

ORNITHOLIDAYS' TOUR TO BHUTAN
Birds and Buddhism

10 - 23 March 2010



Leader: Tony Pym

ORNITHOLIDAYS TOUR TO BHUTAN

Birds and Buddhism

10 to 23 March 2010

A Personal Diary

Wednesday 10 March

The group met at Heathrow Airport at the appointed time of 0850. Our small party was complete, on time, and the check-in at the new Terminal 5 easy and efficient with plenty of British Airways' desks open.

Our flight was scheduled for 1150 and after the security checks we had time for breakfast. We boarded and were underway on our exciting adventure to the Kingdom of Bhutan. First stop though, would be India and this first leg would take just over eight hours of flying to reach Delhi.

Thursday 11 March

We touched down on time at 0125 in the early morning. The immigration facilities were surprisingly good as we were the only plane being checked through. After collecting our luggage we entered the arrivals hall where Prem, from our local ground handlers, was waiting. He would take care of us in Delhi and I knew him well from previous trips. By the time we had arrived to check-in to our first hotel it was nearly 0300. Prem had arranged an early morning birding excursion, which we diplomatically put back to a more pleasant time of 0830 – we were tired and did need some sleep after all!

At 0830 a specialist bird guide named Balraj was waiting for us. The location today would be Sultanpur, a walled bird sanctuary, consisting of a wetland, with paths around, and scrub and light woodland at its edges. But, firstly, the group had to experience Delhi's traffic and the bustling life here in India. There was a kind of organized chaos with Delhi's traffic; cars, bikes, motor cycles, tuk-tuks, all vying for a traffic lane with no signals, horns being blown constantly, whilst negotiating around the dogs and cows that wandered freely. People were literally everywhere you looked, and shops sold all manner of goods, usually from the same premises! For the first-time visitor it is an experience not forgotten, an eye-opener to everyday life in the subcontinent.

The journey should have taken an hour, though our journey to Sultanpur took twice that. Our walk took us around the perimeter of the reserve. We had passed the ubiquitous scavenging Black Kites and House Crows of the capital but now our first birds were in the binoculars and the scopes. On the lake were hundreds of ducks, predominantly Northern Shoveler and Northern Pintail but also Eurasian Wigeon, Common Teal and the occasional Spot-billed Duck. Two stately Common Cranes were a surprise, as the species is a winter visitor and is not the commonest of the cranes in India. Black-headed Ibises and gaudy Purple Swamphens fed at the lake's edges.

As we walked on, colourful Green Bee-eaters swooped out from the trees chasing insect prey, Eurasian Hoopoes flew ahead of us, and Black Redstarts, that typically quivered their tails, hopped around on the ground often in close company of other chats, Indian Robins and Oriental Magpie Robins. In the trees we could study Greenish Warblers and another of the leaf warblers, Chiffchaff, but these here were dingy and duller than ours in the UK, and were of the Siberian form, *tristis*.

After a late lunch at the park's restaurant we headed into the city's traffic to return to the hotel. We called into a photographic shop on the way, as we had been told we would need more photos, under the rapidly changing visa regulations, and these would be required when we returned to India from Bhutan.

We agreed to an early dinner this evening so that we could retire to bed early, as we had a transfer for the airport in the early hours of the morning. All agreed that the food at the hotel was just fabulous, especially for four on vegetarian diets – just so much choice, and beautifully presented.

Friday 12 March

With early morning calls raising us at 0245, everyone was bleary-eyed as we met at 0315 and headed for the airport. The check-in for our Drukair (= Dragon Air) flight opened at 0400. We were the first in the queue so we were able to reserve window seats on the left side of the aircraft, that would give us good views of the Himalayas on the journey.

The plane left on time, the flight direct to Paro in Bhutan (most flights are via Kathmandu, Nepal). As we crossed into Nepalese airspace the snow-capped peaks of the mountains were impressive and the cameras came into action. It was quite some approach into Paro, as the aircraft negotiated two deep valleys, the view each side of the plane was of mountainside, to drop down onto the long level runway. Paro's terminal building, built in traditional Bhutanese style, did look grand. We queued to show our pre-arranged entry visas, a process that went efficiently and smoothly.

In the arrivals hall our local guide, Kipchu, was waiting. He was typical Bhutanese, polite and smiling. He led us to our bus where we met our driver, Wangdi, and we boarded for the journey to town. The Paro Dzong, a prominent ancient fortress and monastery, dominated the valley. The fields were cultivated, many terraces lining the hillsides, and the fruit trees of peach and apple were beginning to bloom. The houses were built of wood, mostly of three levels, and had extravagant portals and corners, most painted brightly. Many had murals on the outer walls of animals like lions, tigers, dragons and mythical birds (*Jatshaung*, the *garuda* that eats poisonous snakes). We were told the paintings of phalluses gave protection from evil, and were linked to one of the stories of an eminent lama.

Our birding began at a small marsh, just outside Paro. A Woodcock took flight (here a snipe would have seemed more likely) but the best bird, a real beauty, was a little further along the main river, an Ibisbill. We found three Ibisbills, along the rocky shoreline. We had just arrived in the country and already, within an hour, we had one of the key birds right in front of us; a species many dream of seeing.

Plumbeous Redstarts danced over boulders in the river, Oriental Turtle Doves were common garden birds, and Grey-backed Shrikes perched on the tops of shrubs. The distinct nasal call 'chaow' had us turning around to see hundreds of Red-billed Chough flying in silhouette against the mountains.

We drove, following the line of the river, through a small village. On the mountainside, sitting precariously was the Tiger's Nest, another *dzong*. Originally built in the 17th century, at the site of a cave where a renowned guru meditated, it is now the most well known of the Bhutanese monasteries by the outside world.

The road ended at another fortress, Drukyel Dzong, though this one was in ruin. Sometimes, it is worth birding the perimeter track, but today there was too much wind and the trees were swaying. We walked the main trail, one that leads for days to the upper pastures and is used by yak herders. A few birds were seen here, including our first Yellow-billed Blue Magpies, a most striking member of the family, and we found a large flock of laughingthrushes, a mixed group of White-throated and Red-headed. A White-collared Blackbird, a regular bird of the Himalayan region, put in an appearance also.

We drove back to our small hotel to check-in to our rooms. Tea and coffee was offered and was warmly welcomed as we sat and chatted in front of an open fire. It was late afternoon, the sun was setting, and it had become noticeably colder. We met for dinner early evening, and called the birdlog – the Bhutan list was underway!

Saturday 13 March

I had heard of a birding site close to Paro, a high pass in the mountains, so discussed with the group a change to the itinerary. Today, rather than visit the Paro Dzong I offered a drive into the mountains to try for high altitude birds. There were a few I had in mind, particularly the pheasant species.

All agreed to the plan, so we set off early at 0500 for the two-hour drive. We needed to be there early morning, just after sunrise. It was dark when we left, so some took a nap on the journey. The road became steeper and narrower, with many more bends. We passed stands of Blue Pine, Silver Fir and Hemlock and large showy rhododendrons. The signs were good, as four male Kalij Pheasants were seen at the side of the road but they were only the precursor to turning a corner to see a large number of pheasants feeding under

the trees in the early morning light. We counted 15 Blood Pheasants and, best of all, a cracking male Himalayan Monal. What an incredible bird, with iridescent feathers of green, copper, purple, then add a cinnamon tail and a topknot on his head – this was one of life's best birds!

