

ORNITHOLIDAYS TOUR TO BHUTAN
Birds & Buddhism

18 February – 02 March 2012



Leader: Simon Boyes

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A Personal Diary

Saturday, 18 February

We meet in Heathrow Terminal 5 for the midday British Airways flight to Delhi in a 747. After lunch it soon gets dark as we fly east over Eastern Europe.

Sunday, 19 February

After seven and a half hours in the air, we land at 0200 local time, which is five and a half hours ahead of GMT. Immigration and luggage are safely negotiated, and those of us who know the Delhi Airport of old marvel at the new efficient and spacious structure of the arrivals area. We are duly met and driven the short distance to our palatial hotel in Gurgaon, for a few hours of sleep.

After a fine buffet breakfast, we leave for Sultanpur National Park at 0900, with our local guide Yaju (Yajuvendra). It takes an hour, first along the Jaipur highway, and then through a series of villages. Delhi's urban sprawl meets the fertile fields of the Gangetic plain. Sultanpur is a shallow lake that attracts great numbers and variety of waterfowl, especially during the northern winter, when migrants join the residents. We complete the three kilometre circuit during the morning, under cloudless skies and perfect spring-like temperatures. The most conspicuous species are the Painted Storks, which spend hours aimlessly soaring above the lake, where they are frequently targeted by an ambitious (but unsuccessful) Bonelli's Eagle. The storks are almost all immatures. The prowling eagle also rearranges the Spotbill Duck, Shoveler, Pintail, Teal, and noisy Greylags at regular intervals, littering the blue sky with squadrons of wildfowl fleeing in random directions. Other raptors – a Tawny and a Great Spotted Eagle, plus an Osprey and two Black-winged Kites – take a more relaxed approach than the fierce Bonelli's. Waders include wintering White-tailed Lapwing, Ruff and Marsh Sandpipers, to add to the resident Red-wattled Lapwings. A huge pair of Black-necked Storks have a half-grown youngster on a large acacia-top nest. A pair of Sarus Cranes trumpet loudly and occasionally appear alongside a herd of skinny grey cattle. For wild mammals, we have two Nilgai – a large antelope, always protected in the Indian villages – a Northern Palm Squirrel and troupes of Rhesus Macaques. At the furthest, driest point in the circuit, different birds appear, such as Pied Bushchat, Long-tailed Shrike, Grey Francolin and a wintering Wryneck. As we return to the shade of the gardens for our picnic lunch, Indian Silverbills and a Spotted Owlet turn up.

Our hotel, which is brand new, has not produced picnic lunches before, but their first attempt is very welcome. We return in good time to relax and think about packing for the Bhutan adventure. The checklist reveals over 70 species seen during the morning, and afterwards we enjoy a delicious early buffet dinner, with many local specialities.

Monday, 20 February

The wake-up calls are horribly early, as we have to leave the hotel at 0315. We would prefer a more civilized flight time, but the Druk Air counters open at 0400. We time it well to choose seats on the left, facing the snowy spine of the Himalayas. We take off on time at 0635, for the hour and a half flight non-stop to Paro. Druk Air has two new Airbus A319s for their international routes, which include Kathmandu and Bangkok. Soon they plan to add Singapore and Hong Kong. The smiling stewardesses soon serve us a hearty breakfast, as we gaze out at the vastness of the highest mountain range in the world. The pilot points out Everest and Kanchenjunga, as we start our descent into Paro. Suddenly we are safely on the ground, outside the terminal building which is constructed in the traditional ornamented Bhutan style. Luggage soon arrives, and we adjust our watches half an hour: now 6 hours ahead of GMT. Outside we meet Tshering, our birding guide, and our driver Ugyen. They are both dressed in formal Bhutan costume, of a one-piece tunic (*gho*) with white sleeves, bare knees, and long socks. Tshering is round-faced, enthusiastic, welcoming, and wears a woolly hat to cover his bare scalp: the embodiment of the Laughing Buddha!

First stop, for photos along the way, produces a great spot by Freda: an Ibisbill on the riverside boulders below us. In fact there are three, two males fighting over an unappreciative female. These charismatic

waders are in a family of their own. Russet Sparrows and a Grey-backed Shrike appear at same spot. At our hotel in the pinewoods, our rooms are ready. There is time to drink tea and relax and unpack, while Tshering, Tashi (our ground agent) and I thrash out details of our exciting programme for the next days. In late morning we drive the short distance to Paro town, and amble along the river for a while, where three redstart species introduce themselves: Plumbeous, Hodgson's, and the tail-flicking White-capped. Lunch is a superb assortment of dishes, some spicy, others plain, at a restaurant in town. Among the dishes is the typical *emadatsi*, a concoction of green beans, *paneer* cheese and plenty of chilli. The local vegetables – spinach, broccoli, carrots, and potatoes – are fresh and tasty.

Next we change money at the Bank of Bhutan. While we wait, we are amazed to see an employee carrying vast bundles of tied 1000 *ngultrum* notes (each worth about \$20) with no security, past customers waiting to change money. No need for Securicor here! Now we drive up the Paro Valley, enjoying White-collared Blackbirds and Olive-backed Pipit at one stop. Another stop, to admire the very sacred Dragon's Nest Monastery perched high on an almost inaccessible cliff, produces Yellow-billed Blue Magpies and Rufous Sibias. The magpies are in no hurry to leave, and offer great views perched and in flight: Roger manages a fine flight-photo. The turn-around spot is Drukgyel Dzong, a ruined fort that has a history of repelling Tibetan invaders. Rufous-breasted Accentor and Blue-fronted Redstart add a splash of colour to the dormant apple orchards. An obliging Blue Whistling Thrush is the first of many to come. By now a cold wind has sprung up and the light is fading. We head back for an early dinner: another superb buffet. It has been a long day, but a wonderful one.

Tuesday, 21 February

Today's start is late by yesterday's standards, but still we must be up early for an assault on Cheli La, a pass that rises to 3,800m to the west of Paro. After tea and coffee in the lobby at 0500, we start the long ascent. It gradually dawns just after six, and soon we are watching Himalayan White-browed Rosefinches and White-browed Fulvettas at point-blank range on the verge. Pikas, (which resemble hamster-like rodents but are in fact lagomorphs, like tiny rabbits), can be seen here and there. Next come Black-faced Laughingthrushes, (with two white patches on the black face), and a snipe, spotted by Jenny. Its dark back and upland forest habitat identify it as a Wood Snipe. The forest is open, with little understorey, a mixture of pine, spruce, fir, larch and hemlock. There are small trees of Himalayan maple and *Berberis* bushes. We come to patches of snow, and a settlement with yaks, which give butter and milk to the nomadic herders. There is also a workforce chipping ice off the road and shovelling snow, part of an Indian government aid programme. A large covey of Blood Pheasants appear: the males far more brilliant than the Grimmett and Inskipp field guide illustration. They are above us, working their way uphill. We drive round another hairpin so that we are above them, and watch them below us. Among them is a single male Himalayan Monal, a stunning crested, iridescent pheasant much larger than the Bloods. Unfortunately, only Tshering and Ian have views of it, as it seems shier than the Blood covey. Here also are Red-headed Bullfinch, Rufous-vented Tit, Rufous-breasted Accentor, and a spectacular male White-throated Redstart, all together in a purple patch.

