

ORNITHOLIDAYS TOUR TO NEPAL
Chitwan, Koshi & Phulchowki

11 - 24 March 2017



Leaders: David Walsh & Suchit Basnet

ORNITHOLIDAYS TOUR TO NEPAL

Chitwan, Koshi & Phulchowki

11 – 24 March 2017

A Personal Diary

The 2017 Ornitholidays' tour to Nepal was timed to coincide with the start of spring migration. Some of the wintering species had already headed north, but in mid-March we were blessed with fine weather and saw close to 300 birds, some stunning mammals (seen more easily than earlier in the year) and over 40 different butterflies taking advantage of the warmth.

We started and finished our holiday in Kathmandu, and spent two days exploring Phulchowki mountain where we encountered a variety of special passerines including Himalayan Bluetail, Striated Bulbul, Fire-tailed Sunbird, Black-faced Warbler and Black-throated Bushtit and had wonderful views to the north of the snow-covered Himalayas.

Next we moved on to the world-famous Chitwan National Park. Based in a comfortable lodge, we spent three full days in a range of habitats, walking through grassland, drifting down the Rapti River in boats, taking an elephant safari and using jeeps to go into the heart of the forest itself. The birds were impressive and included Blue-bearded Bee-eater, Greater Necklaced Laughingthrush, Indian Scops Owl, Stork-billed Kingfisher and Red-headed Trogon, but mammals took centre stage. Rhinos were numerous, and none of us will ever forget the magical two hours in which we encountered Sloth Bear, then Tiger, then Leopard, a combination never recorded previously by our guide in over 20 years!

Our third base was Koshi Camp, from where we explored locally using a 'bund' alongside the Koshi River, the wide range of birds including Brown Fish Owl and Streak-throated Woodpecker; we also travelled north to an area of short grassland where we had wonderful views of Indian Courser, voted Bird of the Trip. In the grounds of our camp we saw Scaly Thrush, Black Bittern and Siberian Rubythroat and, as at Chitwan, the night sounds were magical with an array of owls, nightjars and cuckoos vying for centre stage.

Throughout the trip we were fortunate to be guided by Suchit Basnet, one of the most experienced birdwatchers in Nepal and someone with a real passion for his country, its people and its wildlife. We were very well looked after, enjoyed some lovely Nepalese cuisine, and at Koshi in particular it was a real privilege to feel part of the local community. My first visit to Nepal was back in 1991, and I am very much looking forward to returning to this magical and inspiring country on our 2018 tour!

Saturday 11th March

Our Jet Airways flight left Heathrow's Terminal 4 shortly after 9pm; we were soon relaxing over a meal and trying to get some rest on our overnight journey to Asia.

Sunday 12th March

With strong tail winds, our flight to Delhi took just eight hours five minutes. We proceeded through the transit area and, two hours later, we were taking off again, continuing our journey east. A surprise to some of us, Kathmandu is actually a little south of Delhi. After 65 minutes in the air we landed, at 2.25pm local time, with Nepal being five hours 45 minutes ahead of GMT! Having collected our bags, we were warmly greeted by Suchit, our guide for the whole tour. It being Sunday afternoon there was little traffic; along the 20 minute journey to our hotel we saw lots of people out enjoying themselves as part of Holi "Festival of Colours"; we also noted our first House Crows and Black Kites. Check-in was efficient so we were settling in to our rooms by 4.15pm with plenty of time to get sorted.

At 6.30pm we met up in the restaurant, choosing between Everest and Gorkha beers, then enjoying Thali, a traditional Nepalese meal with several courses served on a platter. We were tucked up and attempting to sleep shortly before 9pm, eagerly anticipating our first full day's birding.

Monday 13th March

We convened for breakfast at 6am, a variety of western fare on offer in the buffet. At 6.45am we set off in three jeeps, heading east then south through a largely deserted Kathmandu before ascending steadily through

a number of villages. In one of them we picked up two police officers who would act as our 'guards' during the day, a precaution apparently based on incidents in the distant past: we actually felt very safe even without them. Having obtained our permits in Godaveri we began our drive up the 13 kilometre track to Phulchowki mountain. We had already reached 1,600 metres before making our first birding stop. Striated Laughingthrush was our first 'good bird' and the supporting cast included Green-backed Tit and Black-throated Sunbird, although the latter eluded many of the group. We tried to coax out a Chestnut-headed Tesia, but it remained hidden from most of us. In contrast, Black-faced Warblers and Black-throated Bushtits showed well to all, and we would have further sightings of these delightful species throughout the day.

Driving on, we encountered a total of five Kalij Pheasants on the track, first a male with two females and then a pair. Suitably encouraged, we made a second planned stop which proved highly productive. The source of a mystery song proved to be a male Large Niltava, only the second one Suchit had ever seen on Phulchowki. A pair of Himalayan Shrike-babblers gave excellent views, as did a Golden-throated Barbet, but a noisy Grey Treepie was only seen in flight whilst a Black Eagle overhead was noted by some but not all of us. A party of Nepal Fulvettas crossed the track and showed well to many.

A viewpoint gave magnificent views north towards the snow-covered Himalayas; we were very fortunate to be here on a magnificently clear day. Our first Green-tailed Sunbirds and a Rufous Sibia entertained us nearby, and a Large-billed Crow gave its raven-like call.

The road became a little icy in places, but careful driving meant we were able to continue, and we reached the top (to be precise, a few hundred metres before it) at 10.45am. We were at 2,650 metres and pleased to have warm clothes on, although the weather remained set fair; an Indian Tortoiseshell basking in the sunshine indicated that it really wasn't too cold. We strolled down the track which was, at this stage, reasonably flat, enjoying a gorgeous male Chestnut-bellied Rock Thrush, a showy White-tailed Nuthatch and the first of several Rufous-gorgeted Flycatchers. We watched a Goldcrest, one of very few 'familiar' birds in the area, before concentrating on the *Phylloscopus* warblers. We were fortunate that most co-operated splendidly in the trees below us, so we could really see the differences between Ashy-throated, Blyth's Leaf and Buff-barred Warblers. The 'yellow-bellied' Grey-hooded Warblers were easy to distinguish and would prove to be a common sight on both visits to the mountain. Suchit used the call of Collared Owlet to encourage the birds to come closer to us, and a real owlet responded too. White-browed Fulvettas were seen by a lucky few before we adjourned for our packed lunch, which included fried chicken, boiled eggs and muffins; we certainly wouldn't go hungry!

After lunch we walked further down the track for well over an hour, with the jeeps following us. The terrain was somewhat testing but we coped well. A Large Hawk-Cuckoo sang, Stripe-throated Yuhinas called, a female White-browed Bush Robin was glimpsed by some and a feeding group of Bar-throated Minlas whizzed through the canopy, but the birding was generally difficult. We persevered and, down at 2,300 metres, we returned to form with a run of five excellent species. First a Himalayan Black-lored Tit perched up nicely, then a pristine male Rufous-bellied Woodpecker sat out for us. The illustration in our book was of Rufous, not Rufous-bellied, Woodpecker, so it was great to see the real thing! The second of two Yellow-browed Tits gave splendid views before a male Fire-tailed Sunbird showed both sides of itself. Finally, what proved in the end to be a juvenile Himalayan Vulture soared overhead, provoking the usual raptor discussions.

We declared on a high and drifted down. In the villages we noted queues for fuel due to local shortages; despite the traffic we were back by 4.30pm. Dinner this evening was 'a la carte', some opting for Indian food, others Chinese. We had worked hard for many of our birds today but everyone had had a number of lifers and there had been many special moments; we had certainly been fortunate with the weather.

Tuesday 14th March

After breakfast we loaded our bags onto a coach and were introduced to Keshab, our driver, and Suraj, his helper. We headed off at 7am, round the 'M25' then west out of the Kathmandu valley. We had a long drive ahead of us, but had scheduled time to birdwatch along the way. Our first stop was unplanned, with two Himalayan Vultures and seven Steppe Eagles found roosting right by the road! We also noted our first Indian Jungle Crow, its call very different from the Long-billed Crow heard the previous day. At 9am we paused again to explore a couple of areas which Suchit thought might produce interesting species. A Yellow-throated Marten was unfortunately leader-only but the birds were more co-operative. A short stroll up a track away

from the road led us to an area of grassland with scattered trees, and we added a number of common birds to our list including Long-tailed Shrike, Plain Prinia and Oriental White-eye as well as Green-billed Malkoha; most uncharacteristically, the latter sat right out in the open! We returned to the road and braved the traffic as we stood on a bridge over a rocky stream, our rewards being a splendid White-capped Redstart and a fine Blue Whistling Thrush. House Swifts sped overhead: we saw surprisingly few swifts during the trip.

We made a pit stop and enjoyed a coffee whilst keeping a look-out in the trees and adjacent fields. This spot was very birdy with female Siberian Stonechat and Pied Bush Chat perching up and both Red-rumped Swallows and Grey-throated Martins flying overhead; Great Eggfly, Banded Treebrown and Common Sailor were added to our butterfly list. Refreshed, we continued our journey before making two stops at places where we had good vistas over the wide but fast-flowing Trishuli River, with its shingle islands. This was the wintering area for a small number of Ibisbills; we were to discover, much to our disappointment, that they had left within the last week to head back to their breeding areas. Supporting cast species were scant consolation but included Plumbeous Water Redstart, *alboides* White Wagtail and River Lapwing.

