

Northern India & the Himalayan Foothills

Naturetrek Tour Report

14 - 28 November 2009

Report compiled by Nick Acheson



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Introduction

‘So there’s this king...’

What a marvellous way to spend a fortnight – glorious landscapes, great buildings, fine food, good hotels, delightful company and superb wildlife-watching. Who could have asked for more? Well, *apart* from Cheer Pheasant, who could have asked for more? There were too many delights to list, but here’s a quick round-up of my favourites:

The sights

What seemed like a whole flock of Short-toed Eagles, joined by a point-blank first-winter Greater Spotted Eagle, just over our heads in the tower in Keoladeo Ghana National Park; the swirling elegance of Black Kites over the great dome of the Taj Mahal; our first dazzling foothill flocks at Corbett Falls and Mangoli; a pair of immaculate Red-flanked Bluetails glowing in the shade of the forest at Sat Tal; the triple whammy – Ibisbill, Crested Kingfisher and Wallcreeper – by the beautiful waters of the Kosi river at Dhikuli; the morning mists over the incomparable grasslands of Dhikala; and – who could forget? – a Tigress crossing the bright waters of a Himalayan stream.

The sounds

The cries of the priest’s acolyte in Keoladeo, as he called his mammoth Indian Flapshell Turtles to their meal on the steps of the temple; the bugling of Sarus Cranes near Bharatpur as we sifted through a flock of weavers and sparrows; the clamour of countless schoolgirls inside the Taj Mahal; dippy choruses of White-crested Laughingthrushes in the foothill forests; burbling Red-vented Bulbuls in the dew-dripping grasses of Corbett; hearts thumping in our throats as we missed seeing a Tiger; even perhaps (I flatter myself) the noble tale of *Ramayana* on a bumpy bus-ride.

The tastes

Many a Kingfisher to celebrate many a good bird; delicious *aloo parantha* for our picnic at Bandh Baretha; wonderful puddings in our dining-room-with-a-view in Nainital; steaming *masala chai* (to which almost all of you became converts); and an amazing last-night buffet in the elegance of the Radisson.

The people

We were helped along our way by far too many kind souls to mention. Prominent among them were: our smiling *rickshewalle* in Keoladeo Ghana National Park for pedalling us serenely through the owl-studded forest; our two guides in Corbett National Park – Jay Hussein and Dharm Vir – for their great knowledge of the forest and their good humour in sharing it with us; our superb and accommodating drivers and ground staff in Corbett – Hari, Ramesh, Yasbal, Vimal and Anil; the patient elephants you rode in Dhikala and their skilled mahouts; all of our kind, careful and welcoming bus drivers and, in particular, Vikki and Surender.

Final thanks to you too, for your tireless enthusiasm for India and her wildlife, for your sensitivity to her culture and people, for your smiles in the face of changes of plan (even those slightly uncomfortable changes of plan), for your interest in everything, and for making two tour leaders' lives very easy.

And thanks to gracious India for allowing us into her magnificent forests. May we all be back there soon...

Day 1

Saturday 14th November

Task number one: gather your group from their various flights. We still hadn't quite managed this by early afternoon when we set off to Okhla, but by evening we had. Meanwhile, at Okhla barrage on the Yamuna River most of us were quickly into the thick of the birding, getting our eyes and ears round the delights of North India's common birds. Hume's Leaf-Warblers lisped from the *Acacia* scrub, Common Tailorbirds chimed and overhead Green Bee-eaters (our only ones of the whole tour) looped and bleated. Out on the water, Little Cormorants, Greylag Geese, Coot, Spotbills, Teal and Pintail were seen and, in the floating mats of water hyacinth, Black-headed Ibis probed, Purple Swamphens fought and placid Nilgai chomped. At the end of the track we stopped to watch Yellow-footed Green-Pigeons and Indian Grey Hornbills feasting on fig fruits while great flocks of Black-headed and Brown-headed Gulls drifted past in the dying light to their roosts. Once the whole group was together, supper was eaten at a restaurant in Connaught Place and we spent the night in the luxury of our hotel in Delhi.

Day 2

Sunday 15th November

This morning was largely spent driving to Bharatpur. The journey was, nonetheless, punctuated with some excellent birding. Near Kosi we stopped at a roadside wetland where the water fairly teemed with Shoveler and Teal (with one Garganey well hidden among them). Black-winged Stilts and Citrine Wagtails stalked the shallows while in scrub around the pools the birds came thick and fast: White-eared Bulbul, Pied Bushchat, Common Babbler, Brown Shrike, Tawny Pipit and – the bird Harish had brought us here to see – Graceful Prinia. A leg stretch at a nearby restaurant added Brown Rock Chat to our list and as we reached Bharatpur we were very pleased to see two of the characteristic birds of the floodplains of North India: Black Ibis and Sarus Crane. A bonus here was our first Indian Spotted Eagle.

After lunch at the impeccable Lakshmi Vilas Palace Hotel in Bharatpur, we made our first foray into the celebrated Keoladeo Ghana National Park. We arrived fore-warned that the rains had failed so we were steeled not to see the great flocks of waterbirds for which the park is famed. It must be said, however, that the birding was excellent. In no time at all, Harish – one of Bharatpur’s most talented birders – had led us to many of the park’s specialities. Spotted Owlets scowled from their roost sites, Collared Scops peered down at us from the tops of palms, and in the gathering gloom we managed brief views of the Dusky Eagle-Owls which were laughing throatily along the path. Earlier, in the Nursery, we had seen a flock of brilliant Long-tailed Minivets, admired a perched Ashy Drongo and marvelled at three Grey Nightjars roosting along *Eucalyptus* boughs and two wonderful Large-tailed Nightjars, fading into the leaf-litter in spite of their bold patterns. The raptor-watching was good too: both dark and pale phase Greater Spotted Eagles were seen well, a Short-toed Eagle flapped by, distant female Pallid Harriers quartered the grass and Black-shouldered Kites hovered in the burnished light of afternoon.

Day 3

Monday 16th November

‘I’d be amazed if it rained at this time of year.’ Oh well, you can’t get them all right and, in my defence, it was the only time it rained on the whole tour. Today began cloudy and misty but, undaunted, we set out for Bayana and Bandh Baretha. We made several stops along the road and found many good birds. As the mist lifted we visited a wetland, used for the cultivation of water-chestnuts. Here we saw many birds familiar from Europe including Crested Lark, Bluethroat, Common Rosefinch, Ruff, Black-tailed Godwit, Common Snipe and Temminck’s Stint. Less familiar were Brown Crake, Indian Pond-Heron, Pheasant-tailed Jacana and Red-wattled Lapwing. A little further we stopped among tall roadside grasses and were treated to amazing views of three confiding species: Ashy Prinia, Plain Prinia and Yellow-eyed Babbler. Here too were Red-headed Buntings, Large Grey Babbler and a Long-tailed Shrike.

At Bayana we walked around the base of the cliffs where, perched vanishingly high above us, was the tour’s only Blue Rock Thrush. Also here were several Indian Vultures – our target bird for the site. Common Babbler trilled from the dry scrub, Dusky Crag Martins swooped round the cliffs and our first Common Langurs bounded up the slopes above us.

In time for lunch we reached the dam at Bandh Baretha where Cotton Pygmy-Geese and our only Wigeon were outnumbered by large flocks of Coot and Gadwall. Overhead flew elegant River Terns and winter-plumaged Whiskered Terns. We retreated to the bus for lunch, to avoid the attention of a rowdy troupe of Rhesus Macaques. After lunch we drove along the flank of the lake and slowly walked up towards the Maharajah of Bharatpur’s dour hunting lodge. Along this track we saw our first Bronze-winged Jacanas (also on water-chestnuts), both Pied and White-throated Kingfishers, our only Asian Koel, a curiously tail-less Plum-headed Parakeet and – high overhead – an Eastern Imperial Eagle. Also here were a Wryneck, two Rufous-tailed Larks and a very distant flock of Glossy Ibis. Just as we reached the bus the heavens opened. The weather seemed to improve as we approached the well-known Indian Flying-Fox roost nearby but no sooner were we out of the bus than the rain poured down again; so we ticked and ran and stayed fairly dry.

This evening was once again spent in the luxury of the Lakshmi Vilas Palace Hotel.

Day 4

Tuesday 17th November

This morning's birding sites weren't, it must be said, the most salubrious we could have imagined, but they more than paid off in the quality of the birds we saw. Our first visit was to the Bharatpur canal where we were treated to a huge range of Palearctic waders including Marsh Sandpiper, Spotted Redshank, Common Snipe, Jack Snipe, Temminck's Stint and numerous Wood Sandpipers. On the dry sides of the canal we saw Small Indian Mongoose, *dukhunensis* and *alboides* White Wagtails, *thunbergi* Yellow Wagtails, Indian Peafowl, Siberian Chiffchaff, Paddyfield Pipit, Grey Francolin and – best of all – Barred Buttonquail. Before lunch we stopped on a different stretch of canal where – bracing ourselves against the stench and filth – we saw Greater Painted Snipe and a fine male Yellow Wagtail of the subspecies *M. f. lutea*.

After lunch we set off in search of one of the tour's most iconic birds – Indian Courser. Harish had recently found a wintering flock near Kumher and, despite some minor bus troubles, we saw many of these beautiful birds almost as soon as we reached the site. Also here were Crested Larks, Ashy-crowned Sparrow-Larks, huge flocks of Greater Short-toed Larks, a lovely *personata* White Wagtail, an equally lovely *calcarata* Citrine Wagtail, Indian Rollers, Isabelline and Desert Wheatears and a fast-winged flock of Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse. Nearby we went on a long walk through *Prosopis* scrub in search of Yellow-wattled Lapwings. The search produced Red Collared Doves, an Isabelline Shrike, a Bay-backed Shrike (beautiful!) and an Indian Monitor but it wasn't until we'd almost made it back to the bus that we saw the lapwings. Driving to Bharatpur, we stopped at a passerine roost where – to the tune of displaying Sarus Cranes – we watched Baya and Black-breasted Weavers, Red-headed Bunting and Spanish Sparrow. A fine day's birding indeed.

Day 5

Wednesday 18th November

We spent the whole of today in Keoladeo Ghana National Park and it too was a superb day. In dry scrub along the eastern boundary of the park we were treated to perching Sirkeer Malkohas and a White-eyed Buzzard, Pied Cuckoos, both Red-breasted and Red-throated Flycatchers, a very confiding Long-billed Pipit and obliging Blyth's and Clamorous Reed Warblers (which would be joined by Paddyfield later in the day). As the day warmed up, the raptor show got going and we were soon discussing the identification of Indian Spotted, Greater Spotted, Short-toed, Bonelli's and Booted Eagles. Superb scope views of a resting Dusky Eagle-Owl in the Nursery were quickly followed by a visit to the Brown Hawk-Owl at his regular roost over the road from the main entrance. Back inside the park in the afternoon, we were amazed at Harish's skill and tenacity at finding a distant pair of Grey-headed Lapwings as two male Pallid Harriers, a Black-shouldered Kite and a young Bonelli's Eagle hunted the dry grassland. Nearby, at the Keoladeo temple, a Rat Snake and an Indian Roofed Turtle basked in the afternoon sun.

Day 6

Thursday 19th November

Today was devoted largely to sight-seeing and travel. We left Bharatpur early and made our first stop at the abandoned Mughal city of Fatehpur Sikri. Having marvelled at its spectacular architecture (and at the Rose-ringed Parakeets on its ruined walls) we travelled to Agra. Here we first visited the fabled Taj Mahal which was as ever breathtaking. Even the die-hard birders had some treats here in the form of a perfect pale-phase Booted Eagle over the dome, a party of Bar-headed Geese over the Yamuna and a pair of River Lapwings on the beach. Our next stop was the Agra Fort and from here we began the long journey to Unchagaon.

Jackals scampered ahead of us on the road, you humoured my story-telling abilities, and you were smilingly tolerant of a long journey. In time for a late supper, lit by flaming braziers and accompanied by local musicians, we reached our historic hotel at Unchagaon.

