

# Northern India & the Himalayan Foothills

Naturetrek Tour Report

19 January - 4 February 2007

---

Report compiled by Manoj Sharma



Naturetrek Cheriton Mill Cheriton Alresford Hampshire SO24 0NG England

T: +44 (0)1962 733051

F: +44 (0)1962 736426

E: [info@naturetrek.co.uk](mailto:info@naturetrek.co.uk)

W: [www.naturetrek.co.uk](http://www.naturetrek.co.uk)

Tour Leaders: Manoj Sharma (Naturetrek Tour Leader and report author)  
Raghu Kulkarni (Naturetrek Assistant Tour Leader)

Participants: Iain Paul  
Ana Paul  
Dave Riley  
Andrea Jackson  
Sheila Alliez  
Alison Elphinstone  
Jim Wilson  
Val Wilson  
Dave Stoddard  
Pierre Essaye  
Lin Essaye  
Hilary Tyler  
Sarah Barnes  
Kevin Button  
George Warke  
Pat Warke

## Day 1

Friday 19th January

Departed UK late morning with Emirates Airlines to Dubai

## Day 2

Saturday 20th January

Open, bright and sunny day, moderately cold weather for mid-January

Group arrived on time. The tour leaders met the group at Indira Gandhi International airport, New Delhi. The first birds to be seen on the Indian soil were a pair of Rock Pigeons (of feral origin) that found the top of a coffee stall in the arrival lobby of the airport to be a suitable place for nesting. As we walked out of the airport building, a bird-like call attracted the attention of some of us, only to realize that the source of the call was a Five-striped Palm Squirrel, calling from the branches of a Gul Mohar (*Delonix regia*) tree growing in the parking lot.

Within the short span of time that we spent getting our luggage loaded in the bus, some of the common birds of Delhi were seen. These included Common and Bank Mynas, Red-vented Bulbul, House Sparrow, House Crow, Brown Rock Chat, and Barn Swallow. As we drove out of the airport, White-throated Kingfisher and Black

Drongo were seen perched on the electricity lines. Black Kites, both *govinda* and *lineatus* races were seen circling above the city.

Delhi is a city of many people – many millions. It was evident as we drove through a sea of moving vehicles during the morning rush hour. Driving through south Delhi, we reached hotel Claridges. Group participants checked in to the comfortable rooms of the hotel for some rest that was much needed after a long flight.

Some of us, the impatient birders, did not take much time to reassemble back in the lawns of the hotel. Amongst the circling Black Kites, an Oriental Honey Buzzard was spotted. A male Shikra was seen perched in an Ashok (*Polyalthia longifolia*) tree. Eurasian Collared Dove and Laughing Dove were common. Rose-ringed Parakeets that we had seen in flight earlier from the vehicle were now seen perched on the dish antenna of the hotel.

We left the hotel in the afternoon and drove a short distance to Pindi restaurant for our first encounter with the Indian Cuisine. After a very tasty lunch, as we came out of the restaurant, a few Yellow-footed Green Pigeon were seen perched in a Bargad (*Ficus benghalensis*) tree. For those who had missed the Five-striped Palm Squirrel at the airport, there were a couple of them, chasing each other, up and down the trunk of the same tree.

Thereafter we drove to Okhla Bird Sanctuary on River Yamuna. Okhla Bird Sanctuary is a highly disturbed, degraded and polluted habitat. However, despite all the problems, the birding is excellent. The place offers opportunities to observe some specialty species that are not possible or are very difficult on rest of the itinerary. Yellow-bellied Prinia and Striated Grassbird being two of these specialty birds that we saw here.

Some interesting birds amongst other species observed were Woolly-necked Stork, Long-legged Buzzard, a single Brown-headed Gull, a few hundred Black-headed Gulls, Red-collared Dove, a flock of Black-breasted Weavers, Red Avadavats and Indian Silverbills.

## Day 3

Sunday 21st January

Open, bright and sunny day, moderately cold weather for mid-January

As we had missed out on some of the special birds of Okhla Bird Sanctuary, and we knew that Bharatpur had too little water and too few birds this year, we decided to spend the morning session at Okhla. We got five new species here today, including three local specialties that were not seen on the trip again. These included Great White Pelican, Rufous-winged Bush Lark and Okhla specialties like White-tailed Stonechat, Graceful Prinia and Striated Babbler.

After our rescheduled lunch at Chor Bazar restaurant at Noida, close to Okhla, we drove to Bharatpur. The drive, including a few birding and leg-stretch stops, took us five hours. We arrived at Hotel Laxmi Vilas Palace, Bharatpur towards the evening. Laxmi Vilas Palace is a property owned by the family members of the royal family of Bharatpur and offers very ethnic and comfortable accommodation.

Amongst other birds observed today were interesting species like Little Grebe, Darter, Black-headed Ibis, Greylag and Bar-headed Geese, White-tailed Lapwing, Tawny Eagle, Sarus Crane, Yellow Wagtail and Spotted Munia. Some troops of Rhesus Macaques were the new mammals seen during the day.

## Day 4

Monday 22nd January

Bright sunny day, warm afternoon and pleasant evening.

Keoladeo Ghana National Park, Bharatpur is known for the congregation of thousands of waterfowl, shorebirds, raptors and woodland birds in the winters with most of the species being migratory in nature. Many resident birds breed in the park during the monsoon and can be seen in good numbers in the winters.

Unfortunately, the failure of last monsoon in the western Rajasthan, resulted in too little water being released from the nearby water bodies and this man-made wetland turned into a dry and arid habitat. The common wetland species found in this protected area in the winters were missing. Though most of these were found at other locations on the tour the spectacle of watching thousands of birds from close distance was missing. These circumstances were enough to start a quick discussion, the previous evening over the drinks, and it was decided that the morning session would be spent in the park followed by the afternoon session outside the park at the canal, a few kilometres from the hotel.

After breakfast, we left the hotel and in less than half an hour found ourselves at the nursery close to the barrier inside the park. This is a good woodland area with some undergrowth here and there and some open areas nearby. Some of the interesting birds seen here were Spotted Owlet, Green and Coppersmith Barbet, Black-rumped Flameback, Ashy Drongo, Long-tailed Minivet, Red-breasted, Taiga and Grey-headed Canary Flycatcher, Common Tailorbird, Hume's and Greenish Warblers. Two of the specialty birds of this nursery area, Orange-headed and Tickell's Thrush were seen from close distance.

After spending a few hours at the nursery, we hired some cycle rickshaws, a popular mode of transport in the park, and checked out the area along the main road till Sapan Mori. Various species of egret, cormorants and herons were seen in the areas where there was some water. Two Greater Spotted Eagles were seen soaring high in the sky.

On the way to Sapan Mori, on a giant Kadamb (*Mitragyna parviflora*), a Dusky Horned Owl was seen attending to a young bird in the nest - quickly the spotting scopes were focused on the handsome bird. A little while later another adult was located in the same tree, sitting some distance away from the nest. As if one species of owl was not sufficient, a pair of recently split (from Collared Scops Owl) Indian Scops Owl was seen peeping down from a Date Palm (*Phoenix sylvestris*) tree.

On the way back, with the help of a rickshaw driver, a pair of Indian Rock Python were seen, a couple of hundred meters inside the jungle. The same rickshaw driver took us into the nursery, a different one, located just outside the main entrance of the park where a handsome Brown Hawk Owl was seen from very close distance.

After an exciting first half of the day, we returned back to the hotel for lunch. Late in the afternoon we drove a few kilometres to the canal situated outside the park where the rest of the day was spent looking for various species of Egrets, Spoonbill, Cormorants, Waders, Waterfowl, Raptors and Woodland birds. Many Jungle Crows

(split from Large-billed Crow) were seen at this spot. Hanuman Langur, Indian Grey Mongoose, Nilgai and Spotted Deer were new species of mammals recorded today.

In the evening, over some Kingfisher beer, we enjoyed some very good local music and dance at the cultural show organized by the hotel. This was a puppet show involving very good live performance by a family of artists including some very charming young children.

## Day 5

Tuesday 23rd January

Bright and sunny day, windy at the reservoir, pleasant evening.

This morning we left, after an early breakfast, for a full day excursion to Bund Baretha. Bund Baretha is a man-made reservoir, created by a dam for the purpose of irrigation and is situated at a distance of approximately 40 kilometres from Bharatpur. The drive to Bund Baretha is mostly through remote rural areas and there is very good birding on the way. We came across a big troop of Hanuman Langur on the road and also saw many Rhesus Macaques today. Jungle and Large Grey Babblers were seen in good numbers on the drive and Indian Peafowl was found commonly with many birds seen perched on the tops of rural houses. A single Isabelline Wheatear was seen in an open dry field, as we scanned the fields around we came across some Common Stonechat, Pied Bushchat and a couple of Tawny Pipits.

Most of the small roadside ponds had shorebirds and species seen included Black-winged Stilt, Common Greenshank, Green, Wood and Marsh Sandpiper, Red-wattled Lapwing, Black-tailed Godwit, Spotted and Common Redshank and a pair of Common Snipe.

In a reed bed along the road, a small flock of Red Avadavat was seen from close distance. Indian Roller was seen perched on the electric lines. Eurasian Wryneck was seen on a small tree and as we were watching it our attention was attracted by a calling Grey Hornbill that flew from one tree to another. In a dry field some Crested Larks were seen. Bay-backed and Long-tailed Shrikes were seen perched on small shrubs and electricity lines.

After some good birding on the way to Bund Baretha, we reached a forest rest house just short of the dam. The gardens of this rest house are being used by forest dept. as a plant nursery. We came across a colony of very noisy and active Indian Flying Foxes. Some interesting birds were seen here including Small Minivet, Common Iora, Grey-headed Canary Flycatcher and an elusive Tickell's Thrush that showed briefly.

Thereafter we reached the main dam at the reservoir. The reservoir was full of birds including numerous waterfowl and shorebirds. Comb Ducks, Bar-headed Geese, Greylag Geese, Ruddy Shelduck and Spot-billed Ducks were seen along with various varieties of Egrets, Cormorants, Herons, Ibises, Storks and Waders on the small islands in the reservoir. Waders included Black-tailed Godwit, Spotted and Common Redshank, Common Green Shank, Green, Wood, Marsh and Common Sandpiper, Black-winged Stilt and Red-wattled Lapwing. Amongst the waterfowl on the water were Cotton Pygmy-Goose, Northern Pintail, Common Teal, Gadwall, Northern Shoveler, Red-crested and Common Pochard.

On the slope of the dam various wagtail species were seen from close distance. These included Citrine, Grey, White and White-browed Wagtails. A flock of Lesser Whistling Ducks was seen on a small island of the

reservoir. A pair of Mallard was spotted through spotting scopes and so was a solitary Eurasian Curlew. There were many Asian Openbills in the area.

We had our lunch at the Dam itself and carried on with the birding thereafter. Some Indian River Terns were seen flying above the reservoir. A little while later a few Gull-billed and Whiskered Terns were also spotted. Purple Sunbird, a common species of North Indian plains that was not seen in good numbers so far was in abundance here. Three White-capped Buntings were seen further up.

We arrived at the ruined palace on top of a small hill, overlooking the reservoir. Large numbers of birds could be seen from here. An Osprey was seen fishing and after a lot of scanning through the scopes, two Indian Skimmers were seen on a small island in the distance. On the way back from the top, we had an Imperial Eagle that flew overhead.

The drive back from Bund Baretha offered the usual birds that we had seen earlier from the moving vehicle. Several Short-nosed Fruit Bats were seen flying in the late evening while returning from Bund Baretha.

## Day 6

Wednesday 24th January

Dry and bright, cool

Both the sessions were spent in the park exploring the areas near the nursery, Sapan Mori and the temple. After spending some time near the nursery in the morning, we took cycle rickshaws and reached Sapan Mori. A little scanning through Spotting Scopes revealed the presence of at least a dozen Indian Coursers. This attractive species inhabiting open dry areas is benefiting due to the dry conditions at Bharatpur.