At nine o'clock we find a hot breakfast awaiting us prepared by two smiling cooks from a restaurant in Paro, who are catering for us today in the field. The breakfast site is memorable: we are at 3,822m, at the summit of Cheli La, and the temp is 2°C. We have chairs, tables, tablecloths, cereals and hot milk, eggs, toast, jam, coffee and Indian *masala chai*. We take a look at the west side of the pass, where we briefly feel warm in a short burst of sunshine. Here we find three raptor species that can be found in Europe: Lammergeier, Hen Harrier and Sparrowhawk. The Lammergeier is an adult with warm buff, almost orange neck, cruising slowly around the mountainside. White-winged Grosbeaks perch up in the trees and chatter to each other. Back on the east side, we descend, but stop for a superb trio of close-up Spotted Laughingthrushes which are oblivious to us as they feed on the verge. The forest is often quiet, with occasional parties of tits passing through, mostly high in the tops. Goldcrests and a Eurasian Treecreeper remind us of birding at home. Suddenly we come across a fine stir-fry lunch in final stages of preparation, next to a large group of fluttering prayer flags. A Spotted Nutcracker observes us from various treetops as we eat. Thanking our two cooks, we continue down the slope, enjoying several Kalij Pheasants by the road. At the lower end of the forest, we come across Chestnut-crowned Laughingthrush, Rufous Sibia, and Rufous-fronted Tit, a close relative of our Long-tailed. Another flock has mostly Green-backed Tits, with a few Chestnut-tailed Minla and a small, plain Green Shrike-Babbler. We stop to photograph the intricate pattern of terraces, mostly empty but some growing young wheat. In the northern summer, the monsoon enables the locals to grow rice.

Returning to the hotel in mid-afternoon, there is the option of taking a rest, as it's been all-go (often at strange hours) since we left home. The rest of us continue to a small marsh near Paro town, where a Black-tailed Crake immediately shows itself well. By the river, we enjoy River Lapwings on territory and a pair of Ibisbill, which also look as if they are interested in an area of pebbles on an island. Above it on a pole is a buzzard, but which? Debate ensues: the pale head, dark - almost black - flanks, longish tail and slow, heavy flight (showing a white flash at the base of primaries on the upperside) convince both Tshering and me that we have an Upland Buzzard on its wintering grounds. We make a final stop to photograph the beautiful architecture of Paro's main street, with many national flags flying to celebrate the King's birthday. So we return to the warm hotel after another enjoyable Bhutan day.

Wednesday, 22 February

There is no hurry to start this morning, so a 0730 breakfast is appreciated. Today is the Bhutan New Year, the occasion for more celebrations. It comes one new moon after the Chinese New Year – it seems somehow typical of Bhutan to go its own way! A short look at the hotel gardens turns up a flock of 20 Spotted Nutcrackers, feeding on the mature pine cones. There are also Oriental White-eye and plenty of Russet Sparrows. The drive to Thimpu is only just over an hour, but we take the whole morning over it. Walking along the Paro River, south of the airport, we find Brown Dipper, two drake Goosanders, a well-camouflaged Ibisbill (our closest yet), and a wintering Blue Rock Thrush. The morning is warm and the sky cloudless: what a change from yesterday. Tshering asks us to check cliffs for Wallcreeper, and one appears almost instantly. It flicks its magenta wings as it creeps up and along the cliff face, occasionally finding a spider. The rest of the drive to Thimpu is extremely beautiful, all the better for the blue skies and clear air.

Tshering shows us the city centre, the only one in the world without traffic lights. We enjoy a restaurant lunch with more Chinese influence (noodles for example), before setting out for a non-birding exploration. We visit a *chorten* (or *stupa*): a solid construction that usually holds sacred relics. (Bhutan must have tens of thousands of *chortens*). This one is a memorial to the third King who died aged 44. Many monks and other devotees turn prayer wheels or walk clockwise round the *chorten* to gain merit. Next we see the Golden Takin, Bhutan's national mammal, in a large enclosure above the city. This strange looking beast lies somewhere (taxonomically) between goat and antelope, with a bulbous Roman nose. In the wild they live in West China and the high peaks of Bhutan. Looking over the city from a nearby viewpoint, we discover that it has a population of 90,000, expanding and flourishing. Our final stop is at the enormous and impressive Tashichho Dzong, which (like all *dzongs*) combines both government administrative buildings and an active monastery. We are just in time to watch the changing of the guard, with much ceremony and goose-stepping as the national flag (a dragon image on orange and yellow) is lowered. Tshering shows us inside the monastery itself, and we admire the *mandalas* (sacred paintings) which adorn the walls. The scale of the place is huge, and the decorations and paintwork intricate and fascinating. We watch monks (in ceremonial yellow rather than the usual maroon) chanting, as many devotees come to visit a display of one of the Buddha's teeth. British life seems a planet away from here.

Soon after five, we check in to our city hotel. Our ground-agent Tashi joins us for dinner and offers us French wine as a change from the strong local beer, (alcohol content 8%), which is called Druk, meaning dragon. We are amazed how widely and well English is spoken, but Tshering explains that all education in Bhutan is conducted in English, except of course for the study of the national language.

Thursday, 23 February

We are up and away early, and after an hour's driving we reach Dochu La (La is a pass in Tibetan and Bhutanese). Here the pines give way to a much more varied broadleaved forest. It is cold but clear at 3,116m on the summit, where a huge number of *chortens* and prayer flags have been put up: 108 of them commemorate the loss of life in the 2003 conflict (known as Operation Flush-out) in lowland Bhutan to expel a troublesome group of Assam separatists who were living wild in the Bhutan forests. A little further on is the restaurant where a welcome cooked breakfast awaits us. The oatmeal porridge with honey proves especially popular. Dave buys a CD of instrumental Bhutan music, which we listen to in the bus in the afternoon.

For most of the morning we walk down a track past the Royal Botanical Park headquarters. We start off with a large flock of White-collared Blackbirds, but the forest walk is disappointingly quiet for birds. Hoped-for mixed flocks must still be lower down the mountain in these low temperatures. The consolation is the walk

itself, through superb mixed forest with much chestnut and evergreen oak. The first rhododendrons are just beginning to flower, some pink but most a rich scarlet. One attracts a Green-tailed Sunbird. On the forest floor are many pink *Primula denticulata* in flower, and plenty of creeping 'monkey-hand' (*Lycopodium*). The trees are festooned with moss and Spanish moss (which is a lichen). Stripe-throated Yuhinas come to our rescue, clumsily flycatching as the sun brings the first insects out. With them are a pair of Chestnut-tailed Minlas, but unlike the yuhinas they quickly disappear. Crossing the road into the botanical gardens, we soon find Rusty-flanked Treecreeper and a Brownish-flanked Bush Warbler (a *Cettia*). This one is spotted low in a bamboo by Jenny.