Day 7

Friday 20th November

This morning we left the Unchagaon Fort hotel early – with a passing nod to roosting Spotted Owlets in the garden – and set off for Nainital. For the first half-hour of the journey we travelled along an irrigation canal which was peopled by a barely credible number of White-throated Kingfishers. Our first real stop was at Corbett Falls where a brief walk in the forest was very productive. Here we hit our first foothill flock – Grey-headed Canary-Flycatcher, Grey-hooded Warbler, Lemon-rumped Warbler, Rufous-bellied Niltava, Grey-capped Pygmy-Woodpecker, Black-crested Bulbul, White-throated Fantail, Yellow-bellied Fantail... great birding. Later, after gaining altitude we stopped at Mangoli for another stunning handful of new birds – Russet Sparrow, Red-billed Blue-Magpie, Green-backed Tit, Slaty Blue Flycatcher, Black-headed Jay, Green-tailed Sunbird, Streaked Laughingthrush, Brown-fronted Woodpecker, Himalayan Bulbul and Yellow-breasted Greenfinch... better yet. By evening we reached Nainital and settled into our very comfortable hotel, the Naini Retreat.

Day 8

Saturday 21st November

Early this morning we set out from Nainital with the twin aims of seeing birds in forest at Sat Tal and in open country *en route*. To this end, our first stops were in rocky grassland along the road. Steppe Eagles soared over distant hillsides, Grey Bushchats buzzed from the scrub, Goral grazed peacefully on distant hillsides, and power-lines were laden with hundreds of Eurasian Crag Martins. Things weren't all easy however: a Striated Prinia shot past at break-neck speed, White-capped Buntings crouched under distant rocks and buses roared past within inches. Eventually we accepted defeat and moved on to a nearby village with rough fields and scrubby hillsides. After a slow start, our luck changed dramatically here and soon we were watching superb birds – Blue-fronted Redstart, Blue-capped Redstart, Black-throated Accentor, Rufous-breasted Accentor, Rufous Sibia and Lammergeier.

From here we drove on to Sat Tal where we spent most of the day wandering the forests, delighting in Whistler's Warblers, Red-flanked Bluetails, Nepal House Martins, Slaty-headed Parakeets, Black-lored Tits, Black-throated Tits, Olive-backed Pipits, Velvet-fronted Nuthatches and White-capped Water-Redstarts. There really are some superb birds in the Himalayas. On the way home we again stopped in the productive fields by the road. Among a huge flock of Russet Sparrows we also saw a brief Speckled Piculet and our first – fantastic – Rusty-cheeked Scimitar-Babblers.

Day 9

Sunday 22nd November

Today's destination was the Bajun valley (which is very often, though less correctly, referred to as Mangoli valley). The birding began quickly with superb Striated Laughingthrushes hopping out of the bushes. In the early morning the beautiful forest dripped with White-tailed Nuthatches, Ashy-throated Warblers, Speckled Piculets, and Whiskered Yuhinas.

Further down the valley, Harish found us not one but two much-sought (and utterly glorious) species of Forktail – Spotted and Slaty-backed – while other goodies near here included Himalayan Griffon, Stripe-throated Yuhina and Lammergeier. As we left the valley we were treated to a family of Yellow-throated Martens scampering down paths and up trees, as three Mountain Hawk-Eagles sped past at eye level. Brilliant! Lunch was taken by a roadside stream (Mountain Bulbul, Peregrine and Steppe Eagle), after which we ‘twitched’ Spot-winged Tit in a conifer stand which also held Goldcrest and Collared Grosbeak. We spent the rest of the afternoon walking down through the High Fields, seeing Striated Prinia, Rock Bunting, Yellow-browed Tit and a host of beautiful birds we’d seen previously.

Day 10

Monday 23rd November

Today seemed destined to be superb – laden with rare birds and fantastic scenery. The scenery was – as we’d hoped – staggering but somehow the birding never quite came together. This said, we saw some very good things. We left Nainital early, bound for Pangot and Vinayak. Soon after dawn we were walking through beautiful forests, decked with lichens and mosses, in search of the rare Koklass Pheasant. Despite our best efforts, it wasn’t to be. What we did muster here was one of the best flocks of the day, containing both White-browed and Green Shrike-Babblers. In grassland beyond Vinayak we searched, and searched, and searched for another rare and elusive Pheasant – Cheer – but this too eluded us. Come to think of it we never even saw a Kalij on the tour! However, at this beautiful site we watched a flock of Himalayan Griffons rise in a great stack, looked down on a Lammergeier and saw flocks of Altai Accentors buzzing over the hillside. As we ate our delicious packed breakfast we gazed in wonder at the mighty Himalayan range.

Several forest-edge stops followed and little by little we notched up a decent list of birds. A tremendous flock of White-throated Laughingthrushes also held a Chestnut-capped Laughingthrush, a Great Barbet and a handful of other glimpsed goodies. At Pangot we watched a solitary male Pink-browed Rosefinch sitting discreetly in a bush and on the woodpecker trail we had a purple patch – Himalayan and Fulvous-breasted Woodpeckers above us and a fantastically obliging pair of Rufous-bellied Woodpeckers beneath us. At our last stop of the day – as evening fell – we watched Bar-winged Flycatcher-Shrikes, a Grey-backed Shrike, a Hen Harrier, Striated Prinias and many other good birds.

Day 11

Tuesday 24th November

All too soon our stay in the foothills came to an end and we were heading down to magical Corbett National Park. First thing today we drove from Nainital, through beautiful forests of *Sal* and Teak, to Ramnagar. At the Kosi barrage we searched in vain for Wallcreeper but were rewarded with great views of Ruddy Shelduck and Streak-throated Swallows. From here we drove to the same river near Dhikuli, in search of Ibisbills. As reached the river I was frustrated to see a Wallcreeper flying off into the distance before anyone could get a good look. We strode after the Wallcreeper, putting up Tawny Pipits with every step, but in no time an Ibisbill was found in the opposite direction. So we stalked the Ibisbill and, little by little, everyone got very good views indeed! At this point things really got going – a Crested Kingfisher was found perched on a stone and every other stone seemed to have a Plumbeous Water-Redstart on it. Then a Wallcreeper flew over again, and again, and again, until everyone had gasped at the beauty of this unique bird. Reluctantly leaving the river, we saw our first Red-headed Vultures and Changeable Hawk-Eagles, and our first Egyptian Vultures since leaving the lowlands.

From here we headed into Corbett and spent the rest of the day delighted by its simply superb wildlife-watching. Flocks sparkled with Scarlet Minivets, Small Minivets, Lesser Racket-tailed Drongos, Fulvous-breasted Woodpeckers and Lesser Yellownapes, while nearby a pair of awesome Great Pied Hornbills posed for us to admire. Sambar chomped leaves at the roadside, Wild Boar crashed through the undergrowth, Tawny Fish-Owls scowled impressively from their roost, and we were lost under the spell of this magnificent park. We stopped for lunch at Gairal and were treated to whizzing flocks of White-rumped Needletails and Himalayan Swiftlets while nearby an adult Rufous-bellied Eagle drifted past. At Crocodile Point (now where did they get that name?) Gharials and Muggers loafed on the sand and huge fish swam in crystal waters. As quickly as possible we drove to Dhikala and were soon off into the grassland for an evening safari. Grey-breasted Prinias bounced through the grasses, Red Junglefowl crowed in the forests and in the far distance a tusker Asian Elephant swayed along the edge of the lake.

Day 12

Wednesday 25th November

We spent the whole of today in the beautiful forests and grasslands of Corbett. In the morning most of us drove the Sambar road, while the others experienced the beauty of the park from elephant-back. Tigers came there none, but we did see plenty of great birds including a fig-tree full of barbets – Coppersmith, Blue-throated and Lineated – a splendid mixed flock with Long-tailed Minivets, Fulvous-breasted Woodpeckers and a Common Iora, and a posse of Large Cuckooshrikes and Maroon Orioles. Late in the morning, once the sun had risen and the forest fallen silent, we spent a couple of hours in the tower near Dhikala. From here we watched two Jungle Owlets, a trio of Collared Falconets, a pair of Pallas' Fish-Eagles (repeatedly bullying a young bird off their territory) and a shy duo of female Hog Deer.

After lunch we set off once more for the park, again some of us in jeeps and others on an elephant. Now devoting ourselves largely to searching for Tigers, we explored the entrance road. We had a great encounter with a single male Asian Elephant while our only Ashy Bulbuls squeaked and twittered nearby. Soon we heard that a Tiger had been seen along the Ram Singh road. Thither we sped and spent much time trailing the cat and, in the process, seeing a family of Asian Elephants, a pair of Streak-throated Woodpeckers and a formation-flying flock of Plum-headed Parakeets. Then – disaster of disasters – I saw the Tiger and no sooner had I done so than it was gone, with only one other of you having seen it. As we waited, willing the dusk to recede and the Tiger to emerge again, some of us saw the tour's only Green-billed Malkoha. But it was little consolation.

Day 13

Thursday 26th November

Early this morning we made our last forays – by jeep and by elephant – into the lovely grasslands and forests of Dhikala. Golden-headed Cisticolas twitched in the grass, an Indian Grey Mongoose slipped across the track and a solitary Lesser Coucal bathed in the morning sun; but we had journeys ahead and all too soon we were heading out of the park. Our exit proved one of the most exciting half-days of the whole tour. We reached High Bank and were (unsuccessfully) scanning the maelstrom of fishing Great Cormorants for Smooth-coated Otters when an almost disbelieving voice behind us said, "Tiger!" As one, the group spun round to watch a lean female slip into grass at the river's edge. For several minutes more she half-appeared and disappeared among the silvery grasses and almost everyone saw her well. Elated, we headed on and were yet more amazed when, close to the park gate, another voice was heard crying, "Tiger!" Two of our jeeps saw a larger animal crossing a dry stream-bed. The stuff of legends!

Once out of the park we made our way to the famous Quality Inn at Kumeria, our base for the final two nights of the tour. From here, in the late afternoon, we strolled down to the river with two birds on our particular wish-list and two more we felt we'd like to see and – bingo! – we saw them all. A Brown Hawk-Owl peered piercingly at us from its roost in a tall tree, a glorious Little Forktail hopped and shimmied over the stones in the river, a Brown Dipper bounced over the same stones and into the icy current, and a party of White-crested Laughingthrushes caused us much mirth with their all-singing-all-dancing routine. If only all birds could be so obliging.

Day 14

Friday 27th November

Who could believe it had come so fast? Our last full day in the field! We spent it in the beautiful forests around Kumeria, picking up several delightful new birds. In quick succession we saw a pair of Greater Flamebacks and a pair of Himalayan Flamebacks (where had they been until now?). Our only Striated Heron crouched in a stream as we watched one of the best mixed flocks of the whole tour. As we drove back for lunch Harish quite brilliantly found us a Grey-bellied Tesia by call from a moving jeep. The little fellow (the Tesia, not Harish) delighted us by hopping along the edge of the road, over stones and under *Lantana*, until we'd all had a great look. In the afternoon, a reduced band set out above Kumeria, hoping for a few last-minute new birds. A Spotted Forktail worked slowly down a stream, White-capped Buntings hopped among tumbled boulders, a flock of White-browed Shrike-Babblers, Golden-fronted Leafbirds and Bronzed Drongos sallied and fidgeted, and a Brahmin priest anointed our jeep under the great boughs of a Banyan tree. What a beautiful place is India.

Day 15

Saturday 28th November

From the dreamy foothills of the Himalayas to the beautiful bustle of Delhi was our journey today. At the bridge over the Ganga we stopped to watch Gangetic Dolphins (in precisely the same spot as last November). Here too, surrounded by worshippers and mourners, who had never seen anything like us, we scanned the sandbanks for new waders and gulls. We briefly saw a young Steppe Gull and a first winter Steppe Eagle lazed high overhead but there were to be no more new birds. Close to Delhi we were amazed – as I am every time I see them – by the literal clouds and crowds of Black and Black-eared Kites over the great rubbish dumps of Noida. And all too soon we were in Delhi. Rooms, supper, a brief rest and a transfer to the airport - all too soon we were saying goodbye to India and to our quite brilliant friend Harish.

But as you work through the rest of the winter, or as you trudge along a bleak January beach in search of Snow Buntings, every now and again our Tigress will stride silent-footed through the forests of your minds.

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Species Accounts

Birds

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*: This familiar friend from home was seen frequently in the lowlands around Bharatpur.

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*: A fine bird, which was seen once – in winter plumage – at Okhla Dam.

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*: Also very familiar from home, Great Cormorants were seen on no fewer than eleven days of the tour, principally around Bharatpur and Dhikala.

Little Cormorant *Phalacrocorax niger*: This bird was also seen frequently around Bharatpur and it made a re-appearance at the dam in Ramnagar. Because of the drought, we unfortunately saw not a single Indian Cormorant, a bird normally very reliable at Bharatpur in winter.

Oriental Darter *Anhinga melanogaster*: This elegant bird was seen first at Okhla and later on two days around Bharatpur and Bandh Baretha.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*: Yet another familiar bird from home, and one that was seen commonly beside wetlands on the first five days of the tour.

