

Nepal

Chitwan, Koshi & Phulchowki



Sunday 11 March – Saturday 24 March 2018

Leaders: David Walsh and local guides

2018 Cost: **£3,999** single room supplement **£440**

Nepal and Kathmandu: the names conjure up images of pagodas, Buddhist stupas and Hindu temples and a panorama of snow-capped Himalayan peaks. This will be Ornitholidays' 11th visit to this magical country and it is a holiday that will provide you with some unforgettable sights, sounds and experiences. Kathmandu lies in a wide valley-basin, at about 1,300m in the mid-Himalayas, and the city is an interesting mix of the ancient and modern. For a small country (the size of England and Wales), Nepal has recorded an amazing 10 per cent of the world's bird species. The Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve is one of Asia's finest wetland sites; our base has Black Bittern, Scaly Thrush and Siberian Rubythroat on its list of 'garden birds', and we will search for the beautiful Indian Courser on a nearby area of short grassland. Nepal possesses one of the world's great natural parks, Chitwan, a fine example of lowland grassland and forest, and home to the world's densest concentration of Indian One-horned Rhinoceros. On the 2017 tour we were fortunate to see Tiger, Leopard and Sloth Bear in a single afternoon! Birds in the area include Blue-bearded Bee-eater, Greater Necklaced Laughingthrush, Stork-billed Kingfisher and Red-headed Trogon. Two-thirds of our tour will be in the lowlands, but by way of contrast we will spend two full days on Phulchowki mountain which is just a short drive from Kathmandu. An impressive array of passerines here includes Himalayan Bluetail, Fire-tailed Sunbird, Black-faced Warbler and Black-throated Bushtit, and stunning views of the Himalayas are often possible, with scarlet-flowering rhododendrons in the foreground. Throughout the tour we will have the services of one of Nepal's foremost bird guides.



Indian Rhinoceros

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Days 1 to 3

We depart on a scheduled evening flight from London to Kathmandu via Delhi. We arrive in Kathmandu the following afternoon and transfer to our hotel in Thamel, a colourful and friendly shopping area close to the main city centre, where we stay for two nights.

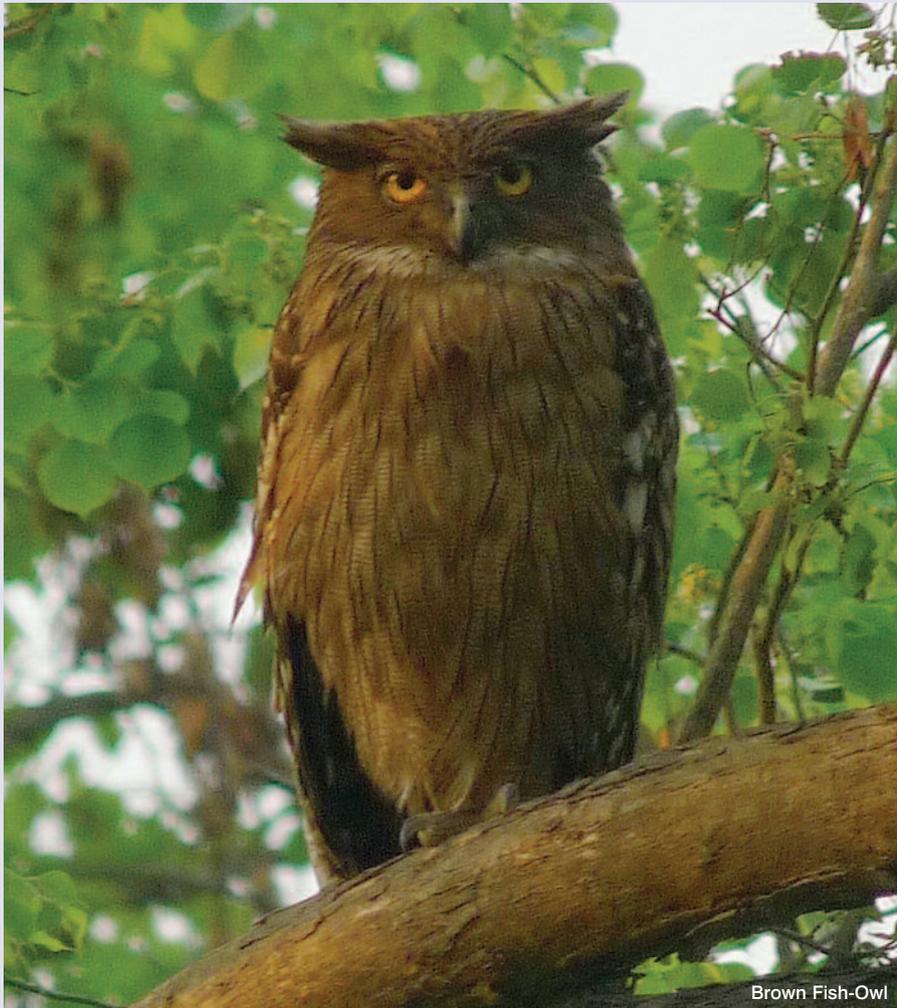
The next day we make the short drive to Phulchowki mountain; we travel in jeeps, and a track leads right to the top at over 2,500m. Having brought a picnic lunch, we are able to spend most of the day in this area (and we have a second opportunity to explore here on our final full day). Weather permitting, we will concentrate on the upper slopes on one of our visits, birding a little lower down on the other day. The variety of laughingthrushes, babblers, yuhinas, bulbuls, flowerpeckers, flycatchers, sunbirds, tits and warblers is tremendous. On the lower and middle slopes, we hope to find birds such as Kalij Pheasant, Red-billed Blue Magpie, Red-billed Leothrix, Nepal Fulvetta, Himalayan