The breakfast restaurant send two cooks down with a wonderful hot lunch which we enjoy in warm sun. Soup first, then a range of hot dishes including fish, roast potatoes, and a great recipe of mushrooms in a creamy cheese sauce. There are spicy vegetables and non-spicy ones too. As we drop down the east side of the pass, both warmth and our bird sightings increase. White-tailed Nuthatch, Oriental Honey-buzzard and Crested Serpent Eagle start us off; followed by a wonderful pair of barbets feeding on tiny fruits in a leafless tree: Great and Golden-throated. Round the next bend, another tree with large soft fruits attracts photogenic Himalayan Black Bulbuls, Rufous Sibias and a Himalayan Striped Squirrel. Striated Laughingthrushes in the same spot can clearly be seen eating leaves: an unusual diet. Across the road, Tshering draws our attention to a trio of *Phylloscopus* warblers, the tiny Ashy-throated and Lemon-rumped, and the bright yellow Grey-hooded (which has recently been moved from the genus *Seicercus*). The last is Chiffchaff-sized, and moves at a sedate pace, while the first two are minuscule balls of energy, flitting constantly and hovering as they seek tiny insect food. A few Chestnut-crowned Laughingthrushes are at the same spot. We stop to watch an archery contest, between two teams of 11 all dressed in the formal *gho*. They yell at the tops of their voices as they fire, and their arrows often land amazingly close to the tiny target, well over 100m away.

In late afternoon we reach the floor of the Punakha valley, and after a short climb, soon arrive at our hotel, with its magnificent views over the valley to the north. The welcoming staff serve tea and coffee, and we have plenty of time to relax before another fine meal.

Friday, 24 February

Six Yellow-breasted Greenfinches are perched outside our rooms before breakfast. One male sings a single *wheez* reminiscent of our European birds. The early morning warmth (14°C) makes a pleasant change from the higher altitudes of our previous three mornings. After a cooked breakfast we leave at 0750 for a morning exploring to the north, as far as the entrance to Jigme Dorji National Park. Crested Kingfishers and scattered Ruddy Shelduck along the river start us off well. We pass the magnificent Punakha Dzong at the confluence of the Mo Chu (Mother River) and the Pho Chu (Father River). It's a relaxing drive, stopping to watch and photograph anything and everything, from Oriental Turtle Doves and Long-tailed Shrikes to village scenes, a golden-roofed *stupa* set high on a forested hill, and friendly locals with faces full of character. The lovely valley of the Mo Chu narrows as it reaches the hills, and the fine square farmhouses and terraced fields give way to forest. The landscape and the river are endlessly photogenic.

Fire-breasted Flowerpecker and Large Niltava appear along the way, before a mixed feeding flock below us teases us for several minutes. There are Chestnut-crowned Warblers, Whiskered Yuhinas, and a Yellow-bellied Fantail restlessly moving along the riverside. A shout from Tshering diverts us onto a Slaty-backed Forktail, and as we cross the bridge that forms the national park boundary, a Little Forktail appears. Only the size of a male Pied Flycatcher (which it resembles at a distance), it feeds at the water's edge, constantly disappearing behind boulders. Patience is rewarded with scope views for all. Now Dave shouts: it's a Black Eagle, quartering the treetops above us. The photographers manage good shots as it soars round so slowly, primaries separated like widespread fingers. Red-tailed Minlas and White-tailed Nuthatch appear next, and a Mountain Bulbul is the last bird before we turn back. We have lunch in town today, but a whole day for further explorations up here tomorrow. On our way back, we are surprised to see that the Ruddy Shelduck numbers have swollen from tens to hundreds, with a lone Bar-headed Goose among them.

Lunch is another fine buffet meal with many choices in a restaurant in Punakha town. Tshering changes from his birding gear into formal attire, to guide us round the enormous Punakha Dzong in the afternoon. We start by crossing the beautifully decorated cantilever bridge across the Mo Chu. The *dzong* was built in 1637, and was the original seat of Bhutan's government, from its construction when the great Lama Shabdrung unified the country, through wars with Tibet, until the move to Thimphu during the 1960s when the

first road was built. Here the first King (Ugyen) was enthroned in 1907 – another great unifier after centuries of conflict. Tshering explains the intricate wall decorations depicting the various Buddhas of Compassion and many other sacred themes. The whole place is on a grand scale, with monks scurrying across courtyards, looking tiny in front of the vast height of the *dzong* walls. The climax of the experience is the great meeting hall, where we are not allowed to photograph. Here monks are chanting, to the accompaniment (at intervals) of cymbals, drums and two long base horns. We are invited to light a butter lamp, make a donation and a wish ‘from our heart.’ A walking track leads us from the *dzong* to a long suspension bridge across the Pho Chu, and on a little further, past a commotion of Red-vented Bulbuls. Their anxiety and annoyance is directed at a Collared Owlet, no larger than they are. It flies off, but not before we have seen it well. Ugyen meets us in the coach, and we drive a little further along the track, in search of a critically endangered species: the White-bellied Heron has an estimated population of 200 pairs.

Perhaps we have good *karma* in the monastery: the heron appears in flight and perches in view. There is enough light for the photographers to have a good record shot. It is a huge heron, longer (but less heavy) than the African Goliath – which is always quoted as the world’s largest heron. Our excitement has not ended: an almost equally endangered Pallas’s Fish Eagle flies over, carrying a large well-chewed fish in its talons. Seemingly unsure where to settle, it flies round us a few times before disappearing over a hill. Freda, our Ibisbill specialist, finds us another further downstream. We arrive back at dusk after an especially enjoyable and exciting day.

Saturday, 25 February

As we pass through Punakha town, we stop for 20 minutes at a colourful and photogenic market where throngs of locals have come to buy fresh fruit and vegetables. An Eurasian Hoopoe perches on a nearby fencepost. We return to the Jigme Dorji National Park, but this time we explore further north. On the way we stop to photograph White-throated Kingfisher, and a Slaty-backed Forktail in Ugyen’s home village. Once in the park, we watch a Besra display-flighting: the resident equivalent of our Sparrowhawk. The star birds of the morning are both great subjects for the photographers: an Asian Barred Owlet and a Wallcreeper which we follow up and down a small rock face by the coach for 15 minutes at least. Tshering calls ‘Speckled Piculet!’ But alas it is gone before any of us can latch on to this warbler-sized woodpecker.