A 36 kilometre section of the highway was shut for roadworks until 3pm which gave us plenty of time to enjoy a relaxing lunch, and Suchit took us to a wonderful place near Kurintar with butterfly-rich gardens and a view along the valley. Momos (meat-filled dumplings) were among the choices made by the more adventurous! Yamfly, Common Lascar and Bevan's Swift were the pick of the butterflies, whilst a dragonfly perching by a water feature proved to go by the name of the Granite Ghost! A Common Garden Lizard was identified, whilst a perched juvenile Bonelli's Eagle perplexed us for a while.

The drive through the roadworks took two hours: we were actually expecting worse. The real issue the roadworks caused us was that we were unable to stop at spots which had been productive for Suchit in the past. We paused in the lowland forest at the far end, a scoped Hair-crested Drongo proving instructive. Then, after a fascinating drive through small villages as dusk approached, we arrived at our lodge on the edge of Chitwan National Park, home for four nights. We were warmly welcomed and there was time to begin settling in to our rooms before we met at 7.30pm for a Nepalese buffet dinner; Suchit explained that the country's cuisine was designed to make the most of spices without losing its taste by being too hot. Well before 9pm we retired: it had been a long day, and less birdy than expected, but we had nevertheless made some interesting sightings and looked forward to exploring a completely new area in the morning.

Wednesday 15th March

The night sounds from our rooms were awesome, with Spotted Deer, Brown Hawk-Owl, Large-tailed Nightjar and Common Hawk-Cuckoos all in full voice. Savanna Nightjar was added to the mix a little before dawn.

After breakfast, which unexpectedly included porridge, we met at 6.50am for a walk. It was great to stretch our legs after a day on the road. New birds came thick and fast as we strolled out of the gate and down the side of our grounds, seeing 'easy-to-identify' species such as Spotted Doves, Black Drongos, Chestnut-tailed and Asian Pied Starlings and Rufous Treepies. We compared Jungle, Common and Hill Mynas, whilst Green Bee-eaters and a Black-hooded Oriole provided real colour. A Shikra perched up before giving an impressive display, then we had frame-filling scope views of a drumming male Greater Flameback. A distant perched bird seemed worthy of further attention, and so it proved: Blue-bearded Bee-eater! Often this species calls from deep in the forest and is hard to see, but not today, as two of them sat up on a treetop for ages, allowing wonderful views for all of us.

Back down to earth, we discussed the taxonomy of the Cinereous Tits before Suchit moved us on, keen to get to the edge of the reeds before things hotted up. As always he was spot on with his timing, and most of us got very passable looks at a lurking Spotted Bush Warbler as well as excellent views of Chestnut-capped Babbblers. Smoky Warbler remained in the 'better views desired' category, but most of us weren't complaining. Red-whiskered Bulbul and Verditer Flycatcher, Cinnamon Bittern and Brown Crake, Yellow-bellied and Grey-breasted Prinias, Striated Babbler and Lesser Coucal – the new birds kept on coming, and most gave us ample time to study them, and try to remember them for later. We moved back into the drier habitat and Suchit stopped in his tracks as a small bird called from a bush close to us. It proved to be a female Himalayan Rubythroat, and it gave fine views to some but eluded others despite the leader's best efforts to coax it out.

Male and female Plum-headed Parakeets sat side-by-side, Chestnut-shouldered Petronias were seen by some and Blue Pansy was added to our ever-growing butterfly list before we reached the jeeps and headed back to base, arriving around 11.30am with an hour to simply relax or pore over the books and try to process the number of species we had seen: what a morning!

Onion soup was on the menu as part of our buffet lunch, then we had a 90 minute 'siesta', interrupted for some by the sight of our first Greater One-horned Rhinos in the field behind the lodge! We were pleased to see them, not realising quite how many we would encounter over the next few days.

At 2.30pm we met up again and made the short journey through the village to the National Park entrance. We disembarked and walked across the bridge over the Rapti River. There was loads to see and we were pleased to have our scopes with us. A Woolly-necked Stork was our only one of the trip, whilst a Grey-backed Shrike to the left and Hog Deer to the right meant we had to cross the road several times. We didn't turn down the chance to marvel at the Pied and White-throated Kingfishers even if they were common, there were plenty of egrets and herons to admire and sleeping Muggers to watch too. Our first Indian Peafowls strutted by the river and were enjoyed before we made for the end of the bridge, where a *calidus* Peregrine Falcon and a nesting pair of Red-naped Ibises were sharing the same tree! A Chestnut-bellied Nuthatch gave stunning views too, at eye level.

We strolled into the forest where, inevitably, the birds were harder to see, but by persevering we found a pair of Grey-capped Pygmy Woodpeckers, compared Western Crowned and Greenish Warblers and saw our first Velvet-fronted Nuthatch. Frustratingly a male Rosy Minivet remained leader-only. As we admired a Gharial down by the river, Suchit talked to us about the breeding programme designed to save this critically endangered species. Lineated Barbet and Chestnut-headed Bee-eaters gave wonderful scope views before it was time to head slowly back. A small 'black-and-white' passerine proved to be a male Ultramarine Flycatcher and caused much excitement; a female was spotted close by. Back at the bridge, a Himalayan Flameback eventually gave itself up, yet another bird which was new for virtually all of us.

We met for our splendid buffet dinner at 7.30pm; unsurprisingly, the bird list took a while to complete this evening! We looked forward expectantly to more of the same tomorrow.

Thursday 16th March

The night birds were once again on top form, and we had the bonus at breakfast of a Jungle Owlet perched in a tree outside the restaurant.

At 6.45am we set off in the jeeps for a full day's exploration inside Chitwan National Park; the idea was to get as far as time allowed in order to cover a wide range of habitats. We had a good start not far from the lodge, seeing Bengal Bush Lark, Black Francolin and Black-winged Kite having made a short cut to the right of the village. Once 'off road' inside the park we saw the first of several Wild Boars before coaxing out a rare Grey-crowned Prinia; the Pale-footed Bush Warbler in the same area eluded most of us. At this stage we were in Sal forest with grassland undergrowth, and we added White-bellied Drongo, Scarlet Minivet and Large Woodshrike as we progressed slowly along the track, plus Red Collared Dove drinking at a pond. Drifting along we enjoyed a perched Crested Serpent Eagle, a pair of Small Minivets and our first Oriental Pied Hornbills before we arrived at Kamal Tal, a larger expanse of water. Here it was deemed safe to get off the vehicles provided we stayed together, which meant I could set up the scope. As a result, the perched Stork-billed Kingfisher, Red-breasted Parakeet and Yellow-footed Green Pigeon were all seen splendidly as well as a Grey-headed Fish Eagle on its nest. Grey-headed Woodpecker and Black-crested Bulbul were further additions before we got back on the jeeps.

A short distance further on we came across the first of a number of small fires; the grass is burnt deliberately to allow new growth and prevent the whole area becoming forest. A Rhino was close enough to the track for us to be pretty wary about lingering! At a flowering tree we had seconds of a number of species seen earlier on, as well as a Spot-winged Starling, a species we were particularly pleased to see as its movements are erratic. We saw signs of Tiger presence with a scratch mark on a tree, then with a certain amount of excitement we crossed the Reu River. Here the habitat becomes mixed evergreen forest. We passed Tiger Tops lodge, a place much sought after in the distant past but, like all the other lodges inside the park, no longer used. We admired the Nepal Grey Langurs nearby, as well as both Greater Racket-tailed and Bronzed Drongos, before

stopping for lunch. It was, of course, not the optimum time of day to be here but we had to make the best of it. A Green Warbler called and was of interest to Suchit but it had become silent by the time I tried to show it to the group. We strolled along for a while, seeing Pin-striped Tit-Babbler above our heads, White-throated Bulbul ahead of us and, for some, a female Red-headed Trogon to the left. A Banded Bay Cuckoo called but remained hidden. We greatly enjoyed listening to the sweet song of a White-rumped Shama but only a few of the group were lucky enough to see it.

We did a loop and began our return journey; whilst still in the same habitat we found a party of Greater Necklaced Laughingthrushes which entertained us royally, and then a second Red-headed Trogon, this time a male. At the river, we watched a *leucopsis* White Wagtail and then a pair of White-tailed Stonechats. We were supposed to be looking for mammals, but new birds continued to appear with Orange-breasted Green Pigeon and Lesser Yellownappe seen superbly in the tall trees to our left.

The first of our two jeeps scored with Sloth Bear ahead of them on the track. There was little anyone could have done to assist those in the second jeep; some of us took a little while to get over the natural disappointment! A ringtail Hen Harrier drifted past and the Rhino total for the day passed 20 before, via a pond with Brown Crakes and a trackside Streak-throated Woodpecker, we made haste for the exit. Birding for the day wasn't quite finished as, in 'added time', we located an Indian Scops Owl right outside our rooms. It showed splendidly for those not already in the showers and preparing for dinner. A barbecue was served this evening and we reflected on a different sort of day in which we had got a real flavour of what Chitwan has to offer.