We continued higher, up now past the major tree line, to where White-winged and Collared Grosbeaks flew in parties between the scrub and scattered trees. Green-backed, Rufous-vented and Grey-crested Tits were still to be found at this height and Sandra found a Red-headed Bullfinch, our only one of the tour.

At the top of the pass we were at 3,880 metres (more than 12,700 ft.). The altitude difference certainly meant we needed to walk slowly. At the summit there was a surprise in store as Kipchu and I had organised breakfast! Two of the trekking cooks from our ground agent in Bhutan had camped overnight at the top of the pass so as to prepare our breakfast. Quite extraordinary, that we were in the Bhutanese mountains being served juices, hot porridge, cereals, eggs and toast whilst sitting at a table with chairs, all the cutlery, napkins and so on. We could look around and see the snow-capped peaks, with Jomolhari standing proud at 7,316 metres (over 24,000 ft.) to one side. This mountain is the residence of one of the Jomo goddesses and forms the border with Tibet. It has been climbed only once.

During breakfast, flocks of Snow Pigeons flew past at eye level and two birds pointed out by Sandra, very close to our breakfast table, were Alpine Accentors. We walked slowly downhill. Blue-fronted Redstart was expected but the next, White-throated wasn't. It's a winter visitor that stays only a few months in Bhutan. Virtually alongside it, in the same shrub, was an eye-catching Himalayan Bluetail (see taxonomic notes at end of checklist). Two more Himalayan Monals, again both males, were seen walking away through the rhododendrons.

Lunch, was another surreal affair. The catering team were waiting for us, and had set up the tables and cooking tent close to a small shrine. We could watch Spotted Nutcrackers and Black-faced Laughingthrushes whilst tucking in to fresh aubergines, and other mixed vegetables, served with rice. The whole experience in these high mountains had been marvellous...and some great birds!

We drove down to Paro during the afternoon. We were taken to a very early temple, the shrine here at Kyichu dating from the 7th century. We didn't know in advance but today was an auspicious date in the Buddhist calendar and also the first month of a new year. The monks had gathered inside and we could hear their monotone chanting, followed by the ringing of a small hand bell and the blowing of *ra-long*; the various horns included two very long metal trumpets from which deep notes emanated. We were allowed inside and monks, and Kipchu, prostrated themselves towards the image of the Lord Buddha. The Abbot sat elevated from monks who, cross-legged on the floor, were reciting *mantras*. Kipchu showed us around the temple and explained one of the most commonly used mantras, *Om Mani Padme Hum*, the mantra of *Chenrezi*, the Buddha of compassion.

Back at the hotel we welcomed the tea and coffee offered once more. Today had been unforgettable.

Sunday 14 March

We had a relaxed start to the day with breakfast served at 0715. We loaded the bus and headed towards Thimpu, the capital of Bhutan. Firstly, we stopped at the market in the square at Paro. It was colourful and a number of people had walked some distance to sell their vegetables. Kipchu pointed out the more unusual produce. (We decided against trying the *betel* that was offered, which stains the teeth red and is then spat out, to stain the floor...)

The main highway from Paro to Thimpu is the most used road in the country and offered little in the way of birding. A few Great Cormorants were on the rocks in the main river. To reach Thimpu took a couple of hours and, although a meal had been arranged for us in the city, we opted for the field-catering once more, this time the agreed meeting place was a forest's edge.

We stopped at a rockface where there were the nests of Giant Rock Bees. Through binoculars a mass of bees completely covered the nests. This was a 'stakeout' known to Kipchu and Wangdi for a particular bird, Yellow-rumped Honeyguide, and it didn't take long for us to find the bird. The species sits patiently for hours then makes a strike at a nest for the beeswax. Apparently it doesn't feed on the bees themselves but

has a digestive system able to handle the substance. A male will defend his territory of a number of bees' nests, and mates with several females who visit his domain.

The forest held few birds, though the walk was pleasant with the bus following to then collect us to go for lunch. The chosen site had a view of the river and hills, a temple was on the hillside, and a Brown Dipper was actively swimming and jumping around the rocks in the fast-flowing water. A Plumbeous Redstart joined the Brown Dipper and the pleasant song of a Blue Whistling Thrush was in the background.

As we left, and were driving slowly, we could hear that a mixed feeding flock was moving through the forest. We found Long-tailed Minivets, Chestnut-tailed Minlas, White-tailed Nuthatch, a very smart Ashy-throated Warbler and, at least ten, Yellow-bellied Fantails. Without doubt, other species went through also but the flock was hyperactive and soon passed. Above our heads, Himalayan Swiftlets raced over.

Closer to the city we came to a very small marsh. It was only some 100 square metres or so in size, had garbage in one corner and looked quite degraded in places but Thimpu and Wangdi said Black-tailed Crakes had been seen here. With everyone primed to be quiet and still with cameras ready, I tried the iPod. Great success...two crakes appeared, coming to the playback and heading straight towards us. We had excellent views of these secretive birds (see Peter's photo at end of report).

Our birdlist was now recording Himalayan Monals, Ibisbills and Black-tailed Crakes and we were still only on Day Three in Bhutan. What other goodies awaited?

Monday 15 March

We left the hotel at 0530 to reach the pass at DochuLa. The pass is at 3,100 metres (some 10,200 ft.) and can be very good for birds. We stopped at the summit where 108 *chortens* (=stupas) were built in 2004, to atone for the sin of killing the ULFA militants that had holed up in southern Bhutan.

A Rufous-breasted Accentor was seen close to the carpark and two Darjeeling Woodpeckers chased each other through the pines, whilst raucous Yellow-billed Blue Magpies made all aware of their presence. The best bird though came unexpectedly. We had stopped to check a gully (hoping for a tragopan, but no luck!) when a snipe lifted from a tiny boggy area inside the wood. Luckily it didn't fly far, so we traipsed in. I had hopes what the species may be, but needed better views. Wangdi found it again, and through the scope it was confirmed to be a Wood Snipe. I have tried for this species a number of times, even in Sichuan, China leaving at 0430 in the morning to hopefully see them at a breeding site in a high-altitude meadow. They display before sunrise, and although one of the party saw a 'lump', I could hear the bird but just couldn't see it. Now, at last, success - a difficult bird for the life list!

We were still discussing the snipe when an active bird party came through. Stripe-throated Yuhinas were the main species, but both the stunning Green-tailed and showy Mrs Gould's Sunbirds were in their company. A female Rosefinch had been photographed by Peter, which was identified later as Dark-rumped.

We stopped a number of times as we headed downhill towards Punakha. Two Great Barbets, were not seen by the entire group, but would almost certainly be seen later in the tour as they do call incessantly throughout the day. A young Rufous-bellied Eagle was better, as it sat for ages on an exposed snag in the forest. We had poor views of a Rufous-gorgeted Flycatcher but again I felt we would see more of these as we continued eastwards.

At another stopfound a tit flock that contained Black-throated, Yellow-browed, Grey-crested and Green-backed Tits, before coming across the catering team again...today it was a choice of pasta and rice dishes.