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*: This handsome bird was seen on two days around Bharatpur. One especially obliging individual was seen through the clearing mist at a roadside wetland on the way to Bandh Baretha.

Great Egret *Ardea alba*: Many were seen around Bharatpur and a few in the far distance around the lake in Dhikala.

Intermediate Egret *Egretta intermedia*: Readily separated from its bigger cousin by jizz, structure and its black bill tip, this bird was seen many times in the Bharatpur area but not reliably anywhere else.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*: Commonly seen around Bharatpur and Dhikala. For that matter, commonly seen just about anywhere in the UK these days. How things have changed.

Indian Pond Heron *Ardeola grayii*: Not so common in the UK but very common on our tour. Seen on five days in the lowlands around Delhi and Bharatpur and on three days around Dhikala.

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*: Probably soon to be common in the UK and seen on the first seven days of our tour, around Bharatpur and up towards Nainital. Some authors split this form as Eastern Cattle Egret *Bubulcus coromandus*.

Striated Heron *Butorides striatus*: Seen only once, on a bright stream through forest near Kumeria. Often referred to as Little Heron in India but almost universally known as Striated Heron in the rest of the world. Sounds like a laryngitic Jackdaw either way.

Yellow Bittern *Ixobrychus sinensis*: One individual of this elusive species was found by Harish in a roadside wetland as we returned from Bandh Baretha. After standing stock still for a few minutes it melted into the reeds. Had we arrived any later than we did, we would have stood no chance at all of finding it.

Painted Stork *Mycteria leucocephala*: The usual vociferous colonies of this gorgeous bird were absent from Bharatpur on account of the drought. However, we admired several dapper birds in roadside wetlands *en route* to and from Bharatpur.

Asian Openbill *Anastomus oscitans*: While less striking than the last bird, this is always a crowd-pleaser. It was seen in small numbers on all three days spent around Bharatpur and Bandh Baretha.

Black Stork *Ciconia nigra*: To my mind the best stork in the world, this dazzling bird was only seen in Dhikala, first at great distance by the lake and later close to the camp.

Woolly-necked Stork *Ciconia episcopus*: Also very handsome, woolly-necks were seen on two days around Bharatpur.

Black-necked Stork *Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus*: If you were listening very carefully to my lecture from the top of the tower in Keoladeo Ghana National Park, Bharatpur (hereafter KGNP), you will now know how to sex these impressive birds by eye colour. We saw them first here and much later on two days in Dhikala.

Black-headed Ibis *Threskiornis melanocephalus*: The distantly-scoped individuals of this bird at Okhla on the first day were hardly satisfactory. However we subsequently saw the species well at several wetlands around Bharatpur.

Black Ibis *Pseudibis papillosa*: Our first bird of this much-sought species was a flyover at a roadside pond as we approached Bharatpur. Later one more was briefly seen from the bus as we left Unchagaon bound for Nainital.

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*: You had to look hard, and have great faith in your leaders, but a flock this widespread species was seen on a distant island in the lake at Bandh Baretha.

Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*: This unlikely bird was seen flying over the canal in Bharatpur.

Greylag Goose *Anser anser*: The great flocks of geese associated with winter in Bharatpur were not to be seen. However, we did see eastern-race Greylags with long, pink bills on the Yamuna river at Okhla.

Bar-headed Goose *Anser indicus*: This bird was on just about everybody's wish-list so we were thoroughly disappointed that not one was to be seen around Bharatpur. It was therefore very pleasing to see a family fly over the Yamuna river behind the Taj Mahal. Even more pleasing was the fact that they flew back again a few minutes later, allowing those members of the party who had been frivolously admiring the architecture to see them too.

Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea*: Just two of these lovely birds were present at Bharatpur. However, we saw many more at several sites including the Taj Mahal, the dam at Ramnagar, the lake at Dhikala and the Ganga river.

Cotton Pygmy-Goose *Nettapus coromandelianus*: This lovely bird, the smallest of all the world's waterfowl, was seen only once, at Bandh Baretha. Often known as Indian Pygmy-Goose, though its range extends as far east as Australia.

Eurasian Wigeon *Anas penelope*: Only one drake Wigeon was seen on the tour, also at Bandh Baretha. Yesterday I saw loads on the lake at Blickling – should have stayed in Norfolk.

Gadwall *Anas strepera*: Gadwall were common – at Okhla, around Bharatpur and at Bandh Baretha.

Common Teal *Anas crecca*: Teal were also seen at Okhla and at several wetland sites around Bharatpur.

Spot-billed Duck *Anas poecilorhyncha*: Being one of the only North Indian ducks not also found in the UK, Spotbills are always popular with the punters. We saw them first at Okhla and later in KGNP.

Northern Pintail *Anas acuta*: Pintail were – amazingly – only seen at the Graceful Prinia site on our drive to Bharatpur. In wet years they quite literally darken the skies over KGNP.

Garganey *Anas querquedula*: This loveliest of ducks (not that I'm biased) was also seen only once, with the Pintail at the Graceful Prinia site.

Northern Shoveler *Anas clypeata*: Continuing with the northern duck theme, Shoveler were seen at Okhla and several times around Bharatpur.

Common Pochard *Aythya ferina*: Pochard were only seen at Okhla and at Bandh Baretha. Red-crested Pochard were, unfortunately and perhaps surprisingly, not seen at all.

Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*: Tufted Ducks were only seen at Okhla too.

Common Merganser *Mergus merganser*: A single misguided Common Merganser (known in the UK as Goosander) was seen in a flock of Great Cormorants near Dhikala as we stalked a Tiger one evening.

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*: Several Ospreys were seen in their usual haunts around Dhikala.

Oriental Honey-Buzzard *Pernis ptilorhynchus*: This fairly common bird was seen just once, over the Nursery on our first visit to KGNP.

Black-shouldered Kite *Elanus caeruleus*: This lovely bird was seen commonly in the lowlands around Bharatpur and Unchagaon. It made a re-appearance late in the tour in the mighty grasslands of Dhikala.

Black Kite *Milvus migrans*: Though the species is near-ubiquitous in the lowlands, our most memorable encounter with Black Kites was at Noida rubbish dump as we drove back to Delhi. Here literally thousands of this and the next bird perched on pylons and swirled over the gigantic mounds of refuse. Quite a sight.

Black-eared Kite *Milvus (migrans) lineatus*: Now often recognised as a separate species, this migratory form, identified among other characteristics by its large size and prominent pale under-wing panel, was first seen over Okhla.

Pallas' Fish-Eagle *Haliaeetus leucoryphus*: What a magnificent bird! Pairs of this superb, stentorian raptor were much admired in Corbett National Park. During the morning we spent in the tower near Dhikala, we saw a young bird repeatedly, and vociferously, driven off by a resident pair.

Lesser Fish-Eagle *Ichthyophaga humilis*: This was a much-desired bird so we were pleased to see it each day in Corbett National Park, notably at its regular haunt above the crocodile pools near Gairal.

Lammergeier *Gypaetus barbatus*: One of the birds of the trip for many of you, this glorious beast was first seen at a stop on the way to Sat Tal. The next day we saw it again over the Bajun valley. It was seen in its full glory, from above, in grasslands beyond Vinayak as we – unsuccessfully alas – searched for Cheer Pheasant.

Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus*: Common as ever in the lowlands around Bharatpur and Unchagaon, the Egyptian Vulture made a re-appearance over the Kosi River near Dhikuli, where it competed for attention with our first Changeable Hawk-Eagles and Red-headed Vultures.

Indian Vulture *Gyps indicus*: Harish's local knowledge led us to Bayana, near Bandh Baretha, where several of these now tragically rare birds were seen on and over the cliffs. This bird was formerly considered the same species as Slender-billed Vulture *Gyps tenuirostris*, under the name Long-billed Vulture.

Himalayan Griffon *Gyps himalayensis*: This finest of the Indian griffons was seen first over the Bajun valley. The following day we had superb views of many individuals over grassland beyond Vinayak.

Eurasian Griffon *Gyps fulvus*: There is debate over whether Eurasian Griffons exist in Uttarakhand at all. However, Harish and I both lean towards the old view that the warm-toned birds, with little individual variation, found at lower elevations are Eurasian Griffons. Higher up, where classic Himalayan Griffons are definitely found, it is easy to see contrast between strikingly pale adults and darker, streakier young birds.

Cinereous Vulture *Aegypius monachus*: This magnificent bird was only seen briefly from the rest house at Dhikala as we prepared to leave Corbett.

Red-headed Vulture *Sarcogyps calvus*: Another handsome bird and one which we saw each day around Corbett National Park. Look out for the white arm-pits.

Short-toed Eagle *Circaetus gallicus*: One of a truly fine crop of eagles seen on the tour, especially around Bharatpur. In KGNP we frequently saw this great bird, with up to four flying over our heads together as we stood at the top of the tower.

Crested Serpent-Eagle *Spilornis cheela*: This typical eagle of Indian forests was seen on both days we visited KGNP and on our full day in Corbett NP.

Western Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*: Another friend from the UK, the Marsh Harrier was only seen over the water-hyacinth mats at Okhla. In wet years it can be very numerous around Bharatpur.

Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*: Our first individual of this lovely species was a surprise as we saw it high over a hill-top near Pangot. Later we saw numerous females in more typical habitat in the grasslands around Dhikala.

Pied Harrier *Circus melanoleucos*: It's always nice when a much-desired but far-from-guaranteed bird makes its way onto the list. As we stood watching Golden-headed Cisticolas in the grassland of Dhikala a distant male Pied Harrier was seen and the pleasant sound of mass-ticking was heard.

Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus*: Several ringtails of this slender, elegant harrier were watched over the dry grassland of KGNP. Later, two immaculate males were seen as we strained our eyes to find two distant Grey-headed Lapwings.

Shikra *Accipiter badius*: This lovely hawk was seen many times in the lowlands, especially in and around Bharatpur.

Besra *Accipiter virgatus*: Equally attractive, though much harder to find, Besra was seen with certainty only once when an individual flew over the jeeps at the forest edge near Dhikala.

Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*: Also near Dhikala we saw our only Sparrowhawk of the tour.

White-eyed Buzzard *Butastur teesa*: A thoroughly obliging White-eyed Buzzard posed (front views and back views) in a dead tree at the north end of KGNP on our full day there.

Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*: Only one Buzzard was seen, on the drive back from Sat Tal to Nainital. This form is sometimes split as Himalayan Buzzard *Buteo burmanicus*.

Indian Spotted Eagle *Aquila hastata*: We hope you came to love the niceties of eagle identification as much as we do. The very first *Aquila* eagle we saw – on the way to Bharatpur – was in fact an Indian Spotted, identified both by subtle structural and subtle plumage characteristics. Though this species was greatly outnumbered by Greater Spotted, it did make a re-appearance on our full day at KGNP. In older books this bird is included in Lesser Spotted Eagle *Aquila pomarina*.

Greater Spotted Eagle *Aquila clanga*: The most numerous *Aquila* over KGNP, we especially enjoyed seeing a pale first winter sitting next to a dark first winter on our first visit to KGNP. A magnificent dark-chocolate (at least 75% cocoa) first winter was greatly admired as it flew right past us in the tower by the Keoladeo Temple.

Steppe Eagle *Aquila nipalensis*: This bulkier beast can sometimes be seen around Bharatpur but on our tour we had to wait until we were approaching Nainital to see it. First seen at Mangoli, it was, as ever, common over most of the sites we visited at this altitude.

Eastern Imperial Eagle *Aquila heliaca*: Now this is the eagle-lover's eagle in North India. The first one we saw was high over the hunting lodge at Bandh Baretha. A second bird was also high overhead the following day at Harish's top-secret Indian Courser site near Kumher.

Bonelli's Eagle *Aquila fasciata*: I don't know whether this message came across but I'm a big fan of Bonelli's Eagle. We saw both an adult and a lapwing-harrying young bird on our full day in KGNP.

Booted Eagle *Aquila pennata*: Droopy-winged Booted Eagles of various hues were seen over KGNP on our full day there. A very handsome pale adult was also seen the following day over the dome of the Taj Mahal. But could I get you to look at it?

Rufous-bellied Eagle *Aquila kienerii*: An adult of this gorgeous species was seen almost stratospherically high over the jeeps as we drove to our lunch stop at Gairal on our first day in Corbett NP.

Changeable Hawk-Eagle *Spizaetus cirrhatus*: Birds of various ages, stages and plumages were seen on each day we spent in Corbett NP.