As we were looking for ground birds, a medium-sized bustard-like bird was spotted at a great distance and its identity could not be confirmed as the bird quickly disappeared in a tall grassy patch. It could have been a juvenile Macqueen's Bustard and it is possible that it could be a female or non-breeding male of Lesser Florican, a species historically recorded once from grassland habitat of Bharatpur. As the bird did not show well, the unwritten rule of 'leave it out, when in doubt' was applied and no addition was made to the day's list. There have been no further reports from Bharatpur about any bustard sighting. Therefore none of the species are counted in the total species list for the tour.

A pair of Brook's Leaf Warbler, a solitary Long-billed Pipit, a pair of Sarus Crane, a Yellow-crowned and a Brown-capped Pygmy Woodpecker were spotted on the rest of the trek. On the way back we saw a booted Eagle and a soaring Tawny Eagle.

After the morning session of birding around Sapan Mori, we boarded the rickshaws and drove back for the lunch at the hotel. After lunch we went back to the park, hired the same cycle rickshaws and drove once again to Sapan Mori. This time we walked from Sapan Mori to the temple and did some birding around the temple. An Indian Spotted Eagle was seen flying low near the temple. A Crested Serpent Eagle gave very good views as it was seen perched on an overhanging tree. A Brown Crake was seen under some very thick bushes close to water. Indian Hare, Sambar and Wild Boar were the new mammals seen today. We returned back, boarding our usual cycle rickshaws and spent our last night at hotel Laxmi Niwas Palace.

## Day 7

Thursday 25 January

Pleasant morning, a little warm during the day and pleasant evening

After another early breakfast, we left for Fatehpur Sikri, our first monument on this trip. The drive took us 45 minutes and we were met and accompanied by an expert local cultural guide who explained the historical facts related to this grand Mughul monument. Thereafter we left for Agra where we paid a visit to Red Fort. A lunch that was organized at hotel Mughul Sheraton was very nice indeed. In the afternoon, we visited Taj Mahal the star attraction of the trip. Small Indian Mongoose were seen in the gardens of Taj Mahal. There were many birds seen on the river Yamuna, mostly the species seen before and after some local shopping, we drove to Mathura, where we boarded our train to Lal Quan.

As the local agents did not previously confirm the train tickets, we encountered difficulty in boarding the train. We had no clue as to what seats belonged to us and after some difficulty the tour leader and Raghu managed to find everyone a seat.

## Day 8

Friday 26th January

Pleasant morning, warm afternoon, cold at night

The train reached at a small railway station, Lal Quan, on time at 0900 hrs and we immediately started our journey towards Corbett Tiger Reserve. On the way to Corbett, at another small town called Katgodam, we had the most disorganized meal of the trip. The small restaurant was ill equipped to serve, though the staff there tried their best. With some trouble, we managed to finish our breakfast and commenced our rest of the journey towards 'Corbett Country'.

Our next stop was at Kosi barrage at Ramnagar where we came across a large flock of almost 100 Ruddy Shelducks. We reached hotel Quality Inn at Kumerian, some 30 odd kilometres north of Ramnagar for our lunch that was organized in the gardens of this beautifully located hotel.

After the Lunch we went to a nearby place, known for the roosting of rare Tawny Fish Owl. The Owl was sitting in a Sal (*Shorea robusta*) tree and we had some great views of this beautiful bird through spotting scope. The rest of the evening was spent around Kumerian including a walk on the trail that led up to River Kosi. Important species recorded here were Lesser Fish Eagle, Red Headed Vulture, Crested Treeswift, Crested Kingfisher, Blue-throated Barbet, Streak-throated Woodpecker, Bronzed Drongo, Red-billed Blue Magpie, Himalayan Bulbul, Small Niltava, Yellow-bellied and White-throated Fantail, Grey-hooded Warbler, Himalayan Rubythroat. Plumbeous and White-capped Water Redstart, Little and Spotted Forktail, Blue Whistling Thrush, a pair of Brown Dippers feeding a young bird, Chestnut-bellied Nuthatch and Green-tailed Sunbird.

## Day 9

Saturday 27th January

Pleasant morning, warm afternoon, cold at night

We started the day with some birding in the early morning in the gardens of the hotel. The first thing that we heard in the morning was the calls of Red-breasted Parakeet that were flying around in flocks. Some of these birds settled down in a dry tree and gave us wonderful views through the spotting scope. There was a pair of

Crested Kingfishers that was seen from the edge of the property from where there is a clear fall in to River Kosi. A Blue-throated Barbet, a pair of Lesser Yellownappe and a Grey-crowned Pygmy Woodpecker were seen in the same tree where the Parakeet flock was a few minutes earlier.

Blue-whistling Thrush, White-capped and Plumbeous Water Redstart were seen foraging on the river. A Mountain Hawk Eagle was seen soaring in the sky. Some other birds seen here included Yellow-bellied Fantail, Oriental White-eye, Golden-fronted and Orange-bellied Leafbird and Crimson Sunbird.

After breakfast we left on jeeps with our packed lunch for a full day birding excursion. We spent time around Kunkhet before we reached a place on the road to Mohan from where there is a view of the Pallas's Fish Eagle's nest on a big Semal (*Bombax ceiba*) tree growing across the river. An adult bird was seen sitting close to the nest. We reached Mohan where, in the gardens of a British-time forest resthouse, we enjoyed our lunch.

After lunch, at birding pace, we drove past Dhangarhi, Sundar Khal, Garjia and Dhikuli before we reached Ringora where the only known breeding population of White-rumped Vultures is surviving in the area. We saw two nests containing one young bird each and being attended by one adult bird each. Another adult bird was seen perched on a tree.

We reached Kosi barrage and the reason for travelling 30 kilometres from our hotel was our quest for an elusive species that we had been looking for, since we arrived in the foothills but failed to find so far. After at least half an hour we were rewarded with superb views of Wallcreeper, perched on the wall of the barrage.

Some other birds seen during the day included Little Heron, Gadwall, Red-crested Pochard, Cinereous Vulture, Collared Falconet, Spotted Dove, Alexandrine Parakeet, Collared Scops Owl, House Swift, Lineated Barbet, Scally-bellied and Fulvous-breasted Woodpecker, Himalayan Flameback, Black-hooded Oriole, Spangled Drongo, Bar-winged Flycatcher Shrike, Slaty-blue Flycatcher, Rufous-bellied Niltava, Grey-breasted Prinia, Whistler's Warbler, Dark-throated Thrush, Black-breasted and Green-tailed Sunbird.

## Day 10

Sunday 28th January

Windy and cloudy morning, hazy conditions, sunny afternoon and cold evening

The first bird that we saw this morning was a Red-headed Vulture that was seen gliding at 0700 hrs above the hotel in some very windy conditions. The bird obviously was roosting on some cliffs from where it simply may have launched itself into the wind currents. We spent some time birding at and near the hotel before we had our breakfast and left in the 4X4 jeeps for Dhikala. While we were crossing Mohan, we came across a flock of at least 25 Grey Treepies that were perched on Mango (*Mangifera indica*) trees. This species coexists with Rufous Treepie in the foothills and replaces it in the hills. Unlike the Rufous Treepie this species is generally found in flocks.

Thereafter we reached Dhangarhi, our entry point to Corbett Tiger Reserve and drove 31 kilometres to Dhikala. In the afternoon some of the group members opted to take the elephant ride while the rest did the birding from the jeeps. Some of the birds seen during the day included Great and Intermediate Egret, Woolly-necked, Black and Black-necked Stork, Black-shouldered Kite, Pallas's Fish Eagle, Cinereous and Egyptian Vulture, Hen, Pied

and Marsh Harrier, Osprey, Common Kestrel, Collared Falconet, Black Francolin, Red Junglefowl, Brown Crake, Little Ringed Plover, Common Sandpiper, Common Snipe, Indian River Tern, Lesser Coucal, Jungle Owlet, Wryneck, Grey-headed Woodpecker, Greater Yellownappe, White-bellied and Spangled Drongo, Green Magpie, Large Cuckooshrike, Ashy Bulbul, White-bellied Yuhina, Bright-headed Cisticola, Common Stonechat, Hodgson's Bushchat, Black-lored Tit, Bar-tailed Treecreeper and Red Avadavat. Asian Elephant and Hog Deer were new mammal species recorded today.

## Day 11

Monday 29th January

Foggy morning, sunny day, cold evening

This morning we explored the areas around Dhikala. We started the day with a drive to Sambar road and visited Khinanauli, Nimbu Bhuji, Ram Singh road, Thandi Sarak, Mota Sal, Leed Khalia and Sher Bhuji. Thereafter we came back to Dhikala and after lunch again went out on the jeeps to the areas along the grassland. We saw a pair of Tigers in courtship at Thandi Sarak and a little while later came across a male Tiger in a patch of thick grass. This male was seen by other tourist, a little while ago, making a kill of a Sambar Deer and carrying it into the grassy patch. A big herd of Asian Elephants was also seen in the grassland.

Interesting species of birds seen today were Black-crowned Night Heron (one flew above Dhikala very early in the morning and probably was missed by most of the group members), Bonelli's Eagle, Peregrine Falcon (Saheen race), Collared Falconet, Great Thick-knee, Lesser Coucal, Brown Fish Owl, Jungle Owlet, Speckled Piculet, Rufous Woodpecker, Oriental Skylark, Black-hooded Oriole, Long-tailed Minivet, Slaty-blue Flycatcher, Aberrant Bush Warbler, Zitting and Bright-headed Cisticola, Chestnut-bellied Rockthrush, Dark-throated Thrush, Hodgson's Bushchat, Long-billed Pipit and Crimson Sunbird.

## Day 12

Tuesday 30th January

Cloudy and windy morning, sunny afternoon and stormy evening with rain

We had decided to split the group into two as some of us wanted to go back to the spot where a pair of Tigers was seen yesterday while the rest of us were keen upon checking up the creatures that could fly. Raghu was put in charge of the Tiger party and they left early morning and had great views of the Tigers at the same place where we had left them the previous evening. The rest of the party spent some time birding at Dhikala campus and left half an hour later.

As the second party reached Thandi Sarak on the edge of the grassland, fresh footprints of a female tiger were seen in the fine dust and on the tyre-marks of the vehicles that had gone past a few minutes ago. A Sambar was calling from the Jungle, indicating that the Tigress had crossed over from the grassland to the forest. As we travelled another kilometre on Thandi Sarak, we came across two jeeps that had missed the Tigress whose footprints we had just seen and 20 feet from the jeeps, in a grassy thicket was a male Tiger. The male got up and crossed the road in front of our jeeps and disappeared in the forest. We travelled another kilometre and reached the spot where our Tiger party was busy watching their pair of Tigers in courtship. These were still chasing each other in tall grass, showing every now and then.

From here, we travelled to Leed Khalia, at the western end of the grassland and came across a herd of Elephants. On our way back, we reached the spot where we had seen the male Tiger with the Samber Kill and saw it in some heavy grass. As it was slowly walking in the grass, its head was visible through moving grass. In an area of 3 sq. km. we had seen four Tigers and recorded the presence of another female. This should be the highest density of Tigers anywhere in the world, with three adult males and two adult females being in such tightly packed territories.

After we spent some more time in the grassland, we reached Dhikala, had our breakfast and left for Nainital. On the way we had our lunch at hotel Tiger Camp. We arrived at Nainital in some very rough weather involving some heavy rain and stormy conditions and checked into a very comfortable hotel, 'The Vikram Vintage Inn'.

Some of the birds seen during the day included massive flocks of Great Cormorants at Dhikala, Changeble Hawk Eagle, Lesser Fish Eagle, Great Thick-knee, White-rumped Needletail, Great Hornbill, Maroon Oriole, Common Woodshrike, Short-billed Minivet, Rusty-cheeked Scimitar Babbler, Zitting Cisticola and probably the same Wallcreeper that we had seen three days ago at the same spot.

## Day 13

Wednesday 31st January

Bright and sunny day, windy evening, cold overnight.

Our first day at Nainital was spent around the town itself including a visit to Kilbury and Pungot. Nainital is a hill station that attracts many tourists, mostly domestic, in the summers. It virtually lies deserted in the winters with hardly any tourist around except for the birders. A short drive from our hotel is a place called Bara Pathar. The name indicates the presence of twelve big rocks and behind this rocky hill face lies a small valley with rocky and grassy slopes. This valley is known to birders as 'High Fields'. We spent the first few hours of the day here.