Shrike-babbler, Black-throated Bushtit, White-throated Laughingthrush and both Green-tailed and Fire-tailed Sunbirds. If we are lucky we may find the rare and localised Himalayan Cutia, a specialist of mossy trunks. We can look up for Black Eagle and both Cinereous and Himalayan Vultures, and scan the leafless trees for Great Barbets. Amongst the commonest birds on the upper slopes are Rufous Sibia and both Grey-hooded and Buff-barred Warblers; we can keep our eyes open for Himalayan Black-lored Tit, Black-faced Warbler, Blue-winged and Bar-throated Minlas, Fire-breasted Flowerpecker, White-browed Fulvetta and Whiskered Yuhina whilst Himalayan Bluetails can sometimes be seen on the track. On a clear day there are impressive views of the snow-clad Great Himalayas, with our guide able to point out Manaslu (the world's seventh highest peak), Langtang and part of the Annapurna range.

Days 4 to 7

We leave the Kathmandu Valley and take our time enjoying the scenery along the river as we head west then south towards the lowlands.

Well-chosen stops may produce species such as River Lapwing, White-capped Redstart, and perhaps even a Wallcreeper. Our destination is Chitwan National Park, which comprises mainly sal forest and riverine grasslands, a magnificent environment with a greater variety of wildlife than any other area of Nepal. Over 480 species of birds have been recorded here, and we can expect to see nearly one third of these, as well as many mammals and reptiles. Red Junglefowl and Indian Peafowl will be searching for food on the jungle floor, while Oriental Pied Hornbills glide overhead. Crested Serpent Eagles and Grey-headed Fish Eagle hunt in and around the forest, while Red-naped Ibises and Lesser Adjutants feed on the marshy margins where we also hope to find Himalayan Rubythroat, Spotted Bush Warbler, Chestnut-capped Babbler and Brown Crake. In the forest, we should find a variety of woodpeckers, drongos, cuckoos, minivets, parakeets and perhaps mouthwatering species such as Chestnut-headed and Blue-bearded Bee-eaters, Greater Necklaced Laughingthrush or Red-headed Trogon. The grasslands have their own important birdlife,



Brown Fish-Owl



Siberian Rubythroat

Outline Itinerary

Day 1	Depart London
Days 2-3	Kathmandu
Days 4-7	Chitwan National Park
Days 8-11	Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve
Days 12-13	Kathmandu
Day 14	Depart Kathmandu, arrive London

Party Size

Maximum of 10 clients.