We drove through Punakha, to cross the river and drive onto dirt roads. We were trying for another special bird, one that is critically endangered. The tracks followed the line of the river but we needed to get some distance, to quiet stretches of water. River Lapwings and Ruddy Shelducks were on the banks. Unintentionally we disturbed two Wallcreepers that were on boulders, in a sandy bank; we stopped the bus to see one fly yet again. Soon we were driving past the confluence of the PhoChu ('father river') and the MoChu ('mother river'). We still had some miles to go, passing large Crested Kingfishers on the way, to finally reach a peaceful rocky-lined stretch of river. We panned with the scopes, it didn't look hopeful, so we

moved further yet again, and this time we were in luck. A large dark heron had its back to us, but it had to be the bird. It was a White-bellied Heron, a globally threatened species with a population that is small and declining. Unfortunately, this decline is projected to increase in the near future as a result of the loss and degradation of lowland forest and wetlands, and through direct exploitation and disturbance. In Bhutan it is holding its own, though to put this into context a detailed survey in Bhutan, July 2007, recorded 30 individuals only. Our bird eventually did turn around, and the views through the scopes were good.

Tuesday 16 March

We had been advised that the road into the Jigme Dorji National Park was going to be closed today for some serious road works (including rock blasting!) but if we left at 0530 we would clear that particular area before work started.

The National Park is very large, with an area of 1680 sq. miles, and provides sanctuary for the likes of Snow Leopard, Himalayan Black Bear and Red Panda. We would be entering only the boundary. The primary forest began the other side of the roadworks.

The road went past the important and famous Punakha Dzong, but we would be visiting this later in the day. We followed the MoChu as it became narrower, passing the Khamsum Yulley Namgyal Chorten, a most impressive stupa, built to the order of the nation's Queen Mother in the 1990's.

At our first stop in the national park we had a number of barbets, both Great and Golden-throated, feeding in a fruiting tree. Black-chinned Yuhinas and Oriental White-eyes soon joined them. There was plenty of activity as Himalayan Black Bulbuls came across the track in flocks, a Chestnut-bellied Nuthatch was close by, and a pair of Bay Woodpeckers hammered bark from a large tree.

Breakfast, as always, was a superb affair as the team today had hot porridge and cheese omelettes awaiting us. As we enjoyed the food after our early morning start, a good supply of raptors soared and glided over a woodland ridge; Northern Goshawk, Mountain Hawk Eagle and a Rufous-bellied Eagle, this time an adult.

We drove back into the park, stopping on seeing a party of laughingthrushes. Both Striated and Scaly Laughingthrushes were seen here and a very obliging and photogenic Asian Barred Owlet perched in the open. We drove further passing some small shacks, the farmers relying, no doubt, on subsistence farming, and finally came to a wooden barrier where it seemed there had been a minor landslide. If only we had more time. I'm sure further ahead lay undisturbed primary forest and what birds?

After lunch at the campsite we left the park. The road workers had delayed the explosions specifically for us to enjoy the area, now they would start work again. We headed towards the town, stopping at a fast-flowing stream where a pair of Slaty-backed Forktails was at home. It's always nice to see these super birds. Also, Sandra spotted a dazzling warbler in the streamside bushes, a Grey-hooded.

At another stop we had a fine Greater Yellownape, some woodpecker this one! As we drove on, a large eagle was seen soaring low, in front of the bus. We pulled up to see a Black Eagle circle, then to momentarily disappear over a ridge. But we didn't expect what happened next...it reappeared to come swooping down extremely close to us, and drop and crash through a bamboo clump only ten metres away. It rose up with an Oriental Turtle Dove in its talons. We assumed the bird had spied this potential meal but had been disturbed as the bus approached. Maybe the dove had been on a nest as a clump of vegetation was in the eagle's feet also.

We approached Punakha Dzong, stopping at convenient places for photographs. Constructed in the 17th century as a fortress it is the residence of the head abbot of the country, used for royal coronations, and holds many important relics. It is now the most important Buddhist monastery in the country. Kipchu took us across the bridge to show us around. He explained the history, described the paintings and murals, and took us into one of the inner temples where the giant statues of the Buddha were flanked by an important Bhutanese guru and the Zhabdrung, who unified Bhutan, giving the people an identity, separate from Tibet.

Wednesday 17 March

It would take all day to drive to Trongsa, allowing for the planned birding stops, so we left at 0530. An important stop would be the pass called PeleLa.

Just outside Punakha we found a skulking Rusty-cheeked Scimitar-babbler that finally showed, after some time. A flashy male Chestnut-bellied Rock Thrush perched on the electricity wires, to be joined by a Crested Bunting.

The cooks today had the tables laid and our breakfast ready, inside a traditional old house alongside the road. From here, we started the climb towards the pass but before the top we turned off into the Phobjikha Valley. Our quest was to see the Black-necked Cranes that spend the winter here - this being one of six known wintering locations for the species in Asia. Some 250 birds arrived this season from the breeding grounds in Tibet, but their return migration can be sudden, and to the day, usually 15th March! A few days back we were told that only seven birds remained in the valley. Would any still be here today? Admittedly I was a little on edge and the nail biting had started.

The crane reserve was an hour's drive from the turning. Himalayan Griffons were passing overhead, this being a reliable spot for these huge vultures, and we found a female-type Hen Harrier quartering the dwarf bamboo on one of the hillside slopes.

We drove down into the valley and, thankfully, soon were looking at cranes. Panic over, we had found a family group of four birds; two adults with two juveniles from last years breeding. The young by now looked like the adults but their heads were blotchy and not fully black. We found a further lone bird in the distance, viewable through the scope, so our tally was five.

We drove over the PeleLa, at 3,300 metres (close to 11,000 ft.), to find lunch was waiting, with a vista of the mountains all around. We appreciated the bowls of hot soup whilst watching Himalayan Griffons passing over the high ridges, and enjoyed the pizza slices whilst viewing Besra and buzzard.

We drove on towards Trongsa for the night. One last stop, late afternoon, was very productive indeed, as we found another feeding flock that contained inquisitive Rufous-winged Fulvettas, skulking Rufous-capped Babblers that gave themselves away on calls, a lone Green Shrike Babbler (photographed by Wendy), not forgetting Mrs Gould's Sunbird and there were great views of Rusty-flanked Treecreeper for all.

Our hotel was on a hillside with views over the town of Trongsa. The Chökhör Raptentse Dzong dominated the scene. Built on a mountain spur, high above the gorges of the MangedeChu, this fortress controlled the trade, from east to west and vice versa, for centuries.

Thursday 18 March

We had tea and coffee served at 0600. Our drive took us south today on the Shemgang Road that leads to Assam. There was particularly good forest though the road itself was in a poor state in places.

A Spotted Forktail was seen perched on a road marker but only to fly into deep cover. We stopped at a squalid roadside camp, constructed by the Indian workers who were here repairing the roads, as a flock of Bhutan Laughingthrushes crossed in front of the vehicle and moved through the low vegetation.

Troops of attractive Golden Langurs, with their bright cream hair, were conspicuous in the tree canopy. They are an endangered species also, again with a small population and limited range. Whilst watching these primates two Hoary-throated Barwings, an altitudinal migrant, appeared in the closest bushes.

A number of Fork-tailed Swifts passed through the valley where we had our lunch stop. We walked the quiet road and our bus followed. All saw the Broad-billed Warbler, an exceptional record of this rare resident. A well-known stakeout for (another) Yellow-rumped Honeyguide was visited and, sure enough, the bird was sitting close to large bees' nests at an overhang. A waterfall here had a Little Forktail in residence that took a while for all to see, as just on first locating it the bird flew downstream accompanied by a Plumbeous Redstart. A pair of Little Forktails bred here in 2009.

