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Sighting of Greater White Fronted Goose (*Anser Albifrons*) After 6 Years in Chhattisgarh

Himanshu Gupta[1], **Rahul Gupta***[2] **and Ratnesh Gupta**[3]

[1]*Navjeevan Cancer Hospital, Infront of Marine Drive, Chowk, Pratappur, Ambikapur, Chhattisgarh Chhattisgarh, 497001 India*
[2]*Paramount Green Energies, Karona chowk, Sadarbazar, Bilaspur 495001, Chhattisgarh, India*
[3]*AVM trading company, in front of Madhu Mishra house, Vinobha Nagar, Bilaspur 495001, Chhattisgarh, India*

Corresponding author: **Rahul Gupta** | E-mail: **rahulhobbyist00861@gmail.com**

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Abstract

The Greater White-fronted Goose (Anser albifrons), a circum-Arctic breeder with East Asian populations exceeding 250,000 individuals, winters sporadically in northern India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, favoring large waterbodies. In India, records are rare, with central sightings limited to single individuals in Maharashtra (Amravati) and Chhattisgarh (Raipur, 2019). Here, we report the first multi-individual wintering record in Chhattisgarh after a 6-year gap: three A. albifrons were observed at the ash dyke of NTPC Sipat (22° 5.64' N, 82° 17.34' E), Bilaspur district, from 28 December 2025 to 22 February 2026—140 km north of the prior Raipur site. Initial sightings on 28 December 2025 and 18 January 2026 featured the trio associating with Bar-headed Goose (Anser indicus), Knob-billed Duck (Sarkidiornis lunulatus), Northern Shovelers (Spatula clypeata), Gadwall (Mareca strepera; n=15), and Ruddy Shelducks (Tadorna ferruginea; n=50). Subsequent observations confirmed the same flock (minus one Bar-headed Goose), with birds resting or swimming amid Ruddy Shelducks. This prolonged 2-month stay indicates the site as a wintering ground, suggesting expanded passage routes through central India amid shifting distributions.

Keywords: *Greater White Fronted Goose, Chhattisgarh, Ash Dyke, Anser albifrons, Winter Migration.*

INTRODUCTION

Greater White-fronted Geese (*Anser albifrons*) are one of the few waterfowl species, and one of only two goose species with a circum-arctic breeding distribution [3]. This goose measures 66–86 cm in length. Adults of both sexes are similar in appearance, featuring a brown plumage with a distinctive white forehead patch extending from gape to gape (occasionally reaching the chin), a white-tipped pinkish bill, prominent heavy black blotches on the breast and abdomen, white tail and undertail coverts, and orange-yellow legs and feet. It is readily identified by its high-pitched honking call [7]. The East Asian population of the Greater White-fronted Goose was estimated at about 130,000 birds—comprising roughly 33,000 in eastern China (mid-2000s), 30,000 in South Korea, and 70,000 in Japan—based on mid-winter average counts from 2000–2004. However, recent data indicate substantially higher numbers in South Korea and Japan, though not in China, suggesting the current population likely exceeds 250,000 [8].

In Japan and South Korea—as in Europe—Greater White-fronted Geese forage in agricultural habitats, primarily on spilt rice, winter wheat, and improved pastures. In eastern China, by contrast, they feed mainly on Carex sp. Generally, the geese target short swards of graminoid plants at the initial stage of growth, which offer the highest protein and lowest structural carbohydrates [8].

The Greater White-fronted Goose overwinters in Pakistan, northern India, and Bangladesh, favoring expansive rivers, lakes, and reservoirs. In India, sightings occur sporadically across regions: northwest (e.g., Kachchh in Gujarat, Keoladeo National Park in Rajasthan); northeast and Gangetic plains (Uttar Pradesh to Assam, Manipur, West Bengal); and central areas (Amravati in Maharashtra, Raipur in Chhattisgarh). [1].

In Chhattisgarh state the first recorded sighting of Greater White Fronted Goose (*Anser Albifrons*) was from Raipur district in 2019 Asian Water Bird census where single individual was observed with a flock of Bar-headed goose (*Anser indicus*) [2].

MATERIAL AND METHOD

A Nikon p1100 camera and Nikon D5600 with 70-300 mm lens was used to click pictures of the birds while keeping a safe distance to keep the birds undisturbed.

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Adult Greater White-fronted Goose at NTPC Sipat Bilaspur Chhattisgarh. 18/01/26 pic-RATNESH GUPTA



Adult Greater White-fronted Goose at NTPC Sipat Bilaspur Chhattisgarh. 28/12/25 pic-RAHUL GUPTA



Adult Greater White-fronted Goose at NTPC Sipat Bilaspur Chhattisgarh. 18/01/26 pic-RAHUL GUPTA



Adult Greater White-fronted Goose at NTPC Sipat Bilaspur Chhattisgarh. 18/01/25 pic-DR. HIMANSHU GUPTA

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The bird was identified as greater white fronted goose as its white patch at bill base and dark brown-black bars on pale belly were the prominent indicators and also missing yellow eye-ring which is present in lesser White-fronted goose helped us to distinguish it from the same [7].

Six years after the previous record, Greater White-fronted Geese were sighted 140 km north of that location [2]. Observations occurred on 28 December 2025, 18 January 2026, and multiple times through 28 February 2026 along the ash dyke at NTPC Sipat (22° 5.64' N, 82° 17.34' E), Bilaspur, Chhattisgarh.

On the first date, three geese accompanied a Bar-headed Goose, Knob-billed Duck, pair of Northern Shovelers, 15 Gadwalls, and ~50 Ruddy Shelducks. The second sighting featured the same flock minus the lone Bar-headed Goose. Subsequent records showed similar assemblages.

Birds typically rested on the ash dyke or swam with Ruddy Shelducks, indicating expanded distribution and a passage route via central Chhattisgarh. Their ~2-month presence establishes this site as a wintering ground in central India.

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