

Wildlife club members rescue injured teal from Hooghly banks

Wounded wing on mercy flight

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A male lesser whistling teal, a small brownish duck that winters in lower Bengal, was found injured and shivering by Sayan Tripathi and Aditya Ghosh on Thursday afternoon, on a sandbank by the Hooghly, in Burdwan's Purbasthali.

The rescued duck was handed over to the Calcutta Zoological Garden's veterinarians, for treatment and resuscitation, on Friday.

Had it not been for the members of Jungles, a nature and wildlife club of the city, the bird could well have ended up as dinner for predators like the jackal or even raptors like the osprey that stalk the area.

Junglee secretary Raja Chatterjee said on Friday that a team of seven members was busy conducting a waterfowl census by boat near the sandbank, known as Kamalnagar Char, where the ducks had congregated this winter.

"We had finished our count of about 2,000 lesser whistling teals," recounted Chatterjee. "Sayan and Aditya got off the boat and inched close to photograph some birds. When they were about a hundred metres away, the birds took flight, but Sayan and Aditya saw something struggling near the edge of the water."

On realising it was an injured duck, the two young Jungles picked it up and found its right wing and feet badly bruised. Their boatman advised them not to leave the duck behind. "He said jackals often swam across to prey on the birds at night and an injured one had no chances of survival," Chatterjee said.

By Friday afternoon, the teal had travelled all the way to Alipore, where zoo director S.K. Chatterjee gladly "admitted" it. If hospital reports are any indication, the teal should recover well in time to join the flock that flies back to the Himalayan foothills, where it breeds in summer.



The injured duck at Alipore zoo. Picture by Pabitra Das