Mid-afternoon we reached a bridge over a stream. The birding was so good here that we stayed for some time. Feeding flocks came through regularly, mainly of tits and warblers (great views of Lemon-rumped for the group). Yellow-bellied Fantails were in numbers and we recorded other flycatchers like Small Niltava, Rufous-gorgeted, many Grey-headed Canary Flycatchers and, meanwhile, hundreds of Nepal House Martins were overhead.

We returned to Trongsa, stopping in the main street of this town of old wooden buildings to experience the local shops, where Wendy bought a length of some colourful cloth. We stopped to take photos of the dzong before arriving back at the hotel in the late afternoon.

Friday 19 March

Today we would be driving to Wangdue. The route would take us over the pass once more, the PeleLa. I had another site in mind for birding and we needed to be there as soon as possible after daybreak.

Coffee and tea was served at 0500 and we were loaded and underway very shortly after. We had set off in the dark, but the light and sight of the mountains in the early hours was dramatic. A Brown Parrotbill was heard calling close to the roadside, but we would come back later for this species.

The plan was to walk an old road at 3200 metres. It was no longer used, as it is now impassable for traffic due to landslides. This site was a really great find - early morning, the birds were calling, a quiet road, no traffic, snow peaks all around, mountain air and sunshine...it was magical.

A Hill Partridge was calling as we started the walk. Peter pointed out a flock of birds feeding on the ground and to my amazement they were all Altai Accentors, not only uncommon in Bhutan but here was a flock of 15. I assumed a migrating flock. At one point they flew to land in the top of the tallest of the few trees here. I tried the iPod, and played Satyr Tragopan, one of the stunning Himalayan pheasants, but the response was in the far distance. Wendy saw a White-winged Grosbeak that flew, singing its buzzing nasal song.

The group had stopped to photograph butterflies and flowers, so we were spread out along the trail. I walked around a corner to come face-to-face with three female Satyr Tragopans, right next to the path, only metres away. I beckoned the group forward but, unfortunately, all three birds decided to move - quietly and deliberately but without panic - over a small ridge and out of sight. I tried playback but these birds did not reappear. There was a response though, further along the mountainside and, this would have been from a male. This whole experience had proved the value of this birding location, which deserved more time.

We walked back to the bus. Peter showed me an image of a bird he had photographed earlier on our walk - it was a female Gold-naped Finch. Wangdi drove us to where our breakfast awaited, a few miles away. The boys had set up, the eggs were in the frying pan, and we sat down to eat looking at mountains.

We drove back to the Brown Parrotbill site. It took a while to find any and we tried different patches of bamboo (typical habitat for this species). At last, we heard one calling, which did pop out in full view. A chough called and we looked to the sky to see three passing over, still some height above us (and we were at 3,000 metres). The sun glinted off the yellow bills of these Yellow-billed (or Alpine) Choughs. In Bhutan this species is found only in the highest mountain areas.

We started the descent, birding on the way down. At our lunch stop, the woodland birds gave anxious alarm calls as a large female Northern Goshawk powered over. As we approached Wangdue the wind had picked up strength, the trees were swaying, so we headed directly to the hotel arriving a little earlier than planned but in time for afternoon tea and biscuits. We had time to relax before dinner, to take a beer or glass of wine, whilst looking over the PunatshangChu, which flowed behind the hotel.

Saturday 20 March

We left Wangdue and headed west for Paro, which would take the day. Two Wallcreepers were found soon after leaving the hotel, on a large boulder in a sandbank next to the roadside. One began singing, body pointing downwards with head held at 60° to the body.

The principal birding site on the way would be DochuLa, the pass over the mountains. We stopped a few times on the way, listening for mixed flocks, sometimes walking with the bus following to collect us. By now, we were getting accustomed to the tit species, yuhinas and the plaintive calls from sibilas. A large finch, first suspected as being one of the rosefinches, was found to be a Crimson-browed Finch. We found one male with three females that appeared to be feeding on leaves.

At our breakfast stop, Ashy Drongos sat sentinel on the treetops and two White-tailed Nuthatches performed well. In small woodland we tried playback for a Hill Partridge, which came very close indeed, but still remained out of sight. The place where we had the Wood Snipe some days back was worth a second try but no further luck, he had left.

Near the top of the pass we took lunch before continuing on our way to Thimpu. This city having the largest collection of shops in the country we stopped for any gifts that were needed to take home as presents. The road from Thimpu to Paro is usually busy, with few places for birding. We arrived at our hotel in Paro late afternoon as planned.

Sunday 21 March

It was our departure day, to leave Bhutan and fly to Delhi, India. However, the flight was at 1155 so, allowing for check-in, we still had some time for birding. After a relaxed breakfast, we checked-out and loaded our luggage and left the hotel at 0800.

We drove through Paro, following the Paro River. A flock of more than ten Oriental Skylarks were found in the ploughed fields and, at the same location as before, there were two Ibisbills; what a way to end the Bhutan section of our holiday!

At the airport we said goodbye to Kipchu and Wangdi and thanked them for all their help. Check-in was smooth, the security check thorough, and we had window seats once more. We saw the peaks of Everest (highest mountain on Earth above sea-level) and Kangchenjunga (third highest) in the clear sky. Crossing Nepal we headed to Delhi where we touched down to be met by Prem, once again. We transferred to a very nice hotel and, after freshening up, went birding to the outskirts of the capital.

Our local guide was named Gajju (short for Gajendra), a birder from the famous reserve of Bharatpur. He took us to Tuglakabad, an old fort and a site I had not visited before. Inside the walls there was a broad area of scrub where we found lots of Rose-coloured Starlings, a winter visitor to India, a number of Brown Rock-Chats, Indian Robins, Common Babblers and, best of all, a Sulphur-bellied Warbler.

We braved the traffic, and returned to the hotel.

Monday 22 March

We met for breakfast 0700 and left 0730 to go birding with Gajju. We had two places in mind; this morning would be a visit to Okhla Barrage on the River Yamuna, particularly important for the breeding and wintering waterbirds. The dominant feature of the site was a large lake formed after the creation of a barrage (=dam) on the river in 1986.

We walked the main track of the bird sanctuary. Pied Starlings and Common Rosefinches were new for us. The view of the lake recorded the usual ducks, in thousands, but in the distance were Greater Flamingos and Wendy picked out the occasional Whiskered Tern, that could be seen dipping to the water for aquatic invertebrates.

We took a trail through the marsh that led to a watchtower. From our elevated position we looked over another portion of the lake where Little and Indian Cormorants sat on posts exposed above the water level, and Wood Sandpipers, Ruff and Black-winged Stilts fed in the shallows. Two Eurasian Marsh Harriers quartered the reedbed but it was the two further raptors that looked interesting. Both were sitting on the tops of bushes; the first a Crested Serpent Eagle and the other a Steppe Eagle. Our walk back took us past singing Clamorous Reed Warblers and both Ashy and Plain Prinias.

Lunch today, for a change, was at a restaurant. It was good food, and this establishment is used regularly by visiting Westerners. Our next, and final bird stop would be at Lodi Gardens, open parkland where the birding can be surprisingly productive. Brown-headed Barbets were calling monotonously from the trees and we saw Alexandrine Parakeets very well.

