

TAKING WING

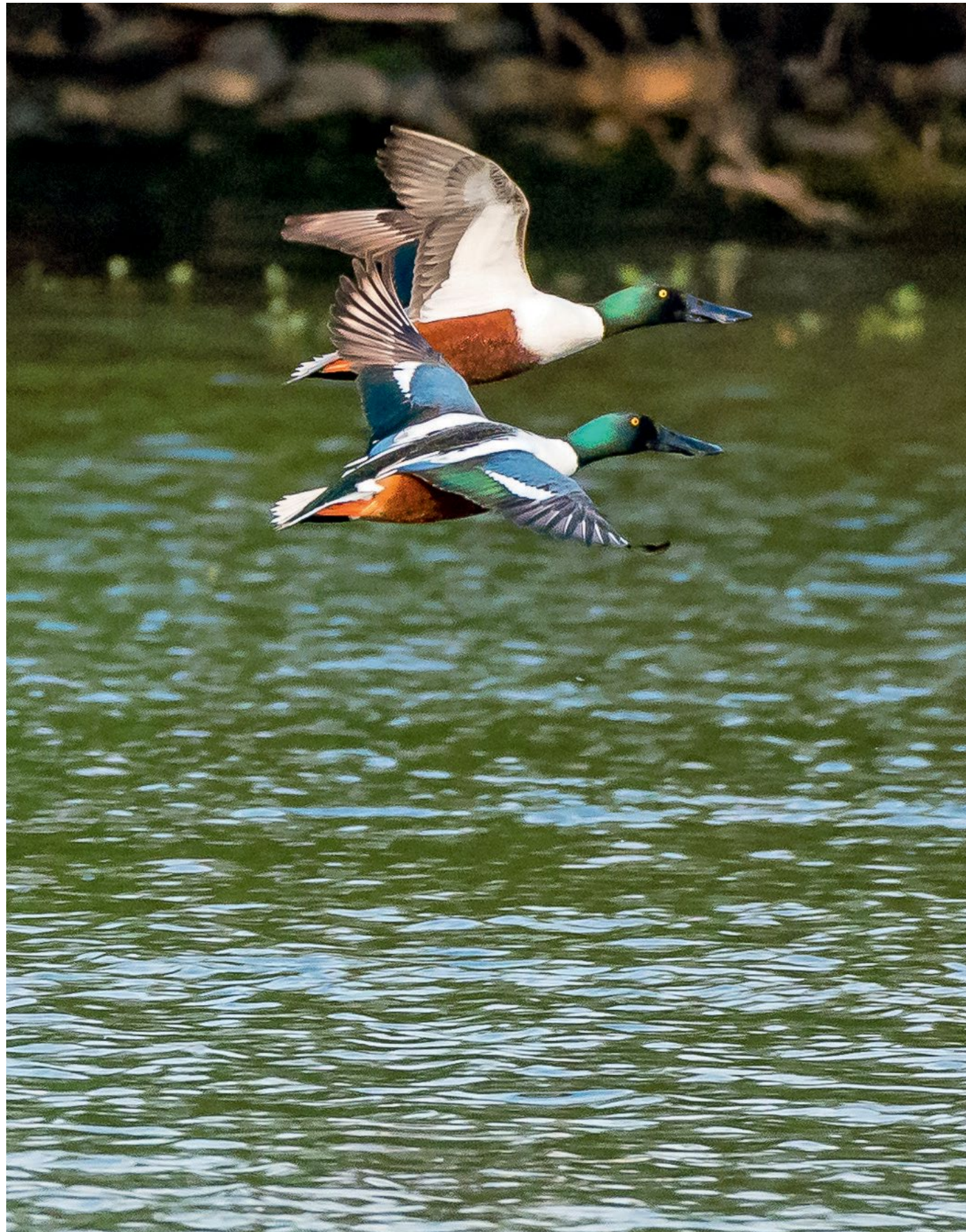
Bird-watching is a great way to destress. Here's a list of birding destinations just a short drive from DLF5

BY BINDU GOPAL RAO

With its serene vistas, DLF5 has an amazing landscape that has been a haven for not just nature lovers but a variety of birds, too. The COVID-19 lockdown has been great for nature, and birders across the country have been sharing tales of backyard or balcony birding. If that piqued your interest, here are some hotspots that make for a quick getaway from DLF5 condominiums.