Lunch is in the field by the clear rushing waters of the Mo Chu: the restaurant where we lunched in Punakha provides a field meal with many choices of hot dishes – much too grand to call a picnic. Again, it is much enjoyed and appreciated. The lunch spot has a Crested Kingfisher, a stunning male Rufous-breasted Bush-Robin and a Rufous-gorgeted Flycatcher. The next mixed flock includes Nepal and Rufous-winged Fulvettas, Chestnut-crowned, Lemon-rumped and Grey-hooded Warblers, Black-eared Shrike-Babblers (small but exquisitely coloured!) and Whiskered Yuhinas, which are the species we see most in the forest today. A flock of 20 or so Rusty-fronted Barwings entertain us as well, often hidden but sometimes showing well. Next comes a Mountain Hawk-Eagle, swooping to a perch where we can scope it. The long crest, barred tail and flanks show well even at a distance. Two Grey Tree-pies are nearby as we watch the eagle. As we leave the national park, the bridge that forms the border keeps us busy as two Slaty-backed Forktails are displaying, bowing to each other and raising their long patterned tails to the sky. Across the river is a single Little Forktail, surely the one we watched here yesterday. By contrast it pulses its short tail in and out constantly. The day’s finale is provided by a pair of Rusty-cheeked Scimitar-Babblers, which are feeding close to the road in a ploughed field. They are busy flicking aside the soil with their long bills to find insects below, and seem oblivious to the slowly approaching photographers.

Sunday, 26 February

Today is our longest drive of the tour – from Punakha, over Pele La at 3,500m, to Trongsa. We leave at dawn after tea and coffee, and head east. As we climb out of the new town of Wangdue Phodrang, we start seeing new birds in the remnant forest between patches of cultivation. Bhutan Laughingthrushes (called Streaked in the older books, before a recent split), Barred Cuckoo-Dove and Chestnut-bellied Rock Thrush all show well. Breakfast is an excellent cooked buffet at a restaurant in Nobding.

After climbing to well over 3,000m, we divert into the Phobjika Valley to look for the Black-necked Cranes that winter here. The road descends into a different landscape dominated by dwarf bamboo, which is popular with many yaks. *Cotoneaster* bushes, some prostrate, line the road. The farmers of Phobjika grow excellent potatoes, which we sampled at breakfast: most are exported to India. The valley bottom is a huge swamp,

where a wintering population of cranes find food and refuge. We start with small family groups flying round, but eventually count 160. Closest to us are a flock of 30, which we watch and photograph both feeding and in flight. Their loud bugling calls must be a familiar sound to the potato farmers. Next month they will migrate north to remote breeding grounds on the Tibetan plateau. Happy with our crane experience, we head back to the main road, stopping for an engaging flock of Rufous-fronted Tits which surround the coach.

At the summit of Pele La, we divert again onto the old road, for an hour before lunch. Here, among dwarf rhododendrons and remnants of snow, we enjoy a mixed flock of White-browed Fulvettas, Eurasian Treecreeper, Rufous-breasted Accentor, and three tit species: Rufous-vented, Coal and Grey Crested. A Himalayan Buzzard crosses the valley, but there is no sign of the high altitude pheasants that are occasionally reported from here. A hot lunch is provided and served by staff from the restaurant where we breakfasted. Many of us vote this the field meal of the tour so far – the mushroom dish, locally grown potatoes, and the aubergine dish are memorable. A gentle snowfall enhances the scene.

Heading east again, we pass a Hen Harrier being harried itself by a Large-billed Crow, and a flock of 15 or so Himalayan Griffons which start off below eye level. After walking round the beautiful Chendiji Chorten – built in the Nepali style, with the eyes of Buddha facing all directions – we meet another mixed flock. We start with Rufous-winged Fulvettas at ground level, then raise our sights to the alders, where a large group of acrobatic Black-throated Tits is joined by a pair of showy Yellow-cheeked Tits and contrastingly plain Yellow-browed Tits. A Rusty-flanked Treecreeper is nearby. And so we complete the final few miles to Trongsa, through superb mountain scenery along a quiet, bird-filled road. We enjoy Yellow-billed Blue Magpies, Chestnut-tailed Minlas and abundant Blue Whistling Thrushes as we approach our newly constructed hotel, overlooking Trongsa Dzong. We must be about the first occupants of our warm and luxurious rooms.

Monday, 27 February

An hour's walk before breakfast takes us down the drive to the road and back again. Old friends the minlas – Chestnut-tailed and Red-tailed – explore the rhododendron branches for insects. We have nicknamed the Red-tailed 'the badger' on account of its head pattern. At the main road a huge flock of White-throated Laughingthrushes, perhaps 120 in all, slowly work through the low vegetation, and flick aside leaves on the ground. With them are a pair of Eurasian Jays. A secretive Streak-breasted Scimitar-Babbler gives views on the way back, without ever fully emerging from cover.

After breakfast, the road from the hotel to Trongsa is slow with road-works, but a flock of Rufous-capped Babblers cross the road between us and a huge earth-mover. Much of the East-West Highway is being widened from single track: a process that will surely take many more years. As we take photos of the huge *dzong*, another flock of White-throated Laughingthrushes is joined by a few of their Chestnut-crowned cousins. As we descend the winding road towards Zhemgang, we stop for Nepal House Martins, Rufous-winged Fulvetta, Green-tailed Sunbird, and both Striated and Bhutan Laughingthrushes. In the late morning we stop at Bubja – Bhutanese for 'bee-cliff' – where a Yellow-rumped Honeyguide perches, waiting for chances to feed on wax and larvae from the huge hanging bees' nests. It is a male, which will mate with any visiting female. A Grey-headed Canary Flycatcher is nearby, working through the alder canopy. Our latest mobile catering team, from a restaurant in Trongsa, have set out another wonderful field meal, our sixth and last. We watch Fork-tailed Swifts and gaze over a view that must encompass two thousand metres in altitude. During the afternoon an Ashy Drongo appears, along with two Little Forktails and one Slaty-backed Forktail. Strangely the absent Spotted Forktail is the one usually seen here. Ugyen alerts us to a superb group of Golden Langur Monkeys, almost a Bhutan endemic. They make good photographic subjects as they pose in trees above the road. Fire-capped Tits, Upland and Himalayan Buzzards are our final noteworthy birds before we head back to base for tea and coffee. As I climb up the hill to my room, the White-throated Laughingthrush flock is all around, (with a Eurasian Jay still in attendance). The laughingthrushes find plenty of dead moths to eat as I watch, and keep together with a variety of feeble squeaks and grunts. When the Eurasian Jay gives an alarm call, the flock all flies into cover for a few moments. The Eurasian Jay will do this to put the flock on alert while it finds food itself.