We arrived back at our hotel 1700, agreeing to meet for our final dinner together later. Once more, the buffet in the restaurant was a sumptuous spread.

Tuesday 23 March

We had time to repack, enjoy breakfast as Prem came to meet us for the transfer to the airport at 1015. The airport was the quietest I have ever seen it. Sometimes, Delhi Airport can be chaotic with masses of people, both outside and inside the terminal buildings, but today all was tranquil, even no queue at the check-in. We thanked Prem for all his help and moved through Emigration. Security checks followed which were diligent and very thorough.

Our plane left on time at 1340. We had a nine and one-quarter hour flight to Heathrow and touched down in London at 1800, a little later than scheduled. Our luggage took longer than expected, which meant our goodbyes at the carousel had to be brief, as onward travelling was still involved. All that remained now was the journeys to our homes.

Acknowledgements

Particular thanks to our Bhutan guide, Kipchu, who helped finding birds, and recommending sites to visit. He was very knowledgeable on all aspects of his country - its history, people and customs - and Buddhism, the inherent way of life in Bhutan. He was only too pleased to share that knowledge with us all.

Wangdi, our driver in Bhutan, drove carefully and considerately and we had total faith in him on the mountain roads. Both Kipchu and Wangdi were always cheerful and early (whether loading the vehicle or to specific schedules).

In India, thanks to the specialist guides, Balraj and Gajju, and not forgetting Prem, of our ground operator, who handled many requests from myself and looked after the background administration for the tour.

My gratitude to Peter for his terrific photographs that have been used in this report.

To you all, many thanks for coming on our tour to Bhutan. You saw some great *birds* and learnt something about *Buddhism*, just as the tour's title announced. I hope you enjoyed your visit to this Himalayan kingdom and that your photographs, and memories, relive some of our experiences and time together. I look forward to seeing you on another Ornitholidays' adventure in the near future.

Tony Pym
Ornitholidays
29 Straight Mile
Romsey
Hants
SO51 9BB
Tel: 01794 519445
Email: info@ornitholidays.co.uk

May 2010

Itinerary and Weather

10 March	Flew from Heathrow, London
11 March	Arrival Delhi, India. Sultanpur Cloudy 30°C
12 March	Flew Delhi to Paro, Bhutan. Local birding, following River Paro to Drukyl Dzong Sunny 24°C
13 March	Mountain pass 3988m Sunny, partly cloudy, low cloud at times 15°C
14 March	Drove to Thimpu, with birding stops on journey Sunny, cloud at times during afternoon 16°C
15 March	Drove to Punakha via Dochula 3100m Sunny, partly cloudy 16°C
16 March	a.m Jigme Dorji National Park p.m Punakha Dzong Sunny, cloudy afternoon 20°C
17 March	Drove to Trongsa via Phobjikha Valley and PeleLa Sunny and bright 18°C
18 March	Shemgang Road Sunny, becoming hot, slight rain early afternoon, then bright 25°C
19 March	Drove to Wangdue via PeleLa Bright, sunny and warm 24°C
20 March	Drove to Paro via Dochula and Thimpu Warm, cloud in mountains 24°C
21 March	Local birding along Paro River. Flew Paro to Delhi. Tuglakabad Bhutan 20°C India 36°C
22 March	a.m Okhla Barrage Sanctuary p.m Lodi Gardens Very hot 36°C
23 March	Flew Delhi to Heathrow, London

Temperatures above show highest recorded during that day

Origin of names

On tour, I was asked about the following:

- *What is the meaning or reason for the name Satyr Tragopan?*

With reference to the males' two brightly coloured fleshy horns on their heads that are erected during courtship displays. *Tragopan* is from the Greek word *tragus* meaning 'goat' and Pan, the half-goat deity. *Satyrs* were Pan's companions, were semi-deities in Greek mythology, which had horns and the hind limbs of goats (here added to the name for even more emphasis). The tragopan was also a mythical, horned, purple-headed bird mentioned by Pliny and Pomponius Mela. The scientific name is *Tragopan satyra*.

- *Why monal, as in Himalayan Monal?*

Monal is from Sanskrit, one of the holy languages of Buddhism and Hinduism, and means simply 'bird' thus (the) 'Himalayan bird'.

- *Who was Hume, as in Hume's Warbler?*

Allan Octavian Hume CB (1829-1912). Theosophist, poet, and writer on Indian birds, he has many birds named in his honour. His books included *The Game Birds of India* and *Indian Oology and Ornithology*.

CHECKLIST OF BIRDS SEEN IN BHUTAN

Max no of days seen or heard Maximum 10 h=heard only	Location	Abundance scale Maximum seen (on one day)
	Pa = Paro area, with ChileLa	1 = 1-4
	Th = Thimpu area	2 = 5-9
	Pu = Punakha area, with Wangdue, DochuLa, Jigme Dorji N.P.	3 = 10-99
	Tr = Trongsa area, with Phobjikha Valley and the PeleLa	4 = 100-999
		5 = 1000-9999

SPECIES	No of days recorded	Locations	Abundance Scale	SCIENTIFIC NAME
Hill Partridge	- 3h		Pu Tr 1	<i>Arborophila torqueola</i>
Blood Pheasant	1	Pa	3	<i>Ithaginis cruentus</i>
Himalayan Monal	1	Pa	1	<i>Lophophorus impejanus</i>
Kalij Pheasant	2	Pa	Tr 1	<i>Lophura leucomelanos</i>
Bar-headed Goose	1		Pu 2	<i>Anser indicus</i>
Ruddy Shelduck	4	Th	Pu 3	<i>Tadorna ferruginea</i>
Gadwall	1	Th	2	<i>Anas strepera</i>
Common Merganser (Goosander)	3	Th	Pu 1	<i>Mergus merganser</i>
White-bellied Heron	1		Pu 1	<i>Ardea insignis</i>
Great Cormorant	6	Th	Pu Tr 3	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>
Northern Goshawk	2		Pu Tr 1	<i>Accipiter gentilis</i>
Besra	1		Tr 1	<i>Accipiter virgatus</i>
Himalayan (Common) Buzzard ¹	4	Pa	Pu Tr 1	<i>Buteo (buteo) burmanicus</i>
Mountain Hawk Eagle	1		Pu 1	<i>Spizaetus nipalensis</i>
Rufous-bellied Eagle	2		Pu 1	<i>Lophotriorchis kienerii</i>
Steppe Eagle	1	Pa	1	<i>Aquila nipalensis</i>
Black Eagle	1		Pu 1	<i>Ictinaetus malayensis</i>
Himalayan Griffon	2		Tr 3	<i>Gyps himalayensis</i>
Hen Harrier	1		Tr 1	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>
Crested Serpent Eagle	1		Tr 1	<i>Spilornis cheela</i>
Common Kestrel	4		Pu Tr 1	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>
Black-tailed Crake	1	Th	1	<i>Porzana bicolor</i>
Black-necked Crane	1		Tr 2	<i>Grus nigricollis</i>
Ibisbill	2	Pa	1	<i>Ibidorhyncha struthersii</i>
River Lapwing	5	Pa Th	Pu 2	<i>Vanellus duvaucelii</i>
Common Sandpiper	2	Pa	Pu 1	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>
Solitary Snipe	2	Pa	1	<i>Gallinago solitaria</i>
Wood Snipe	1		Pu 1	<i>Gallinago nemoricola</i>
Eurasian Woodcock	2	Pa	1	<i>Scolopax rusticola</i>
Oriental Turtle Dove	9	Pa Th	Pu Tr 3	<i>Streptopelia orientalis</i>
Snow Pigeon	1	Pa	3	<i>Columba leuconota</i>
Rock Pigeon	10	Pa Th	Pu Tr 4	<i>Columba livia</i>
Grey Nightjar	- 1h		Tr 1	<i>Caprimulgus indicus</i>
Asian Barred Owlet	1		Pu 1	<i>Glaucidium cuculoides</i>
Collared Owlet	- 4h	Pa	Tr 1	<i>Glaucidium brodiei</i>
Himalayan Swiftlet	2	Th	Pu 4	<i>Collocalia brevirostris</i>
Fork-tailed Swift	1		Tr 3	<i>Apus pacificus</i>
Crested Kingfisher	3		Pu Tr 1	<i>Megaceryle lugubris</i>
Great Barbet	3		Pu Tr 2	<i>Megalaima virens</i>
Golden-throated Barbet	1		Pu 3	<i>Megalaima franklinii</i>
Eurasian Hoopoe	3	Pa	Pu 1	<i>Upupa epops</i>
Greater Yellowthroat	1		Pu 1	<i>Picus flavinucha</i>
Bay Woodpecker	1		Pu 1	<i>Blythipicus pyrrhotis</i>
Crimson-breasted Woodpecker	1		Pu 1	<i>Dendrocopos cathpharius</i>
Rufous-bellied Woodpecker	1		Pu 1	<i>Dendrocopos hyperythrus</i>
Darjeeling Woodpecker	1		Pu 1	<i>Dendrocopos darjellensis</i>
Yellow-rumped Honeyguide	2	Th	Tr 1	<i>Indicator xanthonotus</i>
Oriental (Small) Skylark	1	Pa	3	<i>Alauda gulgula</i>
Nepal House-Martin	1		Tr 4	<i>Delichon nipalensis</i>
Barn Swallow	1		Pu 1	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>

