

**ORNITHOLIDAYS' TOUR TO INDIA - GOA**

*Birds, Beaches & Bhajees*

**20 November – 05 December 2009**



**Leader: Simon Boyes**

## ORNITHOLIDAYS TOUR TO INDIA – GOA AT LEISURE

*Birds, Beaches & Bhajees*  
20 November – 05 December 2009

### A Personal Diary

#### **Friday, 20 November**

Our small and select group meet up in Heathrow's Terminal 4 for the Jet Airways overnight flight to Mumbai. It is a comfortable, punctual flight in a 777.

#### **Saturday, 21 November**

We negotiate Mumbai Airport and transfer to the domestic terminal, where the speed of the security process leaves something to be desired. After a tight connection, the Jetlite 737 lands in Goa at 1400 local time, but unfortunately the luggage has failed to make the flight. By waiting at the airport another two hours, we can collect it and drive north to our accommodation in Baga. The Ronil Beach Hotel always gives our groups a friendly reception, and soon we are in some of the quietest rooms in the house, in V Block. At first sight the Ronil menu is huge and confusing, but we have two weeks to work our way through it. We all greatly enjoy our chosen dishes. After a long journey bed seems especially welcome.

#### **Sunday, 22 November**

We enjoy an early breakfast at 0630, just as it is fully light. Streams of Pond Herons fly from coastal roosts to the rice-fields to feed. Fresh pineapple and papaya, cereals, toast and juice are on offer, plus a cooked dish for those who wish. Half an hour later, we meet wildlife guide, Loven and driver Sudhir. The journey to Arpora Hill is only ten minutes. Here we spend the next three hours, enjoying a mix of Goa's coastal species. Ashy Drongos and Purple-rumped Sunbirds start us off, followed by a mixed flock of Small Minivet, Common Iora and several noisy bulbuls, both Red-whiskered and White-browed. Indian Golden Oriole, Black-headed Cuckooshrike and White-spotted Fantail turn up as well, but none of the three stays to be admired for long. A Puff-throated Babbler looks pipit-like on the ground, while an uncommon Fork-tailed Drongo-Cuckoo swallows a huge caterpillar as we watch in the scopes. Loven finds us a smart Orange-headed Thrush, and both male and female Indian Blackbird show up too. Common Langurs and Three-striped Palm Squirrels start off our mammals list – the monkeys are catching the early sun from their bush-top perch.

We watch the activity at the eyrie of the White-bellied Sea-Eagles which have been faithful to this site for years: both parents attend the huge structure. Jungle Babblers, Black-rumped Flamebacks and Nilgiri Flowerpecker all show well as the morning heats up. As bird activity drops, more butterflies appear, such as the Southern Birdwing, India's largest. A short stop at the ponds by the Marinha Dourada Hotel adds colourful species to our list: such as Indian Roller, White-throated and Common Kingfishers and Green Bee-eater. There are also swallows, swifts and waders to check. We are back at base in good time before lunch – Ronald explores the sandy beach with its line of cafés and sun-loungers.

For lunch we try various western-style fish options, as a change from last night's spicy dishes. The Ronil caters for all tastes! After siesta in the heat of the afternoon, we meet up for a walk to the Beira Mar Hotel. Its terrace overlooks the Baga rice-fields, and visitors who buy drinks at the garden bar are welcomed. For the rest of the daylight, there are no birdless moments as we gaze out over the panorama with the light perfectly behind us. The electricity wires are wonderful perches for Rosy and Grey-headed Starlings, Jungle Mynas, and both White-rumped and Scaly-breasted Munias. Brahminy and Black Kites are always circling above, while three Western Marsh Harriers quarter the paddies. An Osprey remains motionless on a dead palm all afternoon. A small tree below us has Long-tailed Shrike and a female Indian Golden Oriole. The multitude of herons and egrets include a brilliant Purple Heron and two flying Western Reef Egrets, a little removed from their usual estuarine habitat. At dusk, at 1820, two Spotted Owlets show up on the wires in front of us.

We return to another excellent Ronil meal, with plenty of good sightings to mull over.

### **Monday, 23 November**

We leave at 0700 for Saligao Spring, a forested area close to Calangute. Pramod takes over from Loven as our bird-guide. Saligao turns out to be less peaceful than we would like, as a local family is preparing the sound system for a wedding, at top decibel levels. However, with patience we put together a good bird list. We enjoy species such as Loten's and Small Sunbirds, White-spotted Fantail, Tickell's Blue Flycatcher, and Jerdon's Leafbird. Grey-fronted Green Pigeons and Plum-headed Parakeets look especially fine in the scope. We also see Black-hooded Oriole, Pied Flycatcher-shrike and three Paradise Flycatchers. It is an excellent morning for raptors too, with both Shikra and Oriental Honey-buzzard perched for long periods, and flying Peregrine and Indian Spotted Eagle among the abundant kites.

Lunch is followed by a siesta with time to swim or catch up on diaries. At 1500 we set out again for Carambolim Lake, collecting Pramod from the ferry near his home on Chora Island. The lake is in fact a reservoir for irrigating vast ricefields below the dam; the wildlife attracted to this superb habitat is an incidental bonus. The lake is beautiful with flowering water lilies, well populated by Lesser Whistling-Duck and Purple Swamphens. Bronze-winged Jacanas look smart in dark colours, while their Pheasant-tailed cousins are pale and less impressive in their non-breeding plumage. A few Cotton Teal can be found in small groups, but no migrant duck seem to have arrived yet. Whiskered Terns are dipping to feed on insects on the surface; and Blue-tailed Bee-eaters hawking insects over the water.

Not far to the east is a quiet road with saltmarsh on one side and paddies on the other. So, on the right we have Ruff and Redshank, Asian Openbill and Lesser Adjutant; while on the left Indian Roller, two bee-eater species, Pied Bushchat, a huge flock of Baya Weavers, and so on. The road leads to a grove of trees where Brown Hawk Owl is often found; but the locals have not seen them recently, and we are unable to locate them as the light fades. It is dark as we drive back through bustling Calangute, with all the tourist stalls and shops still open, but with fewer visitors this year from Europe. During dinner out by the hotel pool, David sees a Barn Owl fly over. A pair often nests in the hotel water tower, close to the restaurant.

### **Tuesday, 24 November**

Pale-billed Flowerpecker and Purple-rumped Sunbird are in the bottlebrush tree by reception as we wait for the minibus to take us to Morji Beach. When we arrive, we find the usual huge number of gulls, but their roost is on a distant sand island instead of their normal close-up sandspit. Still, we watch good numbers of Brown-headed Gulls streaming past us, with smaller numbers of Slender-billed, Heuglin's and Steppe Gulls, as well as Great Crested, Lesser Crested and Gull-billed Terns. Waders comprise a few Lesser Sand Plovers and Kentish Plovers. As the morning heats up, we stop at the Turtle Bay Café for a round of fresh lime sodas. Offshore, Pramod notices the fins of a few Indo-Pacific Hump-backed Dolphins around a dolphin-watching boat.

Next we take a look at Parshim Marsh, further up the Chapora River. A White-bellied Sea-Eagle soars over the wetland as we step from the vehicle, dwarfing the Brahminy Kite with it. Black-headed Ibis are feeding on a mudflat, and our first Striated Heron and Pied Kingfishers show up. A Wire-tailed Swallow flies round its nest-site under a culvert. A Ruddy Shelduck flies short distances and settles several times: perhaps a recently arrived migrant orientating itself to a strange place. A Common Mongoose appears briefly on the shore. After a productive time here, we head back for another selection of delicious dishes, and siesta. During this time I swim in both sea and one of the hotel's pools.