Friday 17th March

Our third day at Chitwan was action-packed! We set off at 6.45am and made a 20 minute journey to the Rapti River before donning life-jackets and gingerly stepping into two small boats, in which we were punted slowly down the river with the sun behind us. It was all very relaxing, and we added Rosy Pipit, Citrine Wagtail, Striated Heron and Golden Jackal to the list. A Peregrine Falcon reducing the population of Grey-throated Martins by one before our very eyes stole the show. We were thrilled to get really close views of Goosander, Lesser Adjutant, Asian Openbill and Purple Heron as well as a variety of kingfishers and, overall, it was a simply wonderful experience.

Once on land we drove off in the vehicles through the riverine forest, seeing a Spotted Owlet on the main road bridge and then a group of Oriental Honey Buzzards; we were pleased to see them, but less keen on their quarry! There was the first of several opportunities to take photographs in the local village before we returned to the lodge for a pit stop.

Part two of the morning's entertainment was an elephant safari. Being on the animal meant that other wildlife would apparently, if we were quiet, regard us as a 'part of the elephant' which meant we could get very close to them. To be honest, we had low expectations in terms of birdlife, especially as Suchit predicted that "we will see nothing smaller than a Lesser Coucal." The beauty of birding is that it is unpredictable, of course, and today that was demonstrated in spectacular fashion as we managed to locate both Slender-billed Babbler and Indian Grassbird, both very difficult species to watch on foot let alone balanced on an elephant! Some were lucky enough to see Ruddy-breasted Crake and Bluethroat as well. Two male Red-crested Pochards on the river represented a new species for the trip, but a Crested Serpent Eagle with a serpent was more memorable. We got up close and personal with yet more Rhinos.

We dismounted at 11am and, either side of our 'chicken with spaghetti' lunch, there was time to explore the grounds properly. We found a place where the Olive-backed Pipits were sitting happily and obtained excellent views of them, but the butterflies took centre stage; Common Mormon, Peacock Pansy and Common Jay were just three of a number of colourful species on offer.

We set off again at 2pm; it was, for the first time on the tour, getting hot. We hadn't got further than the village before we made an unplanned stop to watch two Greater Spotted Eagles gliding over. A little further on we watched the interplay between some young goats and a group of Red-naped Ibises before we drove over the bridge and into the park. Today we were on a serious mammal hunt, and we turned left to explore an area further east than the one visited the previous day. It was still too early for mammals at this stage, so we had plenty of time to admire the warm-up act of Bronze-winged Jacanas, Grey-headed Swamphens and Lesser

Whistling Ducks. A Five-striped Palm Squirrel was another write-in before, at 4.10pm, we scored with our first big target, a Sloth Bear found hiding behind a fallen tree before heading out into the open, only 30 metres away. It was new for many of us and would have been enough to satisfy us for the whole day. But we weren't finished. A few minutes later, just after we had turned left onto a new track, the front jeep stopped suddenly. We were waved at frantically and did our best to catch up, but the Tiger which they had watched on the track had long since sloped off into the vegetation. There was much discussion as to the best tactics, and we separated for a few minutes to watch a greater area, but this didn't produce, so we got together and drove on. At 5.25pm the first vehicle stopped again, with us just behind. The Tiger was sitting in the grass just 20 metres to our right, staring straight at us! We (and it) couldn't quite believe it, and after a few seconds it stood up and calmly walked away. An incredible moment, another candidate for 'best moment on tour' really; Tigers in Nepal are seen very infrequently and this was the first sighting by anyone in the area for 10 days! A little further on, and still in shock, we stopped again, this time for a male Indian Peafowl in full display: could the day really get any better? The answer for my jeep was yes as, incredibly, at 6.05pm a Leopard shot across the road just as we were exiting the park, sitting momentarily under the trees before rushing off into the forest.

Tonight's meal had a Chinese theme, with spring rolls much in demand. We had had a wonderfully varied day, with no adjective properly able to describe the events of the last two hours of the afternoon. We would have a multitude of memories to see us through the journey of the following day.

Saturday 18th March

The night birds had gone quiet, perhaps sad that we were leaving, so it was down to an obliging White-browed Wagtail to bid us farewell as, at 6.45am, we left Chitwan behind and began our long journey east. We drove for the best part of three hours, making a short comfort break along the way, before having a planned birding stop on the Rapti River near Hetauda. As expected, there were no Ibisbills here, but it was good to see more River Lapwings and a few commoner species. Striped Blue Crow was a new butterfly and, for many, the highlight of the morning. At a second stop, by a fast-flowing stream, some noted White-capped Redstart but another butterfly stole the show, this time a Rustic. The main reason for pausing here was to allow the driver and helper to get a good meal and it was important that they were suitably refreshed as we had a long way to go.

The main road south went to the Indian border but we turned left, east, and headed into the Gangetic Plains. We stopped for lunch at an area which had been logged, which at least gave us some logs to sit on. A feeding flock drifted off all too quickly so there were few additions to our day's list before it was time to carry on. The road was busy, and we had the choice of catching up on our notes, sleeping, looking at the shops along the way or counting Black Drongos. We were certainly pleased to cross the Koshi Barrage and even more delighted to arrive at Koshi Camp at 5.40pm, ahead of schedule. It had been a very long journey but it was great to arrive in daylight, and we were given a splendid welcome. Our permanent tents all had en-suite facilities at the back and could in no sense be described as 'basic'! We sat down to dinner at 7.15pm and looked forward to three days of local birding in what was a new location for all of us.

Sunday 19th March

We met for breakfast in the garden at 6am, with Hume's Leaf and Yellow-browed Warblers calling in the same tree next to us! An hour or so later we strolled past some ponds, seeing a very fine Jungle Owlet en route, before getting into our jeeps and making the short journey along a 'bund' to the northern end of Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve. First we concentrated on an area of bamboo, and it wasn't long before we saw our target species, a Whistler's Warbler; patience was eventually rewarded with excellent views at eye level. A Black-rumped Flameback was another addition to our list before we began strolling in a southerly direction, looking in the bushes on both sides of our elevated road. A pair of Brown-capped Pygmy Woodpeckers showed for ages; in contrast a female Siberian Rubythroat and a leader-only Blue-capped Rock Thrush disappeared all too quickly. We were pleased to see both Large and Black-winged Cuckooshrikes before Anish, our local bird expert, called us off the path. He had located a pair of Brown Fish Owls at their daytime roost and we all managed excellent scope views. Back on the track, we found a male Ultramarine Flycatcher which was much more co-operative than the Chitwan bird, then a male Spot-winged Starling showing its throat colour to good effect, followed by an Ashy Drongo and finally a Rufous Woodpecker; the birds in this part of Koshi clearly expected to be viewed through the telescopes!

We returned to our camp in plenty of time for lunch; some headed to the hide, finding a Black Bittern and our first Brown Shrike. Others tried to find new butterflies, whilst there was also time to rest up after our morning exertions. In the early afternoon I was summoned by our multi-talented waiter and general helper, Sankar; he had discovered an Orange-headed Thrush close to the entrance, and I managed to find a few of the group to enjoy it with me.

At 2.30pm we set off once again in the jeeps, this time heading a little further south to an area where ponds and open fields were viewable from the bund. We enjoyed watching White-rumped Vultures on their nests, and some were fortunate to see a Swamp Francolin. Then our progress was halted by an Asian Elephant on the road in front of us. There were just four wild elephants in the reserve, and here was one of them. Eventually it headed off, allowing us to pass, and we made the most of our opportunity. Obeying Suchit's instructions to "stand still and be very quiet" we were thrilled to see a male Siberian Rubythroat which was sitting motionless inside a trackside bush! Most of us managed very passable views of this sought-after species, the 'most-wanted' bird of the trip for a number of the group.

We weren't finished, with a stunning Red-necked Falcon seen perched up close to its nest, a Striated Grassbird finally giving itself up and perching on a reed, and then a Black Bittern giving frame-filling scope views. What an afternoon! We returned to our base feeling very chuffed and, after time to freshen up, we enjoyed a splendid Chinese meal. Day one at Koshi had surpassed all expectations and we looked forward to more of the same.

Monday 20th March

We were somewhat taken aback to hear thunder close by as we stirred this morning in preparation for a 5.30am departure in the jeeps. It took around 75 minutes to reach our destination, a journey which took us through villages and along a river bank, where first a male Black-throated Thrush and then a delightful Bengal Fox caused us to pause briefly. We arrived at a spot where the plan was to unload two boats which were to ferry us across onto an island. But it was beginning to rain, so we decided to hold fire and, instead, have our packed breakfast nearby. The rain soon stopped, and the birds duly appeared. A perched White-eyed Buzzard was scoped, a summer plumage Pallas's Gull flew past, and then we hit the jackpot, with two Indian Coursers spotted in the distance. This was supposed to have been our target species across the river, but now there was no need for the boats after all! A number of passerines, including Greater Short-toed Larks, Ashy-crowned Sparrow-Larks and a fine Richard's Pipit delayed us but soon we were all enjoying super views of the coursers. A bonus appeared in the form of an Isabelline Wheatear: it's always nice to find something which is only listed in the 'vagrants' section at the back of the book! Further goodies included two groups of Bar-headed Geese migrating north, a superb male 'Eastern' Black Redstart, several Eurasian Hoopoes, a soaring Black Stork and a couple of singing Oriental Skylarks. Two young lads who had been fishing were pleased to accompany us and look through the scope. Once down by the river we watched Small Pratincoles at rest and in flight, several Little Terns and a gliding Short-toed Snake Eagle before locating our second prize bird, a Sand Lark, showing superbly as it fed on the grass.