As we started our walk along a very steep built up path, we came across small hunting parties of warblers including Lemon-rumped, Buff-barred and Grey-hooded warblers. An Orange-flanked Bush Robin was seen feeding on a grassy slope and a little distance further up we saw Blue-capped and Blue-fronted Redstarts. A single Goldcrest was seen in a small tree growing next to a house. A bar-tailed Treecreeper and Brown-fronted Woodpeckers were seen in a tree. A little while later a pair of White-tailed Nuthatches was seen climbing the trunk of another nearby tree.

Green-backed Tit, Black-throated Tit, Streaked Laughingthrush, Russet Sparrow and Grey Bushchat were other common birds seen on the trail. As we came out of the trail, a big bird flew overhead and somebody screamed 'Lammergeyer'. We had good and prolonged views of this attractive vulture flying along the mountain cliffs.

The rest of the morning session was spent on Snow-View ridge from where we had great views of the Himalayan ranges. We had good views of Himalayan Woodpecker and Oriental Turtle Dove here.

In the middle of the day we came back to the hotel for our lunch and after a short rest started again for some birding on the Kilbury-Pungot ridge. Some interesting birds seen in this area included a party of 4 Black-throated Accentors, Striated Prinia, a female Chestnut-bellied Rock Thrush and Green Shrike Babbler. Yellow-throated Martin was a new mammal species recorded today.

## Day 14

Thursday 1st February

Bright and sunny, warm during the middle of the day

We left in the morning after our customary 'early breakfast' to Sattal. Sattal valley lies at a distance of 22 kilometres past the busy town of Bhowali. On the way we saw a big flock of swallow-like birds perched on electricity line and close inspection revealed that these were Eurasian Crag Martins. A little distance from here we saw the only Rufous-breasted Accentor that we had on the trip. A small drive further and we reached Mehra Gaon, a place 7 kilometres short of Sattal Lake and from where the road takes a diversion from the main highway.

There were many Himalayan and Red-vented Bulbuls around and a little way further up we saw an Aberrant Bush Warbler followed by 3 Spotted Forktails in a steep streambed. A kilometre's walk from the main highway took us to the Eureka Forbes fields where many Black-throated Accentors were seen. Thereafter we arrived at a well-wooded lake and came across a mixed flock of White-crested and White-throated Laughingthruses and Red-billed Blue Magpies feeding on garbage dump.

We reached the main lake at Sattal and had our lunch that we were carrying with us. There is beautiful short trail that starts from the main lake at Sattal and we spent some time exploring the area. Some of the birds seen during the day were Mountain Hawk Eagle, Slender-billed Vulture, Kaleej Pheasant, Slaty-headed Parakeet, Himalayan Swiftlet, Alpine Swift, Black-crested Bulbul, Black-chinned Babbler, Small and Rufous-bellied Niltava, Lesser Whitethroat, Common Chiffchaff, Buff-barred, Lemon-rumped and Grey-hooded Warbler, Common Stonechat, Grey Bushchat, Dark-throated Thrush, Great, Green-backed, Black-lored and Black-throated Tit, White-tailed and Velvet-fronted Nuthatch, Bar-tailed Treecreeper, Olive-backed Pipit, Green-tailed Sunbird and Russet Sparrow.

## Day 15

Friday 2nd February

Sunny morning with some cloudy patches during the day and light showers in the late afternoon

We had an early breakfast and drove out towards Mongoli Valley. Our first stop was at a hairpin bend where we had an excellent bird's eye view of a beautiful lake in the valley down below. A Cheer Pheasant was briefly seen here and despite much effort, it was lost behind the rocks on the grassy slope. We drove a little distance further to Char Khet, where a party of Kaleej Pheasants was seen.

We arrived at village Bajun that lies at a distance of 12 kilometres from Nainital on the road to Kaladhungi and started on the trail that is known as Mongoli Valley trek. The trail enters a narrow valley that gradually broadens and going along the hillside and above a picturesque village goes down to a small stream where we enjoyed our lunch that we were carrying with us.

Some of the birds seen here included Besra, Asian Barred Owlet, Scally-bellied Woodpecker, Lesser Yellonape, Red-billed Blue Magpie, Grey Treepie, Black-chinned Babbler, White-throated and Striated Laughingthrush, Blue-winged Minla, Red-billed Liothrix, Chestnut-headed Tesia, Striated Prinia, Buff-barred and Ashy-throated Warblers, Orange-flanked Bush Robin, Blue-capped and Blue-fronted Redstart, Slaty-backed Forktail, Black-

throated and Mrs. Gould's Sunbird, Yellow-breasted Greenfinch, Common and Pink-browed Rosefinch and Rock Bunting.

In the late afternoon we drove back to Nainital where it was drizzling. We left again in the early evening for some birding at Bara Pathar and Land's End Trek where we had some great views of Greater Yellownappe, Brown-fronted Woodpecker, Black-headed Jay and Rufous Sibia.

## Day 16

Saturday 3rd February

Bright and sunny day, warm during the middle of the day and pleasant evening

After breakfast we left our hotel, the very pleasant the Vikram Vintage Inn, and went past the beautiful Nainital Lake, drove down the road to the plains. A little past Nainital, we stopped at a place where our bus driver and his helper had located some perched birds previously and these turned out to be Steppe Eagles, Himalayan Griffons and Slender-billed Vultures.

Going through busy towns of Kathgodam, Haldwani and Rudrapur, we drove along National Highway towards New Delhi. Very surprisingly a Lesser Racket-tailed Drongo was seen from the moving vehicle in a degraded forested patch in the foothills. There were several leg-stretch stops with lots of good birding involved. We came across some perched Aquila eagles in sparse woodland and there was a quick debate about their identity. When looked through the spotting scope, the presence of round nostrils and comparatively smaller size indicated that they were endemic Indian Spotted Eagles.

We stopped at a roadside open restaurant for our lunch that we were carrying along. Thereafter a quick stop at the Holy Ganges River, produced at least three Gangetic River Dolphins. Some other birds seen here included Brown-headed Gull, Indian River and Whiskered Tern, Ruddy Shalduck and Plain Martin.

We carried on our long journey and reached New Delhi in the late evening. Raghu had to meet his next Naturetrek group that had landed in Delhi this morning and we said goodbye to this very brilliant young naturalist. Thereafter we reached hotel Ashok Country Resort where, after saying goodbye to the group members, the tour leader caught the train to his hometown, Ramnagar. The group departed to UK later that evening.

---

## Species Lists

### Birds

Nomenclature and taxonomy generally follows Grimmett and Inskipp's *The Birds of Northern India* (2003) which follows the treatments in the *The Birds of the Indian Subcontinent* (1999) by the same authors with the exception of their revised new taxonomic treatments of Indian Spotted Eagle, the Long-billed Vulture complex and Golden-spectacled Warbler complex. In addition, the recent splits of Collared Scops Owl and Indian Scops Owl, Indian Jungle Crow and Large-billed Crow, Red-breasted and Taiga Flycatchers are followed here.

#### **Black Francolin** *Francolinus francolinus* (3:15)

This attractive species was seen in good numbers around Dhikala in the Chours (grasslands), CTR.

#### **Grey Francolin** *Francolinus pondicerianus* (4:15)

Regularly seen in small groups at KGNP, a single bird was seen at Bund Bathertha and a few birds on the drive from Bharatpur to Agra.

#### **(Hill Partridge** *Arborophila torqueola millardi*)

Heard occasionally near Nainital

#### **Red Junglefowl** *Gallus gallus murghi* (3:15)

Distribution of this ancestor of domestic chicken is associated with Sal (*Shorea robusta*) forests in the subcontinent and a few birds were seen, mostly on the edge of the forest, around Dhikala, CTR.

#### **Kalij Pheasant** *Lophura leucomelanos hamiltoni* (2:15)

A single bird was seen on the way to Sattal and a few were seen at Char Khet near Nainital.

#### **Cheer Pheasant** *Catreus wallichii* (1:15)

A male was seen briefly on the grassy slope close to Nainital.

#### **Indian Peafowl** *Pavo cristatus* (10:15)

Widespread and regularly seen on the plains and a handful of birds recorded inside CTR, not seen at higher elevations.

#### **Lesser Whistling Duck** *Dendrocygna javanica* (1:15)

A flock was seen at Bund Baretha.

#### **Greylag Goose** *Anser anser rubirostris* (2:15)

A few birds were seen at OBS and recorded in good numbers at Bund Baretha. It was missing from KGNP due to lack of water.

#### **Bar-headed Goose** *Anser indicus* (3:15)

A few birds were recorded from OBS and KGNP and atleast 50 birds were seen in mixed waterfowl flocks at Bund Baretha.

**Ruddy Shelduck** *Tadorna ferruginea* (8:15)

Recorded in small numbers from the lowland areas and a good flock was present at Kosi barrage at Ramnagar.

**Comb Duck** *Sarkidiornis melanotos* (2:15)

Few birds were observed in the mixed waterfowl flocks at Bund Baretha and a single bird was present at KGNP.

**Cotton Pygmy Goose** *Nettapus coromandelianus* (1:15)

Some birds were seen at Bund Baretha.

**Gadwall** *Anas strepera* (4:15)

Observed in very small numbers at OBS, KGNP and Kosi barrage, Ramnagar and atleast 100 birds were seen along with mixed flocks of waterfowl species at Bund Baretha.

**Eurasian Wigeon** *Anas Penelope* (2:15)

A few birds were seen at OBS and upto 50 birds were present at Bund Baretha.

**Mallard** *Anas platyrhynchos* (2:15)

A pair was seen through spotting scopes at Bund Baretha and a flock of upto 50 birds was at Ramganga reservoir, CTR.

**Spot Billed Duck** *Anas poecilorhyncha* (3:15)

A few birds of this stunning resident species were seen at OBS, KGNP and Bund Baretha.

**Northern Shoveler** *Anas chrypeata* (3:15)

Seen in very good numbers at OBS and Bund Baretha, missing from KGNP due to lack of water.

**Northern Pintail** *Anas acuta* (2:15)

A few birds at OBS and large flocks at Bund Baretha were recorded. Some of the distant waterfowl in mixed flocks at Ramganga reservoir, CTR could be this species. It was missing from KGNP due to lack of water.

**Common Teal** *Anas crecca crecca* (4:15)

Recorded in very good numbers at OBS and Bund Baretha, a handful of birds were seen at KGNP and a flock of almost 50 birds were present at Ramganga reservoir, CTR.

**Red Crested Pochard** *Rhodonessa rufina* (2:15)

At least 200 were present at Bund Baretha and four birds were seen at Kosi barrage, Ramnagar.

**Common Pochard** *Aythya ferina* (2:15)

Seen in very good numbers at OBS and Bund Baretha.

**Tufted Duck** *Aythya fuligula* (2:15)

A handful of birds at OBS and Bund Baretha.

**Barred Buttonquail** *Turnix suscitator plumbeipes* (1:15)

One bird was seen at CTR.

**Eurasian Wryneck** *Jynx torquilla* (3:15)

Seen once at Bund Baretha and twice at CTR.

**Speckled Piculet** *Picumnus innominatus* (1:15)

Recorded once from CTR.

**Brown-capped Pygmy Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos nanus nanus* (1:15)

One bird seen at KGNP.

**Grey-capped Pygmy Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos canicapillus mitchelli* (3:15)

Fairly common in the foothills with birds seen close to Kumerian and Dhikala, CTR.

**Brown-fronted Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos auriceps auriceps* (2:15)

Only seen in and around Naini Tal.

**Fulvous-breasted Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos macei* (4:15)

Regularly seen in the foothills.

**Yellow-crowned Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos mahrattensis pallescens* (2:15)

One bird was seen at Bund Baretha and another showed up at KGNP.

**Himalayan Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos himalayensis himalayensis* (1:15)

One bird seen on Snow-view ridge, Nainital.

**Rufous Woodpecker** *Celeus brachyurus humei* (2:15)

Seen twice near Dhikala, CTR.

**Lesser Yellownape** *Picus chlorolophus chlorolophus or simlae* (6:15)

Seen regularly in the foothills around Kumerian, Mohan and Dhikala, CTR and was observed around Nainital, Pungot and Sattal.

