

Indian Peacock, National Bird, India Gifts 5 Peacock to UN Geneva

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The **Indian Peacock** is the National Bird of India. Among the Peafowl, the male is called a Peacock, while the female is called a Peahen. It is widely recognised for its bright blue plumage, long iridescent train and eye shaped spots. The species is adaptable and commonly occurs in forests, grasslands, agricultural areas and locations near human settlements.

Why is Indian Peacock in News?

The Indian Peacock is in news after India sent five peafowls to the United Nations Office at Geneva in August 2026. The group included four blue males and one white male. India's permanent representative Ambassador Arindam Bagchi formally handed them to UN Geneva Director General Tatiana Valovaya. This was India's second peacock donation to UN Geneva after the 1981 gift sent by **Prime Minister** Indira Gandhi.

Indian Peacock

The Indian Peacock is a large, colourful, ground dwelling bird known for its adaptability, distinctive display and ecological importance. The key features of the Indian Peacock are:

- **Scientific Name:** The scientific name is *Pavo cristatus*. It belongs to Phasianidae, the pheasant family, which also includes jungle fowl, partridge, pheasant and quail.
- **Peafowl Terminology:** Peafowl is the collective term. The male is a peacock, the female is a peahen and young birds are called peachicks.
- **Appearance:** Males and females show strong physical differences. The male has a metallic blue head and neck, crest and long iridescent train with eye shaped ocelli. The female is smaller with brown plumage and slight green colouring.
- **White Peacock:** White peafowl represent a genetic colour variation and are different from albinos because their eyes retain normal pigmentation.
- **Habitat:** Indian peafowl inhabit deciduous forests, shrublands, grasslands, forest edges, cultivated fields and areas near settlements. They are especially adaptable where water sources are available.
- **Distribution:** The species is native to India and also occurs in Sri Lanka and parts of Pakistan.
- **Behaviour and Diet:** It is an omnivore that feeds on seeds, fruits, flowers, insects, small reptiles, small mammals and crops. It generally stays on the ground but roosts on trees at night.
- **Breeding:** The species is polygamous, with breeding usually linked to the monsoon. Males display their feathers to attract females and produce a loud “may-yow” call.

National Bird of India

The Indian Peacock is the National Bird of India. The key highlights related to the declaration has been provided below:

- **Declaration:** The Indian Peacock was declared India’s national bird in 1963. Its widespread presence and recognisable appearance helped establish it as a **national symbol**.
- **Cultural Significance:** The bird has strong associations with Indian mythology and tradition. Lord Krishna is traditionally depicted with a peacock feather, while Lord Murugan is associated with the peacock.
- **National Representation:** Its unique appearance makes the Indian Peacock easily recognisable and suitable for representation in official documents, publications and national imagery.
- **UN Geneva Connection:** Peacocks have been present at Arian Park for over a century. In 1981, **Indira Gandhi** sent a breeding pair from Delhi Zoo to UN Geneva.
- **2026 donation:** In August 2026, India sent five male peafowls to UN Geneva, comprising four blue and one white bird. The gesture highlighted biodiversity conservation and international cooperation.

Indian Peacock Conservation and Challenges

The Indian Peacock has strong legal protection, but habitat change, agriculture expansion and human-wildlife conflict remain important conservation concerns.

- **Protection Status:** The Indian Peacock is listed as Least Concern on the **IUCN Red List**. It is included in Schedule I of the **Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972**.

- **Habitat Suitability:** At least 19% of Kerala's area is considered suitable habitat. This could rise to 40-50% by 2050, reflecting the species' strong adaptability.
- **Agricultural Conflict:** Increasing peacock populations can create problems for paddy farmers in Kerala. Birds may damage seeds and crops, contributing to human-animal conflict.
- **Environmental Pressures:** Agriculture expansion and deforestation can push wildlife towards human dominated areas. Peafowl also thrive under dry conditions, making population trends relevant to changing climatic conditions.

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