Mountain Hawk-Eagle *Spizaetus nipalensis*: We had a magnificent, eye-level encounter with three birds, an adult and two youngsters, as we left the Bajun valley. The next day we saw a pair, high over a slope near Pangot and, finally, Harish's jeep saw a perched bird near Dhikala.

Collared Falconet *Microhierax caerulescens*: How could you not love these plucky little birds? We saw them perched against the sun from the tower near Dhikala, over the camp itself and perched at the forest edge nearby.

Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*: Kestrels were seen commonly around Bharatpur and again at the end of the tour around Dhikala.

Eurasian Hobby *Falco subbuteo*: We saw a Hobby by the Yamuna at Okhla on our first day. Later one slammed past us in the dusk as we stood by Bharatpur fort searching for owls (and gathering human admirers).

Peregrine *Falco peregrinus*: There is an unwritten law that Peregrines in India have to be seen as distant specks over mountain-tops. The birds on this tour didn't break the mould, the first two distant specks being seen above our picnic stop by the road between Bajun and Nainital and the third speck being seen far beyond the Pallas' Fish-Eagles from the tower near Dhikala.

Black Francolin *Francolinus francolinus*: Handsome males were seen on two occasions from the jeeps in the grasslands around Dhikala.

Grey Francolin *Francolinus pondicerianus*: The delightfully dippy song of these birds was a constant accompaniment to our birding around Bharatpur. They were seen here – often at point-blank range – on four days too.

Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix*: The front jeep had a brief view of a Quail along a track through grassland in Dhikala.

Red Junglefowl *Gallus gallus*: The shrill crows of this lovely bird were often heard in the jungles of Corbett NP and, from jeeps and from elephants, most of us managed good views too.

Indian Peafowl *Pavo cristatus*: The most emblematic bird of all India was seen commonly in lowland areas around Delhi, Bharatpur, Unchagaon and Corbett.

Barred Buttonquail *Turnix suscitator*: We were delighted to see a small group of these tricky-to-track-down birds along the canal in Bharatpur. For many of you they constituted a family tick. Never look a gift buttonquail in the mouth.

Sarus Crane *Grus antigone*: Several pairs of these statuesque, but fast-declining, birds were seen around Bharatpur. One thoughtful pair, in fields near the weaver, sparrow and bunting stop on the road back from Kumher, danced and sang at very close range.

Brown Crake *Amauornis akool*: Two of these shy birds were seen at a roadside wetland on the drive to Bandh Baretha.

White-breasted Waterhen *Amauornis phoenicurus*: Waterhens were very commonly seen in the lowlands around Bharatpur and Unchagaon. This said, they also provided a nice illustration of how much it behoves leaders to be on the ball. At the end of the first day I called White-breasted Waterhen during the list and none of the clients had seen a single one. Harish and I reckoned we'd each seen about 30! Luckily everybody saw many more thereafter.

Purple Swamphen *Porphyrio porphyrio*: Swamphens were seen distantly, against the evening light, at Okhla and in several wetlands around Bharatpur.

Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*: Lots of Moorhens were seen in lowland wetlands.

Common Coot *Fulica atra*: Coots were only seen on large stretches of open water at Okhla and Bandh Baretha.

Pheasant-tailed Jacana *Hydrophasianus chirurgus*: Winter-plumaged adults and some young juveniles were seen through the mist at a roadside wetland as we drove towards Bandh Baretha.

Bronze-winged Jacana *Metopidius indicus*: Both adults and first winters of this very dapper bird were seen several times. Perhaps the most obliging were trotting over the water-chestnut beds of Bandh Baretha.

Greater Painted-Snipe *Rostratula benghalensis*: Several of these strikingly lovely birds were seen crouching among the plastic bags and polystyrene boxes of the stench-laden canal at Bharatpur.

Ibisbill *Ibidorhyncha struthersi*: Ibisbill has to count as one of the most sought-after birds on the Indian subcontinent so we were delighted to see one in the rocky shallows of the Kosi river near Dhikuli. At first we strained to see it but, as we gradually stalked towards it, we had ever better views. The general effect was improved yet further by the Crested Kingfisher perched nearby on a stone, the Wallcreeper looping loops over the river and the Plumbeous Water-Redstarts scudding over the water. A fine hour of Himalayan birding.

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*: The stinkier the waterbody, the more the Black-winged Stilts seem to like it. We saw many of these impossibly elegant birds at pools of execrable sludge around Bharatpur and Unchagaon.

Indian Courser *Cursorius coromandelicus*: Harish pulled out all the stops to show us this jewel-in-the-crown bird at a site he's only recently discovered near Kumher. Nearly twenty of these oh-so-handsome creatures were to be seen in an open patch of semi-desert, accompanied by many other dry-country species which we would see no-where else. And, better still, our drivers managed to fix the bus while we watched the birds so we made it back to Bharatpur.

River Lapwing *Vanellus duvaucelii*: This handsome beast was first seen in the far distance on the Yamuna river from the Taj Mahal. Later we saw the species several times around Ramnagar and Dhikala.

Yellow-wattled Lapwing *Vanellus malabaricus*: We *deserved* to see Yellow-wattled Lapwings. Having seen the coursers with ease, we waded through mud, whacked through thornscrub and trudged over the plain for what seem hours in search of this lovely bird. Having failed, we turned back to the road and, on reaching the bus, found a pair crouching under a bush, very close to where we'd started. It must be said that the walk wasn't an unmitigated failure as it brought us our only Indian Monitor and Bay-backed Shrikes, our first Isabelline Shrike and many other good things.

Red-wattled Lapwing *Vanellus indicus*: It's a good job these are beautiful birds as they are so clamorous and ubiquitous that one could quickly tire of them. Common everywhere in the lowlands.

White-tailed Lapwing *Vanellus leucurus*: This much more delicate and refined lapwing was seen by the roadside on our drive to Bharatpur and again on the same day from the tower by the temple in KGNP.

Grey-headed Lapwing *Vanellus cinereus*: This bird is a real rarity in the Bharatpur area and it was only thanks to Harish's determination that we succeeded in seeing it. After much peering and jostling, most of us eventually managed to see the faces of two very distant birds as evening fell and Pallid Harriers, a Black-shouldered Kite and a young Bonelli's Eagle hunted overhead.

Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*: Common at wetland sites around Bharatpur and scrutinised closely, in the company of the following species, at the canal.

Jack Snipe *Lymnocyptes minimus*: One of these wonderful waders was found by Harish, characteristically bob-bob-bobbing at the canal in Bharatpur.

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*: Several of these elegant birds appeared through the mist at our roadside stop on the way to Bandh Baretha.

Spotted Redshank *Tringa erythropus*: Spotskanks (*chivik!*) were seen both on the day we drove to Bandh Baretha and on our wader-packed visit to the canal in Bharatpur.

Common Redshank *Tringa tetanus*: Redshanks (*TEW du du*), more familiar from Norfolk saltmarshes, were seen at many roadside puddles and wetlands around Bharatpur and Unchagaon.

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*: You probably gathered that I have a bit of a soft spot for these perfect little waders. We saw them extremely well on our visit to the canal.

Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*: Greenshank (*TEW TEW TEW*) were seen several times around Bharatpur and, typically, along the bright, stony rivers of Corbett.

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*: Another familiar bird from home, Green Sands (*toonit toonit*) were commonly seen around Bharatpur and made a re-appearance late in the tour in the rivers around Corbett.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*: Delicate Wood Sandpipers (*tif if if*) were typically common in wetlands around Bharatpur.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*: Only seen on two days – on our journey to Bharatpur and under the walls of the fort there.

Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii*: Scarce in Britain, this bird is common in North India during winter. We saw them very nicely on our way to Bandh Baretha and at the Bharatpur canal.

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*: Ruff were also quite common at wetlands around Delhi and Bharatpur.

Steppe Gull *Larus (cachinnans) barabensis*: The last new bird of the tour was – frankly – a bit of a let down. Having just seen the Gangetic Dolphins at the eponymous river crossing, we walked along the *ghats* in search of river specialities. We were rewarded only with one brief, distant view of a young Steppe Gull, a job load of Ruddy Shelducks and a horde of human admirers. This form is regarded by some as a subspecies of the Caspian Gull *Larus cachinnans*.

Brown-headed Gull *Larus brunnicephalus*: One bird was seen at very close range on our afternoon visit to Okhla and several more were identified by structure in a flock of backlit Black-headed later in the day.

Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus*: Many were seen over the Yamuna at Okhla.

River Tern *Sterna aurantia*: This silver-winged beauty was much admired at Bandh Baretha. Later it was seen overhead in KGNP, as we watched the Grey-headed Lapwings, and in Agra.

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida*: White winter-plumaged Whiskered Terns (how's that for ornithological alliteration?) were seen quartering the lake at Bandh Baretha.

Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse *Pterocles exustus*: We eventually managed to see some diagnostic colour on them but these fast-flying birds proved hard work as they dashed through the distance over the plain near Kumher.

Rock Dove *Columba livia*: Everywhere.

Eurasian Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*: Seen very commonly in the lowlands but absent from Nainital and Corbett NP.

Red Collared Dove *Streptopelia tranquebarica*: Handsome males of this lovely bird were seen very well as we searched for Yellow-wattled Lapwings near Kumher.

Spotted Dove *Streptopelia chinensis*: This attractive creature was seen on two days in Corbett NP, notably at the three-barbet tree in Khinanauli camp.

Laughing Dove *Streptopelia senegalensis*: Very common at lowland sites around Delhi, Bharatpur and Unchagaon.

Yellow-footed Green-Pigeon *Treron phoenicoptera*: Big flocks of these lovely birds flew over us at Okhla, where feeding in a fig tree they entertained us with their zany songs. Later in KGNP we saw several more handsomely perched in glorious morning light.

[Alexandrine Parakeet *Psittacula eupatria*: I can't believe it; we only *heard* Alexandrine Parakeets, first at Okhla and again much later in Corbett NP.]

Rose-ringed Parakeet *Psittacula krameri*: These lovely birds, now all too familiar from the UK, were ubiquitous in the lowlands at the start of the tour.

Plum-headed Parakeet *Psittacula cyanocephala*: Oh ye of little faith, Plum-headed Parakeets *do* exist and are thoroughly lovely. I admit that the birds we heard many times at Bandh Baretha were extremely hard to see, and it's true that the only one we saw even remotely well didn't have a tail, but it was worth the wait when you finally saw a tree full of these dazzling birds in the golden light of evening along Ram Singh road in Corbett NP.

Slaty-headed Parakeet *Psittacula himalayana*: These fine birds were seen whizzing past at speed both at Sat Tal and in the Bajun valley.

Red-breasted Parakeet *Psittacula alexandri*: It involved some craning of necks and some placing of scopes at the weirdest angles but we all managed to see some of these very beautiful birds roosting sluggishly in trees above the kiosks at Sat Tal.

Asian Koel *Eudynamys scolopacea*: The only bird we saw of this common species was a male perched in scrub as we walked up to the lodge at Bandh Baretha. He was there on our way down too.

Green-billed Malkoha *Phaenicophaeus tristis*: This was the one that got away for most of you. On the evening of our full day in Corbett NP I made the mistake of seeing a Tiger which was gone before all but one of you could see it. As the dusk gathered and the bulbuls laughed at us and we waited and waited and waited for the Tiger to re-emerge (it didn't) I saw a Green-billed Malkoha fly by. Some of you managed to see it but none of us was in a particularly sparkly mood. The Tigers made it up to us the next day.

Sirkeer Malkoha *Phaenicophaeus leschenaultia*: Two of these rakish birds were seen perched at the edge of dry forest on the morning of our full day in KGNP.

Pied Cuckoo *Clamator jacobinus*: Two of these were seen in KGNP too, in forest edge at the western boundary of the park, bordering Harish's village.

Greater Coucal *Centropus sinensis*: Splendid Greater Coucals were seen on many days of the tour, the first at Okhla and the last in the edge of the camp at Dhikala (when we were looking for Lessers).

Lesser Coucal *Centropus bengalensis*: On our last morning in Dhikala we saw one perched bird in streaky winter plumage.

Barn Owl *Tyto alba*: Hereby hangs a tale. After our notable success with owls in KGNP, we decided to follow a tip-off that more were roosting in the ramparts of the fort in Bharatpur. They turned out to be Barn Owls but we enjoyed watching three Demerara-golden birds in their hole, begging and screeching, and we sort of enjoyed the amicable crowd of locals who gathered around us.

Collared Scops Owl *Otus bakkamoena*: This classic Bharatpur bird was, as always, seen perched high under the leaves of palms along the entrance road of KGNP. Note that the taxonomy of this bird is somewhat disputed; some regard the form we saw as Indian Scops Owl, with Collared Scops occurring in India only in the Himalayan foothills.