DLF GOLF LINKS, GURUGRAM
Our very own oasis of green, set against the backdrop of the Aravalli Hills, is a rolling landscape of 200 acres. With unique outdoor experiences like The Meadows, The Sculpture Garden, The Woodlands, The Palmerie and The Sacred Grove, home to over 25,000 trees, The Sanctuary at DLF Golf Links has over a hundred species of birds as its native and visiting residents. Some of the species like

the grey francolin, white-breasted waterhen, black-crowned night heron, laughing dove, rose-ringed parakeet, large grey babbler, red-vented bulbul, and Oriental magpie robin, are regulars here. The bar-headed goose from Siberia, the jacobin cuckoo from Africa, common pochard from Eurasia and bluethroat from Europe are seasonal visitors. A walk around the block here promises you close encounters with these chirpy guests!



SULTANPUR NATIONAL PARK, GURUGRAM

Located on the Gurugram-Farukhnagar Road, the Sultanpur National Bird Sanctuary has an ancient lake within its sprawling 265-acre campus. This is where several species of birds are often sighted, including those that migrate from Siberia, Europe and Central Asia. Records indicate that 250 species of birds call it home during the peak winter season. There are four towers erected within the property to facilitate bird-watching. Look out for the European roller, Eurasian wigeon, tufted duck, rosy starling, western crowned warbler, white-eyed buzzards, northern shoveler, common teal, ferruginous duck and Eurasian coot.

ARAVALLI BIODIVERSITY PARK, VASANT VIHAR, NEW DELHI

A botanical park with over 240 medicinal plant species, the Aravalli Biodiversity Park has varied flora and fauna. There are 20 forest communities in the park with unique grass and herbs, a tropical rainforest as well as a conservatory of bulbous and tuberous plants that make the biodiversity a favourite among the birds. The 699-acre land is home to black-breasted redstart, yellow-footed green pigeon, plum-headed parakeet, golden-backed woodpecker and grey hornbill, red whiskered bulbul and ashy prinia. Some of the rare birds sighted here are the black eagle, Eurasian eagle owl, honey buzzard, streaked weaver and orange-headed thrush.

SURAJPUR WETLAND AND BIODIVERSITY PARK, GREATER NOIDA

With over 230 bird species recorded, this wetland has seen about 82 water birds, 99 woodland birds and 49 grassland birds. This urban wetland in the Yamuna River basin is home to spot-billed duck, lesser-whistling duck, cotton pygmy goose red-crested pochard, ferruginous pochard, bar-headed goose, comb duck,

greylag goose, common teal, northern shoveler and gadwall. The sarus cranes, species of storks, herons, cormorants and water peafowl are also seen in the season at the 761-acre Surajpur Wetland. The Dadri Wetland, which is 15km from Surajpur, also attracts many migratory birds and if you have time, you can easily visit both, when you are here.

BASAI WETLAND, GURUGRAM

This wetland in lesser-known village of Basai in Haryana is a birder's paradise and has been recognised as an Important Bird and Biodiversity Area (IBA) by BirdLife International, a bird conservation organisation of global

fame. This site is home to over 280 species of migratory and endangered birds, and spreads over 250 acres of lush land. This is where you can see the grey-headed swampphen, cattle egret, black bittern, cinnamon bittern, yellow bittern, yellow-bellied prinia, grey-headed lapwing, watercock, and greater flamingo. The critically-endangered white-rumped vulture and red-headed vulture have also been spotted here. The wood sandpiper, smoky warbler, moustached warbler, common grasshopper warbler, water rail, Baillon's crane, great bittern, water pipit, citrine wagtail and yellow wagtail are some of the other unique migrant species spotted here every year. **✎**