Accommodation

The accommodation we use is normally the best available in the area. We use one of the best lodges just outside Chitwan National Park, with each room having en suite facilities. At Koshi Camp the tents are permanent and are walk-in safari style; each has its own bathroom attached.

Transport

By coach, jeep, zodiac and elephant.

Includes

All flights, meals, accommodation, transport, entry fees, services of the leaders, airport taxes and tips.

Gradings

 Good/Tented

 300

 Warm to Cool

 Low

 Special

 Relaxed

 Excellent

 Moderate

 Scheduled



Tiger

including Bengal Bush Lark, Slender-billed Babbler, Indian Grassbird and White-tailed Stonechat. A boat trip on the Rapti river may produce Citrine Wagtail, Rosy Pipit and Stork-billed Kingfisher. We look for mammals both during afternoon jeep rides and on an elephant safari. We are sure to encounter good numbers of Indian One-horned Rhinos, whilst other species include Wild Boar, Sambar, Spotted and Hog Deer, Rhesus Macaque and Grey Langur Monkeys. Tiger, Leopard, Sloth Bear, and Gaur are all present as well, and seen from time to time by the lucky ones! Butterflies are many and varied with fascinating names such as Common Mormon, Peacock Pansy and Great Eggfly (we recorded over 40 species on the 2017 tour). We stay in our comfortable lodge just outside the park for four nights. These should be truly outstanding days.

Days 8 to 11

It is a daylong journey through the 'terai' from Chitwan to Koshi. We pass through many villages and towns that give a unique insight into the Nepalese way of life. By making an early start we aim to reach Koshi Camp by late afternoon, where we stay for four nights; we are sure to receive a warm welcome. Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve is situated in the far eastern corner of Nepal, close to the country's southern border with India. The grounds of our camp have been developed into a haven for wildlife; on the ponds, we can expect to see Black Bittern and Bronze-winged Jacana, and we have a good chance of seeing a Siberian Rubythroat either here or nearby. Taiga Flycatcher, Scaly Thrush and Blue-throated Barbet are other possibilities in the garden. As at Chitwan, the night sights and sounds are magical; we can expect to hear cuckoos and nightjars and see both Spotted Owllet and Brown Hawk-Owl, as well as Black-

crowned Night Herons and Indian Flying Foxes as they leave their daytime roosts. We spend two mornings exploring the local area from a bund which protects the arable land from flooding; wetland birds include Grey-headed Lapwing and Black-headed Ibis, whilst Striated Grassbird and Smoky Warbler are found in the reedy fringes. The trees, bushes and long grass are home to an array of birdlife including Swamp Francolin, White-rumped Vulture, Red-necked Falcon, Streak-throated Woodpecker, Whistler's Warbler and Black-throated Thrush; if we are lucky, we may find the local pair of Brown Fish Owls. On one morning, we drive to an area of short grassland adjacent to the Koshi river; it may be necessary to cross by silent zodiac to an otherwise inaccessible island in search of Indian Courser, Sand Lark, Small Pratincole and Pallas's Gull. Near the barrage across the river, we may be fortunate and see some of the endangered Gangetic River Dolphins that live here. This region is the last refuge of the wild Water Buffalo in Nepal, and we may also see wild Asian Elephant, Indian Grey Mongoose, Golden Jackal and Bengal Fox.

Days 12 to 14

This morning we reluctantly leave Koshi Camp and make the 90-minute drive to Biratnagar Airport, from where we catch our return flight to Kathmandu, with Mount Everest often visible to our right. We take a city tour this afternoon, and we expect to visit a Hindu temple as well as a Buddhist stupa. On our last full day, we return to Phulchowki where, with spring migration in full swing, the birds are likely to be rather different from those on our first visit. Our final night in Nepal is spent in Kathmandu. In the morning, we transfer to the airport for our return flight to London which arrives in the evening.