Dusky Eagle-Owl *Bubo coromandus*: Having only managed a silhouette on our first evening, we were really pleased to see a dozing bird of this commanding species on our full day in KGNP. It was very kindly found and marked for us by a friend of Harish's.

Brown Fish-Owl *Ketupa zeylonensis*: This grumpy-faced beast was seen on our walk down to the river at Kumeria and again the next day in nearby forest.

Tawny Fish-Owl *Ketupa flavipes*: A pair of these magnificent birds was seen at their usual roost on our drive in to Dhikala.

Asian Barred Owlet *Glaucidium cuculoides*: Finally, after several Jungle Owlets masquerading as ABOs, we briefly saw a *bona fide* Asian Barred in forest near Kumeria on the last full day of birding.

Jungle Owlet *Glaucidium radiatum*: This lovely little bird was seen several times in forest near Dhikala and near Kumeria.

Spotted Owlet *Athene brama*: This characteristic bird of open woodlands in North India was seen and heard on six days in the first half of the tour. Great views were had in KGNP and by the stables of our hotel in Unchagaon.

Brown Hawk-Owl *Ninox scutulata*: The regular roosting bird in the nursery over the road from the main entrance to KGNP was very much admired by the whole group.

Grey Nightjar *Caprimulgus indicus*: Several of these lovely birds were roosting in *Eucalyptus* trees in the nursery on our first visit to KGNP.

Large-tailed Nightjar *Caprimulgus macrurus*: This is a very fine nightjar indeed and we saw it on our first visit to KGNP thanks to Harish's superb eyes and outstanding local knowledge. Two roosted among fallen bamboo leaves under dense vegetation and, had we not known they were there, we might have walked past them dozens of times without ever seeing them. Superb!

Himalayan Swiftlet *Aerodramus brevirostris*: This dapper little number was seen among more numerous Needletails on the days we drove in and out of Corbett NP.

White-rumped Needletail *Zoonavena sylvatica*: This delightful little bird was commonly seen over forest on the days we drove in and out of Corbett NP. Incorrectly called White-rumped Spinetail in some books.

Little Swift *Apus affinis*: Very common in lowland sites at the start of the tour. Sometimes known as House Swift.

Crested Treeswift *Hemiprocne coronata*: Oh-so-elegant, Crested Treeswifts were seen on four days in Corbett NP and around Kumeria.

Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*: Now in India they really *are* common. We saw them on eight days, around Delhi and Bharatpur, from the coach on the road to Nainital and around Dhikala.

Stork-billed Kingfisher *Pelargopsis capensis*: This was the scarcest of the five kingfishers we saw, making an appearance only once, over the Ramganga river on the Sambar road in Corbett NP. What a truly magnificent beast.

White-throated Kingfisher *Halcyon smyrnensis*: And this was by far our commonest kingfisher. We saw this startlingly beautiful bird on eleven days, its only real absence being from Nainital. A particularly high count of them was made as we drove along an irrigation canal on our way from Unchagaon to Nainital. Often called White-breasted Kingfisher.

Crested Kingfisher *Megaceryle lugubris*: This fine beast was first seen alongside our Ibisbill on the Kosi river but it was seen again along stony rivers on each of the following three days. Sometimes referred to as Himalayan Pied Kingfisher.

Pied Kingfisher *Ceryle rudis*: This charming bird, always announced by its double-chip call, was seen first along the road to Bandh Baretha. It was later seen on all four days in the area of Corbett and Kumeria.

Blue-bearded Bee-eater *Nyctyornis athertoni*: Superb! This stunning creature was seen, admired and photographed in the camp at Dhikala as we watched the Dark-sided Flycatcher.

Green Bee-eater *Merops orientalis*: In summer this is one of the most frequently-seen of North India's birds. However, we saw it only on our first-day visit to Okhla.

Indian Roller *Coracias benghalensis*: These glorious birds – best seen in flight – were common in dry country around Bharatpur. They were seen particularly well in the semi-desert of the courser site near Kumher.

Eurasian Hoopoe *Upupa epops*: Delightful Hoopoes were frequently seen at lowland sites around Bharatpur and on our drives to and from Unchagaon.

Indian Grey Hornbill *Ocyroceros birostris*: I don't think we saw as many of these wonderfully clumsy birds as I would normally expect. We nonetheless caught up with them at Okhla, around Bharatpur and around Unchagaon. We also heard them in Corbett NP. Many of the sightings we had were brief and from the bus.

Great Pied Hornbill *Buceros bicornis*: A pair of these splendid beasts was seen well in tall *Sal* forest on our drive in to Dhikala.

Great Barbet *Megalaima virens*: The first Great Barbet of the tour was seen in the garden of our hotel in Nainital by clients who didn't feel up to the visit to Bajun. However, the next day around Pangot we saw several, including one absurdly bold and photogenic individual accompanying a flock of White-throated Laughingthrushes.

Brown-headed Barbet *Megalaima zeylanica*: Seen on three days around Bharatpur.

Lineated Barbet *Megalaima lineata*: This striking bird, which replaces the last species in the foothills and in North-East India, was seen and heard giving its loud, repetitive song on five days around Corbett NP. Perhaps our best views were in a fruiting fig tree at Khinanauli which also contained the following two dazzling species.

Blue-throated Barbet *Megalaima asiatica*: This fantastic bird is always popular with the crowds. It was first seen in the company of Coppersmith and Lineated Barbets in a fruiting fig at Khinanauli in Corbett and made a re-appearance the following day in forest edge near Dhikala.

Coppersmith Barbet *Megalaima haemacephala*: It was a good job we saw these gorgeous little birds in the fruiting fig at Khinanauli as we'd previously drawn a blank at my most reliable site – the garden of the Taj Mahal.

Eurasian Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*: One of these great birds was seen on our walk up to the hunting lodge at Bandh Baretha. Like Jack Snipe, it was a new British bird for some of you!

Speckled Piculet *Picumnus innominatus*: These wonderful little birds did their best to try our patience. The first, found by Harish as we stopped in scrub on the way back from Sat Tal, was gone almost as soon as it was seen. However, the next day at Bajun a couple were eventually seen very well by everybody in a warbler flock. What a cracker!

Grey-capped Pygmy-Woodpecker *Dendrocopos canicapillus*: First seen at Corbett Falls as we drove towards Nainital, this attractive bird was commonly seen in flocks in the Corbett area.

Brown-fronted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos auriceps*: This was the commonest of the pied woodpeckers we saw in the foothills. The first individual was seen during the glorious half-hour stop at Mangoli on our drive to Nainital. The species was seen in flocks on each of the following three days.

Fulvous-breasted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos macei*: At slightly lower elevations, around Corbett, this is the commonest pied woodpecker. We saw it on five consecutive days around Pangot, Corbett and Kumeria.

Yellow-crowned Woodpecker *Dendrocopos mahrattensis*: And this is the lowland pied woodpecker, though it's by no means guaranteed. We were lucky to see a pair superbly well as we left the temple area on rickshaws on the evening of our full day in KGNP.

Rufous-bellied Woodpecker *Dendrocopos hyperthyrus*: This was the woodpecker of the tour for many of you. After a difficult day around Pangot and Vinayak, where to be frank none of the birds did what it should have done, we finally bumped into several woodpeckers on the woodpecker trail. Beneath us, on the edge of the road, two of these bright, beautiful birds were extremely obliging and much admired.

Himalayan Woodpecker *Dendrocopos himalayensis*: Now technically I'm breaking one of my own rules here – birds shouldn't count as 'seen' unless they are seen by at least one client and one leader. In the case of the pair of Himalayan Woodpeckers seen on the woodpecker trail near Pangot, neither leader saw them but most of the clients did. However, as Harish and I were watching a Fulvous-breasted pair, also present, I was able to identify the other woodpeckers you were seeing from a different angle by describing their back patterns and comparing them to Greater and Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers back home. You unanimously agreed that you had seen birds with back patterns to match both British species. Rule broken; it's on the list.

Lesser Yellownape *Picus chlorolophus*: This fine bird was seen on all three days we spent in Corbett NP, usually in the company of Fulvous-breasted Woodpeckers and other goodies.

[Greater Yellownape *Picus flavinucha*. Alas, I can't break my rule for this species as only I saw it – distantly at that – in forest above Kumeria.]

Streak-throated Woodpecker *Picus xanthopygaeus*: As we searched for a Tiger along Ram Singh road in Corbett a pair of these lovely birds dropped into a bare tree almost above us.

Grey-headed Woodpecker *Picus canus*: We first saw this usually common bird at Sat Tal. However, it didn't make its re-appearance until we were in Kumeria right at the end of the tour.

Himalayan Flameback *Dinopium shorii*: A pair of these brilliant birds was seen on our last full day in forest near Kumeria. Rather conveniently, they were closely preceded by a pair of the very similar Greater Flameback so everybody had a good chance to see the differences.

Black-rumped Flameback *Dinopium benghalense*: Several of these stunning birds were seen – and hugely admired – on our full day in KGNP.

Greater Flameback *Chrysocolaptes lucidus*: Near Kumeria we saw a pair of these handsome creatures above the road.

Rufous-tailed Lark *Ammomanes phoenicurus*: The only birds we saw of this unusual lark with a penchant for perching in trees were at Bandh Baretha.

Greater Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla*: There were literally hundreds of these handsome birds in great flocks in the semi-desert at Kumher.

Ashy-crowned Sparrow-Lark *Eremopterix grisea*: There were fewer of these, also at Kumher, but we had great looks at both males and females and we liked them very much.

Crested Lark *Galerida cristata*: Also at Kumher we saw a handful of these perky birds, having seen them the day before on the road to Bandh Baretha.

Plain Martin *Riparia paludicola*: This unassuming little bird was one of our most constant companions during the tour. We saw them for seven consecutive days at the start of the tour – around Delhi, Bharatpur and Unchagaon – and again around Corbett at the end of the tour.

Eurasian Crag-Martin *Ptyonoprogne rupestris*: Hundreds of these birds – familiar to most of you from Southern Europe – were lined up on power lines near Nainital (at the site where we struggled to see White-capped Buntings and Striated Prinias).

Dusky Crag-Martin *Ptyonoprogne concolor*: We often catch this bird around tall buildings in Delhi. However, on our tour we only saw it over the cliffs at the Indian Vulture stop at Bayana.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*: Barn Swallows were seen on no fewer than nine days of the tour, in the lowlands, in the foothills and around Corbett.

Wire-tailed Swallow *Hirundo smithii*: This striking, snow-bellied swallow was first seen at the Graceful Prinia stop on the road to Bharatpur. We saw it again at Bandh Baretha and the following day over the canal.

Red-rumped Swallow *Cecropis daurica*: This was one of many dry grassland birds which were much commoner this year than last at Bharatpur, perhaps on account of the drought. (Others included Pallid Harrier and Short-toed Eagle). We saw the species every day here, in addition to several times around Nainital and Corbett.

Streak-throated Swallow *Hirundo fluvicola*: These diminutive and delightful swallows were seen – as predicted by Harish – on power lines over the Kosi river barrage at Ramnagar.

Nepal (House) Martin *Delichon nipalense*: We first saw this bird at Sat Tal. It was seen again the next day high over Bajun and the following day near Pangot.

White Wagtail *Motacilla alba*: I hope that at least *some* of you acquired a taste for identifying wagtail subspecies during the tour. We saw three subspecies of White Wagtail – and on one day we scored all three. They were *M. a. dukhunensis* and *M. a. alboides* (we scrutinised them at the canal in Bharatpur) and *M. a. personata* (a personal favourite) seen at Kumher.

White-browed Wagtail *Motacilla madaraspatensis*: The first bird of this species that I saw was from the plane as it touched down in Delhi. We saw it again on three days around Bharatpur. It's a handsome beast indeed.

Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola*: More subspecies! We saw the grey-backed subspecies *M. c. citreola* commonly in the lowlands. The very handsome black-backed subspecies *M. c. calcarata* was seen only once – a winter-plumaged male at the courser site near Kumher.

Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*: And yet more subspecies. Between the canal at Bharatpur and the semi-desert near Kumher we notched two subspecies of this lovely bird too - *M. f. thunbergi* with a grey head and *M. f. lutea* which is all bright yellow, rather like a British Yellow Wagtail.

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*: We didn't see as many of these as I'd expected, probably because there was no water at KGNP. However, we did see and hear them on eight days, right through the tour, from Bharatpur to Nainital and on to Corbett.