**Greater Yellownape** *Picus flavinucha* (3:15)

A few birds recorded from the foothills, around Nainital and Mongoli Valley.

**Streak-throated Woodpecker** *Picus xanthopygaeus* (2:15)

Seen on two occasions in the foothills.

**Scally-bellied Woodpecker** *Picus squamatus* (2:15)

A single bird seen close to Kumerian and another seen at Mangoli Valley.

**Grey-headed Woodpecker** *Picus canus sanguiniceps* (4:15)

A few birds seen inside CTR and a single bird each at Sattal and Mongoli Valley.

**Himalayan Flameback** *Dinopium shorii* (3:15)

Very commonly heard in the foothills with single birds seen around Kumerian and Dhikala.

**Black-rumped Flameback** *Dinopium benghalense* (3:15)

Widespread but recorded in small numbers in lowland woodlands and foothill forests.

**(Greater Flameback** *Chrysocolaptes lucidus sultaneus*)

Heard regularly from the forest above hotel Quality Inn, Kumerian.

**Great Barbet** *Megalaima virens marshallorum* (2:15)

A pair was seen near hotel Quality Inn, Kumerian and two birds were observed at Sattal. The bird was heard countless number of times around Nainital, Sattal and Mongoli Valley.

**Brown Headed Barbet** *Megalaima zeylanica caniceps* (3:15)

A few birds were seen in a *Ficus* tree in the Nursery at KGNP followed by one bird at Bund Baretha and another bird seen close to Ramnagar.

**Lineated Barbet** *Megalaima linea rana* (3:15)

Very common in the foothills where this species replaces the previous one. Commonly heard around Kumerian, Mohan and Dhikala, CTR with a few sightings from the same locations.

**Blue-throated Barbet** *Megalaima asiatica* (4:15)

Common bird of the foothills and higher elevations, heard commonly in CTR, Nainital, Sattal and Mongoli Valley with most sighting being from the foothills and one bird seen at Sattal

**Coppersmith Barbet** *Megalaima haemacephala* (1:15)

Only two birds of this very attractive species were seen in the nursery at KGNP, though heard many times in the lowland areas

**Indian Grey Hornbill** *Ocyrceros birostris* (4:15)

Commonly seen and heard at KGNP.

**Great Hornbill** *Buceros bicornis* (1:15)

Heard calling from Sal (*Shorea robusta*) forest on number of occasions while waiting for the Tigers to show up at Dhikala Chour (grassland). One bird was seen in flight.

**Common Hoopoe** *Upupa epops* (4:15)

Only recorded in ones and twos in the plains at OBS, KGNP, Bund Baretha and the gardens of Taj Mahal.

**Indian Roller** *Coracias benghalensis benghalensis*

Seen on number of occasions in the plains with a few birds seen close to Ramnagar.

**Common Kingfisher** *Alcedo atthis* (5:15)

Recorded in small numbers from the foothills at Kumerian, Ramnagar and CTR.

**Stork-billed Kingfisher** *Halcyon capensis capensis* (1:15)

One bird of this difficult and much sought after species was located by following the calls at Ram Singh Road, CTR.

**White-throated Kingfisher** *Halcyon smyrnensis* (12:15)

Very common and widespread on the plains and in foothills and a bird was recorded from Sattal.

**Crested Kingfisher** *Megaceryle lugubris continentalis* (5:15)

Seen regularly in small numbers in the foothills.

**Pied Kingfisher** *Ceryle rudis leucomelanurus* (6:15)

A pair was seen at Bund Bareths, another was present at river Yamuna behind Taj Mahal and a few birds were recorded around Kumerian and CTR.

**Green Bee-eater** *Merops orientalis beludschicus* (2:15)

Only recorded in small numbers at OBS.

**Common Hawk Cuckoo** *Hierococcyx varius varius* (1:15)

One bird was seen at KGNP.

**Greater Coucal** *Centropus sinensis sinensis* (7:15)

Widespread and common in the lowland areas with birds recorded from OBS, KGNP, Bund Baretha, river Yamuna behind Taj Mahal and a single bird inside CTR.

**Lesser Coucal** *Centropus bengalensis* (2:15)

A few birds were seen well at Dhikala Chour (grassland), CTR. A pair seen, through spotting scopes, perched on tall elephant grass was presumed to be this species as though the previous species is found in the grassland habitat here it never perches on tall elephant grass.

**Alexandrine Parakeet** *Psittacula eupatria nipalensis* (2:15)

Uncommon, a few birds seen in the foothills including a sighting inside CTR.

**Rose-ringed Parakeet** *Psittacula kramera borealis* (10:15)

Widespread and very common in lowland areas and foothills.

**Slaty-headed Parakeet** *Psittacula himalayana* (4:15)

Seen in good numbers at Kumerian near hotel Quality Inn, Dhikala, CTR, Nainital, Sattal and Mongoli Valley.

**Plum-headed Parakeet** *Psittacula cyanocephala bengalensis* (5:15)

Five birds were seen on the road to Bund Baretha and big flocks were recorded in the foothills. It was very common around Dhiklala, CTR.

**Red-breasted Parakeet** *Psittacula alexandri fasciata* (4:15)

Very common in the foothills near Kumerian, Mohan and inside CTR. On the Eucalyptus trees (exotic) growing at Dhikala campus, on one of the days, hundreds of birds were observed.

**Himalayan Swiftlet** *Collocalia brevirostris brevirostris* (1:15)

A handful of birds were seen at Sattal.

**White-rumped Needletail** *Zoonavena sylvatica* (2:15)

Two flocks were seen inside CTR with one of the sighting involving atleast 30 birds.

**Alpine Swift** *Tachymarptis melba* (1:15)

A flock of atleast 30 birds were seen at Sattal.

**House Swift** *Apus affinis affinis and nipalensis* (5:15)

Recorded in small numbers in the lowland areas (presumably nominate *affinis*) from OBS, Bund Baretha, KGNP and a small flock (presumably race *nipalensis*) was seen at Kosi barrage, Ramnagar.

**Crested Treeswift** *Hemiprogne coronata* (4:15)

Commonly found in the foothills, in flocks of upto 40-50 birds, at Kumerian, Ramnagar and inside CTR.

**Indian Scops Owl** *Otus bakamoena* (earlier treated as Collared Scops Owl) (2:15)

Two pairs recorded from KGNP.

**Collared Scops Owl** *Otus lettia* (earlier treated as conspecific with *O. Bakamoena*) (1:15)

Seen once in the foothills, close to Ramnagar.

**Dusky Eagle Owl** *Bubo coromandus* (1:15)

A pair attending a nest containing a large chick were seen at KGNP.

**Brown-Fish Owl** *Keputa zeylonensis* (1:15)

A single birds was seen well, perched in a Sal (*Shorea robusta*) tree at Sambar Road, east of Dhikala, CTR.

**Tawny-Fish Owl** *Keputa flavipes* (1:15)

One bird was seen from close distance at the usual site near hotel Quality Inn at Kumerian.

**Asian Barred Owlet** *Glaucidium cuculoides cuculoides* (1:15)

One bird was seen at Mangoli Valley.

**Jungle Owlet** *Glaucidium radiatum radiatum* (2:15)

Seen twice and heard very commonly at Dhikala, CTR.

**Spotted Owlet** *Athene brama indica* (2:15)

A pair was seen at the nursery and another bird was seen close to the temple at KGNP.

**Brown Hawk Owl** *Ninox scutulata lugubris* (1:15)

One bird was of this very attractive species was seen from very close distance at the nursery outside the main entrance to KGNP.

**Rock Pigeon** *Columba livia neglecta* (14:15)

Some of the birds seen at Bund Baretha are presumed to be wild birds as they were in the right habitat. Rest of the birds resembling wild Rock Pigeons, seen in great numbers and almost everywhere on the trip, are considered to be of feral origin.

**Oriental Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia orientalis meena* (1:15)

Seen in small numbers at Snow-view ridge, Nainital

**Laughing Dove** *Streptopelia senegalensis* (7:15)

Widespread and very common on the plains with many birds observed from the moving vehicle. Absent in the foothills and hills.

**Spotted Dove** *Streptopelia chinensis* (4:15)

A single bird was seen on the way to Bund Baretha followed by small numbers in the foothills except Dhikala, CTR where many birds were recorded on one of the days.

**Red Collared Dove** *Streptopelia tranquebarica* (1:15)

Only recorded from OBS.

**Eurasian Collared Dove** *Streptopelia decaocto* (8:15)

Widespread and very common on the plains with many birds observed from the moving vehicle. A single bird was recorded at Dhikala, CTR.

**Emerald Dove** *Chalcophaps indica indica* (1:15)

Three birds seen in the undergrowth at Champion road, CTR.

**Yellow-footed Green Pigeon** *Treron phoenicoptera phoenicoptera* (4:15)

Seen in small numbers at Delhi, OBS, KGNP, Bund Baretha and Agra.

(Unidentified Bustard species: **Macqueen's Bustard** *Chlamydotis macqueeni*  
or **Lesser Florican** *Sypheotides indica*)

A bird was seen in the far distance at KGNP and its identity could not be confirmed with certainty. There have been no further reports from Bharatpur about any bustard sighting. Therefore none of the species are counted in the total species list for the tour.

**Sarus Crane** *Grus antigone* (3:15)

Five birds were found during our drinks stop at Koshi when en route to Bharatpur and two pairs were seen at KGNP.

**Brown Crake** *Amaurornis akool* (2:15)

One bird was seen near the temple at KGNP and another bird was observed on River Ramganga at Gorkha Sot, CTR.

**White-breasted Waterhen** *Amaurornis phoenicurus* (5:15)

Commonly seen on the plains at OBS, KGNP, Bund Baretha, and river Yamuna behind Taj Mahal.

**Purple Swamphen** *Porphyrio porphyrio indica* (2:15)

Seen in small numbers at OBS and atleast 50 birds were recorded from Bund Baretha.

**Common Moorhen** *Gallinula chloropus* (2:15)

Recorded in large numbers at Bund Baretha and a few birds near the temple at KGNP.

**Common Coot** *Fulica atra* (3:15)

Recorded in good numbers at OBS and Bund Baretha.

**Common Snipe** *Gallinago gallinago* (5:15)

A single bird at OBS, a pair at Bund Baretha followed by two pairs before the temple at KGNP and three birds near Dhikala on river Ramganga at CTR.

**Black-tailed Godwit** *Limosa limosa limosa* (4:15)

A few birds recorded from KGNP, Bund Baretha and river Yamuna behind Taj Mahal

**Eurasian Curlew** *Numenius arquata orientalis* (1:15)

A single bird was seen at Bund Baretha.

**Spotted Redshank** *Tringa erythropus* (4:15)

Quite a few birds at KGNP, a few seen at Bund Baretha and at river Yamuna behind Taj Mahal.

**Common Redshank** *Tringa totanus* (6:15)

Frequently seen in small numbers at KGNP, Bund Baretha and at river Yamuna behind Taj Mahal followed by a handful of birds recorded at Ramganga reservoir.

**Marsh Sandpiper** *Tringa stagnatilis* (3:15)

Small numbers were seen at KGNP and a couple of birds at river Yamuna behind Taj Mahal.

**Common Greenshank** *Tringa nebularia* (7:15)

Seen in small numbers at KGNP, Bund Baretha, river Yamuna behind Taj Mahal and river Ramganga near Dhikala CTR.

**Green Sandpiper** *Tringa ochropus* (8:15)

Recorded in small numbers from all the wetlands in the lowlands, foothills and at river Ramganga inside CTR.

**Wood Sandpiper** *Tringa glareola* (4:15)

Commonly seen on the wetlands in the lowlands at KGNP, Bund Baretha and river Yamuna behind Taj Mahal.

**Common Sandpiper** *Actitis hypoleucos* (9:15)

Recorded in small numbers from almost all the wetlands on the plains and foothills including some birds at river Ramganga inside CTR.

**Temmincks Stint** *Calidris temminckii* (4:15)

Seen in small numbers at KGNP and Bund Baretha.

**Ruff** *Philomachus pugnax* (4:15)

Present in small numbers at OBS and Bund Baretha and atleast 30 birds seen near the temple at KGNP.