We meet up again for the short drive to Fort Aguada, a few miles south of Calangute on an impressive promontory overlooking the estuary of the Mandovi River and the Arabian Sea. We end up with a count of two Peacocks and four Peahens – they can be relied upon here. Also here are a juvenile Shikra, (the colour of a female Sparrowhawk, and quite different from the adults), another Pale-billed Flowerpecker and two new ones for us: a small group of Grey-breasted Prinias and a motionless White-cheeked Barbet, no doubt stuffed full of the fruits of the tree where it perches. We look up hoping for migrant Amur Falcons or other raptors; but have to make do with large numbers of Brahminy Kites, and dense flocks of Little Swifts. During dinner, I brief the others about what to take for our two-night stay at Backwoods. We can keep our rooms at the Ronil in our absence.

### **Wednesday, 25 November**

We leave at 0545 with snacks to eat and drink on the journey, and arrive at Backwoods two hours later. There are two reasons for such an early start: one is to be on the road to Ponda before the traffic slows us down; also, we hope to catch the most bird activity around the camp early. We have time to leave our light bags in our cabins, and take a forest walk. First comes an Emerald Dove on the ground just outside camp. The first flock is hard to watch, as it is high in the canopy and flighty. But with patience, there are views of Malabar Woodshrike, Malabar Whistling-Thrush, Velvet-fronted Nuthatch and Black-naped Oriole. As usual, a mixed flock like this is led by a Greater Racket-tailed Drongo. Later, we amble slowly along the entrance track, and birding becomes less challenging. There are scope views of Asian Fairy-bluebird, Malabar White-headed Starling, Vernal Hanging Parrot, Thick-billed Flowerpecker and Plum-headed Parakeet. A pair of Malabar Barbets, nest-excavating, are also worth a long look. Brown-cheeked Fulvettas turn up as we return to camp for our ten o'clock breakfast.

We have a short session between breakfast and lunch as the heat and humidity build up: Pramod recommends a raptor watch over a nearby ridge. We have a Crested Serpent Eagle to start with, followed by an impressive talon-grappling pair of Mountain Hawk-Eagles. Other birds of the area include Malabar Lark, Streak-throated Swallows, and a pair of Common Woodshrikes that a group of Yellow-throated Sparrows are chasing round a tree. The day's star bird is a pair of Malabar Trogons at lunch, just over the roof of the dining area for several minutes. I have time during siesta to enjoy a river swim, in a pool just below a small waterfall. After a cup of tea at 1500, we set off for the nearby temple, which is Goa's oldest monument, dating from the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

While we are watching a sky full of Indian Swiftlets above the temple, a fine adult Rufous-bellied Eagle gives great views as it passes over. Three male Small Sunbirds chase each other through the canopy, and a few Mountain Imperial Pigeons fly past. After watching Yellow-browed Bulbul and Gold-fronted Leafbird at length in the scopes, a thunderstorm threatens and sends us scurrying back to the minibus. However, it is a teacup of a storm that delivers only a few drops. Soon we are back outside, watching Black-throated Munias, Verditer and Brown-cheeked Fulvetta as the light begins to fade. It is interesting to hear that in camp, less than half a mile away, the rain was torrential while we were out. It proves to be the only rain of the tour.

### **Thursday, 26 November**

As we are enjoying tea and biscuits at 0630, Dark-fronted Babblers pass furtively through camp. Pramod shows us a Small Indian Civet that has fallen into a well by the kitchen. It is alive, and is soon rescued by the staff lowering a bucket.

Our movements are more restricted than usual at Backwoods as some of the interior forest walks and all paddyfields are too wet for walking after a late monsoon. Also, no fruiting tree has yet been found locally, to act as a magnet for a great variety of species. So, for our early walk, we drive to Bolkorne Junction to look for hornbills, stopping for a Hair-crested Drongo as we leave camp. Black-headed and Red-headed Buntings are on electricity wires with munias, sparrows and a Malabar Lark. At the junction, as the early mist clears, Ronald puts us onto a Malabar Pied Hornbill preening in a mature tree across a field. Later, a Malabar Grey Hornbill perches almost above our heads as we walk by a river. Other early birds include Brown Shrike, Ashy Woodswallow, and Stork-billed Kingfisher. The closest we get to a view of a Brown Fish Owl is a pile of crab claws on the riverbank from its midnight feasts. Blyth's Reed Warbler is a common winter visitor that we have been hearing as it skulks in undergrowth: now it's good to get good views of one perched up.

After a welcome breakfast of omelettes and toast, tea, coffee and bananas, we take a stroll along the entrance track, along with the two Canadians who are staying in camp. A Flame-throated Bulbul and an Orange-headed Thrush offer lengthy scope views for starters. Then, a quiet period ensues with few birds, so we enjoy the butterflies such as Peacock, Blue Mormon, Common Crow and Common Sailor, and a Malabar Flying Lizard. A Puff-throated Babbler bathes in a puddle on the track, before a mixed flock on way back revives us. Three woodpeckers (Black-rumped Flameback, Indian Pygmy and the wonderful Heart-spotted) are associating with Small Minivet, Brown-cheeked Fulvetta, Tickell's Blue Flycatcher, Gold-fronted Leafbird, Bronzed Drongo, and probably more. The flock is in no hurry and we watch at our leisure for many minutes.

During my afternoon swim, a Grey Wagtail approaches to within two metres of my head; and a Common Kingfisher flies upstream. A noisy and quarrelsome troupe of Common Langurs clamber through the trees above our cabins, and drop branches on the roofs. At 1530 we meet up again for tea, and set out on foot a short distance into the forest. Here Pramod points out a pair of Ceylon Frogmouths, at their daytime roost on the edge of a bamboo clump, less than two metres off the ground. These remarkable nightbirds, luckily for us, are usually faithful to the identical roost; but they are extremely hard to relocate if disturbed. Nearby we are happy to convert another 'often heard' into a 'well seen:' this time a Grey-headed Bulbul. Nearby are its Yellow-browed and Flame-throated relatives. As we walk down the entrance track, two Malabar Parakeets fly rapidly overhead, calling raucously. It's not a brilliant view, but as their call is distinctive, we can be in no doubt of their identity. Above the paddyfields, a Chestnut-headed Bee-eater is our first, atop a tall tree – this is the most forest-dwelling of the three common bee-eaters. Nearby are White-cheeked Barbet, Grey-fronted Green Pigeon and 14 Asian Fairy-bluebirds looking superb in the scopes. A small fruiting tree has appeared at last! At dusk, we try for Jerdon's Nightjar at the volleyball field just beyond the end of the drive, but only succeed in hearing it distantly. Two Indian Pittas are calling closer, but their location in dense cover is unpromising for an attempt on them tomorrow. Jupiter and three of its moons show clearly in the scopes.

### **Friday, 27 November**

The early session at the temple turns up Orange Minivet and a possessive Gold-fronted Leafbird chasing a visiting Jerdon's Leafbird out of its tree. Another treetop has a group of Mountain Imperial Pigeons, together with Black-naped and Indian Golden Orioles, and Malabar Barbets. The combination looks wonderful in the early sunshine in the scopes. Not finding as much activity as we hoped, we take a look at the *peepal* tree (*Ficus religiosa*) we found fruiting yesterday. It is very busy with Asian Fairy-bluebirds, barbets, bulbuls, Plum-headed Parakeets, and a Malabar Grey Hornbill. Square-tailed Black Bulbuls are our first. In a tree nearby a pair of Malabar Pied Hornbills sit and preen. On the wires are an interesting selection comprising Black-headed Bunting, Common Rosefinch, Long-tailed and Brown Shrikes, and Yellow-throated Sparrows.