Paddyfield Pipit *Anthus rufulus*: Our only bird of this species was seen at point-blank range at the canal in Bharatpur.

Richard's Pipit *Anthus richardi*: Only one of these big, chunky pipits was seen – briefly at that – by the lake in Dhikala.

Long-billed Pipit *Anthus similis*: We saw this most imposing of pipits twice. The first was a brilliantly obliging perched bird, which had been scared out of dry scrub in KGNP by a feral cat. The second was also very obliging. It landed on a track through the grassland in Dhikala in front of our jeeps and refused to budge as we drove along the road after it.

Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris*: This was the commonest pipit of the lowlands, being seen very often at sites around Bharatpur and along the Kosi river near Dhikuli.

Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni*: First seen at Sat Tal, this common bird of the Himalayan foothills was later seen again in Corbett NP. The only birds we scrutinised closely were of the streaky-backed Himalayan subspecies *A. b. hodgsoni*.

Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis*: A handful of Tree Pipits were seen in scrub and on power lines in semi-desert near Kumher.

Large Cuckooshrike *Coracina macei*: Heard on the day we drove into Corbett, Large Cuckooshrike was seen the next day in tall forest in the company of a Maroon Oriole.

Small Minivet *Pericrocotus cinnamomeus*: Our only encounter with this lovely bird was with a flock in the canopy of *Sal* forest on our drive into Dhikala.

Long-tailed Minivet *Pericrocotus ethologus*: It was unusual to see a flock of these dazzling birds flying over the Nursery in KGNP. Later we saw them in more typical haunts at Sat Tal, around Pangot and in Corbett. Particularly good views were had of perched birds in a flock at Khinanauli, just after we'd seen the trio of barbets.

Scarlet Minivet *Pericrocotus flammeus*: These are very fine birds. We saw them on four consecutive days, often in the company of Long-tails, around Corbett and Kumeria.

Bar-winged Flycatcher-Shrike *Hemipus picatus*: Derision was heaped on this bird for its name. It's a cracking little creature nonetheless and we saw it as we came back from Pangot and on three days around Corbett and Kumeria.

Black-crested Bulbul *Pyconotus melanicterus*: This is perhaps the finest in a very fine line-up of bulbuls seen on this tour. We saw it first at Corbett Falls and again from the tower near Dhikala.

Red-whiskered Bulbul *Pyconotus jocosus*: This lovely bird was first seen in grassland edge near Dhikala and it stayed with us for the rest of our time in Corbett and Kumeria.

White-eared Bulbul *Pyconotus leucotis*: This typical bulbul of dry country was seen on four days around Bharatpur. This form was previously regarded as conspecific with the Himalayan Bulbul, under the name White-cheeked Bulbul *P. leucogenys*.

Himalayan Bulbul *Pyconotus leucogenys*: This quirky-crested bird was first seen at Mangoli as we drove towards Nainital. I told you that evening to tick it for the rest of the tour. And we saw it every day for the rest of the tour.

Red-vented Bulbul *Pyconotus cafer*: This is the default bulbul of the North Indian lowlands. We saw it again and again around Delhi, Bharatpur and Unchagaon. It was also seen around human habitation at Sat Tal and near Pangot before coming back into our lives in huge numbers in the grasslands of Corbett.

Mountain Bulbul *Ixos mccllellandii*: Only one of these scarcer bulbuls was seen on the tour, sitting quietly in a bush, minding its own business, as we had lunch – Steppe Eagles and Peregrines overhead – on our way back from Mangoli.

Ashy Bulbul *Hemixos flavala*: We didn't see as many of these lovely birds as I'd expected. A flock was seen just once, just after an encounter with an Asian Elephant tusker, on our full day in Corbett NP.

Black Bulbul *Hypsipetes leucocephalus*: We did see as many of these as I'd expected. They were typically common and noisy in forest around Nainital.

Goldcrest *Regulus regulus*: This diminutive friend from home was seen in conifer forest above Nainital as we searched for Spot-winged Tits.

Golden-fronted Leafbird *Chloropsis aurifrons*: One was seen briefly as we drove into Dhikala. However, it wasn't until our last afternoon in forest above Kumeria that we had good looks at this lovely bird.

Common Iora *Aegithina tiphia*: We didn't see as many of these in Corbett as we might have done. In fact the only good sighting was of a bird in the mixed flock which passed through Khinanauli in Corbett NP.

Brown Dipper *Cinclus pallasii*: How obliging of this great little bird to be exactly where we were expecting it (and right beside the other species we were expecting) on the river at Kumeria.

Rufous-breasted Accentor *Accentor strophia*: After our first encounter with this brilliant little bird, in the company of a Black-throated Accentor, in scrub on our way to Sat Tal, we saw it again on the two following days. The first bird – perched on the top of *Lantana* bushes – was especially obliging.

Black-throated Accentor *Accentor atrogularis*: Just one of these great little birds was seen – very briefly indeed – in scrub on our way to Sat Tal.

Altai Accentor *Accentor himalayana*: This was numerically the most common accentor of the tour but we only saw them once and – to be honest – we didn't see them very well. At the Cheer Pheasant grasslands beyond Vinayak flocks of dozens of Altai Accentors were constantly flying over but seemed never to land in a convenient place for seeing them. As its scientific name would imply, this bird is sometimes known as Himalayan Accentor.

Chestnut-bellied Rock-Thrush *Monticola rufiventris*: A resplendent male was seen in scrub by a river above Kumeria.

Blue Rock-Thrush *Monticola solitaria*: The only bird of this species we saw was high, high, high at the top of a cliff at Bayana.

Blue Whistling-Thrush *Myophonus caeruleus*: This great bird was characteristically common at every site visited around Nainital and Corbett on the last eight days of the tour. Its call sounds to me exactly like a referee's whistle.

Plain-backed Thrush *Zoothera mollissima*: A bird of this species hopped briefly onto a rock at the crest of the grassland beyond Vinayak.

And where were the rest of the thrushes?

Golden-headed Cisticola *Cisticola exilis*: This fine little bird was seen on two days (unstreaked nape plain for all to see) in the grasslands of Dhikala.

Striated Prinia *Prinia criniger*: After tantalising almost-glimpses of this lovely bird on the way to Sat Tal, we had very good views both at the High Fields in Nainital and near Pangot.

Grey-breasted Prinia *Prinia hodgsonii*: This tiny prinia was seen in *Lantana* scrub around Nainital on two days and on four days around Corbett.

Graceful Prinia *Prinia gracilis*: Harish led us straight to this delicate bird at an apparently unpromising roadside marsh on the road to Bharatpur.

Ashy Prinia *Prinia socialis*: We saw numerous Ashy Prinias in the lowlands around Bharatpur but without doubt the star was one which almost walked over our feet in the mist as we drove towards Bandh Baretha. Late in the tour this lovely species made a re-appearance in the grassland of Dhikala.

Plain Prinia *Prinia inornata*: This was probably our most numerous prinia. We saw it many times around Bharatpur (including several birds on the road to Bandh Baretha which were almost as tame as the Ashy there) and again several times in the grasslands of Dhikala.

Grey-bellied Tesia *Tesia cyaniventer*: Harish brilliantly found one of these tricky-to-see birds by call from a jeep as we drove through forest near Kumeria. It hopped around under *Lantana* bushes and over stones, giving excellent views.

Grey-sided Bush-Warbler *Cettia brunnifrons*: It was extremely jammy of us to see a bird of this ultra-skulky species stopping for moment on top of a wall at Sat Tal.

Paddyfield Warbler *Acrocephalus agricola*: We were exceedingly chuffed to see a handsome individual of this species – one of the most distinctive in the genus *Acrocephalus* – in scrub in KGNP.

Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum*: Part of a trio of reed warblers seen on our full day in KGNP. The poor bird we saw had only one eye.

Clamorous Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus stentoreus*: Early in the morning of our full day in KGNP we were treated to a sunbathing individual of this bulky reed warbler.

Common Tailorbird *Orthotomus sutorius*: Tailorbirds were seen and heard on four days around Delhi and Bharatpur at the start of the tour.

Siberian Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus (collybita) tristis*: This bird, which is still considered by many as a subspecies of the Common Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*, was very common, as always, around Bharatpur. A surprise though was how often we saw it around Nainital. Neither Harish nor I had ever seen the species at this altitude before. We saw it last around Dhikala.

Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus*: Just one of these skulkers was seen in bushes on the road to Sat Tal. I was having a comfort break at the time and was mighty miffed to miss it as it would have been an India-tick for me!

Ashy-throated Warbler *Phylloscopus maculipennis*: This bright, diminutive bird was only seen on the day we visited Bajun, though here we saw several.

Lemon-rumped Warbler *Phylloscopus chloronotus*: Lemon-rumps were our near-constant companions in Nainital and Corbett. This bird is often also referred to as Pale-rumped Warbler. It's lovely by any name.

Hume's Leaf-Warbler *Phylloscopus humei*: This sweet little bird, a relatively recent split from the Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus*, was seen and heard commonly around Bharatpur and heard many times in Corbett NP.

Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides*: We heard numerous Greenish Warblers in KGNP and finally saw one – briefly – in Corbett NP.

Whistler's Warbler *Seicercus whistleri*: This bright, beautiful warbler was first seen at Sat Tal. We saw it again in Bajun and at the end of the tour around Kumeria. Until recently this form was considered conspecific with the Golden-spectacled Warbler *Seicercus burkii*.

Grey-hooded Warbler *Seicercus xanthoschistus*: This very common bird was seen – and heard giving its twittering call – constantly during the last eight days of the tour.

Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca*: Lesser Whitethroats were seen and heard on the first five days around Delhi and Bharatpur. They made less expected re-appearances in a couple of scrubland sites around Nainital.

Rufous-gorgeted Flycatcher *Ficedula strophilata*: This subtly handsome flycatcher was first seen at Sat Tal. Later we saw it again, right at the end of the tour, at Kumeria.

Red-breasted Flycatcher *Ficedula parva*: These pretty little numbers were commonly seen around Bharatpur and were heard snarling in Corbett.

Red-throated Flycatcher *Ficedula (parva) albicilla*: We saw one female on the western boundary of KGNP. She was picked up by her distinctive call. A recent split from Red-breasted Flycatcher, this bird is also known as Taiga Flycatcher.

Slaty Blue Flycatcher *Ficedula tricolor*: The robin-like ticking call of this lovely bird was constantly heard around Nainital and Corbett. We saw lots of quietly-toned female and just a few bright blue males.

[Little Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula westermanni*: Alas only I managed to see a male of this lovely species in Corbett.]

Dark-sided Flycatcher *Muscicapa sibirica*: During lunchtime on our full day in Dhikala Harish picked up one of these birds flycatching from the tiger-proof fence round the camp. We were lucky to see it as they're scarce here; Harish had previously only ever seen the species in Sikkim.

Rufous-bellied Niltava *Niltava sundara*: Now this is a bird that made us work. Our first male, at Corbett Falls, was very retiring and was not seen by everyone. It wasn't until the very end of the tour at Kumeria that we managed to have better views, of both a female and a male.

Grey-headed Canary-Flycatcher *Culicicapa ceylonensis*: Unusually we didn't see this bird at all in KGNP. Harish did hear one during the downpour at the Flying Fox site near Bandh Baretha but to be honest we were mostly worrying about getting back to the bus. Having seen the species first at Corbett Falls, we went on to see it many times in mixed flocks in Corbett.

Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica*: This lovely bird was common around Bharatpur, giving its strident buzzy call, and was also seen once in the grassland around Dhikala.

Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus*: What a bird! We were delighted with the first female we saw at Sat Tal but later in the day she was eclipsed by the eye-thumping male of a pair at the same site. The next day we saw the species again at Bajun. Sometimes known as Orange-flanked Bush-Robin.

Oriental Magpie-Robin *Copsychus saularis*: This very beautiful bird was seen often around Bharatpur, notably at the gates of the Mahajarah's palace. We caught up with it again in scrub on the road to Sat Tal.

[White-rumped Shama *Copsychus malabaricus*: Only one of you managed to see one of these, on the day we drove into Dhikala.]

Indian Robin *Saxicoloides fulicata*: These charismatic little birds were seen on three days around Bharatpur. Our best views were probably of roadside birds in the morning mist on the way to Bandh Baretha.

Blue-capped Redstart *Phoenicurus caeruleocephalus*: This beautiful and highly distinctive redstart, whose cap is rarely blue, was seen on numerous occasions around Sat Tal, High Fields and Pangot.

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochuros*: The glorious North Indian resident subspecies of this familiar bird was seen several times, over four days, around Bharatpur.

