European bee-eater recorded in Chennai for the first time – near the Adyar estuary

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News

A juvenile European bee-eater (Merops apiaster), a migratory bird, was seen on 11 Oct 2026 at the 'Broken Bridge' near the Adyar estuary, Chennai – the species' first recorded appearance in Chennai. R.V. Ramanan and his son Shreyas Ramanan first noticed it among two Green bee-eaters; Bharath Ravikumar and Balakrishnan confirmed it from photographs. The record was accepted on the citizen-science platform eBird. A Eurasian wryneck was also recorded at the same spot on the same day.

Key facts

Bird	European bee-eater – Merops apiaster; juvenile
Place–date	Broken Bridge, Adyar estuary, Chennai – 11 Oct 2026
Taxonomy	Family Meropidae; order Coraciiformes (kingfisher order)
Diet	Flying insects – bees, wasps; rubs off the sting on a perch
Range	Breeds in Europe & western Asia; winters in TN around Coimbatore, Tiruppur, Salem
IUCN	Least Concern

Background

- Biology: bee-eaters have slender bodies, pointed wings and long, slightly curved bills, and catch prey in flight. They are not passerines – they belong to Coraciiformes with kingfishers and rollers. India's common species is the Green bee-eater (Merops orientalis). The wryneck belongs to the woodpecker family (Picidae).
- Migration: India lies on the Central Asian Flyway. The Convention on Migratory Species (CMS / Bonn Convention) was adopted in Bonn, Germany, in 1979 and came into force in 1983; it works under UNEP; India has been a party since 1983. CMS COP13 – Gandhinagar, Gujarat (Feb 2020).
- Ecology: an estuary is a partly enclosed coastal water body where river water mixes with sea water. The Ramsar Convention on wetlands was signed in Ramsar, Iran, in 1971. eBird is a citizen-science platform run by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, USA.

Tamil Nadu link: Vedanthangal in Chengalpattu district – protected by the British as early as 1798 and declared a sanctuary in 1936 – is India's oldest bird sanctuary and became a Ramsar site in 2022. Chennai's Pallikaranai Marsh also became a Ramsar site in 2022.

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