As we reach camp, more than ready for breakfast, a flock including Greater Racket-tailed Drongo and Heart-spotted Woodpecker is working its way through the canopy. A short walk through forest and the adjacent Wildwoods camp produces nothing new – in fact very little as the heat is building up fast. Malabar Parakeets continue to frustrate us, as a pair dashes by without giving us good views. There is time to shower, pack and relax before our final Backwoods lunch.

At 1350 we leave the friendly staff (and tree-frogs in the bathrooms), and set off back for the coast, happy to have seen most of the endemics and target species of this part of the Western Ghats. Iain and David have an Orange-headed Thrush outside their cabin as they leave. It takes two and a half hours to reach Ronil Beach. After we have settled back into our cool and comfortable rooms, we walk to the Beira Mar Hotel. Here we have a second chance to watch and scope birds at leisure over a cool drink. Highlights include our first Black-crowned Night Heron and White-browed Wagtails. The wagtails are on the electric wires, along with birds as diverse as bee-eaters, shrikes, munias, kingfishers, and even Pond Herons and a Brahminy Kite. Common Snipe are here too, both on the ground, and a party of eight in flight. At 1820, two Spotted Owlets start their day just as most other species have already gone to sleep. We enjoy the Ronil's more varied menu.

### **Saturday, 28 November**

After an exciting schedule in the heat and humidity of the camp, we opt for an easy day today. All the same, we are out early to catch the maximum bird activity. The morning walk is very local, on Baga Hill, which overlooks the Baga Ricefields. A pair of Alexandrine Parakeets have a nest in a dead palm near the road; later we watch three in flight uttering their deep calls. Other birds include Drongo-Cuckoo, Indian Yellow Tit, Small Minivet, Rufous Treepie, Indian Blackbird and White-cheeked Barbet. A pair of Blue-tailed Bee-eaters pass overhead, making for the lake by the Baga Ricefields. Outside the Marinha Dourada are three species of kingfishers, Pied Bushchat and Paddyfield Pipits. A White-bellied Sea Eagle soars high above Baga Hill.

In late morning a proposed amble for a few items of Christmas shopping is foiled by a surprise: most shops are closed for a Muslim festival. Islam is a minority religion here, with far fewer devotees in Goa than Christianity and Hinduism. After lunch and siesta, we walk round to the Beira Mar. A Little Ringed Plover is our first, on the distant lake that also has Wood Sandpiper and one of four Purple Herons. There are more Grey-headed and Rosy Starlings on the wires than before. We discover as we are about to leave that a new

hotel, the Nazri, has opened up next to the Beira Mar, with a terrace overlooking the rice-fields – we'll give it a try soon.

We try a Barn Owl vigil between 1820 and 1900, from the balcony of room V21, but it eludes us again. Perhaps it's not nesting up in the water tower this year. We all try the superb freshly-caught kingfish, but in different styles: *tandoori*, *masala* and *florentine*.

### **Sunday, 29 November**

We have a number of places still to visit that need an earlier start than our usual 07.00. So, we begin a new regime of 0630 departures, still with a full breakfast available before we go. This morning is our boat-trip on the Zuari River. As we pass the Saligao Ricefields, we stop to watch a pair of Woolly-necked Storks. The Sea Pearl, with a canopy and a crew of three, awaits us. First we voyage a short distance downstream, under the great rail and road bridges. Great Crested Terns are perched on poles that are used to support fish nets. A Little Tern hovers and fishes, one of Goa's less common terns. In this area are also Wire-tailed and Streak-throated Swallows, and a grey Western Reef Egret. Now we cruise upstream, into the Cumbarjua Channel, and start to see Black-capped and Stork-billed Kingfishers. Pied, White-throated and Common Kingfishers soon follow, leaving only the more tricky Collared to find. We cruise past species as diverse as Osprey, Montagu's Harrier, Darter, Striated Heron and Indian Golden Oriole, before we turn down a narrow creek. An Indian Reed Warbler flies off, much larger than the more abundant Blyth's Reed. Eventually a pair of Collared Kingfishers appear, as usual more hidden in the trees than their relatives. As we head back, an Indian Spotted Eagle takes to the air among the legions of Brahminy Kites. The Zuari cruise is always a much enjoyed, relaxing morning outing.

A short detour on the drive back takes us to Batim Lake, a water-lily-clad stretch of water near Goa Velha. This is my first visit here, and quickly I realize that it's worth more time one afternoon when the sun is at a better angle. Before we go, we find Common Teal among a great number of Lesser Whistling-Duck and Garganey, and both jacana species. We will return on Tuesday.

Lunch is another fine and satisfying one served by Pradeep and his men. After siesta, I had hoped to take a walk from the football field at the north end of the Baga paddyfields. But as it is much too wet underfoot, we try a local walk in the area of Thomas Bar, at the south end of the Baga ricefields. We see nothing new for the holiday, but Indian Shag is new for us in Baga, obligingly next to a Little Cormorant. There is plenty to watch, from harriers and sandpipers to bee-eaters, shrikes and orioles.

### **Monday, 30 November**

We set off at 0630 for Mayem Lake. We decide to go by the more direct bridge route, and meet Pramod at the lake, rather than by the ferry route that we have often used in the past. It only takes 45 minutes to reach the lake, and as we arrive early mist is rising from the water. Mayem is a beautiful forest where bird activity is usually good in the mornings. Red-throated Flycatcher starts us off. This is the eastern form of the European Red-breasted, often called Taiga Flycatcher from the Siberian habitat where it nests. We soon reach an area of open forest on one side and lake on the other. Here we watch as a succession of interesting species pass by, or remain in view for several minutes. Among them are Greater Racket-tailed, White-bellied and Bronzed Drongos, Common Woodshrike, Black-hooded Oriole, White-cheeked and Coppersmith Barbets, Jerdon's Leafbird, Black-rumped Flameback and Yellow-crowned Woodpecker. A pair of Ashy Prinias are our first, and a Crested Hawk-Eagle comes in to land close to us. We also spend time enjoying a Rufous Woodpecker which moves slowly, feeding on branches close to the ground.

After a refreshing drink at the café where we parked, we head for the Ribander ferry, stopping at Tikhamen on the way. This is an area of unharvested paddy and mangroves not far from Pramod's home. Here our diverse sightings include Common Hoopoe, Lesser Adjutant, and a magnificent juvenile Steppe Eagle, which conflicts in mid-air with two Western Marsh Harriers, dwarfing them with its huge size and wingspan. At the ferry we say goodbye to Pramod, and watch a flock of Eurasian Curlews as we cross the Mandovi River. We arrive back at Ronil in time for lunch, after passing an Indian Spotted Eagle at the Saligao Ricefields.

At 1600 we walk down to the Nazri Resort, the new hotel just beyond the Beira Mar, which has a similar garden viewpoint over the paddies. It only opened in March, and we find the staff hospitable, but some of

the guests a little too inquisitive! Over bottles of *Kingfisher* beer, we enjoy the usual species, plus Woolly-necked Stork, much harassed by crows and kites. There are many more snipe flying round, including groups of ten or 15. All the ones we can identify from wing patterns are Common. We finish at the Beira Mar, as dusk approaches, with a close-up motionless Chestnut Bittern and the usual Spotted Owlet, on cue at 1820. Tonight we dine by the pool with the Canadian couple we met at Backwoods.