We drove back, seeing Indian Grey Mongoose en route, and Anish talked me through the various crops being grown by the local people and proudly showed me his home, and that of his parents. We returned to base at 11.45am and met up with Sue who had had a lovely morning relaxing and exploring the grounds, obtaining super views of Purple Sunbirds. Lunch was pork burgers followed by apple fritters and we were pleased to be introduced to Kancha, our cook.

I took the opportunity to deliver some pens and pencils to the local primary school, another real privilege, before photographing Spotted Owlets on a nest box behind my room. Then, at 3pm, we headed off in the jeeps once more. The weather was looking distinctly iffy so our plan, involving three 'twiches' and limited time out of the vehicles, was well-timed. The traffic was very slow as we made our way back towards Koshi Barrage, so we were all pleased to stretch our legs by some ponds where, eventually, we located a couple of Pheasant-tailed Jacanas. Part two of the afternoon's entertainment was to stand on the bridge and keep a watch below the barrage, and it wasn't long before we scored, all of us seeing the Gangetic River Dolphins as they surfaced. The final spot we visited was a bird-rich marsh where, in addition to the Grey-headed Lapwing we were hoping for, we found 40 Black-headed Ibises, more Wild Water Buffalo and a snipe 'showing characteristics of Pin-tailed'.

We returned at 6.05pm, just in time to catch sight of the Black-crowned Night Herons and Indian Flying Foxes leaving their roosts a little earlier tonight given the gloomy conditions. Onion Bhajees were served as we did our bird list this evening prior to another enjoyable meal. It began to rain heavily, but we were pleased that the weather had not disrupted our plans; if anything, it had helped us!

Tuesday 21st March

The rain continued overnight and it was still very gloomy at dawn. We had decided on a 6am departure and headed in the jeeps to the southern end of the reserve. A few of us were lucky to see a white phase Oriental Paradise Flycatcher flash across the road; we all saw two Asian Elephants enjoying each other's company. We paused to eat our packed breakfasts, keeping the crows at bay, and I maintained a vigil on the road which proved decisive as, eventually, a Swamp Francolin was spotted feeding not far away. We all had super scope views, another target species seen very well. Some were delighted to 'grip back' Streak-throated Woodpecker, others pleased to finally have a chance to see Dusky and Blyth's Reed Warblers properly, whilst a Sand Lark found by Anish was most welcome for Sue who hadn't seen it the previous day.

A Eurasian Wryneck was familiar to us, as was a male Siberian Stonechat, and a familiar rattle signified the presence of a Red-breasted Flycatcher, although it remained hidden. A dark phase Booted Eagle overhead showed splendidly and, with the sun beginning to appear through the clouds, we saw a number of birds in much better light. A blue butterfly called Forget-me-not and a distinctive dragonfly named Variegated Flutterer provided variety, whilst a Smoky Warbler in the reeds was yet another bird to give us a second chance. An elephant lying down was a rare sight as we drifted back.

We returned shortly after 11am, with Common and Tailless Lineblues giving the butterfly connoisseurs food for thought. We had lunch at 12.30pm as usual before an extended period of 'free time' during which several of the group finally had excellent looks at Taiga Flycatcher. Common Four-ring was added to the butterfly list.

4pm was the official time for the start of our late afternoon birding together, but in the event we met up a little earlier, Scaly Thrush and Brown Hawk-Owl having been sighted in the woodland behind our rooms. The first disappeared before everyone had seen it which was certainly less than ideal, but the latter sat in full view for us to enjoy. Fortunately the thrush was relocated around 20 minutes later and we all had magnificent looks at this normally secretive species. We then headed to one of the ponds where crakes proved unco-operative but we enjoyed the Blue-throated Barbet and Asian Koel whilst we were waiting patiently.

After the thrush excitement people went their own ways again for a while, and I headed into the village to take more photos. At 6.15pm we met up again to try for owls just before dusk; we weren't successful, but some of us did manage to glimpse a Large-tailed Nightjar before getting good views of the herons and bats at the usual time. Our final Koshi dinner was another Nepalese affair and Suchit showed us a short video of the Fishing Cat seen the previous night on the camera trap.

Wednesday 22nd March

There was a last opportunity for pre-breakfast strolls in the grounds which had very much become our home. Some chose to visit the hide, with a final chance to admire the Bronzed Jacanas and Black Bittern, some marvelled at the White-breasted Waterhens calling from high in the bushes, and others headed to a different pond. We didn't succeed with crakes, but rewards came in the form of a female Black-throated Thrush and then a male Siberian Rubythroat; views were distant, and brief, but really thrilling as it fed 'Bluethroat-like' on the mud between the water and the reeds.

Breakfast in the garden at 7am was as splendid as ever, with porridge and masala omelettes once again proving popular. A drumming pair of Fulvous-breasted Woodpeckers gave excellent views near our rooms. We took photos of the local 'team', Suchit telling us that they came from at least five different tribes, before saying goodbye and heading through the village, people waving us off along the way. It took 90 minutes to reach Biratnagar Airport. We dropped off our baggage before relaxing in the garden with juice and fruit; a number of common birds, including a family of Jungle Babblers, were on offer for those keen to make the most of every minute's birding time. The plane to Kathmandu took off at 11.40am and landed 45 minutes later. We all had seats on the right hand side of the plane and I for one was really moved to have my first chance to see Mount Everest, albeit distantly. Once again we were so lucky to have a clear day.

Baggage was handed back one at a time at Kathmandu which made life interesting, and the joys of Koshi seemed far removed as we got stuck in several traffic jams on the way to the hotel. Nevertheless, we caught up some time by having lunch whilst our rooms were prepared, so there was a little time to get sorted before, at 3pm, the majority of us went on an afternoon's sightseeing. We were taken to two places, a Hindu Temple and a Buddhist Stupa. At the first, we witnessed Hindu cremations taking place alongside the river, not something we could easily have prepared for. The second half was more 'mainstream' as we walked in a clockwise direction, impressed at the speed with which the Nepalese authorities had repaired the stupa after the 2015 earthquake. There was time for a quick visit to see some students hard at work painting pieces which would take weeks to complete, then we headed back to the hotel.

At 7.30pm we enjoyed another Nepalese buffet and prepared for the following day: how many new species would we add?

Thursday 23rd March

Our last full day in Nepal saw us head back to Phulchowki. Our consistently prompt group meant we were ready to leave at 6.25am, ahead of schedule. We reached the bottom of the mountain 45 minutes later and headed up around seven kilometres to more or less the spot at which we had finished on our first visit. Having focused on the upper section previously, today we would concentrate on the middle part, walking down from 2,300 metres to 2,050 metres, taking the morning and early afternoon to do so. The walking wasn't easy, and we noted a distinct lack of benches, but we soldiered on and were well-rewarded. The weather was mild and cloudy, generally without much sunshine but most importantly with good visibility. Many birds were familiar to us from our earlier visit, but we added a large number of new species and had much better views of others than previously. Right at the start we scoped a male Fire-breasted Flowerpecker and watched a female Maroon Oriole as it sat out for us. A number of Himalayan Cutias (our most-wanted species) sang for us, including one very close, but we didn't manage even the merest glimpse despite the trackside trees being full of its favourite moss-covered trunks. Something for a return visit! A Green-backed Tit mimicking its song was fascinating but unwelcome! A run of super birds included a Chestnut-crowned Warbler, two male Ultramarine Flycatchers (further evidence of spring) and a showy Blue-winged Minla. A Collared Owlet followed us down the track; we were pleased to get scope views, and it certainly helped attract in the small passerines! A couple of Whiskered Yuhinas provided an excellent finale to the first part of our walk.

We paused for a drink before mooching on down the track. A crested and colourful Striated Bulbul was our next new bird, and I for one was pleased it gave us a second chance! A Chestnut-crowned Laughingthrush teased us from thick cover, whilst a Himalayan Cuckoo called from down the hill; many of us had dismissed it as a Eurasian Hoopoe, the song being quite similar. An Asian Barred Owlet was another 'heard only', and both Green-crowned Warbler and Red-billed Leothrix proved difficult to see, before we returned to form with a bang, watching a showy Streak-breasted Scimitar Babbler at close range for ages, then a group of inquisitive White-throated Laughingthrushes and finally a wonderful female Himalayan Bluetail feeding on the track itself.

We enjoyed our last picnic, already down at 2,125 metres, before making one final walk. A Sikkim Treecreeper gave ace views and made a most un-treecreeper-like song! Unlike on our first visit, we all had super looks at a Nepal Fulvetta, then a Mountain Bulbul appeared out of the canopy for us. Having walked around three kilometres in total we were happy to declare but pleased with our tally of new birds. At the reserve entrance in the lowlands we strolled briefly, but the Red-billed Blue Magpies we had heard at the start of the tour were not in residence today so we had to be content with a Himalayan Buzzard, cracking views of a Great Barbet and another bluetail.