Black Drongo	1				Pu	2	<i>Dicrurus macrocercus</i>	
Ashy Drongo	1				Pu	1	<i>Dicrurus leucophaeus</i>	
Bar-winged (Pied) Flycatcher-shrike	1				Pu	1	<i>Hemipus picatus</i>	
Grey-backed Shrike	4	Pa	Th		Pu	1	<i>Lanius tephronotus</i>	
Long-tailed Shrike	5	Pa			Pu	Tr	1	<i>Lanius schach</i>
Chestnut-tailed Starling	1				Pu	1	<i>Sturnus malabaricus</i>	
Common Myna	6	Pa	Th		Pu	Tr	3	<i>Acridotheres tristis</i>
Eurasian Jay	1				Pu	1	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>	
Yellow-billed Blue Magpie	5	Pa			Pu	Tr	3	<i>Urocissa flavirostris</i>
Spotted Nutcracker	3	Pa			Pu	Tr	3	<i>Nucifraga caryocatactes</i>
Red-billed Chough	5	Pa	Th			Tr	4	<i>Pyrrhonorax pyrrhonorax</i>
Yellow-billed (Alpine) Chough	1					Tr	1	<i>Pyrrhonorax graculus</i>
Large-billed (Jungle) Crow	10	Pa	Th		Pu	Tr	2	<i>Corvus macrorhynchos</i>
Short-billed Minivet	1				Pu	1	<i>Pericrocotus brevirostris</i>	
Long-tailed Minivet	5			Th	Pu	Tr	3	<i>Pericrocotus ethologus</i>
Himalayan Black Bulbul ²	4				Pu	Tr	3	<i>Hypsipetes leucocephalus</i>
Mountain Bulbul	1				Pu	1	<i>Hypsipetes maclellandii</i>	
Striated Bulbul	2				Pu	Tr	1	<i>Pycnonotus striatus</i>
Red-vented Bulbul	6				Pu	Tr	3	<i>Pycnonotus cafer</i>
Winter Wren	1					Tr	1	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>
Rusty-cheeked Scimitar-babbler	1					Tr	1	<i>Pomatorhinus erythrogenys</i>
Rufous-capped Babbler	3				Pu	Tr	1	<i>Stachyris ruficeps</i>
Green Shrike Babbler	1					Tr	1	<i>Pteruthius xanthochlorus</i>
Rufous-winged Fulvetta	1					Tr	1	<i>Alcippe castaneiceps</i>
White-browed Fulvetta	1					Tr	1	<i>Alcippe vinipectus</i>
Yellow-throated Fulvetta	2				Pu	2	<i>Alcippe cinerea</i>	
Chestnut-tailed Minla (Bar-throated Siva)	1			Th		3	<i>Minla strigula</i>	
Rufous (Black-capped) Sibia	6	Pa	Th		Pu	Tr	3	<i>Heterophasia capistrata</i>
Brown Parrotbill	1					Tr	1	<i>Paradoxornis unicolor</i>
White-naped Yuhina	1					Tr	1	<i>Yuhina bakeri</i>
Whiskered Yuhina	2				Pu	3	<i>Yuhina flavicollis</i>	
Stripe-throated Yuhina	3				Pu	Tr	2	<i>Yuhina gularis</i>
Black-chinned Yuhina	1				Pu	3	<i>Yuhina nigrimenta</i>	
Hoary-throated Barwing	1					Tr	1	<i>Actinodura nipalensis</i>
Red-headed (Chestnut-crowned) Laughingthrush	2	Pa				Tr	2	<i>Garrulax erythrocephalum</i>
Scaly Laughingthrush	1				Pu	1	<i>Garrulax subunicolor</i>	
Bhutan Laughingthrush ³	1					Tr	2	<i>Garrulax imbricatus</i>
Black-faced Laughingthrush	2	Pa				Tr	2	<i>Garrulax affine</i>
Striated Laughingthrush	1				Pu	2	<i>Garrulax striatus</i>	
White-throated Laughingthrush	2	Pa			Pu	3	<i>Garrulax albogularis</i>	
Rufous-gorgeted Flycatcher	3				Pu	Tr	1	<i>Ficedula strophinata</i>
Grey-headed Canary Flycatcher	3			Th	Pu	Tr	3	<i>Culicicapa ceylonensis</i>
Small Niltava	1					Tr	1	<i>Niltava macgrigoriae</i>
Verditer Flycatcher	4				Pu	Tr	2	<i>Eumyias thalassina</i>
Broad-billed Warbler	1					Tr	1	<i>Tickellia hodgsoni</i>
Yellow-bellied Fantail	3			Th	Pu	Tr	3	<i>Rhipidura hypoxantha</i>
Grey-hooded Warbler	1				Pu	1	<i>Seicercus xanthoschistus</i>	
Yellow-browed Warbler	1					Tr	1	<i>Phylloscopus inornatus</i>
Hume's Warbler	1					Tr	1	<i>Phylloscopus humei</i>
Lemon-rumped Warbler ⁴	2				Pu	Tr	1	<i>Phylloscopus chloronotus</i>
Ashy-throated Warbler	2			Th	Pu	1	<i>Phylloscopus maculipennis</i>	
Himalayan Bluetail ⁵	2	Pa				Tr	1	<i>Tarsiger rufilatus</i>
Hodgson's Redstart	5	Pa	Th		Pu	Tr	2	<i>Phoenicurus hodgsoni</i>
Blue-fronted Redstart	6	Pa	Th		Pu	Tr	1	<i>Phoenicurus frontalis</i>
White-throated Redstart	1	Pa					1	<i>Phoenicurus schisticeps</i>
Oriental Magpie Robin	3				Pu	1	<i>Copsychus saularis</i>	
White-capped Water Redstart	4			Th	Pu	Tr	1	<i>Chaimarrornis leucocephalus</i>
Plumbeous Water Redstart	8	Pa	Th		Pu	Tr	3	<i>Rhyacornis fuliginosus</i>
Slaty-backed Forktail	1				Pu	1	<i>Enicurus schistaceus</i>	
Spotted Forktail	1					Tr	1	<i>Enicurus maculatus</i>
Little Forktail	1					Tr	1	<i>Enicurus scouleri</i>
Brown Dipper	3			Th	Pu	2	<i>Cinclus pallasii</i>	
Common Stonechat	2	Pa			Pu	1	<i>Saxicola torquata (maura)</i>	