### **Tuesday, 1 December**

We leave early for Carambolim Saltmarsh, and arrive as the sun is clearing the tree-tops. We start at the site of a long abandoned crocodile breeding project, with birdlife to watch in all directions. Over the saltmarsh, White-bellied Sea-Eagle and Lesser Adjutant perch up on mangrove bushes. Ronald finds a Pied Avocet among the waders: we are surprised by Pramod's reaction. First he wants to check it in the scope; then tells us it's a rarity in Goa, and new to his Goa list. Black-winged Stilt is also the first we have seen in Goa. Various other birds here such as Black-headed Ibis and Streak-throated Swallow are not seen every day here, but the main impression of this magic spot is the constant flights of egrets and cormorants and the atmospheric nature of the sunrise scene. A little way inland is the small woodland where we looked for Brown Hawk Owl eight days ago. We have no more luck with it today, but instead turn up a heavily barred Jungle Owlet, which was not expected. A Common Hoopoe, flying over the nearby expanse of paddyfields, is our last good bird at this spot.

We drive a short distance to the east side of Carambolim Lake, and scope the scene in front of us for the next hour. A Greater Spotted Eagle flies past us twice, and finally settles in a tall tree. This winter visitor specializes in waterfowl, so it is no surprise to see it here. It has hundreds of duck, jacanas, egrets and swamphens to choose from. The numerous Lesser Whistling Duck are now joined by one Spot-billed Duck and a few Northern Shoveler and Northern Pintail, almost certainly arrived since our last visit. A Glossy Ibis flies over. Ronald takes time photographing the Purple Swamphens and Bronze-winged Jacanas closest to us: their plumages are superb in the morning sun. Now that most species are familiar to us, we can spend time on comparing the Little Cormorants and Indian Shags perched together; and the difference between male and female Pied Kingfishers. Eventually the mid-morning heat wins the battle, and we return for lunch.

After siesta, we set out at 1530 for Batim Lake, which we looked at quickly on Sunday. Lesser Whistling Duck, Cotton and Common Teal and Garganey are here in impressive numbers. There are also a few Northern Pintail and one Northern Shoveler. Batim is in a beautiful setting, with the light perfect in late afternoon. One Western Marsh Harrier flies over, but too high to rearrange the duck. A pair of Little Grebe are feeding a stripy-faced chick. A series of electric wires cross the lake, making ideal perches for large numbers of Blue-tailed Bee-eaters, a few Common and White-throated Kingfishers, and various hirundines including one Sand Martin. Like Carambolim, Batim is a dam for irrigating rice paddies on the other side of the road. One paddy system has a good number of Wood Sandpipers, just arrived from the far north. Now we say goodbye to Pramod, who is starting a spell at Backwoods tomorrow.

Rui Madre Deus is general manager of the Ronil Beach, and honorary head chef. He is a friend of Rick Stein's, and specializes in fish dishes. Usually he comes to our table one night during our tours and presents a freshly cooked fish in some delicious sauce. Unfortunately he is in hospital at present, but he has instructed his head chef to cook us a huge red snapper *à la Portuguese*. Second helpings all round!

### **Wednesday, 2 December**

We leave for Bondla at 0530 with a packed breakfast. Bondla is a forest reserve three-quarters of the way to Backwoods, but at this hour the journey only takes an hour and ten minutes. We stop to collect Loven from Old Goa. We arrive at an excellent spot for breakfast and birding at 0640, in full daylight but before the sun has cleared the trees. The spot is a bridge near a temple, with open views of a number of huge bamboos much favoured by a parade of species in the early morning. A Crested Hawk-Eagle is the most conspicuous, being both the largest and the noisiest, as it keeps up a piercing whistling for half an hour. It is joined by Rufous Tree-pie, White-bellied Drongo, Indian Golden Oriole, and later, a Forest Wagtail perched perilously close to the eagle. Even closer bamboo-tops in the opposite direction reveal a Vernal Parrot actually hanging upside down, Copper-smith Barbets, Black-headed Cuckooshrike, and Black-hooded Oriole. Other birds seen around the bridge include Tawny-bellied Babbler, Black-naped Monarch, Malabar Pied Hornbill, Black Robin, and a Booted Eagle of the dark morph, on the wing earlier than most eagles. A Malabar White-headed Starling feeds on nectar from a flowering bush right alongside us.

Walking from the bridge, we continue with excellent sightings. Loven shows us three Oriental Scops Owls in their secret roost, and we enjoy a flock of Crested Treeswifts perched, preening, from another bamboo top. Next come Jerdon's Leafbird, Asian Paradise Flycatcher, and Brown-cheeked Fulvetta. Three birds of great interest are heard but unfortunately not seen: Blue-bearded Bee-eater, Little Spiderhunter, and Malabar Grey Hornbill. Driving on a little way, we reach the hilltop which is our highest point of the tour, about 300m. Here we pay a small entrance fee, which allows visitors to explore the small zoo at the foot of the hill. This we don't intend to do, but we enjoy more wildlife on the walk down. Loven, in great form, finds us a Blue-headed Rock-Thrush and three Malabar Trogons. With help from his mobile phone, he entices a superb White-rumped Shama into full view, where it waits to be scoped. Next comes a mixed flock with Greater Racket-tailed Drongo, Pied Flycatcher-shrike, and Velvet-fronted Nuthatch. The mammal list is boosted by Spotted Deer, Indian Giant Squirrel, and the Bonnet Macaques we got to know at Backwoods. Our last good bird is a Greater Flameback, before we leave Bondla. Coachloads of school children arriving make our departure seem timely. We had planned to stop for lunch at the Sahakari Spice Garden on the outskirts of Ponda, but when we pass at 1145, we realize we are too early. Pressing on, we reach Ronil Beach at 1245.

We still find plenty of new tastes to enjoy at lunch, though old favourites are starting to appear among our choices. After siesta, we meet for a further session at the Beira Mar. Here we record a total of 54 species between 1608 and 1825, when two Spotted Owlets appear on the wires. The most noteworthy are our first Pintail Snipe, with dark underwing and no white trailing edge to secondaries, and a Western Reef Egret that makes two flights, as if looking for tidal mudflats, in front of us. Dinner is as enjoyable as ever, sitting out by the pool under the full moon.

#### **Thursday, 3 December**

Dona Paula is a laterite plateau west of Panaji, the capital city of Goa, always known as Panjim. We are here at 0645, half an hour after leaving the hotel. Greater Short-toed Larks feed on the ground in front of us, with two Oriental Skylarks. The third expected lark, Ashy-crowned Finch-Lark, is hiding this morning. There are more common species too such as Paddyfield Pipit and Black Robin, but recently the Yellow-wattled Lapwings that used to be a feature of the plateau have become less reliable, presumably as a result of greater disturbance. This is a spot where in the past our November groups have found Amur Falcons, a long distance migrant from Eastern Siberia to South Africa. Loven suspects they passed through the week before we arrived.

Next we turn our attention to the Santa Cruz Ricefields, where in not much more than an hour we find 15 species of waders. They include Curlew Sandpiper, Marsh Sandpiper, Temminck's and Little Stints feeding together in excellent light, Ruff, many Little Ringed Plovers, and a flock of Small Pratincoles, quietly camouflaged on the ground. Other notable birds here are Brown Shrike, Stork-billed Kingfisher, and Plain Prinia, to name a few. As we leave, three Woolly-necked Storks fly up the river. A little further on, we stop to scope a wader-, gull-, and tern-roost by a busy main road. Here are Gull-billed Terns, Brown-headed Gulls, Lesser Sand Plovers, and a lone Black-tailed Godwit.