We were back at base well before 4pm with time to pack and, in my case, ensure the group were all checked in for our return flights. We met to do our final checklist at 6pm before being taken to a local restaurant for a traditional meal. We were entertained by local dancers and musicians, and Suchit was particularly proud when members of his own tribe came out to perform. Throughout the trip he had emphasised how diverse the people of Nepal are in terms of their backgrounds and facial looks. The noise meant conversation wasn't as easy as we might have liked, but Suchit felt it was important for us to see some culture so we stuck with it. We were tucked up by 8.30pm, trying to reflect on the wonderful things we had seen and not on the prospect of our return journey.

Friday 24th March

The ever-helpful hotel put on a special breakfast for us at 5.15am: it included noodle soup, a trip tick for some! We left for the airport at 6am and the journey took just 20 minutes. The day's arrangements went more or less as planned. The flight to Delhi took 75 minutes, then we had a couple of hours to relax in the airport before boarding the next plane earlier than expected. Headwinds meant that our flight to London took around nine hours, but it still landed on time. Despite the baggage taking an eternity to arrive we were all 'done' by 7pm and making our various ways home at the end of a super holiday with amazing mammals, nearly 300 species of bird, numerous butterflies, a variety of scenery and wonderfully welcoming people.

Top ten birds of the tour (voted by the group)

1 st	Indian Courser
2 nd	Blue-bearded Bee-eater
3 rd	Siberian Rubythroat
4 th	Black Bittern
5 th	Scaly Thrush
6 th	Fire-breasted Flowerpecker
7 th	Ultramarine Flycatcher
8 th	Greater Necklaced Laughingthrush
=9 th	Blue-winged Minla
=9 th	Chestnut-bellied Nuthatch
=9 th	Red-headed Trogon
=9 th	Streak-throated Woodpecker

Acknowledgements

Enormous thanks to Suchit Basnet, our guide, for showing us the wonderful wildlife of Nepal and, more generally, for giving us so much background information: his enthusiasm was infectious! Thanks also to Nature Safari Tours, our ground agents; the logistical arrangements went as well as they possibly could have done. Thanks to John Dodd, Iain Elliot and John Sykes for allowing us to use some of your photos in this report. I am grateful to John Dodd for helping compile the butterfly list, to Dennis Farrell for helping me identify some of the dragonflies we saw, and to Ed Keeble for his help in preparing the photos.

David Walsh
Ornitholidays
29 Straight Mile
Romsey
Hampshire SO51 9BB
Tel: 01794 519445
Email: info@ornitholidays.co.uk

June 2017



Itinerary and Weather

- 11th Mar Evening flight from London Heathrow.
- 12th Mar Morning arrival into Delhi and onward flight to Kathmandu, arriving mid-afternoon. Onward transfer to our hotel in Thamel, Kathmandu, for a two-night stay.
- 13th Mar Whole day's birding on the mid-upper slopes of Phulchowki mountain (2,300-2,650m). Sunny and clear, 8-20°C.
- 14th Mar Journey from Kathmandu to Chitwan, birding en route, for a four-night stay. Sunny, 10-26°C.
- 15th Mar Morning walk in the Jagatpur area (grassland and riverine forest). Afternoon at the Rapti River and inside Chitwan National Park (Sal forest). Sunny, 11-27°C.
- 16th Mar Whole day's exploration in jeeps of the central and western parts of Chitwan National Park, the varied habitats including Sal forest, grassland and mixed evergreen forest. Sunny, 11-27°C.
- 17th Mar Birding at Chitwan National Park in and around Kasara HQ, including a boat ride along the Rapti River and an elephant safari (both morning) and a jeep drive (afternoon). Sunny, 12-29°C.
- 18th Mar Journey from Chitwan to Koshi, birding at Hetauda en route, for a four-night stay at Koshi Camp near Madhuban village. Sunny, becoming increasingly hazy, 11-27°C.
- 19th Mar Birding in Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve, the northern section (morning) and the central section (afternoon). Hazy then mainly sunny, 14-29°C.
- 20th Mar Morning birding along the Koshi river at Jabdi Ghat. Afternoon at Koshi Barrage and adjacent fields. Rain early, then sun, then cloud and further rain, 16-26°C.
- 21st Mar Birding in and around Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve, the southern section (morning) and the camp gardens (afternoon). Rain overnight, cloudy early morning then sunny, 16-28°C.
- 22nd Mar Drive to Biratnagar for late morning flight to Kathmandu. Onward transfer to our hotel for a two-night stay. Afternoon sightseeing at Pashupatinath Hindu Temple and Boudhanath Buddhist Stupa. Sunny am, cloudy pm, 16-20°C.
- 23rd Mar Whole day's birding on Phulchowki mountain (middle slopes, 2,050-2,300m then the lower part around the entrance). Cloudy becoming sunny, 16-23°C.
- 24th Mar Early morning transfer to Kathmandu airport for flights to London Heathrow via Delhi, arriving early evening.

CHECKLIST OF BIRDS SEEN DURING THE TOUR

No of days recorded	Locations	Abundance scale
1 2h means seen on 1 day and heard on 2 other days	P = Phulchowki inc Kathmandu J = Journeys (Kathmandu-Chitwan, Chitwan-Koshi) C = Chitwan K = Koshi	Maximum seen (on one day) 1 = 1-4 2 = 5-9 3 = 10-99 4 = 100-999 5 = 1,000+

Species	No of Days Recorded	Locations	Abundance Scale	Scientific name
Black Francolin	4	1h C	K 1	<i>Francolinus francolinus</i>
Swamp Francolin	2	1h	K 1	<i>Francolinus gularis</i>
Red Junglefowl	4	C	1	<i>Gallus gallus</i>
Kalij Pheasant	2	P	C 2	<i>Lophura leucomelanos</i>
Indian Peafowl	3	C	2	<i>Pavo cristatus</i>
Lesser Whistling Duck	3	C	K 4	<i>Dendrocygna javanica</i>
Bar-headed Goose	2		K 3	<i>Anser indicus</i>
Ruddy Shelduck	4	C	K 4	<i>Tadorna ferruginea</i>
Gadwall	1		K 2	<i>Anas strepera</i>
Eurasian Wigeon	2	C	K 2	<i>Anas penelope</i>
Mallard	1	J	1	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>
Northern Pintail	3	J C	K 2	<i>Anas acuta</i>
Red-crested Pochard	1	C	1	<i>Netta rufina</i>
Common Merganser (Goosander)	2	C	1	<i>Mergus merganser</i>
Asian Openbill	7	C	K 3	<i>Anastomus oscitans</i>
Woolly-necked Stork	1	C	1	<i>Ciconia episcopus</i>
Black Stork	2	C	K 1	<i>Ciconia nigra</i>
Lesser Adjutant	5	C	K 1	<i>Leptoptilos javanicus</i>
Black-headed Ibis	2		K 3	<i>Threskiornis melanocephalus</i>
Red-naped Ibis (Black Ibis)	5	C	K 3	<i>Pseudibis papillosa</i>
Cinnamon Bittern	2	C	K 1	<i>Ixobrychus cinnamomeus</i>
Black Bittern	4		K 1	<i>Dupetor flavicollis</i>
Black-crowned Night Heron	4	C	K 1	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>
Striated Heron	1	C	1	<i>Butorides striata</i>
Indian Pond Heron	7	C	K 3	<i>Ardeola grayii</i>
Grey Heron	2		K 1	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>
Purple Heron	5	C	K 1	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>
Eastern Cattle Egret	9	P J	C K 4	<i>Bubulcus coromandus</i>
Great Egret	6	C	K 1	<i>Ardea alba</i>
Intermediate Egret	5	C	K 1	<i>Ardea intermedia</i>
Little Egret	7	J C	K 2	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>
Little Cormorant	7	C	K 3	<i>Microcarbo niger</i>
Great Cormorant	5	J C	K 2	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>
Oriental Darter	4	J C	K 1	<i>Anhinga melanogaster</i>
Common Kestrel	3	C	K 1	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>
Red-necked Falcon	1		K 1	<i>Falco chicquera</i>
Peregrine Falcon	2	C	1	<i>Falco peregrinus calidus</i>
Black-winged Kite	5	C	K 1	<i>Elanus caeruleus</i>
Black Kite	7	P J	C K 3	<i>Milvus migrans</i>
Western Osprey	5	C	K 1	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>
Grey-headed Fish Eagle	1	C	1	<i>Haliaeetus ichhyaetus</i>
White-rumped Vulture	4	J	K 2	<i>Gyps bengalensis</i>
Himalayan Vulture	2	J	2	<i>Gyps himalayensis</i>
Short-toed Snake Eagle	2		K 1	<i>Circaetus gallicus</i>
Crested Serpent Eagle	2	C	1	<i>Spilornis cheela</i>
Black Eagle	1	P	1	<i>Ictinaetus malaiensis</i>
Hen Harrier	2	C	K 1	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>
Shikra	7	C	K 1	<i>Accipiter badius</i>
Crested (Oriental) Honey Buzzard	6	J C	K 3	<i>Pernis ptilorhynchus</i>
White-eyed Buzzard	2		K 1	<i>Butastur teesa</i>