Tuesday, 28 February

At 0630 we meet for tea and coffee and snacks, while Ugyen loads the coach. It is a beautiful drive from Trongsa to Chendiji, where a 0900 breakfast awaits us. There are few road-works, and hardly any traffic. The scarlet rhododendrons are starting to bloom along the way, attracting nectar-eating birds. One fine tree has Hoary-throated Barwing, Stripe-throated Yuhina, Chestnut-crowned Laughingthrush, Streak-breasted Scimitar-Babbler and Rufous Sibia all feasting together. Yellow-billed Blue Magpies feed in a neighbouring rhododendron. The photographers also come to grips with Blue Whistling Thrushes, Bhutan Laughingthrushes, Rufous-winged Fulvetas and a single Plain-backed Thrush on a verge. A colony of cliff-nesting Nepal House Martins also detains us a while.

The hot buffet breakfast at Chendiji features a local version of spicy rice porridge and butter tea (optional, and an acquired taste...) but the usual staples too. White-browed Fulvetas and a Rusty-flanked Treecreeper feed in the trees below the restaurant, while a Mountain Hawk Eagle flies from perch to perch in the magnificent primary forest across the river. It is dominated by huge, dark hemlocks, and is (according to Tshering) believed by the locals to be the abode of terrifying demons. Subduing demons is a recurring theme of Buddhism in Bhutan.

Continuing up the east side of Pele La, we have reached 2,950m when a shout from Tshering alerts us to a flock of Snow Pigeons. They alternate feeding on the ground in a fast-walking flock with flying in circles. With white breasts and a striking tail pattern, they are unmistakable. In dwarf bamboo still higher up, we try for Brown or Great Parrotbills, but instead find Little Bunting and Rufous-breasted Accentor. There is time to explore the old road at the summit again, where a frame-filling Alpine Accentor is the star bird. It is adept at walking on almost vertical cliff faces. After lunch at the same restaurant in Nobding where we breakfasted on Sunday, we continue to the warmer lowlands of the Punakha valley again. The afternoon's highlights include a much closer Yellow-rumped Honeyguide, a family of Brown Dippers, and a Blue-throated Barbet at the top end of its altitudinal range. The honeyguide's bee-cliff is in danger of being enveloped by dust-clouds from nearby road-works, where giant earth-movers have carved a hillside away. The dipper parents are feeding three newly-fledged spotty young, an amazingly early brood. We arrive at our warm and welcoming hotel in Wangdue Phodrang in time for a welcome cup of tea. Here we are a few miles further south from Punakha: the same river flows below our rooms. Himalayan Swiftlets stream past in large numbers, some nesting under the eaves of our hotel.

Wednesday, 29 February

A few minutes in the garden before breakfast reveal Wigeon, Pintail and Gadwall in the river below, along with the Ruddy Shelduck that are common along the Punakha River. Lemon-rumped and Grey-hooded Warblers are also busy feeding nearby. After breakfast, we head west for Dochu La. Long-tailed Minivets, in courtship mode, appear in the pines on the lower slopes. The next stops produce a flock of Yellow-breasted Greenfinches, mostly males, sunning themselves in a leafless tree, and a pair of Grey Bush-chats. We stop for a Himalayan Bluetail, obligingly perched by the road and offering photos. This is a recent split from the Red-flanked Bluetail that reaches Finland in summer, and is called Orange-flanked Bush-Robin by the Grimmett field-guide. We spend time in the Botanical Park at 2,650m. *Daphne bhoola* gives a sweet scent to the area, and the huge white-flowering *Magnolia campbellii* trees are beginning to burst. *Rhododendron arboreum* is also starting to bloom: in scarlet, pink and white. Yellow-billed Blue Magpies, White-browed Fulvetta, Stripe-throated Yuhina and White-tailed Nuthatch are the most noteworthy of the birds.

Now our plans are dictated by road closures as continuing road-works slow us down. We wait for the road to re-open and cross the pass as snow begins to fall. Despite the delay, we are in Thimpu for lunch and have time for shopping afterwards. The Arts and Crafts School is worth a visit too, as we watch students practising their skills in woodwork, embroidery and sculpture. The final leg of the journey back to Paro is in sleet, with fresh snow settling on the mountains around us. A break in the weather allows us to spend time with a pair of very approachable Ibisbill: a fitting way to end the tour.

The hotel offers warmth, a fine buffet dinner, and a chance to toast Tshering and Ugyen who have looked after us so well.

Thursday, 1 March

Our check-in for the Delhi flight is at 0915, so we have a leisurely start to the day, as the airport is so close. Tshering and Ugyen are again in their formal attire to say goodbye to us. We take off on time, and most of the group have great Everest views again on the right of the plane. Once in Delhi, we meet Bank Mynas by the terminal building, and have Yaju again as our meeter-and-greeter. The journey to the hotel in Gurgaon is slow, but we are in no hurry. Delhi's 25°C makes quite a change from chilly Paro. After an excellent final dinner, we say our farewells to Ian and Freda, who are off to Singapore. At midnight we return to the airport....

Friday, 2 March

....and take off at 0400, after a typical delay associated with loading a full 747. Our arrival at Heathrow is almost on time at 0730. Luggage is already on the carousel as we enter the baggage hall, where we say our farewells and disperse to our various homes.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to Tshering, who found us many birds we would not otherwise have found. He also introduced us to the colourful world of Bhutanese Buddhism. Ugyen also deserves many thanks for safe driving. Both men - always smiling and attentive - were a wonderful advertisement for a unique and unforgettable country. Most of all, thanks are due to you all, for participating in the tour with such enthusiasm and good humour at all times. I hope we may meet up on another Ornitholiday again soon. Thanks also to Roger and Jenny for the photographs that illustrate this report.

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April 2012

Itinerary and Weather

Wherever possible, **shade** temperatures at dawn and midday are given.

- 19 Feb Arrive Delhi. Sultanpur National Park. Sunny, 11-24°C (52-75°F)
- 20 Feb Delhi-Paro. Tiger's Nest Monastery & Drukgyel Dzong.
Dry, mostly cloudy, 11-16°C (52-61°F)
- 21 Feb Paro. Cheli La (3800m).
Dry, cloudy, 2-11°C (36-52°F)
- 22 Feb Paro-Thimpu.
Sunny, 7-17°C (45-63°F)
- 23 Feb Thimpu-Punakha via Dochu La (3100m).
Cold, cloudy a.m, sunny p.m, 4-16°C (39-61°F)
- 24 Feb Punakha. Jigme Dorji NP.
Sunny, hazy, 14-21°C (57-70°F)
- 25 Feb Punakha. Jigme Dorji NP.
Sunny, hazy, 13-20°C (55-68°F)
- 26 Feb Punakha-Trongsa, via Phobjika Valley & Pele La (3400m).
Cloudy, 14°C (57°F) at dawn; 6°C (43°F) at midday.
- 27 Feb Trongsa. Bubja.
Sunny, 4-21°C (39-70°F)
- 28 Feb Trongsa-Wangdue Phodrang, via Pele La.
Dry, cloudy, 6-17°C (43-63°F)
- 29 Feb Wangdue Phodrang-Paro via Dochu La & Thimpu.
Cloudy, sleet p.m, 5-13°C (41-55°F)
- 1 Mar Paro. Fly to Delhi.
Dry, 4-14°C (39-57°F) (Paro) Sunny, 25°C (77°F) (Delhi)

CHECKLIST OF BIRDS SEEN DURING TOUR - BHUTAN

No of days recorded

1 2h means seen on 1
day and heard on 2
other days

Abundance Scale (max. seen on 1 day)

1 = 1 – 4 individuals
2 = 5 - 9
3 = 10 - 99
4 = 100 - 999

Locations

A = West Bhutan: Paro, Cheli La, Thimpu, and Dochu La (1800-3800m)

B = West-Central Bhutan: Punakha Valley, Jigme Dorji National Park and Wangdue (1300-1800m)

C = Central Bhutan: Pele La, Phobjika Valley & Trongsa (1800-3400), and south to Bubja (1700m)

Taxonomic notes (^{1,2, etc}) follow the list.