There is time to visit another site before lunch, so we turn off the Calangute road by a smartly restored old Hindu temple. Pilerne Lake is always worth a half-hour visit, and this time produces a pair of Yellow-wattled Lapwings. There are also our first Yellow Wagtails, Bronze-winged Jacanas with chicks, seven close Cotton Teal, and a fine aerial display of raptors: among the numerous kites we find two White-bellied Sea-Eagles adult and young, two Greater Spotted Eagles, and a Shikra that causes passerine alarm calls all around as it flies past.

After lunch and siesta, we have two more wetland destinations: Siolim Paddies and Parshim Marsh, both to the north. At Siolim, we find a great concentration of egrets – mostly Great, Intermediate and Little, with a few Western Reef, and feeding with them over 50 Asian Openbills. They are picking up and grasping large water snails, which their nutcracker-like bills will open when the snails are manoeuvred to the right angle. These huge ricefields have drawn thousands of birds to them, but patient searching reveals nothing new among the waders. Black-winged Stilts are especially abundant.

Crossing the Chapora River, we return to Parshim marsh, which we visited on our first Tuesday. Now we walk out onto the causeway overlooking the saltmarsh, at low tide. The mud to our right is littered with

Redshanks and Greenshanks, with seven Terek Sandpipers chasing after crabs. To our left, the marsh has a growth of tall grass, with shallow ponds which have attracted six Ruddy Shelducks. As we head back into the setting sun, two Peregrines squabble and scream in the air above us. One flies perilously close to a Stork-billed Kingfisher on a wire, but the kingfisher holds its ground. This atmospheric place is also a roosting site for large numbers of Green and Blue-tailed Bee-eaters. On the way back, Loven spots a pair of Yellow-wattled Lapwings by the road in the Anjuna ricefields.

### **Friday, 4 December**

For our last day, the group chooses a relaxing one, with a look at Arpora and Baga Hill in the morning, and a final session at the Beira Mar. Nevertheless, we are still starting our breakfast before daybreak, while a Brown Hawk Owl is calling in a nearby tree. The first hour at Arpora is under a cloud cover and humidity we are not used to on the coast. Asian Paradise Flycatcher, White-cheeked Barbets, White-spotted Fantail and Peafowl are among the early birds. An Indian Pitta calls once, but from behind a high wall. Baga Hill starts with the nesting Alexandrine Parakeet, still defending its nest-hole. Tawny-bellied Babblers skulking and Indian Golden Orioles showing themselves off soon follow. We see Purple, Loten's and Purple-rumped Sunbirds, but not the hoped-for Vigors's (a recent split from Crimson). On the hilltop, we are at the same height as two soaring raptors: a well-marked Oriental Honey-buzzard and our first convincing Black-eared Kite (see taxonomic note no.3 below). A Blyth's Pipit flies over, calling its distinctive *spzeeuu*. Soon after 1000 the sun belatedly comes out, and we begin our short return to Ronil Beach. At the hotel we say farewell to Loven, who has guided us with special flair and dedication these last three days.

After lunch and siesta, we wander round to the Beira Mar at 1600, passing optimistic taxi-drivers still offering us the chance to see various Goa rarities. We have Baya Weavers in force on the wires, among the flocks of starlings, mynas and munias. Bee-eaters, rollers and woodswallows are up there too, in smaller numbers. The Osprey is by the lake again, never moving at the top of its dead palm, except to preen. Western Marsh Harriers quarter the ground in front of us, consistently failing to put up any Painted-snipe: a species that can often be found here from November to March. The Spotted Owlet is up on the wires earlier than usual, at 1816, allowing us to watch it in better light. Our final evening by the pool is a convivial one, as we chat over the many highlights of the tour, and enjoy our last outdoor meal of the year.

### **Saturday, 5 December**

Our journey home is punctual and uneventful. We leave the friendly staff of the Ronil Beach at 0600, and are soon on our first plane, to Mumbai. During the 45 minute hop, the Jet Airways staff successfully serve to all passengers a hot breakfast with even a choice of main dish. The connecting flight to London takes off at 1330 local time, and lands at a cold, damp Heathrow at 1720 GMT. In due course the luggage arrives, and we say our final farewells in the baggage hall.

### **Acknowledgements**

Many thanks to Loven and Pramod for guiding us and finding us many fine species. Thanks to our drivers, both named Sudhir, for keeping us safe on Goa's roads; and to all the staff at Ronil Beach and Backwoods, for excellent service always offered with a smile. Special thanks to the group for participating in the tour with enthusiasm, patience and sense of humour. I hope we may meet up on another Ornitholiday again soon. Thanks also to Ronald for the photographs that illustrate this report.

Simon Boyes  
Ornitholidays  
29, Straight Mile,  
Romsey,  
Hampshire,  
SO51 9BB  
Tel: 01794-519445  
E-mail: [info@ornitholidays.co.uk](mailto:info@ornitholidays.co.uk)  
December 2009

## Itinerary and Weather

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

- 21 November** Arrive Goa 1400. To Baga.  
Sunny, 31°C (88°F)
- 22 November** Arpora Hill. Beira Mar Hotel (BMH).  
Sunny, 24-31°C (75-88°F)
- 23 November** Saligao Spring. Carambolim Lake and Saltmarsh.  
Sunny, 24-31°C (75-88°F)
- 24 November** Morjim Beach & Parshim Marsh. Fort Aguada.  
Sunny, 24-30°C (75-86°F)
- 25 November** To Backwoods.  
Mostly sunny, one light afternoon shower, 24-30°C (75-86°F)
- 26 November** Backwoods.  
Sunny, 23-30°C (73-86°F)
- 27 November** Backwoods. Return to Baga.  
Sunny, humid, 22-28°C (72-82°F)
- 28 November** Baga Hill. BMH.  
Sunny, 23-32°C (73-90°F)
- 29 November** Zuari Boat Trip. Baga Ricefields, around Thomas Bar.  
Sunny, 21-30°C (70-86°F)
- 30 November** Mayem Lake. Nazri Resort and BMH.  
Sunny, 21-31°C (70-88°F)
- 1 December** Carambolim Saltmarsh and Lake. Batim Lake.  
Sunny, 22-30°C (72-86°F)
- 2 December** Bondla. BMH.  
Sunny, 22-30°C (72-86°F)
- 3 December** Dona Paula Plateau; Santa Cruz Ricefields; Pilerne Lake. Siolim Ricefields; Parshim Marsh. Sunny, 23-31°C (73-88°F)
- 4 December** Arpora; Baga Hill. BMH.  
Sunny, 24-30°C (75-86°F)
- 5 December** Depart Goa 0900.  
Sunny, 27°C (81°F)

## CHECKLIST OF BIRDS SEEN DURING TOUR

### No of days recorded

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

### Location

A = All coastal locations  
B = Transitional zone: Mayem & Carambolim  
C = Western Ghats: Backwoods And Bondla

### Abundance Scale (max. on 1 day)

1 = 1 – 4 individuals  
2 = 5 - 9  
3 = 10 - 99  
4 = 100 - 999  
5 = 1000 - 9999

