

# **GOLDEN HEADED CISTICOLA: ENVIRONMENT**

**NEWS:** *Golden-headed Cisticola found in Mathikettan Shola National Park*

## **WHAT'S IN THE NEWS?**

The **Golden-headed Cisticola** was recently spotted in **Mathikettan Shola National Park**, Kerala, highlighting the park's **rich biodiversity and unique shola ecosystem**. This bird, typically found in **grasslands of Asia and Australia**, is an important species for ecological monitoring.

## **1. Mathikettan Shola National Park: A Unique Ecosystem**

### **Location & Importance**

- Located in **Idukki district, Kerala**.
- Part of the **Western Ghats**, a UNESCO World Heritage site.
- Plays a crucial role in **elephant corridors** and biodiversity conservation.

### **Vegetation & Ecosystem**

- **Evergreen forests, moist deciduous forests, and shola grasslands.**
- **Shola Grasslands:**
  - Found in **high-altitude regions of the Western Ghats**.
  - Characterized by a mix of **stunted shola forests** and **rolling grasslands**.
  - Support **diverse endemic flora and fauna**.

### **Biodiversity**

- **Key Mammals:**
  - **Lion-tailed macaque** (Endemic & Threatened).
  - **Gaur, wild boar, sambar, langur.**
- **Rivers: Uchillkuthi Puzha, Mathikettan Puzha, Njandar** (tributaries of Panniyar).
- **Major Tribal Group: Muthavan Tribe** (indigenous to the region).



## **2. Golden-headed Cisticola: A Rare Sight in India**

### **General Characteristics**

- Also known as the **Bright-capped Cisticola**.

- **Omnivorous diet**, primarily feeding on **insects and small slugs**.
- Recognizable by its **distinctive call**.

#### **Habitat & Distribution**

- Typically found in **grasslands of mountainous regions**.
- **Global Distribution:** Found in **Australia and several Asian countries**.
- **Distribution in India:** Previously spotted in **Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala**.

#### **Conservation Status**

- **IUCN Status: Least Concern (LC)**.
- Despite **low immediate threats**, habitat degradation in **shola grasslands** can impact its population.

### **3. Significance of the Sighting**

- **Biodiversity Indicator:** Presence in Mathikettan Shola suggests **rich grassland biodiversity**.
- **Conservation Implications:** Highlights the need for **protection of shola ecosystems**.
- **Tourism & Ecotourism Potential:** Enhances Mathikettan's importance for **birdwatchers and conservationists**.

**Source:** <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/golden-headed-cisticola-found-in-mathikettan-shola-national-park/article69173117.ece>