SPECIES	No of days recorded	Locations	Abundance Scale	SCIENTIFIC NAME
Blood Pheasant	1	A	3	<i>Ithaginis cruentus</i>
Himalayan Monal	1	A	1	<i>Lophophorus impejanus</i>
Kalij Pheasant	1	A	2	<i>Lophura leucomelanos</i>
Bar-headed Goose	1	B	1	<i>Anser indicus</i>
Ruddy Shelduck	5	B	4	<i>Tadorna ferruginea</i>
Northern Pintail	1	B	1	<i>Anas acuta</i>
Mallard	1	B	2	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>
Gadwall	1	B	1	<i>Anas strepera</i>
Eurasian Wigeon	1	B	1	<i>Anas penelope</i>
Common Teal	1		C	<i>Anas crecca</i>
Common Merganser (Goosander)	3	A B	2	<i>Mergus merganser</i>
White-bellied Heron	1	B	1	<i>Ardea insignis</i>
Great Cormorant	6	A B	2	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>
Oriental Honey-buzzard	2	B C	1	<i>Pernis ptilorhynchus</i>
Besra	1	B	1	<i>Accipiter virgatus</i>
Eurasian Sparrowhawk	1	A	1	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>
Upland Buzzard	2	A	C	<i>Buteo hemilasius</i>
Himalayan (Common) Buzzard ¹	7	A B C	1	<i>Buteo (buteo) burmanicus</i>
Mountain Hawk Eagle	2	B C	1	<i>Spizaetus nipalensis</i>
Black Eagle	1	B	1	<i>Ictinaetus malayensis</i>
Pallas's Fish Eagle	1	B	1	<i>Haliaeetus leucoryphus</i>
Lammergeier	1	A	1	<i>Gypaetus barbatus</i>
Himalayan Griffon	2		C	<i>Gyps himalayensis</i>
Hen Harrier	2	A	C	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>
Crested Serpent Eagle	1	B	1	<i>Spilornis cheela</i>
Peregrine Falcon	1	B	1	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>
Common Kestrel	5	A B C	1	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>
Black-tailed Crake	1	A	1	<i>Porzana bicolor</i>
Black-necked Crane	1		C	<i>Grus nigricollis</i>
Ibisbill	5	A B	1	<i>Ibidorhyncha struthersii</i>
River Lapwing	4	A B	1	<i>Vanellus duvaucelii</i>
Common Sandpiper	3	A B	1	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>
Wood Snipe	1	A	1	<i>Gallinago nemoricola</i>
Spotted Dove	1	B	1	<i>Streptopelia chinensis</i>
Oriental Turtle Dove	11	A B C	3	<i>Streptopelia orientalis</i>
Barred Cuckoo-Dove	1	B	1	<i>Macropygia unchall</i>
Snow Pigeon	1		C	<i>Columba leuconota</i>
Rock (Feral) Pigeon	11	A B C	4	<i>Columba livia</i>
Mountain Scops Owl	- 1h		C	<i>Otus spilocephalus</i>
Asian Barred Owlet	1	B	1	<i>Glaucidium cuculoides</i>
Collared Owlet	1	B	1	<i>Glaucidium brodiei</i>
Himalayan Swiftlet	4	B	3	<i>Collocalia brevirostris</i>
Fork-tailed Swift	1		C	<i>Apus pacificus</i>
Crested Kingfisher	2	B	2	<i>Megaceryle lugubris</i>
White-throated Kingfisher	2	B	1	<i>Halcyon smyrnensis</i>
Great Barbet	4 2h	B C	1	<i>Megalaima virens</i>