Blue-fronted Redstart *Phoenicurus frontalis*: Now the male of this species is a seriously beautiful redstart. Our first was seen at the scrub and fields stop on the road to Sat Tal (where we also saw our first Blue-capped). Later we saw mostly females and curiously enough they were very often in sites where we saw mostly male Blue-capped. Who's to know what that's all about?

White-capped Water-Redstart *Chamarrornis leucocephalus*: A stunner. Our first was a very tame bird at our lunch stop at Sat Tal. Later we saw many more – but admired each one equally much – in rivers around Nainital and in Corbett. Also sometimes called White-capped River-Chat.

Plumbeous Water-Redstart *Phoenicurus fuliginosus*: Less showy than the last species but just as popular with the punters. Our first female was at Corbett Falls. During the rest of the tour we saw many more, in the same habitats as White-capped. Curiously we saw very few males, so few in fact that late in the tour I was asked to identify a male as if it were a new bird for us.

Little Forktail *Enicurus scouleri*: In precisely the spot where we were looking for it, Harish found us our one and only (and utterly lovely) Little Forktail on the river at Kumeria. Nearby were White-crested Laughingthrushes, a Brown Fish-Owl and our only Brown Dipper.

Slaty-backed Forktail *Enicurus schistaceus*: Just one bird of this impossibly dapper species, at Bajun.

Spotted Forktail *Enicurus maculatus*: What fantastic luck we had with forktails! Our first crisp Spotted Forktail was seen from above as it quietly worked the edge of a stream (the same stream as held our only Slaty-backed) at Bajun. Later we saw more of these dazzling birds on our last afternoon near Kumeria.

Hodgson's Bushchat *Saxicola insignis*: Far less common than the preceding species; we nonetheless managed to see several in the grassland of Dhikala, which must be their most famous stake-out on earth. Also sometimes known as White-throated Bushchat.

Siberian Stonechat *Saxicola maura*: These lovely little birds, now generally recognised as a split from Common Stonechat *S. torquata*, were common in grassland and scrub around Bharatpur and Corbett.

Pied Bushchat *Saxicola caprata*: Common around Bharatpur and never seen again. We saw surprisingly few females of this natty little bird.

Grey Bushchat *Saxicola ferrea*: This friendly fellow with a strong buzzy call was seen on six days spent around Nainital and in Corbett. Females – as on every tour to the Himalayan foothills – constantly inspired the question, ‘What’s that?’

Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina*: One or two of these subtlest of wheatears were seen in semi-desert near Kumher.

Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti*: At least one handsome male was seen at the courser site near Kumher.

Brown Rock Chat *Cercomela fusca*: This funky rooftop number was commonly seen around Bharatpur and much later was seen again in Ramnagar on the day we drove in to Dhikala.

Yellow-bellied Fantail *Rhipidura hypoxantha*: These lovely birds graced mixed flocks at Corbett Falls, Sat Tal and Kumeria.

White-throated Fantail *Rhipidura albicollis*: Also a lovely bird, it was seen at all the same sites as Yellow-bellied, in addition to Pangot and Corbett.

White-throated Laughingthrush *Garrulax albogularis*: Some of these striking birds were glimpsed at Bajun. At Pangot we saw one huge flock, containing various other goodies, in the morning while in the afternoon we encountered a dippily tame flock feeding on seed in the garden of a lodge.

White-crested Laughingthrush *Garrulax leucolophus*: These brilliant birds took some finding. However, in the end we all caught up with them extremely well. The first one was glimpsed in the first White-throated flock at Pangot. More were glimpsed as we drove into Corbett. It wasn't until our walk down to the river at Kumeria, in search of Brown Dipper and Little Forktail, that we really encountered these wonderful, noisy creatures.

Striated Laughingthrush *Garrulax striatus*: Also a great bird. It was seen well on our visit to Bajun and one zipped across the track in front of us at Pangot.

Streaked Laughingthrush *Garrulax lineatus*: All over the place around Nainital.

Chestnut-crowned Laughingthrush *Garrulax erythrocephalus*: Seen just once, at some distance and only by a handful of us, in the first White-throated flock at Pangot.

Rusty-cheeked Scimitar-Babbler *Pomatorhinus erythrogenys*: This cracking bird was first seen in roadside scrub on our way back from Sat Tal. We saw it again around Pangot and heard it several times around Dhikala.

[Streak-breasted Scimitar-Babbler *Pomatorhinus ruficollis*: Also in the first White-throated Laughingthrush flock Harish glimpsed one of these.]

Black-chinned Babbler *Stachyris pyrrhops*: This attractive little number was seen in mixed flocks at Bajun and Pangot and again at the end of the tour around Kumeria.

Yellow-eyed Babbler *Chrysomma sinense*: We had superb views of this beautiful bird around Bharatpur, particularly along the drive to Bandh Baretha. It made a final curtain call at the end of the tour in the grasslands of Dhikala.

Common Babbler *Turdoides caudatus*: A few of these were seen in silhouette at the Graceful Prinia site on the day we drove to Bharatpur. The next day we saw more at Bayana.

Large Grey Babbler *Turdoides malcolmi*: These adenoidal dry-country birds were common around Bharatpur. They made a surprise come-back in the grounds of the hotel where we stopped for tea at Corbett Falls.

Jungle Babbler *Turdoides striatus*: Even commoner than the last species, Jungle Babblers were everywhere around Bharatpur and were also seen on four days around Corbett.

White-browed Shrike-Babbler *Pteruthius flaviscapis*: What a stunner. One was seen briefly in a flock at the start of the day we visited Pangot but it wasn't until our last afternoon, above Kumeria, that we had really good looks.

Green Shrike-Babbler *Pteruthius xanthochlorus*: Just one was seen, in the same early morning flock on the road to Pangot.

Blue-winged Minla *Minla cyanouoptera*: Uncharacteristically uncommon on our tour. Some were seen high in the canopy at Sat Tal, while most people's minds were on warblers, nuthatches and tits, and more were seen by some of you near Kumeria.

Rufous Sibia *Heterophasia capistrata*: Aren't babblers great? This particularly lovely bird made its first appearance in dry scrub on the road to Sat Tal, in the company of a splendid male Blue-fronted Redstart. Many more were seen – as expected – around Bajun and Pangot.

Whiskered Yuhina *Yuhina flavicollis*: Lots of these little beauties were seen at Bajun.

Stripe-throated Yuhina *Yuhina gularis*: Also at Bajun, we saw just one family of these slightly larger – but equally pretty – yuhinas.

Black-throated Tit *Aegithalos concinnus*: This was a great favourite with the group, and rightly so. We saw them first in a distant, difficult flock at Sat Tal. However, this only heightened our pleasure at seeing them much better on the following two days around Bajun and Pangot.

Great Tit *Parus major*: This oriental twist on a familiar bird from home was seen at lower elevations around Nainital, in the forests of Dhikala and around Kumeria.

Green-backed Tit *Parus monticolus*: This is a dazzling little bird and one we saw very often in the forests around Nainital.

Black-lored Tit *Parus xanthogenys*: Perhaps even more dazzling and also frequently seen at sites around Nainital.

Spot-winged Tit *Periparus melanolophus*: Being more conifer-specific (much as our Coal Tit is in the UK) this bird was harder to find. However, we went in search of it in the tall stands of conifers above Nainital and succeeded in finding it. We even saw Goldcrest and Collared Grosbeak into the bargain.

Yellow-browed Tit *Sylviparus modestus*: A sprinkling of Yellow-browed Tits, usually at long distance or in inconvenient places, was seen over three days around Nainital.

Chestnut-bellied Nuthatch *Sitta castanea*: This handsome bird was common around Nainital and Kumeria.

White-tailed Nuthatch *Sitta himalayensis*: We had great views of numerous White-tailed Nuthatches at Bajun and around Pangot.

Velvet-fronted Nuthatch *Sitta frontalis*: First seen at Corbett Falls, this very pretty bird was commonly seen in flocks around Corbett.

Wallcreeper *Tichodroma muraria*: Having seen one flying over the beach as we drove down to the Kosi river at Dhikuli, but failed to get most of you onto it, I was genuinely fearful that this rightly-prized beauty would get away. However, the fruitless search for the first Wallcreeper did turn up our only Ibisbill and just as we were leaving the latter a Wallcreeper flew by. It flew by several more times until everyone in the group had seen it and admired it at leisure.

Bar-tailed Treecreeper *Certhia himalayana*: Common in flocks around Nainital and Kumeria.

Purple Sunbird *Cinnyris asiaticus*: This delicate little bird was seen on four days around Delhi and Bharatpur. Our best views were of birds in the garden of the Lakshmi Vilas Palace Hotel.

Green-tailed Sunbird *Aethopyga nipalensis*: Our only one was a very tame female in a Poinsettia bush at the entrance to the track at Mangoli.

Fire-tailed Sunbird *Aethopyga ignicauda*: This was so nearly the one that got away. Harish and I saw one fly over Gairal as we had lunch on the day we drove in to Corbett. Later, just a couple of us saw a female-type bird for an instant as it flicked through a forest flock near Pangot.

Crimson Sunbird *Aethopyga siparaja*: Fairly common – but dazzling nonetheless – around Kumeria, especially in the Quality Inn gardens where we had superb views in flowering *Callistemon* and *Calliandra* bushes.

[Thick-billed Flowerpecker *Dicaeum agile* : This one *did* get away, on a technicality, in that it was only seen by Harish on our last afternoon above Kumeria.]

Oriental White-eye *Zosterops palpebrosus* : These pretty creatures were first seen on our full day spent in KGNP. Later they were common around Nainital, in Corbett and around Kumeria.

Black-hooded Oriole *Oriolus xanthornus*: Common and vocal, as it is wont to be, in the forests of Corbett.

Maroon Oriole *Oriolus traillii*: We saw a couple of these cracking birds in the forests of Corbett NP.

Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus*: Our first one of these subtly lovely shrikes was at the Yellow-wattled Lapwing site (*long* before we found the lapwings) near Kumher. The next day we saw another in KGNP.

Brown Shrike *Lanius cristatus*: First seen at the Graceful Prinia site, this handsome bird was seen again the next day on the way to Bandh Baretha.

Long-tailed Shrike *Lanius schach*: This is your bog-standard shrike in North India and, true to form, we saw them on no fewer than nine days, and in all sorts of places from the scrub of Bharatpur and Nainital to the grasslands of Dhikala.

Grey-backed Shrike *Lanius tephronotus*: Alas only one of these was seen, and only by a couple of us, at the last stop on the day we spent around Pangot.

Southern Grey Shrike *Lanius meridionalis*: This bird is often more associated with semi-desert than some of its relatives. We saw it on the drive to Bandh Baretha and near Kumher.

Bay-backed Shrike *Lanius vittatus*: The loveliest of North India's shrikes; we saw it as we were searching for Yellow-wattled Lapwings near Kumher. Come to think of it, we saw no end of things as we searched for Yellow-wattled Lapwings near Kumher.

Common Woodshrike *Tephrodornis pondicerianus*: While not terribly rare, the Common Woodshrike was only heard and seen briefly by the canal in Bharatpur.

Black Drongo *Dicrurus macrocercus*: Lowlands + open country = Black Drongo.

Ashy Drongo *Dicrurus leucophaeus*: Don't you just love these subtle-plumaged birds with skinny flight silhouettes and flaming red eyes? We saw Ashy Drongos on two days in KGNP and once at Corbett Falls.

Bronzed Drongo *Dicrurus aeneus*: Now this too is a handsome drongo. We saw it at Sat Tal and Bajun, in Corbett and on both days around Kumeria. Our best views were of sallying birds in a flock of shrike-babblers and tits above Kumeria on the last day.

Lesser Racket-tailed Drongo *Dicrurus remifer*: We saw this wonderful bird only on the day we drove through *Sal* forest into Corbett NP.

Spangled Drongo *Dicrurus hottentotus*: On the same day a couple of us *glimpsed* the very distinctive flight silhouette of one of these great birds.

Eurasian Jay *Garrulus glandarius*: The very pretty local race of this UK garden bird was seen at Sat Tal and near Pangot.

Black-headed Jay *Garrulus lanceolatus*: What a great bird this is. We were lucky to see so many of them, gathering acorns, around Mangoli, Sat Tal, Bajun and Pangot.

Rufous Treepie *Dendrocitta vagabunda*: This handsome but ubiquitous resident of lowland forests was seen on four days around Bharatpur and three around Dhikala.

Red-billed Blue Magpie *Urocissa erythrorhyncha*: Now *this* is a smart bird. We saw them wonderfully well on several occasions around Nainital and Kumeria.