**Greater Painted Snipe** *Rostratula benghalensis* (1:15)

Two birds seen at Bund Baretha.

**Bronze-winged Jacana** *Metopidius indicus* (1:15)

At least a dozen birds were seen at Bund Baretha.

**Great Thick-knee** *Esacus recurvirostris* (2:15)

Two birds seen close to Ramganga reservoir at CTR.

**Black-winged Stilt** *Himantopus himantopus* (8:15)

Widespread and very common on the plains and present even on every waterbody including the most polluted road and railside pond.

**Little Ringed Plover** *Charadrius dubius* (3:15)

A few birds seen at Ramganga reservoir, CTR.

**Kentish Plover** *Charadrius alexandrinus alexandrinus* (1:15)

Only one bird seen near the temple at KGNP.

**Northern Lapwing** *Vanellus vanellus* (1:15)

A single bird recorded at Ramganga reservoir, CTR.

**River Lapwing** *Vanellus duvaucelii* (6:15)

Four birds were seen at river Yamuna behind Taj Mahal and thereafter seen regularly on the rivers in the foothills.

**Red-wattled Lapwing** *Vanellus indicus indicus* (11:15)

Widespread and very common in the plains, absent above the foothills.

**White-tailed Lapwing** *Vanellus leucurus* (4:15)

Seen in small numbers at OBS, Bund Baratha, KGNP and a solitary bird at river Yamuna behind Taj Mahal.

**Indian Courser** *Cursorius coromandelicus* (1:15)

At least a dozen birds were seen in the open dry grassy patch near the temple at KGNP.

**Indian Skimmer** *Rynchops albicollis* (1:15)

Two birds were seen from the ruined palace, in the far distance, through spotting scope on an island at Bund Baretha.

**Steppe Gull** *Larus (buglini) barabensis* (2:15)

Two sightings of one bird each at OBS. This species is often taxonomically confused in the subcontinent with Caspian Gull (*L. cachinnans*).

**Brown-headed Gull** *Larus brunnicephalus* (1:15)

A single bird was at OBS.

**Black-headed Gull** *Larus ridibundus* (2:15)

Large numbers were seen at OBS.

**Gull-billed Tern** *Gelochelidon nilotica* (1:15)

One bird was seen flying close from the bund at the reservoir of Bund Baretha and probably there were more birds in the far distance that were left unidentified.

**River Tern** *Sterna aurantia* (4:15)

A few birds were observed flying over the reservoir at Bund Baretha and many birds were seen, some of these from very close at Ramganga reservoir at CTR.

**Whiskered Tern** *Chlidonias hybridus* (1:15)

A few birds were seen at Bund Baretha

**Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus* (3:15)

One at Bund Baretha was followed by a pair on Ramganga reservoir, CTR that was seen on more than one occasion.

**Oriental Honey Buzzard** *Pernis ptilorhynchus* (6:15)

One bird in overhead flight from the lawns of hotel in Delhi, two birds at Bund Baretha and three birds at CTR.

**Black-shouldered Kite** *Elanus caeruleus* (6:15)

Seen at OBS and Bund Baretha on the plains and at Dhikala Chour (grassland), CTR where it was common.

**Black Kite** *Milvus migrans govinda* and *lineatus* (9:15)

Abundant in the plains with some birds seen in the foothills and a bird flying over Nainital Lake. Most of the birds seen in plains were resident Pariah Kite (*govinda*) but many migrant Black-eared Kites (*lineatus*) showing very well especially in Delhi, OBS and at Taj Mahal.

**Pallas's Fish Eagle** *Haliaeetus leucoryphus* (4:15)

Common at CTR with at least two pairs having territories on either side of Ramganga reservoir.

**Lesser Fish Eagle** *Ichthyophaga humilis* (formerly *I. nana*) (2:15)

One bird was seen on river Kosi at Kumerian and another one was seen on river Ramganga near Dhikala, CTR.

**Lammergeier** *Gypaetus barbatus* (2:15)

At least two birds near Nainital followed by another flying over Sattal Valley.

**Egyptian Vulture** *Neophron percnopterus* (8:15)

Widespread and recorded in small numbers in the lowland and foothills. Recorded in good numbers at Taj Mahal where a pair was seen perched on the main dome of the monument.

**White-rumped Vulture** *Gyps bengalensis* (1:15)

At least two adults were seen on two nests with one young bird each and another adult was seen perched nearby at a village close to Ramnagar. This critically endangered species breeds here regularly in small numbers.

**Slender-billed Vulture** *Gyps tenuirostris* (3:15)

Saw some birds in the foothills around Dhikala, CTR, atleast another 10 birds in flight over Sattal Valley and many birds perched on trees at Nainital.

**Himalayan Griffon** *Gyps himalayensis* (6:15)

Seen in good numbers in the foothills from CTR to the hills around Nainital. The Sub-adult birds resemble Eurasian Griffon and this leads to misidentification of the species. On more than one occasions perched birds that looked like Eurasian Griffon were observed through spotting scopes and the color of the feet was confirmed to be pinkish, a characteristic of Himalayan Griffon. The latter species, it seems, does not occur in this part of Himalayas.

**Cinereous Vulture** *Aegypius monachus* (4:15)

Observed in the foothills only with upto 12 birds seen around Dhikala, CTR.

**Red-headed Vulture** *Sarcogyps calvus* (5:15)

One bird seen on more than one occasions at hotel Quality Inn and atleast three pairs inside CTR. The bird at Quality Inn was seen soaring at 0700 hrs in windy conditions on one morning.

**Crested Serpent Eagle** *Spilornis cheela cheela* (4:15)

One bird was seen perched close to the temple at KGNP, another was seen in flight over Taj Mahal and a few birds were observed at CTR.

**Eurasian Marsh Harrier** *Circus aeruginosus aeruginosus* (5:15)

Two or three birds were seen at OBS, followed by one seen on the road to Bund Baretha and an occasional one at Dhikala chour (grassland), CTR.

**Hen Harrier** *Circus cyaneus* (4:15)

At least two birds at KGNP and a few more at Dhikala Chour (grassland), CTR.

**Pied harrier** *Circus melanoleucos* (1:15)

An adult male was seen in low flight at Dhikala, CTR.

**Shikra** *Accipiter badius* (4:15)

Widespread and common on the plains and foothills. One of the most common Accipiter of the sub-continent

**Eurasian Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter nisus melaschistos and nisosimilis* (5:15)

Seen at OBS, KGNP and Bund Baretha on the plains and a single bird seen near Nainital.

**Besra** *Accipiter virgatus* (1:15)

On perched bird was well seen from close distance at Mongoli valley.

**Common Buzzard** *Buteo buteo* (1:15)

One bird seen in flight near Nainital.

**Long-legged Buzzard** *Buteo rufinus* (1:15)

A single sub-adult was seen in flight at OBS.

**Indian Spotted Eagle** *Aquila hastata* (2:15)

A single adult was seen flying over KGNP, showing characteristic double whitish carpal crescent and many birds were seen on the drive from Nainital to Delhi near Rudrapur.

**Greater Spotted Eagle** *Aquila clanga* (2:15)

Two birds seen circling over KGNP and another was seen at Bund Baretha.

**Tawny Eagle** *Aquila rapax* (1:15)

One bird was seen at KGNP.

**Steppe Eagle** *Aquila nipalensis* (6:15)

One adult bird was seen circling over KGNP. Common in the hills with most of the birds seen being juveniles.

**Imperial Eagle** *Aquila beliiaca* (1:15)

One bird flew overhead while we were coming back from the trek to the ruined palace at Bund Baretha.

**Bonelli's Eagle** *Hieraetus fasciatus* (1:15)

A single bird was seen circling over Dhikala Chour (grassland), CTR.

**Booted Eagle** *Hieraetus pennatus* (2:15)

A single bird was seen at KGNP followed by another bird flying over Taj Mahal.

**Changeable Hawk Eagle** *Spizaetus cirrhatus limnaetus* (1:15)

Three birds seen on the edge of forest at Dhikala Chour (grassland), CTR. One of these birds was calling from a dead tree close to where a pair of Tigers was seen.

**Mountain Hawk Eagle** *Spizaetus nipalensis nipalensis* (2:15)

One bird seen in flight over hotel Quality Inn, Kumeria.

**Collared Falconet** *Microhierax caerulescens* (4:15)

One bird seen briefly at Kumerian and atleast two pairs were recorded at Dhikala, CTR.

**Common Kestrel** *Falco tinnunculus* (5:15)

Recorded in ones and twos from the foothills at CTR and hills at Sattal and Mongoli Valley.

**Peregrine Falcon** *Falco peregrinus peregrinator* (1:15)

A single bird was recorded from Dhikala, CTR. This handsome race *peregrinator* of Indian subcontinent is known locally as Saheen Falcon.

**Little Grebe** *Tachybaptus ruficollis* (3:15)

A single bird was seen at OBS, a few at Bund Baretha and one in a roadside pond on the way to Fatehpur Sikri

**Darter** *Anhinga melanogaster* (3:15)

A single bird each at OBS and KGNP and atleast 15 birds were seen at Bund Baretha. Surprisingly none were seen at Ramganga reservoir, CTR.

**Little Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax niger* (9:15)

Widespread in the lowlands with good numbers at KGNP and Bund Baretha. One flock of almost 50 birds was observed at Kosi barrage, Ramnagar. There were probably many birds seen at the roadside water bodies, from the vehicle, while on the move.

**Indian Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax fuscicollis* (2:15)

A few birds seen at KGNP and a couple of birds at Bund Baretha

**Great Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax carbo sinensis* (9:15)

Recorded in small numbers at OBS, KGNP and Bund Baretha. Massive flocks were observed flying in formation over river Ramganga and were seen fishing on Ramganga Reservoir, CTR.

**Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta garzetta* (12:15)

Widespread and rather common at the wetlands in lowlands and foothills.

**Grey Heron** *Ardea cinerea* (8:15)

Observed in small numbers but present at most of the lowland wetlands and foothills.

**Purple Heron** *Ardea purpurea* (4:15)

One or two birds each at OBS, KGNP and Bund Baretha.

**Great Egret** *Casmerodius albus modestus* (also known as *Egretta alba*) (9:15)

Widespread with birds present in small numbers at lowland wetlands and present in good numbers at Ramganga reservoir, CTR. Many birds seen in the far distance could be of the species but were left unidentified as they were in mixed Egret flocks.

**Intermediate Egret** *Mesophoyx intermedia* (5:15)

Seen in ones and twos at OBS, KGNP, Kosi Barrage, Ramnagar and Ramganga reservoir, CTR. At least 10 birds were observed at Bund Baretha. Many birds seen in the far distance could be of the species but were left unidentified as they were in mixed Egret flocks.

**Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus ibis* (11:15)

Present everywhere in good numbers in the lowlands with many birds seen from the moving vehicle in the roadside fields.

**Indian Pond Heron** *Ardeola grayii* (11:15)

Widespread and very common at wetlands of all shapes and sizes in the lowlands and foothills.

**Little Heron** *Butorides striatus* (1:15)

Only one bird seen at Kosi barrage, Ramnagar.

**Black-crowned Night Heron** *Nycticorax nycticorax* (1:15)

One bird was seen very early morning at Dhikala campus, CTR.

**Glossy Ibis** *Plegadis falcinellus* (2:15)

One bird seen at KGNP and at least 5 were at Bund Baretha.

**Black-headed Ibis** *Threskiornis melanocephalus* (4:15)

Many birds were present at OBS and Bund Baretha and a single bird was seen at river Yamuna behind Taj Mahal.

**Black Ibis** *Pseudibis papillosa* (1:15)

Up to a dozen birds were seen in flight and by the roadside fields near Hapur on the drive back from Nainital.

**Eurasian Spoonbill** *Plalea leucorodia* (4:15)

Upto ten birds were observed at Bund Baretha, a single bird at KGNP, another bird was seen at river Yamuna behind Taj Mahal and three birds were present at Ramganga reservoir, CTR.

**Great White Pelican** *Pelecanus onocrotalus* (1:15)

Three birds were seen in flight at OBS.

**Painted Stork** *Mycteria leucocephala*

A few birds were observed at OBS, KGNP and CTR.