Chestnut-bellied Rock Thrush	2			Tr	1	<i>Monticola rufiventris</i>
Blue Whistling Thrush	7		Th	Pu	Tr	3 <i>Myophonus caeruleus</i>
White-collared Blackbird	6	Pa		Pu	Tr	1 <i>Turdus albocinctus</i>
Green-backed Tit	7		Th	Pu	Tr	2 <i>Parus monticolus</i>
Rufous-vented Tit	2	Pa			Tr	1 <i>Parus rubidiventris</i>
Grey-crested Tit	2	Pa		Pu		1 <i>Parus dichrous</i>
Black-throated (Red-headed) Tit	2			Pu	Tr	2 <i>Aegithalos concinnus</i>
Fire-capped Tit	1			Pu		3 <i>Cephalopyrus flammiceps</i>
Yellow-browed Tit	4			Pu	Tr	1 <i>Sylviparus modestus</i>
Eurasian Treecreeper	2	Pa	Th			1 <i>Certhia familiaris</i>
Rusty-flanked Treecreeper	3				Tr	1 <i>Certhia nipalensis</i>
Chestnut-bellied Nuthatch	1			Pu		1 <i>Sitta castanea</i>
White-tailed Nuthatch	2		Th	Pu		1 <i>Sitta himalayensis</i>
Wallcreeper	3			Pu		1 <i>Tichodroma muraria</i>
Olive-backed Pipit	3	Pa		Pu	Tr	2 <i>Anthus hodgsoni</i>
White Wagtail	7	Pa	Th	Pu	Tr	2 <i>Motacilla alba</i>
Oriental White-eye	1			Pu		2 <i>Zosterops palpebrosus</i>
Black-throated Sunbird	1				Tr	1 <i>Aethopyga saturata</i>
Green-tailed Sunbird	2			Pu		2 <i>Aethopyga nipalensis</i>
Mrs Gould's Sunbird	3			Pu	Tr	1 <i>Aethopyga gouldiae</i>
Fire-breasted Flowerpecker	1			Pu		1 <i>Dicaeum ignipectus</i>
Eurasian Tree Sparrow	4	Pa	Th	Pu	Tr	3 <i>Passer montanus</i>
Russet Sparrow	5	Pa	Th	Pu	Tr	3 <i>Passer rutilans</i>
Alpine Accentor	1	Pa				1 <i>Prunella collaris</i>
Altai Accentor	1				Tr	3 <i>Prunella himalayana</i>
Rufous-breasted Accentor	2			Pu	Tr	1 <i>Prunella strophiatea</i>
Red-headed Bullfinch	1	Pa				1 <i>Pyrrhula erythrocephala</i>
Gold-naped Finch	1				Tr	1 <i>Pyrrhoptectes epauletta</i>
Collared Grosbeak	2	Pa	Th			3 <i>Mycerobas affinis</i>
White-winged Grosbeak	3	Pa			Tr	3 <i>Mycerobas carnipes</i>
Himalayan White-browed Rosefinch ⁶	1				Tr	1 <i>Carpodacus thura</i>
Dark-rumped Rosefinch	1			Pu		1 <i>Carpodacus edwardsii</i>
Crimson-browed Finch	1			Pu		1 <i>Propyrrhura subhimachalus</i>
Crested Bunting	1				Tr	1 <i>Melophus lathamii</i>

Taxonomic Notes

¹ Rasmussen and Anderton (2005) considered the form of Common Buzzard seen in Bhutan to be specifically distinct and be called Himalayan Buzzard *B. burmannicus*. This is confusing as the split, accepted by the IOC (International Ornithological Congress) was Eastern Buzzard i.e. *B. japonicus* which was then further split, with the Himalayan Buzzard being *B. reflectus*

² Himalayan Black Bulbul has been renamed to allow for the split of Square-tailed Bulbul (Western Ghats and Sri Lanka)

³ Bhutan Laughingthrush has been split from Streaked Laughingthrush

⁴ Lemon-rumped Warbler has been split from Pallas' Warbler

⁵ Split from Red-flanked Bluetail (Orange-flanked Bush Robin) by Rasmussen and Anderton and the IOC. *T. rufilatus* has a longer tail and tarsus and more rounded wing-tip. Adult male *rufilatus*, as seen by the group, has brighter blue upperparts, as was noted, paler blue supercilium (usually without white to the front) and narrower and more pure white throat patch than *cyanurus*. Females and immature males of two forms similar, but *rufilatus* averages whiter throat and belly

⁶ Note that the Chinese White-browed Rosefinch has been split, thus the name for those seen by the group is Himalayan White-browed Rosefinch

CHECKLIST OF MAMMALS SEEN IN BHUTAN

Assamese Macaque	3		Th	Pu	Tr	3 <i>Macaca assamensis</i>
Golden Langur	1				Tr	3 <i>Trachypithecus geei</i>
Wild Boar	1				Tr	2 <i>Sus scrofa</i>
Himalayan Striped Squirrel	3			Pu	Tr	1 <i>Callosciurus maccllellandi</i>

A Pika *Ochotona sp.* was seen at DochuLa, and another squirrel species was seen which may have been Orange-bellied Himalayan Squirrel *Dremomys lokriah*

CHECKLIST OF BIRDS SEEN IN DELHI, INDIA

**Max no of days
seen or heard**
Maximum 3
h=heard only

Location
S = Sultanpur
T = Tuglakabad
O = Okhla Barrage and Lodi Gardens

Abundance scale
Maximum seen (on one day)
1 = 1-4
2 = 5-9
3 = 10-99
4 = 100-999
5 = 1000-9999

