

# My Tiny Step... Pitter-Patter... Many Tiny Steps

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Who are we to conserve nature? On the contrary, Mother Nature has been considerate enough to conserve us, for so long. Her expanse is so vast that we are mere inconspicuous miniscule specks assigned a fortunate space within her. Hence, the question is, are we even capable of protecting her? Not really - then can we blend with her in a meaningful fashion? Yes, definitely. I found one such step to harmonize with nature- a step- from which I got much more than what I gave. In the birdbath, I found a window to happiness and satisfaction.

The first, unsure, but hopeful step, was a small water-filled shallow earthen pot placed on the compound wall. Well, there was no sign of any bird even close to it for many days- at least when I was around. Then one Sunday morning, I spotted a couple of black and white birdies (which I later learnt were white-rumped munias- *Lonchura striata*) playfully picnicking in the birdbath, much to our excitement. It became a daily routine to spot them, click them and experience a new kind of happiness.

Slowly the munias are visiting us with their families and friends and fill the air with their faint

not-too-melodious but exciting chirps. They look alike and form a well behaved charming flock. They identify, familiarize and respond to our movements. They stare at us from the tulsi plant or the branches of the neem tree, wait for us to move away and then one by one reach the bath to begin their water sport. They are attentive and stretch and bob their necks left and right in concern. They are cautious of the slightest movement. One-hush from us or one vehicle on the road- and bhurrrr-they disappear into the trees in unison-in one direction and one motion- as if they were actually one big bird. The attendance was regular and full house- about 30-40 of them- in one small birdbath.

We got wiser and got a bigger cement bath. Now the bird bath is busier than ever. It is collecting memories of many more birds of different sizes and feathers. The collage features birds which make the bath worthier - robin, bulbul, kingfisher, munias, greater coucal, crow and koel taken over the last 4-5 years. The Indian pitta in the collage was shot at the lotus pond. Recently, in the harsh summer, I have spotted the bigger birds quenching their thirst- pond heron, water

hen, black kite and brahminy kite. I have witnessed the interaction between birds - how smaller birds make way to the bigger birds obediently and also the attack between two big kites to claim the bath. Our home becomes lively, guests find it amazing and the whole experience is so full of amusement and satisfaction. Living in harmony with nature is meditation in itself...



Centre: White-rumped munia; clockwise from top centre White breasted kingfisher, Indian pitta, Greater coucal, red whiskered bulbul, Oriental magpie Robin and the kingfisher again.



Centre: Black kite; clockwise from top centre: Koel (female), pond heron, pond heron again, white breasted water-hen, crow and the brahminy kite.