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HP on guard as 1.4k birds found dead

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Shimla: After more than 1,400 migratory birds were found dead till Saturday due to an unexplained cause in the Pong Dam area of Kangra district in Himachal Pradesh, the local administration now has suspended all tourism activities in the reservoir's precincts. Wildlife authorities have sent samples taken from the carcass of the birds for testing at the High Security Animal Disease Laboratory (HSADL) in Bhopal to ascertain the cause of death.

On December 29, the field staff of the Pong Dam lake wildlife sanctuary was ordered to search the entire area for dead birds. As many as 421 migratory birds were found in Majhar, Bathari, Sihai, Jagmoli, Chatta, Dhameta and Kudhara areas of the wildlife range at Dhameta and Guglara area of Jawali Beat in Nagrota. On subsequent days, more birds were found. Kangra deputy commissioner-cum-district magistrate, Rakesh Kumar Prajapati, in orders issued under Section 34 of the Disaster Management Act, 2005, said no human and domestic livestock activity would be allowed in around a one-km periphery of the Pong Dam reservoir till further orders. The area has been declared as an

Bird flu scare in Jaipur after crow deaths

Even crows were found dead at Jai Mahal lake on Sunday, adding to fears that a strain of avian influenza (bird flu) virus has hit the state capital. At least 252 birds have succumbed so far across Rajasthan, prompting the animal husbandry and forest departments to jointly send teams to districts and set up a state-level control room on Sunday. So far, at least 100 crows have died in Jhalawar, 72 in Baran, 47 in Kota, 15 in Pali, seven in Jodhpur, and seven in Jaipur. The government has sent samples of the carcasses to a laboratory in Bhopal for examination. Principal secretary (animal husbandry) Kunji Lal Meena said, "Deaths occurred due to this virus were mainly reported among crows and the majority of cases were from Kota and Jodhpur division." While no poultry death has been recorded so far, the administration has already begun preventive exercises, claimed the department.

"Over 75 samples have been sent from various places for testing. The situation isn't alarming but we are vigilant, ensuring this virus doesn't enter domestic animals," animal husbandry department additional director Bhawani Rathore said. TNN

Alert Zone. Further 8 km area around it is the Surveillance Zone, in which all departments are keeping a strict vigil on bird deaths.

"As the possibility of disease cannot be ruled out at the moment, in order to prevent any further spread, if it is found to be contagious, preventive measures need to be taken in and around 10 kms of Pong Dam reservoir as per set protocol," Prajapati said.

Principal chief conservator of forests (wildlife)-cum-chief wildlife warden Archana Sharma said most of the dead birds are bareheaded geese, other species have also

been affected. She said division forest officers (wildlife) of all districts have been asked to be on alert to check deaths of migratory birds in wetlands under their jurisdiction. In February last year, around 1,15,761 birds of 114 different species were recorded at Pong Dam lake. These included 1,04,632 migratory water fowl of 80 species, 10,377 resident water birds of 30 species and 1,292 birds of 24 local species. The population of flagship species of Pong Dam lake, bareheaded geese, showed 63% increase from the year 2018-19, when the total count was 29,443, as compared 49,496 recorded this year.