Himalayan Buzzard	1	P			1	<i>Buteo burmanicus</i>	
Greater Spotted Eagle	1		C		1	<i>Clanga clanga</i>	
Steppe Eagle	4		J	C	K	2	<i>Aquila nipalensis</i>
Bonelli's Eagle	2		J	C		1	<i>Aquila fasciata</i>
Booted Eagle	2			C	K	1	<i>Hieraaetus pennatus</i>
Brown Crake	3			C		1	<i>Amaurornis akool</i>
Ruddy-breasted Crake	1	1h		C	K	1	<i>Porzana fusca</i>
White-breasted Waterhen	8			C	K	2	<i>Amaurornis phoenicurus</i>
Grey-headed Swamphen	3			C	K	3	<i>Porphyrio poliocephalus</i>
Common Moorhen	7			C	K	3	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>
Eurasian Coot	2			C	K	2	<i>Fulica atra</i>
River Lapwing	4		J	C		1	<i>Vanellus duvaucelii</i>
Yellow-wattled Lapwing	1				K	2	<i>Vanellus malabaricus</i>
Grey-headed Lapwing	1				K	1	<i>Vanellus cinereus</i>
Red-wattled Lapwing	4			C	K	1	<i>Vanellus indicus</i>
Little Ringed Plover	4			C	K	2	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>
Common Redshank	1			C		1	<i>Tringa totanus</i>
Common Greenshank	3			C	K	2	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>
Green Sandpiper	2	1h		C	K	1	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>
Wood Sandpiper	1			C		1	<i>Tringa glareola</i>
Common Sandpiper	4		J	C	K	1	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>
Dunlin	2				K	2	<i>Calidris alpina</i>
Indian Courser	1				K	2	<i>Cursorius coromandelicus</i>
Small Pratincole	3				K	4	<i>Glareola lactea</i>
Pheasant-tailed Jacana	1				K	1	<i>Hydrophasianus chirurgus</i>
Bronze-winged Jacana	6			C	K	3	<i>Metopidius indicus</i>
Pallas's Gull	1				K	1	<i>Ichthyaetus ichthyaetus</i>
Little Tern	2				K	1	<i>Sternula albifrons</i>
Rock Dove (Feral Pigeon)	12	P	J	C	K	4	<i>Columba livia</i>
Oriental Turtle Dove	5	P			K	1	<i>Streptopelia orientalis</i>
Eurasian Collared Dove	9		J	C	K	2	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>
Red Turtle Dove (Red Collared Dove)	1			C		1	<i>Streptopelia tranquebarica</i>
Spotted Dove	8		J	C	K	3	<i>Spilopelia chinensis</i>
Orange-breasted Green Pigeon	1			C		1	<i>Treron bicinctus</i>
Yellow-footed Green Pigeon	2			C	K	1	<i>Treron phoenicopterus</i>
Common Emerald Dove	3			C		2	<i>Chalcophaps indica</i>
Alexandrine Parakeet	3			C		2	<i>Psittacula eupatria</i>
Rose-ringed Parakeet	7	P		C	K	3	<i>Psittacula krameri</i>
Plum-headed Parakeet	4			C	K	1	<i>Psittacula cyanocephala</i>
Blossom-headed Parakeet	-	1h		C		1	<i>Psittacula roseata</i>
Red-breasted Parakeet	2			C		1	<i>Psittacula alexandri</i>
Asian Koel	3	2h			K	1	<i>Eudynamis scolopaceus</i>
Green-billed Malkoha	2		J	C		1	<i>Phaenicophaeus tristis</i>
Greater Coucal	9			C	K	1	<i>Centropus sinensis</i>
Lesser Coucal	2			C	K	1	<i>Centropus bengalensis</i>
Large Hawk-Cuckoo	-	2h	P			1	<i>Hierococcyx sparveriioides</i>
Common Hawk-Cuckoo	3	6h		C	K	2	<i>Hierococcyx varius</i>
Banded Bay Cuckoo	-	1h		C		1	<i>Cacomantis sonneratii</i>
Himalayan Cuckoo	-	1h	P			1	<i>Cuculus saturatus</i>
Blue-bearded Bee-eater	1			C		1	<i>Nyctyornis athertoni</i>
Green Bee-eater	8		J	C	K	3	<i>Merops orientalis</i>
Chestnut-headed Bee-eater	3			C		3	<i>Merops leschenaulti</i>
Indian Scops Owl	1			C		1	<i>Otus bakkamoena</i>
Brown Fish Owl	1				K	1	<i>Ketupa zeylonensis</i>
Collared Owlet	1	1h	P			1	<i>Glaucidium brodiei</i>
Asian Barred Owlet	-	1h	P			1	<i>Glaucidium cuculoides</i>
Jungle Owlet	2	3h		C	K	1	<i>Glaucidium radiatum</i>
Spotted Owlet	6			C	K	1	<i>Athene brama</i>
Brown Hawk-Owl	1	6h		C	K	1	<i>Ninox scutulata</i>
Large-tailed Nightjar	1	2h		C	K	1	<i>Caprimulgus macrurus</i>
Savanna Nightjar	-	4h		C		1	<i>Caprimulgus affinis</i>
House Swift	2		P	J		3	<i>Apus nipalensis</i>
White-throated Kingfisher	9		J	C	K	3	<i>Halcyon smyrnensis</i>

Common Kingfisher	5		J	C	K	1	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>
Stork-billed Kingfisher	3			C		1	<i>Pelargopsis capensis</i>
Pied Kingfisher	7			C	K	2	<i>Ceryle rudis</i>
Red-headed Trogon	1			C		1	<i>Harpactes erythrocephalus</i>
Indian Roller	7		J	C	K	1	<i>Coracias benghalensis</i>
Lineated Barbet	2	2h	J	C		1	<i>Psilopogon lineatus</i>
Golden-throated Barbet	1		P			1	<i>Psilopogon franklinii</i>
Blue-throated Barbet	5			C	K	1	<i>Psilopogon asiaticus</i>
Coppersmith Barbet	1	3h	J	C	K	1	<i>Psilopogon haemacephalus</i>
Great Barbet	1	1h	P			1	<i>Psilopogon virens</i>
Eurasian Hoopoe	6			C	K	2	<i>Upupa epops</i>
Oriental Pied Hornbill	3			C		1	<i>Anthracoceros albirostris</i>
Eurasian Wryneck	1				K	1	<i>Jynx torquilla</i>
Rufous-bellied Woodpecker	2		P			1	<i>Dendrocopos hyperythrus</i>
Brown-capped Pygmy Woodpecker	1				K	1	<i>Yungipicus nanus</i>
Grey-capped Pygmy Woodpecker	2			C		1	<i>Yungipicus canicapillus</i>
Fulvous-breasted Woodpecker	6			C	K	1	<i>Dendrocopos macei</i>
Lesser Yellownape	1			C		1	<i>Picus chlorolophus</i>
Streak-throated Woodpecker	2			C	K	1	<i>Picus xanthopygaeus</i>
Grey-headed Woodpecker	4		P	C		2	<i>Picus canus</i>
Himalayan Flameback	2			C		1	<i>Dinopium shorii</i>
Black-rumped Flameback	2	1h			K	1	<i>Dinopium benghalense</i>
Greater Flameback	2			C		1	<i>Chrysocolaptes guttacristatus</i>
Rufous Woodpecker	1	1h		C	K	1	<i>Micropternus brachyurus</i>
Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrike	2			C		1	<i>Hemipus picatus</i>
Large Woodshrike	2		J	C		1	<i>Tephrodornis virgatus</i>
Large Cuckooshrike	5			C	K	1	<i>Coracina macei</i>
Black-winged Cuckooshrike	2				K	1	<i>Coracina melaschistos</i>
Small Minivet	2			C		2	<i>Pericrocotus cinnamomeus</i>
Long-tailed Minivet	2		P			2	<i>Pericrocotus ethologus</i>
Scarlet Minivet	2			C		2	<i>Pericrocotus speciosus</i>
Brown Shrike	3				K	1	<i>Lanius cristatus</i>
Long-tailed Shrike	8		J	C	K	1	<i>Lanius schach</i>
Grey-backed Shrike	4			C	K	1	<i>Lanius tephronotus</i>
Indian Golden Oriole	2				K	1	<i>Oriolus kundoo</i>
Black-hooded Oriole	7			C	K	1	<i>Oriolus xanthornus</i>
Maroon Oriole	2		P			2	<i>Oriolus traillii</i>
Black Drongo	9		J	C	K	3	<i>Dicrurus macrocercus</i>
Ashy Drongo	3		J		K	1	<i>Dicrurus leucophaeus</i>
White-bellied Drongo	2			C	K	1	<i>Dicrurus caerulescens</i>
Bronzed Drongo	2			C	K	1	<i>Dicrurus aeneus</i>
Greater Racket-tailed Drongo	1			C		1	<i>Dicrurus paradiseus</i>
Hair-crested Drongo	5			C	K	1	<i>Dicrurus hottentottus</i>
Common Iora	2	1h		C	K	1	<i>Aegithina tiphia</i>
Yellow-bellied Fantail	1		P			1	<i>Chelidorhynch hypoxanthus</i>
White-throated Fantail	6		P		K	2	<i>Rhipidura albicollis</i>
Oriental Paradise Flycatcher	1				K	1	<i>Terpsiphone affinis</i>
Red-billed Blue Magpie	-	2h	P	J		1	<i>Urocissa erythrorhyncha</i>
Rufous Treepie	8			C	K	2	<i>Dendrocitta vagabunda</i>
Grey Treepie	1	1h	P			1	<i>Dendrocitta formosae</i>
House Crow	9		P	J	C	5	<i>Corvus splendens</i>
Large-billed Crow	2		P			2	<i>Corvus macrorhynchos</i>
Indian Jungle Crow	9		J	C	K	3	<i>Corvus culminatus</i>
Eurasian Jay	-	1h	P			1	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>
Yellow-browed Tit	2		P			1	<i>Sylviparus modestus</i>
Cinereous Tit	7	1h		C	K	1	<i>Parus cinereus</i>
Green-backed Tit	2		P			1	<i>Parus monticolus</i>
Himalayan Black-lored Tit	2		P	J		1	<i>Machlolophus xanthogenys</i>
Black-throated Bushtit (Black-throated Tit)	2		P			3	<i>Aegithalos concinnus</i>
Grey-throated Martin	7		J	C	K	3	<i>Riparia chinensis</i>
Barn Swallow	7		P	J		4	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>
Red-rumped Swallow	2		J		K	2	<i>Cecropis daurica</i>
Grey-crowned Prinia	1			C		1	<i>Prinia cinereocapilla</i>