SPECIES	No of days recorded	Locations	Abundance Scale	SCIENTIFIC NAME
Little Grebe	1		O 2	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>
Darter	1		O 1	<i>Anhinga melanogaster</i>
Little Cormorant	1		O 2	<i>Phalacrocorax niger</i>
Indian Cormorant	1		O 2	<i>Phalacrocorax fuscicollis</i>
Little Egret	1	S	1	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>
Cattle Egret	1		O 4	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>
Great Egret	2	S	O 2	<i>Ardea alba</i>
Grey Heron	2	S	O 2	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>
Purple Heron	2	S	O 1	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>
Indian Pond Heron	1	S	1	<i>Ardeola grayii</i>
Painted Stork	2	S	O 3	<i>Mycteria leucocephala</i>
Greater Flamingo	1		O 3	<i>Phoenicopterus ruber</i>
Eurasian Spoonbill	1	S	1	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>
Black-headed Ibis	1	S	3	<i>Threskiornis melanocephalus</i>
Black Ibis	1	S	3	<i>Pseudibis papillosa</i>
Bar-headed Goose	2	S	O 3	<i>Anser indicus</i>
Ruddy Shelduck	1		O 2	<i>Tadorna ferruginea</i>
Northern Pintail	2	S	O 3	<i>Anas acuta</i>
Common Teal	2	S	O 2	<i>Anas crecca</i>
Spot-billed Duck	2	S	O 1	<i>Anas poecilorhyncha</i>
Gadwall	2	S	O 3	<i>Anas strepera</i>
Eurasian Wigeon	2	S	O 3	<i>Anas penelope</i>
Garganey	1		O 3	<i>Anas querquedula</i>
Northern Shoveler	2	S	O 4	<i>Anas clypeata</i>
Common Pochard	2	S	O 2	<i>Aythya ferina</i>
Ferruginous Duck	1		O 1	<i>Aythya nyroca</i>
Tufted Duck	1		O 2	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>
Black Kite	3	S T	O 3	<i>Milvus migrans</i>
Shikra	1		O 1	<i>Accipiter badius</i>
Steppe Eagle	1		O 1	<i>Aquila nipalensis</i>
Crested Serpent Eagle	1		O 1	<i>Spilornis cheela</i>
Eurasian Marsh Harrier	1		O 1	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>
Grey Francolin	1		O 2	<i>Francolinus pondicerianus</i>
Indian Peafowl	2	S	O 1	<i>Pavo cristatus</i>
Common Crane	1	S	1	<i>Grus grus</i>
Common Moorhen	2	S	O 3	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>
Common Coot	2	S	O 4	<i>Fulica atra</i>
Purple Swampphen	2	S	O 3	<i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i>
Pheasant-tailed Jacana	1		O 2	<i>Hydrophasianus chirurgus</i>
Black-winged Stilt	2	S	O 3	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>
White-tailed Lapwing	1	S	1	<i>Vanellus leucurus</i>
Yellow-wattled Lapwing	1		T 1	<i>Vanellus malabaricus</i>
Red-wattled Lapwing	2	S	O 3	<i>Vanellus indicus</i>
Ruff	1		O 2	<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>
Wood Sandpiper	1		O 3	<i>Tringa glareola</i>
Green Sandpiper	1	S	1	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>
Brown-headed Gull	1		O 1	<i>Larus brunnicephalus</i>
Whiskered Tern	1		O 1	<i>Chlidonias hybridus</i>
Eurasian Collared Dove	2	S	O 2	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>
Laughing Dove	2		T O 2	<i>Streptopelia senegalensis</i>

Yellow-footed Green Pigeon	1			O	1	<i>Treron phoenicoptera</i>
Feral Pigeon	2			T O	3	<i>Columba livia</i>
Alexandrine Parakeet	1			O	2	<i>Psittacula eupatria</i>
Rose-ringed Parakeet	3		S	T O	3	<i>Psittacula krameri</i>
Asian Koel	1	1h	S	O	1	<i>Eudynamis scolopacea</i>
Greater Coucal	1			O	1	<i>Centropus sinensis</i>
House Swift	1			O	2	<i>Apus affinis</i>
Indian Roller	1		S		1	<i>Coracias benghalensis</i>
White-throated Kingfisher	2		S	O	1	<i>Halcyon smyrnensis</i>
Green Bee-eater	3		S	T O	3	<i>Merops orientalis</i>
Brown-headed Barbet	1	1h	S	O	1	<i>Megalaima zeylanica</i>
Coppersmith Barbet	1		S		1	<i>Megalaima haemacephala</i>
Common Hoopoe	2		S	T	1	<i>Upupa epops</i>
Indian Grey Hornbill	1			O	1	<i>Ocyroceros birostris</i>
Crested Lark	1		S		1	<i>Galerida cristata</i>
Barn Swallow	1		S		1	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>
Wire-tailed Swallow	1		S		1	<i>Hirundo smithii</i>
Black Drongo	2		S	O	3	<i>Dicrurus macrocercus</i>
Long-tailed Shrike	1		S		1	<i>Lanius schach</i>
Bay-backed Shrike	1		S		1	<i>Lanius vittatus</i>
Asian Pied Starling	1			O	1	<i>Sturnus contra</i>
Common Myna	3		S	T O	3	<i>Acridotheres tristis</i>
Rose-coloured Starling	1			T	3	<i>Pastor roseus</i>
Rufous Treepie	1		S		1	<i>Dendrocitta vagabunda</i>
House Crow	3		S	T O	3	<i>Corvus splendens</i>
Red-vented Bulbul	3		S	T O	3	<i>Pycnonotus cafer</i>
Red-whiskered Bulbul	1			O	2	<i>Pycnonotus jocosus</i>
Jungle Babbler	1			O	2	<i>Turdoides striatus</i>
Common Babbler	2			T O	2	<i>Turdoides caudatus</i>
Red-throated Flycatcher	1			O	1	<i>Ficedula parva</i>
Ashy Prinia	2			T O	2	<i>Prinia socialis</i>
Plain Prinia	2		S	O	2	<i>Prinia inornata</i>
Common Tailorbird	2			T O	1	<i>Orthotomus sutorius</i>
Lesser Whitethroat	2		S	O	1	<i>Sylvia curruca</i>
Common Chiffchaff	2		S	O	1	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>
Sulphur-bellied Warbler	1			T	1	<i>Phylloscopus griseolus</i>
Black Redstart	2		S	T	1	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>
Brown Rock-Chat	1			T	2	<i>Cercomela fusca</i>
Oriental Magpie Robin	2		S	T	1	<i>Copsychus malabaricus</i>
Indian Robin	2		S	T	2	<i>Saxicoloides fulicata</i>
Common Stonechat	1		S		1	<i>Saxicola torquata</i>
Pied Bushchat	2		S	O	3	<i>Saxicola caprata</i>
Paddyfield Pipit	1		S		1	<i>Anthus rufulus</i>
White Wagtail	1		S		1	<i>Motacilla alba</i>
Citrine Wagtail	1			O	1	<i>Motacilla citreola</i>
Purple Sunbird	3		S	T O	2	<i>Nectarinia asiatica</i>
Indian Silverbill	2		S	T O	2	<i>Lonchura malabarica</i>
House Sparrow	1			T	3	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
Common Rosefinch	1			O	2	<i>Carpodacus erythrurus</i>

CHECKLIST OF MAMMALS SEEN IN DELHI, INDIA

Rhesus Macaque	2		S	T	3	<i>Macaca mulatta</i>
Indian Grey Mongoose	1			O	2	<i>Herpestes edwardsii</i>
Northern Palm Squirrel ¹	1			O	3	<i>Funambulus pennanti</i>

¹Also called Five-striped Palm Squirrel

These lists represent those birds and other animals seen by party members of this tour.



White-throated Laughingthrush



Alpine Accentor



A record shot of a rare
species –
White-bellied Heron



Wallcreeper

Black Eagle, carrying Oriental Turtle Dove, plus remains of its probable nest and other debris
(see Page 5)





Black-tailed Crake