SPECIES	No of days recorded	Locations	Abundance Scale	SCIENTIFIC NAME
Oriental Darter	3	A B	2	<i>Anhinga melanogaster</i>
Little Cormorant	13	A B C	4	<i>Phalacrocorax niger</i>
Indian Shag (Cormorant) <sup>1</sup>	5	A B	3	<i>Phalacrocorax fuscicollis</i>
Little Grebe	3	A B	2	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>
Intermediate Egret	11	A B	4	<i>Egretta intermedia</i>
Little Egret	11	A B	4	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>
Western Reef Egret	5	A	2	<i>Egretta gularis</i>
Great Egret	11	A B	3	<i>Ardea alba</i>
Grey Heron	10	A B	2	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>
Purple Heron	11	A B	2	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>
(Eastern) Cattle Egret <sup>2</sup>	14	A B C	3	<i>Bubulcus coromandus</i>
Indian Pond Heron	14	A B C	4	<i>Ardeola grayii</i>
Striated (Little) Heron <sup>1</sup>	3	A	1	<i>Butorides striatus</i>
Chestnut (Cinnamon) Bittern <sup>1</sup>	1	A	1	<i>Ixobrychus cinnamomeus</i>
Black-crowned Night-Heron	1	A	1	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>
Woolly-necked Stork	3	A	2	<i>Ciconia episcopus</i>
Lesser Adjutant	3	A	1	<i>Leptoptilos javanicus</i>
Asian Openbill	2	A	3	<i>Anastomus oscitans</i>
Black-headed Ibis	4	A	3	<i>Threskiornis melanocephalus</i>
Glossy Ibis	1	B	1	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>
Lesser Whistling-Duck	6	A B	4	<i>Dendrocygna javanica</i>
Ruddy Shelduck	2	A	2	<i>Tadorna ferruginea</i>
Northern Pintail	1	A B	3	<i>Anas acuta</i>
Common Teal	2	A	4	<i>Anas crecca</i>
Spot-billed Duck	1	B	1	<i>Anas poecilorhyncha</i>
Garganey	3	A	4	<i>Anas querquedula</i>
Northern Shoveler	1	A	2	<i>Anas clypeata</i>
Cotton Teal (Pygmy-goose) <sup>1</sup>	3	A B	3	<i>Nettapus coromandelianus</i>
Oriental Honey-buzzard	2	A	1	<i>Pernis ptilorhynchus</i>
Brahminy Kite	13	A B C	3	<i>Haliastur indus</i>
Black Kite <sup>3</sup>	13	A B C	3	<i>Milvus migrans</i>
Shikra	7	A B C	1	<i>Accipiter badius</i>
Mountain Hawk-Eagle	1	C	1	<i>Spizaetus nipalensis</i>
Crested (Changeable) Hawk-Eagle <sup>2</sup>	2 2h	A B C	1	<i>Spizaetus cirrhatus</i>
Rufous-bellied Eagle	1	C	1	<i>Hieraaetus kienerii</i>
Booted Eagle	1	C	1	<i>Hieraaetus pennatus</i>
Steppe Eagle	1	A	1	<i>Aquila nipalensis</i>
Greater Spotted Eagle	2	A B	1	<i>Aquila clanga</i>
Indian Spotted Eagle <sup>2</sup>	3	A	1	<i>Aquila hastata</i>
Osprey	9	A B	1	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>
White-bellied Sea Eagle	6	A	1	<i>Haliaeetus leucogaster</i>
Montagu's Harrier	1	A	1	<i>Circus pygargus</i>
Western (Eurasian) Marsh Harrier	12	A B	2	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>
Crested Serpent Eagle	1	C	1	<i>Spilornis cheela</i>
Peregrine Falcon	2	A	1	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>
Indian Peafowl	6	A C	2	<i>Pavo cristatus</i>
White-breasted Waterhen	8	A B C	1	<i>Amaurornis phoenicurus</i>
Common Moorhen	2	A B	2	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>
Common Coot	3	A B	3	<i>Fulica atra</i>
Purple Swamphen	2	A B	3	<i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i>

Pheasant-tailed Jacana	3		A	B		3	<i>Hydrophasianus chirurgus</i>
Bronze-winged Jacana	5		A	B		3	<i>Metopidius indicus</i>
Pied Avocet	1		A			1	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>
Black-winged Stilt	2		A			3	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>
Small Pratincole	1		A			3	<i>Glareola lactea</i>
Yellow-wattled Lapwing	1		A			1	<i>Vanellus malabaricus</i>
Red-wattled Lapwing	11	2h	A	B	C	3	<i>Vanellus indicus</i>
Lesser Sand Plover	2		A			3	<i>Charadrius mongolus</i>
Little Ringed Plover	3		A			3	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>
Kentish Plover	1		A			1	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>
Ruff	2		A			2	<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>
Eurasian Curlew	1		A			3	<i>Numenius arquata</i>
Black-tailed Godwit	1		A			1	<i>Limosa limosa</i>
Common Redshank	10		A			4	<i>Tringa totanus</i>
Marsh Sandpiper	1		A			1	<i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>
Common Greenshank	10		A			3	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>
Wood Sandpiper	6		A			3	<i>Tringa glareola</i>
Green Sandpiper	8		A		C	2	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>
Terek Sandpiper	1		A			3	<i>Xenus cinereus</i>
Common Sandpiper	9		A	B		3	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>
Common Snipe	6		A			3	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>
Pintail Snipe	1		A			1	<i>Gallinago stenura</i>
Curlew Sandpiper	1		A			1	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>
Little Stint	1		A			3	<i>Calidris minuta</i>
Temminck's Stint	1		A			1	<i>Calidris temminckii</i>
Slender-billed Gull	1		A			3	<i>Larus genei</i>
Black-headed Gull	1		A			2	<i>Larus ridibundus</i>
Brown-headed Gull	3		A			5	<i>Larus brunnicephalus</i>
Great Black-headed (Pallas's) Gull <sup>1</sup>	1		A			1	<i>Larus ichthyæetus</i>
Steppe (Caspian) Gull <sup>3</sup>	1		A			3	<i>Larus barabensis</i>
Heuglin's Gull	1		A			3	<i>Larus heuglini</i>
Great Crested Tern	2		A			3	<i>Thalasseus bergii</i>
Lesser Crested Tern	2		A			2	<i>Thalasseus bengalensis</i>
Gull-billed Tern	5		A			3	<i>Gelochelidon nilotica</i>
Little Tern	1		A			1	<i>Sterna albifrons</i>
Whiskered Tern	3		A	B		2	<i>Chlidonias hybrida</i>
Spotted Dove	13		A	B	C	3	<i>Streptopelia chinensis</i>
Emerald Dove	1				C	1	<i>Chalcophaps indica</i>
Grey-fronted (Pompadour) Green Pigeon <sup>2</sup>	3		A	B	C	1	<i>Treron affinis</i>
Mountain Imperial Pigeon	2				C	2	<i>Ducula badia</i>
Rock Pigeon (feral)	12		A	B		4	<i>Columba livia</i>
Plum-headed Parakeet	8		A	B	C	3	<i>Psittacula cyanocephala</i>
Malabar Parakeet	1	2h			C	1	<i>Psittacula columboides</i>
Alexandrine Parakeet	2		A			1	<i>Psittacula eupatria</i>
Rose-ringed Parakeet	9	1h	A	B		3	<i>Psittacula krameri</i>
Vernal Hanging Parrot	4				C	1	<i>Loriculus vernalis</i>
(Fork-tailed) Drongo-Cuckoo <sup>3</sup>	2		A			1	<i>Surniculus (lugubris) dicruroides</i>
Asian Koel	9	1h	A	B	C	3	<i>Eudynamis scolopacea</i>
Southern (Greater) Coucal <sup>3</sup>	4	5h	A	B	C	1	<i>Centropus (sinensis) parroti</i>
Ceylon (Sri Lanka) Frogmouth <sup>1</sup>	1				C	1	<i>Batrachostomus moniliger</i>
Jerdon's Nightjar	-	1h			C	1	<i>Caprimulgus atripennis</i>
Barn Owl	1		A			1	<i>Tyto alba</i>
Oriental Scops Owl	1				C	1	<i>Otus sunia</i>
Brown Hawk Owl	-	1h	A			1	<i>Ninox scutulata</i>
Jungle Owlet	1		A			1	<i>Glaucidium radiatum</i>
Spotted Owlet	5		A			1	<i>Athene brama</i>
Indian Swiftlet	2				C	3	<i>Aerodramus unicolor</i>
Asian Palm Swift	5		A		C	2	<i>Cypsiurus balasiensis</i>
Little (House) Swift	9		A			4	<i>Apus affinis</i>
Crested Treeswift	1				C	3	<i>Hemiprocne coronata</i>
Indian Roller	10		A	B		2	<i>Coracias benghalensis</i>
Malabar Trogon	2				C	1	<i>Harpactes fasciatus</i>
Pied Kingfisher	8		A	B		1	<i>Ceryle rudis</i>