Grey-breasted Prinia	4		J	C	1	<i>Prinia hodgsonii</i>	
Yellow-bellied Prinia	2			C	1	<i>Prinia flaviventris</i>	
Ashy Prinia	2			C	1	<i>Prinia socialis</i>	
Plain Prinia	2	1h	J	C	1	<i>Prinia inornata</i>	
Zitting Cisticola	1	2h		C	K	1	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>
Striated Bulbul	1		P			1	<i>Pycnonotus striatus</i>
Black-crested Bulbul	1			C		2	<i>Pycnonotus flaviventris</i>
Red-whiskered Bulbul	4			C	K	3	<i>Pycnonotus jocosus</i>
Himalayan Bulbul	2		J			2	<i>Pycnonotus leucogenys</i>
Red-vented Bulbul	9		J	C	K	3	<i>Pycnonotus cafer</i>
White-throated Bulbul	1			C		1	<i>Alophoixus flaveolus</i>
Mountain Bulbul	1		P			1	<i>Ixos mccllellandii</i>
Black Bulbul	4		P	J	C	2	<i>Hypsipetes leucocephalus</i>
Chestnut-headed Tesia	1		P			1	<i>Cettia castaneocoronata</i>
Common Tailorbird	5	1h	J	C	K	1	<i>Orthotomus sutorius</i>
Striated Grassbird	1	1h			K	1	<i>Megalurus palustris</i>
Indian Grassbird	1			C		1	<i>Graminicola bengalensis</i>
Pale-footed Bush Warbler	1	1h		C		1	<i>Urosphena pallidipes</i>
Spotted Bush Warbler	3	2h		C	K	1	<i>Locustella thoracica</i>
Blyth's Reed Warbler	3	2h		C	K	1	<i>Acrocephalus dumetorum</i>
Common (Siberian) Chiffchaff	1	1h		C	K	1	<i>Phylloscopus collybita tristis</i>
Dusky Warbler	3				K	2	<i>Phylloscopus fuscatus</i>
Smoky Warbler	3			C	K	1	<i>Phylloscopus fuligiventer</i>
Tickell's Leaf Warbler	2			C	K	1	<i>Phylloscopus affinis</i>
Buff-barred Warbler	2		P			2	<i>Phylloscopus pulcher</i>
Ashy-throated Warbler	2		P			1	<i>Phylloscopus maculipennis</i>
Yellow-browed Warbler	3				K	1	<i>Phylloscopus inornatus</i>
Hume's Leaf Warbler	2				K	1	<i>Phylloscopus humei</i>
Greenish Warbler	6		J	C	K	1	<i>Phylloscopus trochiloides</i>
Western Crowned Warbler	1			C		1	<i>Phylloscopus occipitalis</i>
Blyth's Leaf Warbler	4		P	C	K	1	<i>Phylloscopus reguloides</i>
Green-crowned Warbler	1		P			1	<i>Seicercus burkii</i>
Whistler's Warbler	2				K	1	<i>Seicercus whistleri</i>
Chestnut-crowned Warbler	1		P			1	<i>Seicercus castaneiceps</i>
Grey-hooded Warbler	2		P			3	<i>Phylloscopus xanthoschistos</i>
Black-faced Warbler	2		P			3	<i>Abroscopus schisticeps</i>
Oriental White-eye	4		J	C	K	2	<i>Zosterops palpebrosus</i>
Streak-breasted Scimitar Babbler	1		P			1	<i>Pomatorhinus ruficollis</i>
Pin-striped Tit-Babbler	1	2h		C	K	2	<i>Macronus gularis</i>
Puff-throated Babbler	-	1h		C		1	<i>Pellorneum ruficeps</i>
Chestnut-capped Babbler	2			C		2	<i>Timalia pileata</i>
Yellow-eyed Babbler	1			C		1	<i>Chrysomma sinense</i>
Striated Babbler	3			C	K	2	<i>Turdoides earlei</i>
Slender-billed Babbler	1			C		1	<i>Turdoides longirostris</i>
Jungle Babbler	7			C	K	3	<i>Turdoides striata</i>
White-throated Laughingthrush	1		P			2	<i>Garrulax albogularis</i>
Greater Necklaced Laughingthrush	1			C		2	<i>Garrulax pectoralis</i>
Striated Laughingthrush	1		P			1	<i>Garrulax striatus</i>
Chestnut-crowned Laughingthrush	1		P			1	<i>Trochalopteron erythrocephalum</i>
Red-billed Leiothrix	1		P			2	<i>Leiothrix lutea</i>
Himalayan Cutia	-	1h	P			1	<i>Cutia nipalensis</i>
Himalayan Shrike-babbler	2		P			2	<i>Pteruthius ripleyi</i>
White-browed Fulvetta	1		P			1	<i>Fulvetta vinipectus</i>
Nepal Fulvetta	2		P			2	<i>Alcippe nipalensis</i>
Blue-winged Minla	1		P			1	<i>Minla cyanouroptera</i>
Bar-throated (Chestnut-tailed) Minla	1		P			1	<i>Minla strigula</i>
Rufous Sibia	2		P			3	<i>Heterophasia capistrata</i>
Whiskered Yuhina	1		P			1	<i>Yuhina flavicollis</i>
Stripe-throated Yuhina	-	1h	P			1	<i>Yuhina gularis</i>
Chestnut-bellied Nuthatch	3	1h		C		2	<i>Sitta cinnamoventris</i>
White-tailed Nuthatch	2		P			2	<i>Sitta himalayensis</i>
Velvet-fronted Nuthatch	3			C		2	<i>Sitta frontalis</i>
Sikkim Treecreeper	1		P			1	<i>Certhia discolor</i>