**Asian Openbill** *Anastomus oscitans*

Almost 40 birds seen at Bund Baretha and another big flock perched in the roadside trees just before Fatehpur Sikri.

**Black Stork** *Ciconia nigra*

At least ten were seen at River Ramganga close to Dhikala, CTR.

**Woolly-necked Stork** *Ciconia episcopus*

A pair was seen poorly in low flight at OBS and a few birds were present at river Ramganga, CTR.

**Black-necked Stork** *Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus* (3:15)

One bird was observed close to the temple at KGNP and atleast two pairs of were present at river Ramganga near Dhikala, CTR.

**Golden-fronted Leafbird** *Chloropsis aurifrons aurifrons* (1:15)

At least four birds were seen in the vicinity of the Quality Inn, Kumeria.

**Orange-bellied Leafbird** *Chloropsis hardwickii* (1:15)

At least half a dozen were seen in the vicinity of the Quality Inn, Kumeria.

**Rufous-tailed Shrike** *Lanius isabellinus arenarius* (1:15)

A single bird was seen at KGNP.

**Bay-backed Shrike** *Lanius vittatus* (3:15)

A handful of birds were recorded from the road to Bund Baretha, KGNP and the gardens of Taj Mahal.

**Long-tailed Shrike** *Lanius schach erythronotus* and *tricolor* (7:15)

Recorded in small numbers on the plains and from CTR where it was rather common and a single bird was recorded from Sattal. Some of the birds seen in Dhikala Chour (grassland) were of race *tricolor*.

**Southern Grey Shrike** *Lanius meridionalis labtora* (1:15)

A single bird was seen at KGNP.

**Eurasian Jay** *Garrulus glandarius bispecularis* (2:15)

Small numbers were seen around Naini Tal, and a single bird was recorded from Sattal.

**Black-headed Jay** *Garrulus lanceolatus* (3:15)

Small numbers were seen around Naini Tal and Sattal and a single bird was recorded from Mongoli Valley.

**Red-billed Blue Magpie** *Urocissa erythrorhyncha* (3:15)

A handful of birds were recorded at hotel Quality Inn, Kumerian, Sattal and Mongoli Valley.

**Common Green Magpie** *Cissa chinensis* (1:15)

A pair of these very beautiful birds was seen on the way to Dhikala, CTR.

**Rufous Treepie** *Dendrocitta vagabunda* (9:15)

Widespread and fairly common in the lowlands and present in the foothills.

**Grey Treepie** *Dendrocitta formosae* (3:15)

Recorded from the foothills with a few birds at Kumerian, flock of almost 25 birds at Mohan and a pair at Mongoli Valley. This species replaces the previous one in the hills.

**House Crow** *Corvus splendens splendens* (8:15)

Common on the plains, especially around human settlements, but replaced by the next species at higher elevations.

**Indian Jungle Crow** *Corvus(macrorhynchos) culminatus* (4:15)

Found in small numbers at the canal in Bharatpur, KGNP, Bund Baretha and on river Yamuna behind Taj Mahal.

**Large-billed Crow** *Corvus (macrorhynchos) japonensis intermedius* (8:15)

Replaces the previous two species in the foothills and hills where it is very common.

**(Eurasian Golden Oriole** *Oriolus oriolus*)

Heard once or twice at Dhikala CTR.

**Black-hooded Oriole** *Oriolus xanthornus* (3:15)

A few birds were recorded from CTR.

**Maroon Oriole** *Oriolus traillii* (1:15)

A handful of birds were seen at the edge of the forest at Dhikala, CTR.

**Large Cuckooshrike** *Coracina macei nipalensis* (3:15)

Recorded regularly but in very small numbers at Dhikala, CTR. Very vocal and was always heard before it was seen.

**Small Minivet** *Pericrocotus cinnamomeus* (1:15)

Five birds were seen in the nursery close to Bund Baretha.

**Long-tailed Minivet** *Pericrocotus ethologus* (3:15)

More widespread than other species of Minivats with two birds seen at KGNP, flocks of 15-20 birds at CTR and three birds at Mongoli Valley.

**Short-billed Minivet** *Pericrocotus brevirostris* (1:15)

A flock of fifteen birds was observed at CTR.

**Scarlet Minivet** *Pericrocotus flammeus* (2:15)

Flocks of approximately twenty birds each were seen on two occasions inside CTR.

**Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrike** *Hemipus picatus capitalis* (4:15)

Recorded in small numbers in the foothills from Kumerian, Mohan and inside CTR but absent from the higher elevations around Naini Tal.

**Yellow-bellied Fantail** *Rhipidura hypoxantha* (6:15)

Common at Kumerian where a few were found in the mango orchard of hotel Quality Inn. Regularly found this species to be present in the foothills and hills.

**White-throated Fantail** *Rhipidura albicollis* (5:15)

Quite common in the foothills at and around CTR and atleast three birds were recorded from Sattal trek.

**Black Drongo** *Dicrurus macrocercus* (10:15)

Very common in the lowlands where it was a frequent sight on roadside wires and a few were seen at CTR.

**Ashy Drongo** *Dicrurus leucophaeus longicaudatus* (2:15)

A bird each was seen at KGNP and Kumerian. Surprisingly none were recorded from the hills.

**White-bellied Drongo** *Dicrurus caeruleus* (3:15)

Seen in very small numbers in CTR.

**Bronzed Drongo** *Dicrurus aeneus* (4:15)

Small numbers were seen quite regularly in forest clearings in the lower foothills at Kumerian, Dhikala and Mongoli Valley.

**Lesser Racket-tailed Drongo** *Dicrurus remifer* (1:15)

One showed, very surprisingly, in a disturbed forested patch in the foothills, from the moving vehicle on the drive from Nainital to Delhi.

**Spangled Drongo** *Dicrurus hottentottus* (3:15)

One was seen surprisingly on the drive from Delhi airport to the hotel on the first day and a handful of birds were recorded in the foothills.

**Common Iora** *Aegithina tiphia* (1:15)

Surprisingly the two birds seen at the nursery near Bund Baretha were the only ones recorded for this widespread and common species.

**Common Woodshrike** *Tephrodornis pondicerianus* (2:15)

A single bird was seen close to Bund Baretha and a small party near Dhikala, CTR.

**Brown Dipper** *Cinclus pallasii* (2:15)

A pair feeding a young bird was seen on two consecutive days on river Kosi near hotel Quality Inn

**Chestnut-bellied Rock Thrush** *Monticola rufentris* (2:15)

A pair near Dhikala was a surprise sighting as this species rarely appears below Nainital and a single female was seen at Pungot.

**Blue Whistling Thrush** *Myophonus caeruleus* (9:15)

A very common bird in the foothills and hills with good numbers seen on every day.

**Orange-headed Thrush** *Zosterops citrina citrina* (1:15)

Three birds seen very well and from close distance near nursery at KGNP.

**Tickell's Thrush** *Turdus unicolor* (2:15)

A bird was seen near the nursery at KGNP, followed by another at the nursery near Bund Baretha.

**Dark-throated Thrush** *Turdus ruficollis atrogularis* (Black-throated Thrush) (3:15)

Recorded in small numbers from the foothills at Kumerian and Dhikala, CTR and atleast half a dozen birds at Sattal.

**Rufous-gorgeted Flycatcher** *Ficedula strophiate* (2:15)

After missing this species in the foothills, where it was expected, one bird was seen at Sattal followed by another one at Mongoli Valley.

**Red-breasted Flycatcher** *Ficedula parva* (4:15)

A few birds recorded from KGNP and Bund Baretha, absent from the foothills and hills where the next species replaces it.

**Taiga Flycatcher** *Ficedula albicilla* (5:15)

A couple of birds were seen around the nursery at KGNP and a few recorded from the foothills including one at Dhikala that was seen within the campus itself. A single bird was seen at Sattal as well.

**Slaty-blue Flycatcher** *Ficedula tricolor tricolor* (3:15)

This common species of the foothills was seen in less numbers than expected with two birds seen at Kumerian, a single bird at Dhikala, CTR and atleast five birds at Sattal where it was common. The bird was however heard in the foothills more often than it was seen.

**Small Niltava** *Niltava macgrigoriae* (2:15)

One seen briefly at Kumerian was followed by another one that showed well at Sat Tal.

**Rufous-bellied Niltava** *Niltava sundara* (2:15)

A very attractive species, a single bird was seen at Kumerian and another one at Sat Tal.

**Grey-headed Canary-flycatcher** *Culicicapa ceylonensis* (4:15)

A bird was seen behind the nursery at KGNP and another one showed up at the nursery near Bund Baretha. One bird was recorded at CTR and another was seen on the Sattal trek.

**White-tailed Rubythroat** *Luscinia pectoralis* (2:15)

A bird was seen near Kumerian and another was recorded from inside CTR.

**Bluethroat** *Luscinia svecica* (4:15)

A few birds were found at OBS, KGNP and Bund Baretha.

**Orange-flanked Bush Robin** *Tarsiger cyanurus* (3:15)

This attractive species was seen in small numbers around Naini Tal, Sattal and many birds were observed on the trek to Mongoli Valley.

**Oriental Magpie Robin** *Copsychus saularis* (5:15)

A few birds were recorded from the lowland areas and a single bird was seen at Dhikala, CTR.

**Indian Robin** *Saxicoloides fulicata* (7:15)

Quite common in the lowlands, a single bird was seen close to Ramnagar and was absent in the hills.

**Blue-capped Redstart** *Phoenicurus coeruleocephalus* (3:15)

Very regularly seen in good numbers at Nainital, Sattal and Mongoli Valley.

**Black Redstart** *Phoenicurus ochruros rufiventris* (4:15)

Recorded in small numbers from KGNP and Bund Baretha.

**Blue-fronted Redstart** *Phoenicurus frontalis* (3:15)

Common in the hills around Naini Tal, Sattal and Mongoli Valley.

**White-capped Water Redstart** *Chaimarrornis leucocephalus* (7:15)

Found in small numbers but regularly in the foothills and also recorded at Sattal and Mongoli Valley.

**Plumbeous Water Redstart** *Rhyacornis fuliginosus* (7:15)

Common on the streams and rivers of all shapes and sizes in the foothills and a single bird at Sattal.

**Little Forktail** *Enicurus scouleri* (1:15)

One showed very well on the River Kosi near hotel Quality Inn, Kumerian.

**Slaty-backed Forktail** *Enicurus schistaceus* (1:15)

A bird was found at the stream near the school at Mongoli Valley.

**Spotted Forktail** *Enicurus maculatus maculates* (2:15)

A single bird was seen on river Kosi near hotel Quality Inn at Kumerian and three birds were seen from close on the way to Sattal.

**Hodgson's Bushchat** *Saxicola insignis* (2:15)

Dhikala Chour (grassland) is the regular wintering ground of this species and after scanning countless Common Stonechats, we saw a female and an immature male followed by another female on the next day. A Naturetrek group on the same itinerary in February 2002 discovered the bird for the area.

**Common Stonechat** *Saxicola torquatus* (*maurus* group) (7:15)

Very widespread, found in small numbers in Bund Baretha and KGNP and encountered in good numbers in the foothills and upto Sattal in the hills. It was particularly numerous in the Chours (grasslands) of CTR where upto 50 birds were seen on one day while looking for more elusive Hodgson's Bushchats.

**White-tailed Stonechat** *Saxicola leucura* (1:15)

This specialty species of OBS was missed on the first evening and was one of the reasons to pay another visit to the sanctuary where a pair was seen foraging from close distance.

**Pied Bushchat** *Saxicola caprata bicolor* (6:15)

Small numbers were seen most days in the lowlands.

**Grey Bushchat** *Saxicola ferrea* (7:15)

Seen every day in small numbers in the foothills and hills.

**Isabelline Wheatear** *Oenanthe isabellina* (2:15)

A bird was seen on the way to Bund Baretha and another was found in a dry grassy area close to the temple at KGNP.

**Brown Rock Chat** *Cercomela fusca* (4:15)

A species closely associated with human habitation and also found near old buildings and monuments. A pair was seen at the ruined palace at Bund Baretha, a few birds were found at Fatehpur Sikri and Taj Mahal, at the breakfast stop at Kathgodam and at Ramnagar.