Golden-throated Barbet	1		B		1	<i>Megalaima franklinii</i>
Blue-throated Barbet	1		B		1	<i>Megalaima asiatica</i>
Eurasian Hoopoe	1		B		1	<i>Upupa epops</i>
Yellow-rumped Honeyguide	2			C	1	<i>Indicator xanthonotus</i>
Nepal House-Martin	3			C	4	<i>Delichon nipalensis</i>
Asian House-Martin	1	A			1	<i>Delichon dasypus</i>
Ashy Drongo	2		B	C	1	<i>Dicrurus leucophaeus</i>
Bar-winged (Pied) Flycatcher-shrike	1		B		1	<i>Hemipus picatus</i>
Grey-backed Shrike	7	A	B	C	1	<i>Lanius tephronotus</i>
Long-tailed Shrike	5	A	B		3	<i>Lanius schach</i>
Common Myna	6		B	C	3	<i>Acridotheres tristis</i>
Eurasian Jay	2			C	2	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>
Yellow-billed Blue Magpie	7	A		C	2	<i>Urocissa flavirostris</i>
Grey Treepie	2		B		2	<i>Dendrocitta formosae</i>
Spotted Nutcracker	7	A		C	3	<i>Nucifraga caryocatactes</i>
Red-billed Chough	4	A			2	<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>
House Crow	1	A			1	<i>Corvus splendens</i>
Large-billed (Jungle) Crow	10	A	B	C	3	<i>Corvus macrorhynchos</i>
Long-tailed Minivet	1		B		1	<i>Pericrocotus ethologus</i>
Himalayan Black Bulbul	6		B		3	<i>Hypsipetes leucocephalus</i>
Mountain Bulbul	2		B		1	<i>Hypsipetes mcclllandii</i>
Red-vented Bulbul	7		B	C	3	<i>Pycnonotus cafer</i>
Winter Wren	3	A		C	1	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>
Streak-breasted Scimitar-babbler	2			C	1	<i>Pomatorhinus ruficollis</i>
Rusty-cheeked Scimitar-babbler	2	1h	B	C	1	<i>Pomatorhinus erythrogegens</i>
Rufous-capped Babbler	2			C	3	<i>Stachyris ruficeps</i>
Green Shrike Babbler	2	A		C	1	<i>Pteruthius xanthochlorus</i>
Black-eared Shrike Babbler	1		B		1	<i>Pteruthius melanotis</i>
Rufous-winged Fulvetta	4		B	C	3	<i>Alcippe castaneiceps</i>
White-browed Fulvetta	4	A		C	3	<i>Alcippe vinipectus</i>
Nepal Fulvetta	1		B		1	<i>Alcippe nipalensis</i>
Red-tailed Minla	2		B	C	2	<i>Minla ignotincta</i>
Chestnut-tailed Minla	6	A		C	2	<i>Minla strigula</i>
Rufous Sibia	10	A	B	C	2	<i>Heterophasia capistrata</i>
Whiskered Yuhina	3		B	C	3	<i>Yuhina flavicollis</i>
Stripe-throated Yuhina	4	A		C	2	<i>Yuhina gularis</i>
Rusty-fronted Barwing	1		B		3	<i>Actinodura egertoni</i>
Hoary-throated Barwing	1			C	1	<i>Actinodura nipalensis</i>
Spotted Laughingthrush	1	A			2	<i>Ianthocincla ocellatus</i>
Chestnut-crowned Laughingthrush	4	A	B	C	2	<i>Trochalopteron erythrocephalum</i>
Bhutan (Streaked) Laughingthrush ²	3		B	C	3	<i>Trochalopteron imbricatum</i>
Black-faced Laughingthrush	1	A			2	<i>Trochalopteron affine</i>
Striated Laughingthrush	3		B	C	3	<i>Grammatoptila striatus</i>
White-throated Laughingthrush	2			C	4	<i>Garrulax albogularis</i>
Rufous-gorgeted Flycatcher	1		B		1	<i>Ficedula strophiatea</i>
Grey-headed Canary Flycatcher	1			C	1	<i>Culicicapa ceylonensis</i>
Large Niltava	1		B		1	<i>Niltava grandis</i>
Yellow-bellied Fantail	2		B		1	<i>Rhipidura hypoxantha</i>
Goldcrest	1	A			1	<i>Regulus regulus</i>
Grey-hooded Warbler	5		B	C	1	<i>Seicercus xanthoschistos</i>
Chestnut-crowned Warbler	2		B		1	<i>Seicercus castaniceps</i>
Brownish-flanked Bush Warbler	1	A			1	<i>Cettia fortipes</i>
Lemon-rumped Warbler	8	A	B	C	1	<i>Phylloscopus chloronotus</i>
Ashy-throated Warbler	4		B	C	1	<i>Phylloscopus maculipennis</i>
Himalayan Bluetail ³	1		B		1	<i>Tarsiger rufilatus</i>
Rufous-breasted Bush Robin	1		B		1	<i>Tarsiger hyperythrus</i>
Hodgson's Redstart	8	A	B	C	2	<i>Phoenicurus hodgsoni</i>
Blue-fronted Redstart	8	A	B	C	2	<i>Phoenicurus frontalis</i>
White-throated Redstart	1	A			1	<i>Phoenicurus schisticeps</i>
Oriental Magpie Robin	4		B		3	<i>Copsychus saularis</i>
White-capped Water Redstart	9	A	B	C	2	<i>Chaimarrornis leucocephalus</i>
Plumbeous Water Redstart	7	A	B	C	3	<i>Rhyacornis fuliginosus</i>
Slaty-backed Forktail	3		B	C	2	<i>Enicurus schistaceus</i>

Little Forktail	3		B	C	1	<i>Enicurus scouleri</i>	
Brown Dipper	4	A	B	C	2	<i>Cinclus pallasii</i>	
Common Stonechat	2		B		1	<i>Saxicola torquatus (maura)</i>	
Grey Bush-chat	1		B		1	<i>Saxicola ferreus</i>	
Chestnut-bellied Rock Thrush	2		B	C	1	<i>Monticola rufiventris</i>	
Blue Rock Thrush	1	A			1	<i>Monticola solitarius</i>	
Blue Whistling Thrush	11	A	B	C	3	<i>Myophonus caeruleus</i>	
Plain-backed Thrush	1			C	1	<i>Zoothera mollissima</i>	
White-collared Blackbird	4	A		C	3	<i>Turdus albocinctus</i>	
Green-backed Tit	10	A	B	C	3	<i>Parus monticolus</i>	
Yellow-cheeked Tit	1			C	1	<i>Parus spilonotus</i>	
Rufous-vented Tit	2	A		C	3	<i>Parus rubidiventris</i>	
Coal Tit	1			C	1	<i>Parus ater</i>	
Grey-crested Tit	1			C	1	<i>Parus dichrous</i>	
Black-throated Tit	2			C	3	<i>Aegithalos concinnus</i>	
Rufous-fronted Tit	3	A		C	3	<i>Aegithalos iouschistos</i>	
Fire-capped Tit	1			C	1	<i>Cephalopyrus flammiceps</i>	
Yellow-browed Tit	2			C	1	<i>Sylviparus modestus</i>	
Eurasian Treecreeper	2	A		C	1	<i>Certhia familiaris</i>	
Rusty-flanked Treecreeper	3	A		C	1	<i>Certhia nipalensis</i>	
White-tailed Nuthatch	3	1h	A	B	1	<i>Sitta himalayensis</i>	
Wallcreeper	2		A	B	1	<i>Tichodroma muraria</i>	
Olive-backed Pipit	4	A	B	C	2	<i>Anthus hodgsoni</i>	
Paddyfield Pipit	1			B	1	<i>Anthus rufulus</i>	
Grey Wagtail	2	A	B		1	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>	
White Wagtail	6	A	B		3	<i>Motacilla alba alboides</i>	
Oriental White-eye	4	A	B		1	<i>Zosterops palpebrosus</i>	
Green-tailed Sunbird	4	A	B	C	1	<i>Aethopyga nipalensis</i>	
Fire-breasted Flowerpecker	1	1h	A	B	1	<i>Dicaeum ignipectus</i>	
Scaly-breasted (Spotted) Munia	1			B	2	<i>Lonchura punctulata</i>	
Eurasian Tree Sparrow	6	A	B		3	<i>Passer montanus</i>	
Russet Sparrow	7	A	B		3	<i>Passer rutilans</i>	
Alpine Accentor	1				C	1	<i>Prunella collaris</i>
Rufous-breasted Accentor	5	A			C	1	<i>Prunella strophiatea</i>
Yellow-breasted Greenfinch	2			B	3	<i>Carduelis spinoides</i>	
Red Crossbill	2	A			1	<i>Loxia curvirostra</i>	
Red-headed Bullfinch	1	A			1	<i>Pyrrhula erythrocephala</i>	
White-winged Grosbeak	1	A			2	<i>Mycerobas carnipes</i>	
Himalayan White-browed Rosefinch	1	A			2	<i>Carpodacus thura blythii</i>	
Little Bunting	1				C	1	<i>Emberiza pusilla</i>

Taxonomic Notes: updates following Rasmussen & Anderton (2005), *Birds of South Asia*.