Spot-winged Starling	2			C	K	3	<i>Saroglossa spilopterus</i>
Common Hill Myna	2			C		3	<i>Gracula religiosa</i>
Jungle Myna	6		J	C	K	3	<i>Acridotheres fuscus</i>
Common Myna	11	P	J	C	K	4	<i>Acridotheres tristis</i>
Pied Myna (Asian Pied Starling)	5			C	K	3	<i>Gracupica contra</i>
Chestnut-tailed Starling	7		J	C	K	3	<i>Sturnia malabarica</i>
Blue Whistling Thrush	3	P	J			1	<i>Myophonus caeruleus</i>
Orange-headed Thrush	1				K	1	<i>Geokichla citrina</i>
Scaly Thrush	1				K	1	<i>Zoothera dauma</i>
Black-throated Thrush	5			C	K	1	<i>Turdus atrogularis</i>
Bluethroat	1			C		1	<i>Luscinia svecica</i>
Siberian Rubythroat	3				K	1	<i>Calliope calliope</i>
White-tailed Rubythroat	1			C		1	<i>Calliope pectoralis</i>
White-browed Bush Robin	1	P				1	<i>Tarsiger indicus</i>
Himalayan Bluetail	1	P				1	<i>Tarsiger rufilatus</i>
Oriental Magpie-Robin	9		J	C	K	1	<i>Copsychus saularis</i>
White-rumped Shama	1			C		1	<i>Copsychus malabaricus</i>
Black Redstart	3				K	1	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>
Plumbeous Water Redstart	1		J			1	<i>Phoenicurus fuliginosus</i>
White-capped Redstart	2		J			1	<i>Phoenicurus leucocephalus</i>
Siberian Stonechat	4		J	C	K	1	<i>Saxicola maurus</i>
White-tailed Stonechat	2			C		2	<i>Saxicola leucurus</i>
Pied Bush Chat	5		J	C		3	<i>Saxicola caprata</i>
Isabelline Wheatear	1				K	1	<i>Oenanthe isabellina</i>
Chestnut-bellied Rock Thrush	1	P				1	<i>Monticola rufiventris</i>
Rufous-gorgeted Flycatcher	1	P				2	<i>Ficedula strophciata</i>
Red-breasted Flycatcher	-	1h			K	1	<i>Ficedula parva</i>
Taiga Flycatcher	7			C	K	3	<i>Ficedula albicilla</i>
Ultramarine Flycatcher	3	P		C	K	1	<i>Ficedula superciliaris</i>
Verditer Flycatcher	4	P		C	K	1	<i>Eumyias thalassinus</i>
Large Niltava	1	P				1	<i>Niltava grandis</i>
Golden-fronted Leafbird	1			C		1	<i>Chloropsis aurifrons</i>
Fire-breasted Flowerpecker	1	1h	P			1	<i>Dicaeum ignipectus</i>
Purple Sunbird	7		J	C	K	2	<i>Cinnyris asiaticus</i>
Green-tailed Sunbird	2	P				2	<i>Aethopyga nipalensis</i>
Black-throated Sunbird	1	P				1	<i>Aethopyga saturata</i>
Fire-tailed Sunbird	2	P				1	<i>Aethopyga ignicauda</i>
Scaly-breasted Munia	2			C		3	<i>Lonchura punctulata</i>
Baya Weaver	1			C		1	<i>Ploceus philippinus</i>
Bengal Bush Lark	3			C	K	1	<i>Mirafra assamica</i>
Greater Short-toed Lark	1				K	3	<i>Calandrella brachydactyla</i>
Sand Lark	2				K	1	<i>Alaudala raytal</i>
Oriental Skylark	1				K	2	<i>Alauda gulgula</i>
Ashy-crowned Sparrow-Lark	1				K	2	<i>Eremopterix griseus</i>
Grey Wagtail	-	1h	P			1	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>
Citrine Wagtail	1			C		1	<i>Motacilla citreola</i>
White Wagtail	2		J	C		1	<i>Motacilla alba alboides</i>
White Wagtail	1			C		1	<i>Motacilla alba leucopsis</i>
White-browed Wagtail	4		J	C		2	<i>Motacilla maderaspatensis</i>
Richard's Pipit	2			C	K	1	<i>Anthus richardi</i>
Paddyfield Pipit	4			C	K	2	<i>Anthus rufulus</i>
Tawny Pipit	1				K	2	<i>Anthus campestris</i>
Olive-backed Pipit	4			C	K	1	<i>Anthus hodgsoni</i>
Rosy Pipit	1			C		1	<i>Anthus roseatus</i>
House Sparrow	10	2h	P	J	C	4	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
Eurasian Tree Sparrow	1			J		1	<i>Passer montanus</i>
Yellow-throated Sparrow (Chestnut-shouldered Petronia)	1			C		1	<i>Gymnoris xanthocollis</i>

MAMMALS

Rhesus Monkey (Rhesus Macaque)
Nepal Grey Langur
Tiger
Leopard
Indian Grey Mongoose
Golden Jackal
Bengal Fox
Sloth Bear
Asian Elephant
Greater One-horned Rhinoceros
Sambar
Chital (Spotted Deer)
Hog Deer
Indian Muntjac
Wild Water Buffalo
Gaur (Indian Bison)
Wild Boar
Orange-bellied Himalayan Squirrel
Five-striped Palm Squirrel
Indian Flying Fox
Short-nosed Fruit Bat
Ganges River Dolphin

Macaca mulatta
Semnopithecus schistaceus
Panthera tigris
Panthera pardus
Herpestes edwardsii
Canis aureus
Vulpes bengalensis
Melursus ursinus
Elephas maximus
Rhinoceros unicornis
Rusa unicolor
Axis axis
Axis porcinus
Muntiacus muntjak
Bubalis arnee
Bos gaurus
Sus scrofa
Dremomys lokriah
Funambulus pennantii
Pteropus giganteus
Cynopterus sphinx
Platanista gangetica

REPTILES

Mugger
Gharial
Common House Gecko
Common Garden Lizard

Crocodylus palustris
Gavialis gangeticus
Hemidactylus frenatus
Calotes versicolor

BUTTERFLIES

Bevan's Swift
Chestnut Bob
Common Bluebottle
Common Jay
Common Mormon
Common Yellow Swallowtail
Common Rose
Common Grass Yellow
Common Brimstone
Common Emigrant (Lemon Emigrant)
Mottled Emigrant
Indian Cabbage White
Yamfly
Common Pierrot
Common Lineblue
Tailless Lineblue
Forget-me-not
Dark Grass Blue
Pale Grass Blue
Blue Tiger
Plain Tiger
Striped Tiger (Common Tiger)
Striped Blue Crow
Blue King Crow
Common Crow
Banded Treebrown
Common Palmfly
Spotted Palmfly
Common Bushbrown
Common Five-ring

Pseudoborbo bevani
Iambrix salsala
Graphium sarpedon
Graphium doson
Papilio polytes
Papilio machaon
Atrophaneura aristolochiae
Eurema hecabe
Gonepteryx rhamni
Catopsilia pomona
Catopsilia pyranthe
Pieris canidia
Loxura atymnus
Castalius rosimon
Prosotas nora
Prosotas dubiosa
Catochrysops strabo
Zizeeria karsandra
Pseudozizeeria maha
Tirumala limniace
Danaus chrysippus
Danaus genutia
Euploea mulciber
Euploea klugii klugii
Euploea core
Lethe confusa
Elymnias hypermnestra
Elymnias malelas
Mycalesis perseus
Ypthima baldus

Common Four-ring
Rustic
Common Leopard
Common Lascar
Common Sailor
Common Baron
Common Earl
Indian Red Admiral
Painted Lady
Indian Tortoiseshell
Blue Pansy
Chocolate Pansy (Chocolate Soldier)
Grey Pansy
Peacock Pansy
Lemon Pansy
Great Eggfly

Ypthima huebneri
Cupha erymanthis
Phalanta phalantha
Pantoporia hordonia
Neptis hylas
Euthalia aconthea
Tanaecia julii
Vanessa indica
Vanessa cardui
Aglaia cashmiriensis
Junonia orithya
Junonia iphita
Junonia atlites
Junonia almana
Junonia lemonias
Hypolimnas bolina

DRAGONFLIES

Yellow Waxtail
Lined Hooktail
Blue-tailed Yellow Skimmer
Granite Ghost
Pied Parasol
Variegated Flutterer
Scarlet Basker

Ceriagrion coromandelianum
Paragomphus lineatus
Palpopleura sexmaculata
Bradinopyga geminata
Neurothemis tullia
Rhyothemis variegata
Urothemis signata

Notes re the checklists

The sequence of the bird list follows the 2016 edition of **Birds of Nepal** by Richard Grimmett, Carol Inskipp, Tim Inskipp and Hem Sagar Baral. The English names follow the International Ornithological Congress (IOC), with alternative names for some species where these were regularly used by Suchit during the tour. The scientific names also follow the IOC in order to reflect up to date taxonomic changes.

The names in both the mammal and reptile lists largely follow those used in the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)'s Red List of Threatened Species.

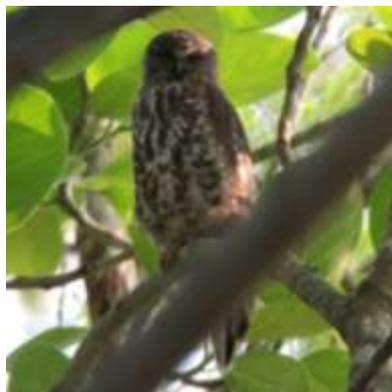
The butterfly list largely follows **The book of Indian Butterflies** by Isaac Kehimkar.

These lists represent the birds, mammals, reptiles, butterflies and dragonflies recorded by the group members on this tour.

© Ornitholidays



Indian Peafowl



Brown Hawk-Owl



Lineated Barbet



Black Bittern



Scaly Thrush



Stork-billed Kingfisher



Ultramarine Flycatcher



Blue-bearded Bee-eater



Chestnut-headed Bee-eaters



'Eastern' Black Redstart



Green-tailed Sunbird



Grey-headed Fish Eagle



Himalayan Shrike-babbler



Himalayan Vulture



Jungle Owlet



Steppe Eagle



Small Pratincole



Indian Courser



Streak-throated Woodpecker



Bengal Fox



Asian Elephant



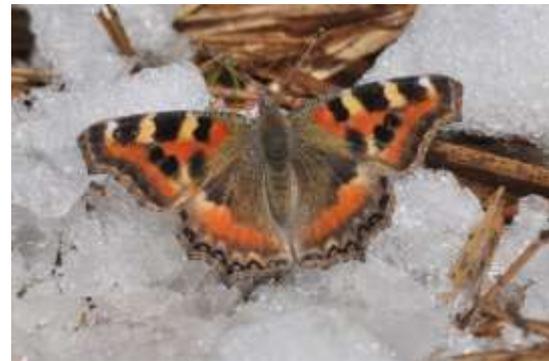
Greater One-horned Rhinoceros



Grey Langur



Yamfly



Indian Tortoiseshell



Striped Tiger



Variegated Flutterer

Front cover: Tiger

All photographs © J Dodd, I Elliot, J Sykes & D Walsh