**Brahminy Starling** *Sturnus pagodarum* (4:15)

Recorded in small numbers from the lowland areas at Bund Baretha and KGNP, Fatehpur Sikri and Agra.

**Asian Pied Starling** *Sturnus contra* (7:15)

Common in the lowlands, normally in the vicinity of water, and a single bird seen at Dhikala, CTR.

**Common Myna** *Acridotheres tristis tristis* (15:15)

Widespread and extremely common. It was one of the three species seen on all the days of the trip, the other two being Red-vented Bulbul and House Sparrow.

**Bank Myna** *Acridotheres ginginianus* (8:15)

Widespread and very common everywhere in the lowland areas and many birds were seen on the drive between Ramnagar and Kaladhungi, on the way to Nainital.

**Chestnut-bellied Nuthatch** *Sitta castanea almorae* (6:15)

Regularly seen in small numbers from various sites in the foothills and a single male recorded from Mongoli Valley.

**White-tailed Nuthatch** *Sitta himalayensis* (2:15)

Upto a dozen birds were seen around Nainital and a single bird was found at Sattal close to the lake.

**Velvet-fronted Nuthatch** *Sitta frontalis* (5:15)

Recorded in small numbers in the foothills from Kumerian, Mohan, Ramnagar, inside CTR and a single bird was seen at Sattal.

**Wallcreeper** *Tichodroma muraria* (2:15)

One bird of this much sought-after species was seen from close distance at Kosi barrage at Ramnagar and probably the same bird was seen from the moving vehicle at the same spot after three days.

**Bar-tailed Treecreeper** *Certhia himalayana* (4:15)

A few birds recorded near Dhikala, CTR, commonly found around Naini Tal and a bird each seen at Sattal and Mongoli Valley.

**Spot-winged Tit** *Parus melanolophus* (1:15)

Quite common in and around Naini Tal

**Great Tit** *Parus major* (8:15)

Seen frequently in small numbers in the foothills and surprisingly a bird near Nainital followed by two birds each at Sattal and Mongoli Valley.

**Green-backed Tit** *Parus monticolus* (3:15)

Common at and around Naini Tal, Sattal and Mongoli Valley.

**Black-lored Tit** *Parus xanthogenys* (3:15)

A few birds seen inside CTR and recorded in small numbers from Sattal and Mongoli Valley.

**Yellow-browed Tit** *Sylviparus modestus* (1:15)

Two birds seen near Nainital.

**Black-throated Tit** *Aegithalos concinnus* (5:15)

Regularly found in small numbers in the foothills and surprisingly only one bird was seen in the hills at Mongoli valley.

**Plain Martin** *Riparia paludicola* (9:15)

Widespread and common with present at almost all the wetlands on the plains and in large numbers on the rivers of the foothills.

**Eurasian Crag Martin** *Hirundo rupestris* (3:15)

Up to 200 birds were counted on electricity lines before Sattal and a few birds recorded around Nainital and Mongoli Valley.

**Dusky Crag Martin** *Hirundo concolor* (1:15)

Four birds seen close to the ruined palace at Bund Baretha.

**Barn Swallow** *Hirundo rustica* (9:15)

Very widespread with small numbers recorded from Delhi, OBS, Bund Baretha, KGNP, river Yamuna behind Taj Mahal, Dhikala, CTR and Sattal.

**Wire-tailed Swallow** *Hirundo smithii* (5:15)

Found in small numbers at OBS, KGNP, Bund Baretha and river Yamuna behind Taj Mahal.

**Red-rumped Swallow** *Hirundo daurica* (6:15)

A handful at Bund Baretha, KGNP, Dhikala, CTR and Sattal.

**Goldcrest** *Regulus regulus* (1:15)

This is an uncommon species in Himalayas and the only bird that was seen briefly at high fields at Naini Tal was almost at the same place where the species was recorded in 2005 by the Naturetrek group on the same itinerary.

**Black-crested Bulbul** *Pycnonotus melanicterus flaviventris* (3:15)

A very attractive but scarce species and was found in very small numbers at CTR and Sattal.

**Red-whiskered Bulbul** *Pycnonotus jocosus* (3:15)

Scarce, only present in the lower foothills and immediately adjacent plains where small numbers were seen.

**White-eared Bulbul** *Pycnonotus leucotis* (3:15)

Seen in small numbers in the plains at KGNP and Bund Baretha. This species was formerly regarded as conspecific with the next species

**Himalayan Bulbul** *Pycnonotus leucogenys* (8:15)

Present in the foothills and hills where it was very common and widespread.

**Red-vented Bulbul** *Pycnonotus cafer* (15:15)

Very common and widespread throughout. Along with Common Myna and House Sparrow this was the only species seen every day.

**Ashy Bulbul** *Hemixos flavala* (3:15)

Commonly found in the foothills around Dhikala, CTR.

**Zitting Cisticola** *Cisticola juncidis* (2:15)

A few birds were seen and many heard in Dhikala Chour (grassland), CTR.

**Bright-headed Cisticola** *Cisticola exilis tyleri* (2:15)

Many birds of this exclusive Cisticola species not found in Africa (all other species, more than 40 atleast, of Cisticolas are found in Africa, hence the Latin name *Cisticola exilis*) were recorded from Dhikala Chour (grassland), CTR.

**Striated Prinia** *Prinia criniger* (2:15)

One bird was seen at Pungot and another one at Mongoli valley.

**Grey-breasted Prinia** *Prinia hodgsonii* (5:15)

A couple of birds were seen at Bund Baretha and found in good numbers in the foothills where flocks of upto 20 birds were encountered, also a flock of almost fifteen birds was seen at Sattal.

**Graceful Prinia** *Prinia gracilis* (1:15)

A few birds seen from close distance at OBS.

**Yellow-bellied Prinia** *Prinia flaviventris* (2:15)

A few birds were recorded from OBS.

**Ashy Prinia** *Prinia socialis* (7:15)

Recorded in small numbers, but regularly, in the lowlands with sightings on all the days and a single bird was seen at Dhikala Chour (grassland), CTR.

**Plain Prinia** *Prinia inornata inornata* (7:15)

Small numbers were encountered each day in the lowlands with many birds recorded at Dhikala Chour (grassland), CTR.

**Oriental White-eye** *Zosterops palpebrosus* (9:15)

A few birds were recorded from Bund Baretha and gardens of Taj Mahal and was found commonly in the foothills at Kumerian, Mohan, Ramnagar, inside CTR and in the hills at Nainital, Sattal and Mongoli Valley.

**Chestnut-headed Tesia** *Tesia castaneocoronata* (1:15)

A single bird was recorded from the stream near the school at Mongoli Valley.

**Aberrant Bush Warbler** *Cettia flavolivacea* (2:15)

Found commonly in the foothills and lower hills, heard far more often than seen with one bird showing well at Dhikala, CTR and another one recorded at Sattal.

**Blyth's Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus dumetorum* (1:15)

At least half a dozen birds were seen between Sapan Mori and the temple at KGNP.

**Common Tailorbird** *Orthotomus sutorius* (4:15)

Recorded here and there in the plains in small numbers and a bird at Dhikala, CTR.

**Common Chiffchaff** *Phylloscopus collybita tristis* (8:15)

Widespread and commonly found in the plains and hills where many birds were seen close to Nainital and a few were present at Sattal. Surprisingly none recorded from the foothills.

**Plain Leaf Warbler** *Phylloscopus neglectus* (1:15)

One bird of this species restricted to the arid areas of North-west India was recorded from Bund Baretha.

**Buff-barred Warbler** *Phylloscopus pulcher* (3:15)

Only seen in the hills around Naini Tal, Sattal and Mongoli Valley, where it was common.

**Ashy-throated Warbler** *Phylloscopus maculipennis* (1:15)

This is an uncommon species in Western Himalayas and it was recorded from Mongoli valley where two birds were briefly seen.

**Lemon-rumped Warbler** *Phylloscopus chloronotus* (3:15)

Surprisingly none recorded from the foothills where it should be common in the winters but found in small numbers around Nainital and Sattal and as many as 25 birds recorded on the trek to Mongoli valley.

**Brook's Leaf Warbler** *Phylloscopus subviridis* (1:15)

Two birds were well seen at KGNP.

**Hume's Warbler** *Phylloscopus humei humei* (5:15)

Widespread and found in small numbers, though heard more often than seen, in the lowlands but scarce in the lower foothills and absent around Naini Tal.

**Greenish Warbler** *Phylloscopus trochiloides viridanus* (5:15)

Small numbers were seen in the lowlands at OBS, KGNP and Bund Baretha and all birds appeared to be race *viridanus* that breeds in Himalayas and is widespread in North India in the winters.

**Whistler's Warbler** *Seicercus whistleri* (1:15)

One bird was seen and a few heard at Kumerian.

**Grey-hooded Warbler** *Seicercus xanthoschistos albosuperciliaris* (6:15)

Very common in the foothills and hill where it was part of almost every mixed hunting party. This species was seen in good numbers and heard more often than seen.

**Striated Grassbird** *Megalurus palustris* (2:15)

A few of these specialty birds of OBS were seen on both the visits.

**White-throated Laughingthrush** *Garrulax albogularis* (3:15)

A large flock of these noisy birds was seen at CTR and recorded in good numbers at Sattal and Mongoli Valley.

**White-crested Laughingthrush** *Garrulax leucolophus leucolophus* (3:15)

This attractive species was recorded in small numbers at Kumerian, inside CTR and surprisingly high for this species near Nainital.

**Striated Laughingthrush** *Garrulax striatus* (2:15)

One bird was seen close to Nainital followed by another two at the Mangoli Valley.

**Streaked Laughingthrush** *Garrulax lineatus* (2:15)

Very common in the hills where seen in very good numbers.

**Rusty-checked Scimitar Babbler** *Pomatorhinus erythrogegens erythrogegens* (2:15)

After the first pair at CTR few more birds were seen on the Mangoli Valley trek.

**Black-chinned Babbler** *Stachyris pyrrhops* (2:15)

Many small parties were encountered at Sattal and Mongoli Valley.

**Yellow-eyed Babbler** *Chrysomma sinense* (2:15)

Recorded a few birds on the way to Bund Baretha followed by a party of five birds at KGNP.

**Striated Babbler** *Turdoides earlei earlei* (1:15)

A few birds were found at OBS, a regular location for this often-elusive species.

**Large Grey Babbler** *Turdoides malcolmi* (3:15)

A large flock was seen on the road to Bund Baretha, and another flock was found at KGNP followed by some birds seen from the moving vehicle between Bharatpur and Fatehpur Sikri.

**Jungle Babbler** *Turdoides striatus siddianus* &/or *striatus* (11:15)

Widespread and very common apart from at the higher elevations around Naini Tal

**Red-billed Leiothrix** *Leiothrix lutea* (1:15)

At least 15 birds of this attractive species were seen near Sattal.

**Green Shrike Babbler** *Pteruthius xanthochlorus* (1:15)

One bird was seen briefly on the Pungot ridge.

**Blue-winged Minla** *Minla cyanouroptera cyanouroptera* (2:15)

At least 15 birds were seen at Sattal and a small flock was seen from close distance at Mongoli Valley trek.

**Rufous Sibia** *Heterophasia capistrata capistrata* (3:15)

Common in the hills around Nainital.

**White-bellied Yuhina** *Yuhina zantholeuca* (1:15)

One bird was seen at CTR.

**Lesser Whitethroat** *Sylvia curruca* (7:15)

Widespread and common in the plains absent in the foothills but recorded in small numbers from Sattal.

**Indian Bushlark** *Mirafra erythroptera* (1:15)

A single bird was seen at OBS.

**Crested Lark** *Galerida cristata chendoola* (1:15)

A few birds were seen on the way to Bund Baretha.

**Oriental Skylark** *Alauda gulgula* (2:15)

Common in Dhaikala Chour (grassland), CTR

**Purple Sunbird** *Nectarinia asiatica* (3:15)

Surprisingly a few birds at Bund Baretha and a single bird each at KGNP and gardens of Taj Mahal were the only members of this common species of the lowland areas of Northern India were seen.

**Mrs. Gould's Sunbird** *Aethopyga gouldiae gouldiae* (1:15)

A female with a prominent yellow rump and white outertail feathers was seen on the Mongoli Valley trek.

