



POP STAR POPS IN. A Filipino fan checks out a shirt with a Madonna print at the venue of her concert in suburban Pasay, south of Manila, the Philippines. Pop star Madonna made a surprise visit to two Manila shelters for orphans and street children, taking selfies with kids a day before the start of her two-night concert stint in the Philippine capital. (AP Photo/Aaron Favila)

Madonna makes surprise visits to Manila children's shelters

MANILA, The Philippines (AP) — Madonna made surprise visits to two Manila shelters for orphans and street children, taking selfies with kids a day before the pop star began her two-night concert stint in the Philippine capital.

Pictures on her Instagram account showed her carrying a baby in one arm while holding hands with a girl guiding her on a tour of the Hospicio de San Jose orphanage. At the Bahay Tuluyan shelter for street kids, she sat on a tarpaulin mat with children.

"Chillin' with my Homies at the Bahay Tuluyan Foundation Inc. giving shelter to orphans street children trafficking/abuse victims in Manila!!" Madonna captioned a selfie taken with three kids as they lay on the mat.

Officials at the shelter were told that Madonna's dancers were going to visit, but they did not find out that Madonna herself was also coming until an hour before her arrival, said Catherine Scerri, the deputy executive director of Bahay Tuluyan.

She said the children did a couple of dances before being joined by Madonna's dancers. Madonna asked the officials about the center's program and whether the children attended school, but she spent most of her 45-minute visit with the kids, Scerri added.

Indian Kashmir takes bird census at Himalayan wetlands

HOKERSAR, India (AP) — A meticulous counting of waterbirds has taken place in the wetlands and marshes of India's portion of the Himalayan region of Kashmir, which attracts species migrating from as far as northern Europe and Japan.

More than 100 wildlife officials and volunteers performed the region's second formal census, after scientists for years criticized less formal counts as unreliable.

Since last year, however, Kashmir's wildlife officials have been working as part of the global effort led by environment groups in accounting for the world's waterbirds.

"In earlier years, let's admit, it was always an estimation, a guesswork," wildlife warden Imtiyaz Lone said. "Now we're counting birds in a proper scientific way according to the internationally accepted guidelines."

Last year's census counted more than half a million waterbirds visiting 13 wetlands in Kashmir. This year's two-day count includes up to 21 wetlands. The results will be released



SCIENTIFIC COUNT. Migratory birds fly above wetlands in Hokersar, 10 miles north of Srinagar, in Indian controlled Kashmir. Waterbirds cover tens of thousands of miles every year during their annual migratory cycle. Every year an International Waterbird Census (IWC) is conducted to monitor the population of the birds around the world. (AP Photo/Dar Yasin)

sometime this month.

Experts say they expect the total number of birds visiting is declining because of habitat degradation and climate changes including more erratic rainfall.

"We're already witnessing substantial decline in the numbers. Unfavorable climate coupled with lesser precipitation this year are the major factors to this declining trend," Lone said.

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