White-throated Kingfisher	13		A	B	C	3	<i>Halcyon smyrnensis</i>
Black-capped Kingfisher	2		A			1	<i>Halcyon pileata</i>
Stork-billed Kingfisher	5	1h	A		C	1	<i>Pelargopsis capensis</i>
Common Kingfisher	8		A	B		3	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>
Collared Kingfisher	1		A			1	<i>Todiramphus chloris</i>
Blue-tailed Bee-eater	9		A	B		3	<i>Merops philippinus</i>
Green Bee-eater	13		A	B	C	3	<i>Merops orientalis</i>
Chestnut-headed Bee-eater	2				C	1	<i>Merops leschenaulti</i>
Blue-bearded Bee-eater	-	1h			C	-	<i>Nyctornis athertoni</i>
White-cheeked Barbet	6	5h	A	B	C	1	<i>Megalaima viridis</i>
Coppersmith Barbet	3	4h	A	B		1	<i>Megalaima haemacephala</i>
Malabar (Crimson-fronted) Barbet <sup>2</sup>	3				C	2	<i>Megalaima malabarica</i>
Common Hoopoe	2		A			1	<i>Upupa epops</i>
Malabar Grey Hornbill	2	1h			C	1	<i>Ocyroceros griseus</i>
Malabar Pied Hornbill	3				C	1	<i>Anthracoseros coronatus</i>
Rufous Woodpecker	1			B		1	<i>Micropternus brachyurus</i>
Black-rumped Flameback	6	1h	A	B	C	1	<i>Dinopium benghalense</i>
Greater Flameback	4				C	1	<i>Chrysocolaptes lucidus</i>
Heart-spotted Woodpecker	2				C	1	<i>Hemicircus canente</i>
Yellow-crowned Woodpecker	1			B		1	<i>Dendrocopos mahrattensis</i>
Indian Pygmy Woodpecker <sup>1</sup>	1				C	1	<i>Dendrocopos nanus</i>
Common Iora	9		A	B	C	2	<i>Aegithina tiphia</i>
Gold-fronted Leafbird	3				C	1	<i>Chloropsis aurifrons</i>
Jerdon's (Blue-winged) Leafbird <sup>2</sup>	5		A	B	C	1	<i>Chloropsis jerdoni</i>
Asian Fairy-bluebird	3				C	2	<i>Irena puella</i>
Indian Golden Oriole <sup>2</sup>	11		A	B	C	2	<i>Oriolus kundoo</i>
Black-hooded Oriole	3		A	B	C	1	<i>Oriolus xanthornus</i>
Black-naped Oriole	2	1h			C	1	<i>Oriolus chinensis</i>
Indian Pitta	-	2h	A		C	-	<i>Pitta brachyura</i>
Oriental Skylark	1		A			1	<i>Alauda gulgula</i>
Greater Short-toed Lark	1		A			3	<i>Calandrella brachydactyla</i>
Malabar Lark	7		A	B		1	<i>Galerida malabarica</i>
Common Sand-Martin	2		A			1	<i>Riparia riparia</i>
Dusky Crag-Martin	1		A			1	<i>Ptyonoprogne concolor</i>
Barn Swallow	13		A	B	C	4	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>
Wire-tailed Swallow	5		A			2	<i>Hirundo smithii</i>
Red-rumped Swallow	13		A	B	C	4	<i>Hirundo daurica</i>
Streak-throated Swallow	4		A		C	2	<i>Hirundo fluvicola</i>
Black Drongo	14		A	B	C	3	<i>Dicrurus macrocercus</i>
Greater Racket-tailed Drongo	4	1h		B	C	1	<i>Dicrurus paradiseus</i>
Hair-crested (Spangled) Drongo <sup>1</sup>	1				C	1	<i>Dicrurus hottentottus</i>
Ashy Drongo	10		A	B	C	2	<i>Dicrurus leucophaeus</i>
White-bellied Drongo	4		A	B	C	1	<i>Dicrurus caerulescens</i>
Bronzed Drongo	6		A	B	C	1	<i>Dicrurus aeneus</i>
Common Woodshrike	2			B	C	1	<i>Tephrodornis pondicerianus</i>
Malabar (Large) Woodshrike <sup>2</sup>	1	1h			C	1	<i>Tephrodornis sylvicola</i>
Long-tailed Shrike	13		A	B	C	1	<i>Lanius schach</i>
Brown Shrike	4		A		C	1	<i>Lanius cristatus</i>
Ashy Woodswallow	7		A			2	<i>Artamus fuscus</i>
Grey-headed (Chestnut-tailed) Starling <sup>1</sup>	10		A			3	<i>Sturnia malabarica</i>
Malabar White-headed Starling <sup>2</sup>	2				C	1	<i>Sturnia blythii</i>
Rosy Starling	9		A			3	<i>Sturnus roseus</i>
Common Myna	6		A			2	<i>Acridotheres tristis</i>
Jungle Myna	11		A	B	C	3	<i>Acridotheres fuscus</i>
Rufous Treepie	6		A		C	1	<i>Dendrocitta vagabunda</i>
House Crow	14		A	B	C	4	<i>Corvus splendens</i>
India Jungle (Large-billed) Crow <sup>1 3</sup>	6		A		C	2	<i>Corvus (macrorhynchos) culminatus</i>
Pied (Bar-winged) Flycatcher-shrike <sup>1</sup>	2		A		C	1	<i>Hemipus picatus</i>
Large Cuckooshrike	1		A			1	<i>Coracina macei</i>
Black-headed Cuckooshrike	2		A		C	1	<i>Coracina melanopectera</i>
Small Minivet	4		A		C	2	<i>Pericrocotus cinnamomeus</i>
Orange (Scarlet) Minivet <sup>2</sup>	1				C	1	<i>Pericrocotus flammeus</i>
Yellow-browed Bulbul	3	1h			C	1	<i>Iole indica</i>