**Green-tailed Sunbird** *Aethopyga nipalensis* (1:15)

A male was seen close to hotel Quality Inn at Kumerian.

**Black-throated Sunbird** *Aethopyga saturata saturata* (1:15)

A male was seen close to hotel Quality Inn at Kumerian.

**Crimson Sunbird** *Aethopyga siparaja* (4:15)

A few birds were seen at Kumerian and inside CTR and a single bird was seen at Sattal.

**House Sparrow** *Passer domesticus (indica group)* (15:15)

Commonly found everyday on the trip including many birds seen surprisingly at Dhikala, CTR.

**Russet Sparrow** *Passer rutilans* (3:15)

Seen in good numbers at Nainital, Pungot, Sattal and Mongoli Valley.

**Chestnut-shouldered Petronia** *Petronia xanthocollis* (3:15)

A single bird was seen at KGNP and another close to Ramnagar but large numbers were recorded at Bund Baretha.

**White Wagtail** *Motacilla alba alboides, leucopsis, baicalensis* and *dukhunensis* (7:15)

Common in the plains and foothills with *personata* being the most common race. Other races observed in small numbers were *alboides, leucopsis, baicalensis* and *dukhunensis*.

**White-browed Wagtail** *Motacilla maderaspatensis* (9:15)

Regularly seen in small numbers at the waterbodies on the plains and the rivers in the foothills.

**Citrine Wagtail** *Motacilla citreola citreola* (5:15)

A few birds were seen at OBS, Bund Baretha, river Yamuna behind Taj Mahal, Dhikala, CTR and atleast 30 birds were recorded near the temple at KGNP.

**Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla flava beema* (2:15)

A few birds were seen at OBS and a couple of birds were there near the temple at KGNP. All birds appeared to be race *beema*.

**Grey Wagtail** *Motacilla cinerea* (3:15)

Recorded in ones and twos from Bund Baretha, Kumerian and Sattal.

**Paddyfield Pipit** *Anthus rufulus* (4:15)

Two birds were seen at KGNP and a few were there in Dhikala Chour (grassland), CTR.

**Tawny Pipit** *Anthus campestris* (3:15)

Two birds were seen at Bund Baretha and a few were there in Dhikala Chour (grassland), CTR.

**Long-billed Pipit** *Anthus similis* (3:15)

A single bird was seen at KGNP and a few were present at Dhikala Chour (grassland), CTR.

**Tree Pipit** *Anthus trivialis baringtoni* (1:15)

Two birds were seen on the way to Bund Baretha.

**Olive-backed Pipit** *Anthus hodgsoni hodgsoni* (4:15)

A small flock of four birds was seen at KGNP, seen in small numbers at Kumerian and inside CTR and four birds were recorded from Sattal Valley.

**Rosy Pipit** *Anthus roseatus* (2:15)

Many birds were seen close to Ramganga reservoir at CTR, it's the darkest of the pipits around, in winters.

**Rufous-breasted Accentor** *Prunella strophiatea* (1:15)

Surprisingly only one bird was seen in the fenced fields next to Eureka Forbes at Sattal.

**Black-throated Accentor** *Prunella atrogularis* (2:15)

Four birds of this uncommon species were seen from close distance at Pungot and atleast 15 were counted in the fenced fields next to Eureka Forbes at Sattal.

**Black-breasted Weaver** *Ploceus benghalensis* (2:15)

A flock of more than a dozen birds were seen at the same place on two consecutive days at OBS.

**Red Avadavat** *Amandava amandava* (4:15)

A few birds of this very attractive species were recorded from OBS and small flocks were seen regularly at Dhikala Chour (grassland),  
CTR.

**Indian Silverbill** *Lonchura malabarica* (3:15)

A few small flocks were observed on the reeds at OBS and atleast a flock of 15 birds was present at Bund Baretha.

**Scally-breasted Munia** *Lonchura punctulata*

A small flock was seen at OBS.

**Yellow-breasted Greenfinch** *Carduelis spinoides spinoides* (2:15)

Three birds were seen at Pungot and another two on the trek to Mongoli Valley.

**Common Rosefinch** *Carpodacus erythrinus* (2:15)

One female at Sattal followed by a male at Mongoli Valley.

**Pink-browed Rosefinch** *Carpodacus rodochrous* (3:15)

A few of these beautiful birds were seen near Nainital, Pungot, Sattal and Mongoli Valley.

**Rock Bunting** *Emberiza cia stracheyi* (2:15)

One bird was seen on the rocky slopes at High Fields near Nainital and another six birds were seen on the trek to Mongoli valley.

**White-capped Bunting** *Emberiza stewarti* (1:15)

Three birds of this widespread species were seen on the trek to the ruined palace at Bund Baretha.

---

## Mammals

**Rhesus Macaque** *Macca mulatta* (13:15)

Very common and widespread

**Hanuman (or Common or Grey) Langur** *Presbytis entellus* (10:15)

Fairly common and widespread, more common in forested areas than the previous species.

**Tiger** *Panthera tigris tigris* (2:15)

A pair in courtship was seen chasing each other in tall grass at Dhikala, another male was seen briefly in some very tall grass where people had earlier seen it entering with a Sambar kill and another male tiger unexpectedly encountered at the edge of the grassland. The first pair was seen on two consecutive days.

**Grey (or Common) Mongoose** *Herpestes edwardsii* (3:15)

A pair was seen at KGNP, and one animal each on two consecutive days at Dhikala, CTR.

**Small Indian Mongoose** *Herpestes auropunctatus* (1:15)

Three animals were seen in the gardens of TAJ Mahal.

**Common (or Golden) Jackal** *Canis aureus* (4:15)

Seen regularly at both KGNP and CTR.

**Yellow-throated Marten** *Martes flavigula* (3:15)

Recorded regularly in small numbers in the hills where it is presumed to be common.

**Indian Fruit Bat (or Indian Flying Fox)** *Pteropus giganteus* (1:15)

Several were seen roosting near Bund Baretha

**Short-nosed Fruit Bat** *Cynopterus sphinx* (1:15)

Several of these small fruit bats were seen flying in the late evening while returning from Bund Baretha.

**Indian Pipistrelle** *Pipistrellus coromandra* (3:15)

A few were seen in the late evening at Agra, one was found at Nainital and a few over Delhi on the last evening.

**[Bat sp.]**

Small bats were seen KGNP, in Agra and over the Dhikala compound at CTR but their identity is not known

**(Northern) Five-striped Squirrel** *Funambulus pennantii* (7:15)

Abundant in the plains where they are found near human settlements but also prefer woodlands.

**Indian Hare** *Lepus nigricollis* (1:15)

One animal was seen at KGNP.

**Asian (or Indian) Elephant** *Elephas maximus* (2:15)

More than 15 animals were seen on the first day at Dhikala and another 25 were counted the next day.

**Nilgai (or Blue Bull or Indian Antelope)** *Boselaphus tragocamelus* (2:15)

Present in good numbers at KGNP.

**Hog Deer** *Cervus porcinus* (3:15)

Only seen at CTR where only few survive in the grassland habitat.

**Sambar** *Cervus unicolor* (4:15)

A few animals were seen at KGNP and CTR.

**Chital (or Spotted Deer)** *Cervus axis* (6:15)

A few were seen at KGNP and large herds of more than 100 deer were common at CTR.

**Indian Muntjac** *Muntiacus muntjac* (4:15)

Small numbers were found in and around CTR.

**Wild Boar** *Sus scrofa* (4:15)

Only one animal was seen at KGNP and was seen regularly at CTR.

**Gangetic (or Ganges River) Dolphin** *Platanista gangetica* (1:15)

Probably three animals of this endemic and endangered aquatic species were seen from the bridge at the Ganges river on National Highway 24.

## Reptiles

### **Indian (or Gangetic) Mud Turtle** *Lissemys punctata* (1:15)

What was believed to be this species was seen at KGNP.

### **Indian Softshell Turtle** *Aspideretes gangeticus* (2:15)

Some of these giant freshwater turtles were seen at river Ramganga, CTR.

### [Turtle sp]

Unidentified turtles/ terrapins were quite common at KGNP and CTR.

### **Gharial** *Gavialis gangeticus* (2:15)

Many were seen at Crocodile pool and Ramganga reservoir, CTR.

### **Marsh Mugger** *Crocodylus palustris* (3:15)

Several were seen sunbathing on riverbanks and lake shores at CTR.

### **Indian Rock Python** *Python molurus* (1:15)

A pair was seen well from close distance at KGNP.

### **Kashmir Rock Agama** *Laudakia tuberculata* (1:15)

One was seen near hotel Quality Inn, Kumerian.

### **Northern House Gecko** *Hemidactylus flaviviridis* (6:15)

Commonly and regularly seen on the trip.

### **Common Garden Lizard** *Calotes versicolor* (1:15)

One was briefly seen at KGNP.

## Fish

### **Mahaseer** *Barbus mosal* (2:15)

This legendary game fish, known to exceed 100 lbs. was seen commonly in river Ramganga, CTR.

### **Goonch** *Bgaririus yarrellii* (1:15)

These massive fish, some of them well over 6 feet in length were seen at Crocodile Pool, CTR.

## Ants

### (Red Tailor Ants Sp.)

These social insects were recorded from the foothills. These ants stick together leaves to make their nests and several nests were observed on Sal (*Shoria robusta*) trees.

## Spiders

### **Giant Wood Spider** *Nephila maculata* (2:15)

Huge spiders on webs that were meters wide were seen in the forest while birding on foot around Kumerian.

### **Zebra Jumper** *Plexippus paykulli* (1:15)

Recorded from the Dhikala, CTR.

### **Burrow Spider Sp.** (?) *Mygalomorph Sp.* (3:15)

Burrows of these spider species (?) were seen in the grassland habitat at CTR.

## Butterflies

### **Common Rose** *Pachliopta aristolochiae* (1:15)

Recorded from Bund Baratha.

### **Lime Butterfly** *Princeps demoleus* (1:15)

Recorded from close to Ramnagar in the foothills.

### **Common Mormon** *Princeps polytes* (1:15)

Recorded from Dhikala, CTR.

### **Indian Cabbage White** *Pieris canidia* (3:15)

Recorded in small numbers from KGNP and CTR.

### **Common Albatross** *Appias albina* (2:15)

Recorded from Bund Baratha and KGNP.

### **Common Wanderer** *Pareronia valeria* (1:15)

One was seen at lunchtime in the gardens of hotel Quality Inn, Kumerian.

### **Common Gull** *Cepora nerissa* (3:15)

Commonly found in the lowland areas.

### **Yellow Orangetip** *Ixias pyrene* (2:15)

A few were recorded from KGNP.

### **White Orangetip** *Ixias marianne* (1:15)

Recorded from KGNP.

### **Common Emigrant** *Catopsillia pomona* (6:15)

Recorded in small numbers from OBS and CTR.

**Common Grass Yellow** *Eurema hecabe* (1:15)

Recorded from Sattal.

**Common Cerulean** *Jamides caleno* (1:15)

Recorded from the foothills.

**Peablue** *Lamipides boeticus* (1:15)

Recorded from the foothills.

**Grass Jewel** *Zizeeria trochilus* (1:15)

This is the smallest butterfly of the country and was recorded from Bund Baretha.

**Malayan** *Megisba malaya* (1:15)

Recorded from CTR.

**Common Bushbrown** *Mycalesis perseus* (1:15)

Recorded from the foothills.

**Peacock Pency** *Persis almana* (1:15)

Recorded from Bund Baretha.

**Painted Lady** *Cynthia cardui* (2:15)

Recorded from Nainital and Mongoli Valley.

**Indian Tortoiseshell** *Aglais cachmirensis* (1:15)

Recorded from Mongoli Valley.

**Glassy Tiger** *Parantica aglea* (5:15)

Recorded from foothills including sightings from CTR and found as high up in the hills as Sattal.

**Common Tiger** *Danaus genutia* (1:15)

Recorded from KGNP.

**Plain Tiger** *Danaus chrysippus* (5:15)

Commonly found in the plains.

**Common Crow** *Euploea core* (1:15)

Recorded from the foothills.

**Golden Angle** *Odontoptilum ransonnetti* (1:15)

Recorded from Mongoli Valley.