House Crow *Corvus splendens*: Ultra common in the lowlands.

Jungle Crow *Corvus (machrorhynchos) culminatus*: Now generally recognised as a separate species from the Large-billed Crow of the Himalayan foothills, this common bird was seen often around Bharatpur and Corbett NP.

Large-billed Crow *Corvus macrorhynchos*: The distinctive voice of this bird was frequently heard around Nainital where large flights could often be seen soaring over the ridges in the company of Steppe Eagles and Eurasian Griffons.

Bank Myna *Acridotheres ginginianus*: Very common around Bharatpur.

Common Myna *Acridotheres tristis*: Very common indeed. Seen and heard on no fewer than twelve days.

Asian Pied Starling *Gracupica contra*: This very dapper bird was seen on six days in the lowlands at the start of the tour.

Brahminy Starling *Temenuchus pagodarum*: Yet another attractive starling. These delightful, peach-coloured birds were commonly seen over four days around Bharatpur.

Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*: Not at all common. I saw one briefly at Okhla. Harish later found us our only watchable individual in a flock of mynas in semi-desert near Kumher. To his disappointment we were far too busy watching Indian Coursers and Ashy-crowned Sparrow-Larks to pay it any attention.

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*: House Sparrows – slimmer and slightly racier than ours in the UK – were seen on three days around Bharatpur and a further three days around Nainital.

Spanish Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis*: A flock of these charismatic little birds, with a few other things thrown in, was seen by the road on our drive back from Kumher.

Russet Sparrow *Passer rutilans*: Talking of charismatic birds... We first encountered Russet Sparrows at Mangoli. The next day we saw a tremendous roost of them as we drove back from Sat Tal.

Chestnut-shouldered Petronia *Petronia xanthocollis*: I was surprised that we only saw a couple of these common birds on the full day we spent in Bharatpur. In summer they can be seen here in huge numbers.

Baya Weaver *Ploceus philippinus*: Just a handful of these were seen in the Spanish Sparrow flock.

Black-breasted Weaver *Ploceus benghalensis*: And at least one of these in the flock too, though it took a while for us all to agree on which birds had been seen by whom.

Red Avadavat *Amandava amandava*: This terrific little grassland bird was seen in the towering grasses of the Yamuna river at Okhla, around Bharatpur and Bandh Baretha and right at the end of the tour in Dhikala.

White-rumped Munia *Lonchura striata*: This was a wildcard bird in a *Lantana* shrubbery near Kumeria at the end of the tour. We were searching for laughingthrushes and forktails and we found munias.

Scaly-breasted Munia *Lonchura punctulata*: This is a pretty bird if you ever seen it well enough. We saw them first at Okhla. Later they re-appeared around Nainital, including an utterly drab juvenile in the Russet Sparrow flock near Sat Tal. Finally, we saw them again on a couple of days around Corbett. *Not* called Nutmeg Mannikin, despite vile rumours that it is.

Indian Silverbill *Euodice malabarica*: This fine little bird was seen on our way to Bandh Baretha and on the full day we spent in KGNP.

Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*: A resplendent male was seen on the drive to Bandh Baretha.

Pink-browed Rosefinch *Carpodacus rodochrous*: Also a resplendent male. We saw him fly into a bush in Pangot, located him in its depths, painstakingly got everybody onto him and thought ourselves very clever. Half an hour later, when we came out of the nearby lodge, he was still sitting in exactly the same spot and we felt considerably less clever.

Yellow-breasted Greenfinch *Carduelis spinoides*: This was a very popular bird with the group, and rightly so as it's lovely. We saw them on three days of our stay in Nainital.

Scarlet Finch *Haematospiza sipahi*: Talking of very popular birds, a stunning male of this much-sought species gave extensive, excellent views on the day we visited Bajun.

Collared Grosbeak *Myocerbas affinis*: If you craned your neck and stared into the canopy of a very tall conifer above Nainital you could definitely convince yourself that you'd seen the diagnostic features which separate this imposing grosbeak from Black-and-Yellow.

Crested Bunting *Melophus lathamii*: It's a good job we listen to calls. Had we not done so, we might have driven right past the handful of these great birds crouching atop damp grass stems in Corbett. Hunched in the mist, with their backs towards us, they looked for all the world like the hundreds of Red-vented Bulbuls festooning every other grass-stem in the park.

Red-headed Bunting *Emberiza bruniceps*: The first views we had of this handsome bird, on the road to Bandh Baretha, left much to be desired. Later, among the medley of Spanish Sparrows and assorted weavers near Kumher, we had much better looks.

Chestnut-eared Bunting *Emberiza fucata*: Seen very badly indeed in rocky habitat above Nainital on the road to Sat Tal. Later a few of us saw a beautiful male in grassland around Dhikala.

White-capped Bunting *Emberiza stewartii*: We did well for these pretty birds, seeing them (also rather badly at first) in scrub near Sat Tal and above Kumeria on the last afternoon.

Rock Bunting *Emberiza cia*: Harish was determined that we would see Rock Buntings and his efforts paid off. Our first birds were at High Fields outside Nainital. Later we saw more near Pangot.

Mammals

Indian Flying Fox *Pteropus giganteus*: The poor old Indian Flying Foxes on this tour definitely didn't get the attention they deserved. As we stepped off the bus to see them at their usual roost near Bandh Baretha, the heavens opened and rain crashed down. We decided we could see Indian Flying Foxes another time.

Rhesus Macaque *Macaca mulatta*: I'm a kind-hearted man; I really am. But I'm really not into animals that break into my room, pinch my toothpaste, leave footprints on the pillow and defecate in the doorway. These wretched brutes were everywhere and we suffered their infernal company on no fewer than twelve days of the tour.

Common Langur *Presbytis entellus*: Why can't all monkeys be like this? We first saw elegant Langurs at Bayana and we carefully noted their slim physiques and tan-hued sides (for subspecific comparison later). Later we felt very erudite when we looked at the big, silvery, square-browed langurs of Nainital and Corbett and said, 'Definitely a different subspecies.'

Golden Jackal *Canis aureus*: These dainty creatures were seen very frequently around Bharatpur and on the road to Unchagaon. We also saw a family standing by its den at great distance by the lakeside in Dhikala.

Yellow-throated Marten *Martes flavigula*: One of the star mammals of the tour and Harish's second-favourite creature. Our first martens were loping across the valley, scampering along a path and slipping through the trees – allowing us all great views – at Bajun. The Mountain Hawk-Eagles overhead added drama to the moment. Later another was seen by some in the roadside dusk as we drove back from Pangot. Finally more were seen on our afternoon walk down to the river at Kumeria. What a great animal!

Small Indian Mongoose *Herpestes auropunctatus*: Remarkably common around Bharatpur though first seen crossing the road at Okhla.

Indian Grey Mongoose *Herpestes edwardsi*: Our only one of these larger mongooses was in grassland at Dhikala.

Tiger *Panthera tigris*: When you're a tour leader, what you categorically don't want to do is see a Tiger yourself only for all of your clients (except the only one who's ever seen a tiger before – and three tigers at that) to miss it. It's just not good form. I was therefore extremely happy the following day – as we left the park and had essentially given up on this most magnificent of animals – when a female was spotted crossing the river below High Bank. Almost everybody saw her before she disappeared completely into long grass. Needless to say, I wasn't the only one who was extremely happy. The back two jeeps were yet more fortunate, seeing another Tiger cross a dry stream bed as we approached the park gates.

Gangetic Dolphin *Platanista gangetica*: Two or three of these now rare creatures played in the murky waters of *Ma Ganga* as we drove back to Delhi at the end of the tour.

Asian Elephant *Elephas maximus*: Fantastic! Harish spotted our first individual – a tusker – at extreme distance across the grassland and the lake in Dhikala. Later we saw several more including a lone male in forest and a family of females by the river at the end of the Ram Singh Road.

Wild Boar *Sus scrofa*: Seen by some from the tower in KGNP and common in Corbett NP, especially out on the short grassland around the lake.

Himalayan Goral *Naemorhedus goral*: These great little mountain ungulates were seen well, with telescopes, on rocky slopes above the road to Sat Tal. Later one more was seen as we searched for Cheer Pheasants beyond Vinayak.

Barking Deer *Muntiacus muntjak*: First seen on the road to Pangot and later on four days around Corbett.

Chital *Cervus axis*: Vast herds of these beautiful deer were to be seen in the grasslands of Dhikala. Smaller numbers were elsewhere in the park.

Hog Deer *Cervus porcinus*: A couple of females of these shy grassland deer were seen from the tower near Dhikala. I also saw a fine male in a herd of Chital from the lodge but it was lunchtime and I couldn't rouse any of you from your siestas to see it.

Sambar *Cervus unicolor*: These imposing forest deer were seen several times in Corbett.

Nilgai *Boselaphus tragocamelus*: Nilgai were first seen at Okhla. These stately animals were also seen many times on both visits to KGNP and on our visit to Kumher.

Five-striped Palm-Squirrel *Funambulus pennanti*: These very attractive little squirrels were commonly seen on the first six days of the tour.

Indian Bush-Rat *Golunda ellioti*: A pretty rat indeed – seen just once on the road to Bandh Baretha.

Reptiles

Indian Flapshell Turtle *Lissemys punctata*: These leviathan creatures were often seen churning up the remaining pools of muddy water, or basking on their shores, in KGNP. Our most remarkable encounter was with the vast individuals living in the tank beneath Jai Ram Das' temple, which he has trained to come up onto the steps to eat dough. Amazing.

Indian Roofed Turtle *Kachuga tecta*: Much smaller, these pretty turtles were seen just once near the Keoladeo temple in KGNP.

Indian Rock Python *Python molurus*: A superb individual of this Bharatpur speciality was seen on our first afternoon in KGNP.

Indian Monitor *Varanus bengalensis*: We saw just one monitor – in semi-desert near Kumher.

House Gecko *Hemidactylus* sp.: Geckos were a feature of several bathrooms in Dhikala. They were probably of the common species *Hemidactylus platyurus*.

Rat Snake *Pytas mucosus*: A very fine individual of this common species was found asleep on the bough of a tree beneath us as we looked at the Roofshell Turtles.

Mugger Crocodile *Crocodylus palustris*: This powerful animal was seen basking on the bank of the Ramganga river on the day we drove into Dhikala.

Gharial *Gavialis gangeticus*: These magnificent animals, still rare but saved from the very brink of extinction by concerted efforts, were also seen on the Ramganga on our drive into Corbett NP.

Butterflies

Common Mormon <i>Papilio polytes</i>	Lime Butterfly <i>Papilio demoleus</i>
Common Rose <i>Atrophaneura aristolochiae</i>	Grass Yellow sp. <i>Eurema</i> sp.
Common Emigrant <i>Catopsilia pomona</i>	Small Salmon Arab <i>Colotis amata</i>
Small Orange-tip <i>Colotis etrida</i>	Yellow Orange-tip <i>Ixis pyrene</i>
Indian Cabbage White <i>Pieris canidia</i>	Common Gull <i>Cepora nerissa</i>
Pioneer <i>Belenois aurota</i>	Large Oakblue <i>Arhopala amantes</i>
Grass Jewel <i>Freyeria trochilus</i>	Tiny Grass Blue <i>Zizula hylax</i>
Plum Judy <i>Abisara echerius</i>	Blue Tiger <i>Tirumala limniace</i>
Striped Tiger <i>Danaus genutia</i>	Plain Tiger <i>Danaus chrysippus</i>
Chestnut Tiger <i>Parantica sita</i>	Striped Blue Crow <i>Euploea mulciber</i>
Common Crow <i>Euploea core</i>	Tawny Coster <i>Acraea violae</i>
Common Leopard <i>Phalanta phalantha</i>	Sargeant / Sailor spp. <i>Athyma</i> / <i>Neptis</i> spp.
Lascar sp. <i>Pantoporia</i> sp.	Common Castor <i>Ariadne merione</i>
Indian Red Admiral <i>Vanessa indica</i>	Painted Lady <i>Cynthia cardui</i>
Indian Tortoiseshell <i>Aglais cashmirensis</i>	Blue Pansy <i>Junonia orithiya</i>
Yellow Pansy <i>Junonia hierta</i>	Chocolate Pansy <i>Junonia iphita</i>
Grey Pansy <i>Junonia atlites</i>	Peacock Pansy <i>Junonia almana</i>
Lemon Pansy <i>Junonia lemonias</i>	Great Eggfly <i>Hypolimnas bolina</i>
Danaid Eggfly <i>Hypolimnas misippus</i>	

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