaign invited plaudits from grateful nature lovers. "Arjan Basu Roy (of Nature Mates-Nature Club) has good news for us this morning from Santragachhi. About 60 Lesser Whistling Ducks have landed and settled in the cleaned portion of the lake, marking this as the day we started getting rewards for all the effort that has gone in to clean the *jheel*," veteran birder and conservation activist Sumit K. Sen wrote in the online forum Bengalbird.

What if more flocks come in before the cleaning is completed? "While that (the arrival of 60 ducks) is extremely good news, it also puts additional pressure on the clean-up teams' effort because now the days of continuing the cleaning are numbered," Sen said.

Patherya lauded the voluntary assistance of various companies and individuals in speeding up the work. "The backhoe payloader provided by Quippo has been a godsend. Hindustan Engineering, which has its plant not more than 20 feet from the water's edge, has given a tractor and deployed some men," he said.

Arjan of Nature Mates said the target for cleaning the entire lake had been advanced to November 15.

That should ensure the soldiers of Santragachhi don't lose the battle this year. But as they remind themselves often, winning the war for the lake's future is the biggest challenge.



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