Red-vented Bulbul	8		A	B	C	3	<i>Pycnonotus cafer</i>
Red-whiskered Bulbul	11		A	B	C	3	<i>Pycnonotus jocosus</i>
Flame-throated (Black-crested) Bulbul <sup>2</sup>	2	2h			C	2	<i>Pycnonotus gularis</i>
White-browed Bulbul	5	1h	A		C	2	<i>Pycnonotus luteolus</i>
Grey-headed Bulbul	1	3h	A		C	1	<i>Pycnonotus priocephalus</i>
Square-tailed Black Bulbul <sup>2</sup>	2				C	2	<i>Hypsipetes ganeesa</i>
Puff-throated Babbler	3	2h	A		C	1	<i>Pellorneum ruficeps</i>
Tawny-bellied Babbler	2		A		C	1	<i>Dumetia hyperythra</i>
Indian Scimitar Babbler	-	1h		B		-	<i>Pomatorhinus horsfieldii</i>
Dark-fronted Babbler	2				C	1	<i>Rhopocichla atriceps</i>
Jungle Babbler	6	1h	A	B	C	2	<i>Turdoides striata</i>
Brown-cheeked Fulvetta	5		A		C	2	<i>Alcippe poioicephala</i>
Verditer Flycatcher	3				C	1	<i>Eumyias thalassinus</i>
Red-throated (Taiga) Flycatcher <sup>2</sup>	1			B		1	<i>Ficedula albicilla</i>
Tickell's Blue Flycatcher	4	5h	A	B	C	1	<i>Cyornis tickelliae</i>
Asian Paradise Flycatcher	5	1h	A		C	1	<i>Terpsiphone paradisi</i>
Black-naped Blue Monarch	1				C	1	<i>Hypothymis azurea</i>
White-spotted (-throated) Fantail <sup>2</sup>	4		A			1	<i>Rhipidura albogularis</i>
Grey-breasted Prinia	3		A		C	1	<i>Prinia hodgsonii</i>
Ashy Prinia	2			B	C	1	<i>Prinia socialis</i>
Plain Prinia	1		A			1	<i>Prinia inornata</i>
Common Tailorbird	9	3h	A	B	C	2	<i>Orthotomus sutorius</i>
Indian (Clamorous) Reed-Warbler <sup>3</sup>	3	1h	A			1	<i>Acrocephalus (stentoreus) brunnescens</i>
Blyth's Reed-Warbler	6	5h	A	B	C	1	<i>Acrocephalus dumetorum</i>
Greenish Warbler	10		A	B	C	1	<i>Phylloscopus trochiloides</i>
Western-Crowned Warbler	1				C	1	<i>Phylloscopus occipitalis</i>
White-rumped Shama	1	1h		B	C	1	<i>Copsychus malabaricus</i>
Oriental Magpie Robin	10		A	B	C	2	<i>Copsychus saularis</i>
Indian Black Robin <sup>1</sup>	2		A		C	1	<i>Saxicoloides fulicata</i>
Common (Siberian) Stonechat	10		A			1	<i>Saxicola torquatus</i>
Pied Bushchat	9		A			1	<i>Saxicola caprata</i>
Blue-headed (-capped) Rock-Thrush <sup>1</sup>	1				C	1	<i>Monticola cinclorhynchus</i>
Malabar Whistling Thrush	1	1h		B	C	1	<i>Myophonus horsfieldii</i>
Orange-headed Thrush	3		A		C	1	<i>Zoothera citrina</i>
Indian Blackbird <sup>2</sup>	2		A			1	<i>Turdus simillimus</i>
India Yellow (Black-lored) Tit <sup>2</sup>	2		A			1	<i>Parus xanthogenys</i>
Velvet-fronted Nuthatch	2				C	1	<i>Sitta frontalis</i>
Blyth's Pipit	1		A			1	<i>Anthus godlewskii</i>
Paddyfield Pipit	4		A			1	<i>Anthus rufulus</i>
Forest Wagtail	1				C	1	<i>Dendronanthus indicus</i>
White-browed Wagtail	5		A	B		1	<i>Motacilla madaraspatensis</i>
Grey Wagtail	3	1h		B	C	1	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>
Yellow Wagtail	1		A			1	<i>Motacilla flava</i>
Little Spiderhunter	-	3h		B	C	-	<i>Arachnothera longirostra</i>
Purple-rumped Sunbird	9		A	B		2	<i>Leptocoma zeylonica</i>
Small (Crimson-backed) Sunbird <sup>1</sup>	4		A		C	2	<i>Leptocoma minima</i>
Loten's Sunbird	3		A			1	<i>Cinnyris lotenius</i>
Purple Sunbird	10			B	C	1	<i>Cinnyris asiaticus</i>
Thick-billed Flowerpecker	3				C	1	<i>Dicaeum agile</i>
Pale-billed Flowerpecker	1		A			1	<i>Dicaeum erythrorhynchos</i>
Nilgiri (Plain) Flowerpecker <sup>2</sup>	3		A			1	<i>Dicaeum concolor</i>
White-rumped Munia	11		A	B	C	3	<i>Lonchura striata</i>
Scaly-breasted Munia	7		A		C	3	<i>Lonchura punctulata</i>
Black-throated Munia	3				C	3	<i>Lonchura kelaarti</i>
Common Rosefinch	1				C	1	<i>Carpodacus erythrinus</i>
House Sparrow	1		A			1	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
Yellow-throated Sparrow <sup>1 4</sup>	3				C	3	<i>Petronia xanthocollis</i>
Baya Weaver	3		A			4	<i>Ploceus philippinus</i>
Black-headed Bunting	2				C	1	<i>Emberiza melanocephala</i>
Red-headed Bunting	1				C	1	<i>Emberiza bruniceps</i>

## TAXONOMIC NOTES

The names used in this list are those proposed in *Birds of South Asia – The Ripley Guide* by Pamela C. Rasmussen & John C. Anderton (Lynx Edicions & Smithsonian Institution 2005). These taxonomic changes are likely to be universally adopted in the near future. They are cross-referenced to the more familiar Grimmett & Inskipp nomenclature in the checklist below.

- 1 These species have a different name in Rasmussen & Anderton (R&A) from Grimmett & Inskipp (G&I), but the taxonomy is the same. The R&A name is placed first, with the G&I name in brackets.
- 2 These species have a different taxonomic treatment from G&I.
- 3 In this group of species, more study is required before some forms can be pronounced separate species. For example, in the case of Black-eared Kite, many individuals are easily recognizable, but intermediate individuals cause confusion.
- 4 Yellow-throated Sparrow was previously known as Chestnut-shouldered Petronia.

## MAMMALS

Common Langur	5	A		C	2	<i>Presbytis entellus</i>
Bonnet Macaque	3		B	C	3	<i>Macaca radiata</i>
Indian Flying Fox	1	A			2	<i>Pteropus giganteus</i>
Indian Giant Squirrel	1			C	1	<i>Ratufa indica</i>
Three-striped Palm Squirrel	11	A	B	C	2	<i>Funambulus palmarum</i>
Spotted Deer (Chital)	1			C	1	<i>Axis axis</i>
Indian Small Civet	1			C	1	<i>Viverricula indica</i>
Common Mongoose	1	A			1	<i>Herpestes edwardsi</i>
Indo-Pacific Humpback Dolphin	1	A			1	<i>Sousa chinensis</i>

**OTHER ANIMALS** included Checkered Keelback (*Xenochrophis piscator*), Malabar Flying Lizard, and a number of tree-frogs and toads.

**BUTTERFLIES** included Southern Birdwing, Common Rose, Crimson Rose, Blue Mormon, Common Sailor, Striped Tiger, and Common Indian Crow.

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



**Bronze-winged Jacana**



**Lesser Whistling-Ducks**



**Oriental Honey-buzzard**



**Black-rumped Flameback**



**Bonnet Macaque**



**Indian Giant Squirrel**

**Front cover: Malabar Pied Hornbill**

**All photographs © Ronald Dauster**