- 1 Himalayan Buzzard (*B. burmanicus*) is a recent split from Common Buzzard.
- 2 Bhutan Laughingthrush is a recent split from Streaked Laughingthrush.
- 3 Himalayan Bluetail is a recent split from Red-flanked Bluetail or Orange-flanked Bush-Robin (*T. cyanurus*).

BHUTAN MAMMALS

Assamese Macaque	4		B	C	2	<i>Macaca assamensis</i>	
Rhesus Macaque	2		B		2	<i>Macaca mulatta</i>	
Golden Langur	1				C	1	<i>Trachypithecus geei</i>
Himalayan Striped Squirrel	3	A	B		1	<i>Callosciurus maccllellandi</i>	
Large-eared Pika	1	A			2	<i>Ochotona macrotis</i>	

SPECIES seen in DELHI and SULTANPUR National Park (India), 19 February 2012

SPECIES	Abundance Scale	SCIENTIFIC NAME
Little Grebe	3	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>
Darter	2	<i>Anhinga melanogaster</i>
Great Cormorant	1	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>
Little Cormorant	3	<i>Phalacrocorax niger</i>
Intermediate Egret	2	<i>Egretta intermedia</i>
Little Egret	1	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>
Eastern Cattle Egret ¹	3	<i>Bubulcus coromandus</i>
Great Egret	2	<i>Ardea alba</i>
Grey Heron	3	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>
Purple Heron	1	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>
Indian Pond Heron	3	<i>Ardeola grayii</i>
Painted Stork	4	<i>Mycteria leucocephala</i>
Black-necked Stork	1	<i>Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus</i>
Eurasian Spoonbill	3	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>
Black-headed Ibis	3	<i>Threskiornis melanocephalus</i>
Greylag Goose	4	<i>Anser anser</i>
Northern Pintail	3	<i>Anas acuta</i>
Common Teal	3	<i>Anas crecca</i>
Spot-billed Duck	3	<i>Anas poecilorhyncha</i>
Gadwall	3	<i>Anas strepera</i>
Northern Shoveler	4	<i>Anas clypeata</i>
Osprey	1	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>
Black-winged (-shouldered) Kite	1	<i>Elanus caeruleus</i>
Black Kite	3	<i>Milvus migrans</i>
Shikra	1	<i>Accipiter badius</i>
Bonelli's Eagle	1	<i>Hieraaetus fasciatus</i>
Greater Spotted Eagle	1	<i>Aquila clanga</i>
Tawny Eagle	1	<i>Aquila rapax</i>
Eurasian Marsh Harrier	1	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>
Grey Francolin	1	<i>Francolinus pondicerianus</i>
Sarus Crane	1	<i>Grus antigone</i>
Common Moorhen	3	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>
Common Coot	3	<i>Fulica atra</i>
Purple Swamphen	2	<i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i>
Black-winged Stilt	1	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>
White-tailed Lapwing	1	<i>Vanellus leucurus</i>
Red-wattled Lapwing	2	<i>Vanellus indicus</i>
Ruff	2	<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>
Common Greenshank	1	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>
Marsh Sandpiper	1	<i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>
Wood Sandpiper	1	<i>Tringa glareola</i>
Green Sandpiper	1	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>
Eurasian Collared Dove	1	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>
Feral Pigeon	4	<i>Columba livia</i>
Rose-ringed Parakeet	3	<i>Psittacula krameri</i>
Greater Coucal	1	<i>Centropus sinensis</i>
Spotted Owlet	1	<i>Athene brama</i>
Little (House) Swift ²	3	<i>Apus affinis</i>
Pied Kingfisher	1	<i>Ceryle rudis</i>
White-throated Kingfisher	1	<i>Halcyon smyrnensis</i>
Black-rumped Flameback	1	<i>Dinopium benghalense</i>
Eurasian Wryneck	1	<i>Jynx torquilla</i>
Grey-throated (Plain) Martin ³	3	<i>Riparia chinensis</i>
Dusky Crag Martin	1	<i>Hirundo concolor</i>
Black Drongo	2	<i>Dicrurus macrocercus</i>
Long-tailed Shrike	1	<i>Lanius schach</i>
Asian Pied Starling	1	<i>Sturnus contra</i>
Bank Myna	3	<i>Acridotheres ginginianus</i>

Common Myna	2	<i>Acridotheres tristis</i>
Rufous Treepie	1	<i>Dendrocitta vagabunda</i>
House Crow	3	<i>Corvus splendens</i>
Large-billed Crow	1	<i>Corvus macrorhynchos</i>
Red-vented Bulbul	1	<i>Pycnonotus cafer</i>
Large Grey Babbler	3	<i>Turdoides malcolmi</i>
Red-throated (Taiga) Flycatcher ⁴	1	<i>Ficedula albicilla</i>
Common Tailorbird	1	<i>Orthotomus sutorius</i>
Black Redstart	1	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>
Oriental Magpie Robin	1	<i>Copsychus malabaricus</i>
Indian Robin	1	<i>Saxicoloides fulicata</i>
Pied Bushchat	2	<i>Saxicola caprata</i>
Common Stonechat	1	<i>Saxicola torquatus</i>
White Wagtail	1	<i>Motacilla alba</i>
Indian Silverbill	3	<i>Lonchura malabarica</i>
House Sparrow	2	<i>Passer domesticus</i>

Taxonomic Notes: updates following Rasmussen & Anderton (2005), *Birds of South Asia*.

- 1 This treatment follows splitting Cattle Egret into Eastern (*B. coromandus*) and Western (*B. ibis*).
- 2 House Swifts in lowland India are now lumped with Little Swifts in Africa, *A. affinis*. The House Swift (*A. nipalensis*) can be found in the highlands of Nepal, Bhutan and further east.
- 3 Non-migratory African and Asian sand-martins have been split: *R. paludicola* in Africa, *R. chinensis* in Asia.
- 4 Red-throated Flycatcher is a recent split from the Red-breasted Flycatcher of Europe, *F. parva*.

MAMMALS: Sultanpur National Park

Rhesus Macaque	<i>Macaca mulatta</i>
Nilgai	<i>Boselaphus tragocamelus</i>
Northern Palm Squirrel	<i>Funambulus pennanti</i>

This list represents those birds and other animals seen by party members of this tour.



Blue-fronted Redstart



Hodgson's Redstart



Black-necked Cranes



Ibisbill



Long-tailed Shrike



Oriental Turtle Dove



Rufous Sibia



Rufous-breasted Bush Robin



Rusty-cheeked Scimitar Babbler



Spotted Laughingthrush



Striated Laughingthrush



Stripe-throated Yuhina



Wallcreeper



White-browed Fulvetta



Yellow-billed Blue Magpie



White-bellied Heron



White-throated Laughingthrush



Bhutan Laughingthrush



White-throated Kingfisher



Alpine Accentor



Spotted Nutcracker



Archery – the national sport



Himalayan view



Punakha Dzong

Cover photograph: Punakha Dzong

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