

Wild India

Bengal tigers and blue bulls

A Greentours Trip Report

December 1st – 21st 2008

Led by Phil Benstead and Rajveer Singh

Trip report by Phil Benstead

Day 1 1st December Travel to Delhi

Four of us met up at the gate at Heathrow's Terminal 5 and boarded the flight for the 'overnight' flight to Delhi. The flight went late but the journey was smooth enough, although most of us failed to get any sleep.

Day 2 2nd December Delhi to Bharatpur

Our delayed departure from Heathrow meant, unfortunately for us, a late arrival in smoggy old Delhi and we were further delayed on the tarmac. Eventually at 4 am we crawled into bed, only to seemingly be immediately woken by our alarm clocks for breakfast! Here we met Peter and Caroline who had arrived in Delhi two days previously to acclimatise – they were significantly perkier but we tried not to hold it against them.

The journey through Delhi during mid-morning is always torturous but the slow pace allows us to drink in the atmosphere and hubbub. So many people, so many cars, motorbikes and sundry transport. After three hours we finally break free of the urban sprawl and associated smog and start seeing some birds and mammals. Occasional man-made wetlands stud the landscape and host a variety of wintering and resident waterfowl. We spot stately sarus cranes in distant fields, two wooly-necked and one painted stork are also seen. Frequently observed roadside birds include common and bank myna, plain and ashy prinia, ring-necked parakeet and white-throated kingfisher. Raptors are abundant and include a huge number of black kite in Delhi, plenty of Egyptian vultures and black-shouldered kite in the countryside and a single honey buzzard. In amongst the wildlife, India continues to assault our senses and we happily pester Rajveer with numerous questions relating to landuse and agriculture. The landscape gets steadily more rural as we progress towards Bharatpur and we spot our first nilgai galloping along through the mustard crops and peafowl become numerous. We stop briefly at midday for chai and a samosa but save

ourselves for a very late lunch at Bharatpur. By the time we get to the Bagh we are quite hungry and enjoy a splendid lunch and a short rest before more food at dinner and finally sleep!

Day 3 3rd December Bharatpur

After a leisurely start we head off in the minibus to the nearby gates of the National Park to get our permits. Through the gate, we first walk around the nursery and temple area. This produces some great birds including a fine singing male bluethroat, a gorgeous male red-breasted flycatcher, two honey buzzards, a superb orange-headed thrush and our first brown-headed barbet. Rajveer showed us a nice Indian jungle nightjar perched high on a dead branch. We enquired about fishing cats at the temple (as some had been seen recently by visiting birders) and the holy man there revealed that he had a active den (?) with a female and two small cubs. Exciting stuff and we vowed to make time for an early morning stake-out of the site later on in our stay. But for now the rickshaws and the park beckoned. As we walk back to the rickshaws we start to see butterflies in good numbers and these include pysche, pioneer, white and yellow orangetips and large salmon arab.

Our first day in the rickshaws is always punctuated with a lot of stops to look at the many new birds and animals that we naturally encounter. We work our way slowly down to the temple where we lunch. En route we stop for many memorable things including a fine Bengal monitor sunning itself by the road. A close dusky eagle-owl nest is a huge hit, the ear-tufted majesty of the incubating adult staring across at us with fierce yellow eyes. Harder to get to grips with was our first collared scops-owl, but we were lucky to get much better views of a pair after lunch. Yet another owl was seen during the morning – the lovely spotted owlet, just one today, perched in a dead acacia.

Reaching the wetland proper we start to hear the tumult of the stork colony. Finding a suitable gap we sit and enjoy watching some nearby trees that are festooned with painted storks. The adults are attending to large young in the nest that are just on the verge of fledging, so the trees are crowded and noisy. This large species is just about the only wetland bird that is still going through the breeding process at this time of year and we can only imagine what the height of the breeding season must look and sound like. Huge Indian flap-shell turtles are spotted hauled out on islands. Just before lunch we spend an enjoyable five minutes by a fruiting tree and see some splendid coppersmith barbets, a single Indian grey hornbill and our first Blyth's reed warbler. The day is heating up nicely and more butterflies are located including the beautiful common rose and our first pansies. Dragonflies (or at least libellulids) too become a feature and we see our first *Crocothemis servilia*, *Orthetrum sabina* and even a single *Tamea basilaris*.

We take a good al fresco lunch with a spirited tame male nilgai and a gang of babblers in the grounds of the temple. Our first hoopoe probes the lawn diligently and overhead a single Dalmatian pelican circles. Afterwards we get down to the big jheel by the temple and here we get our first big numbers of wildfowl. Most are comb duck, but in amongst them we find small

numbers of greylag and bar-headed geese, ruddy shelduck, cotton pygmy geese and even three ferruginous duck. More pelicans appear overhead, a flock containing both great white and Dalmatian pelicans, although the precise ratio remains a mystery somehow. Distant glossy ibis and pheasant-tailed jacana sightings make us hope for better views in the days to come.

We head down the road a way to check some sites for large-tailed nightjar but like everyone so far this year we fail to turn up the species in formerly favoured locations. Whilst here we have time to search large open wetland areas though and add a variety of shrikes and a splendid pair of sarus cranes to our growing day list. Roadside trees hold common hawk-cuckoo and yellow-crowned woodpecker. As dusk approaches we hear pack after pack of jackals calling as each responds to the other and their cries seem to ripple towards us and then recede. Magic stuff and our sign to think about leaving the park. We are pedalled slowly back down the access road stopping for occasional birds including a very nice black bittern and a good look at our first black-necked stork. Around us the dusk gathers and the loud calls of dusky eagle owls are heard. Not a bad start to our time at Bharatpur and we look forward to more, but for tomorrow 'culture' beckons.

Day 4 4th December Fatepur Sikri and Agra

We all show up early in the morning for the big 'cultural day' of this leg of the trip – with three World Heritage Sites to fit in it was going to be hectic. Our first stop of the day is the ancient city of Fatepur Sikri, almost deserted at this time of day apart from the many hawkers keen to make the first sale of the day... At the gate we meet up with Liman, our engaging guide who tranships us into small motorcycle trishaws for the drive up to the entrance. Here our first brown rock chats make an appearance in piles of building rubble. Liman takes us on the full tour, first through the tranquil, preserved and fascinating old city and then to the more boisterous public and holy shrine area around the Victory Gate. As always the place weaves a spell and we all enjoy our time here, even if we have been before.

Driving off, we peel the last of the hawkers from our vehicle and head for Agra. En route Phil spots two black ibis and we pull into the grounds of a school to get a good look at them through the 'scope. Agra when we arrive is crowded and busy as usual and we weave our way in to get to the Taj Mahal. This time we debuss and board a small electric conveyance that takes us on another kilometre before we walk the last bit and go through the security screening process.

The Taj looks fabulous, resplendently white after its once-in-a-decade clean and the hour-and-a-half we spend here is splendid. Birds seen out the back and overhead include more great white pelicans, and a raft of new waders including river lapwing and more familiar species wintering from northern Eurasia. But by now it was time for lunch and we happily head for a nearby restaurant for a slap-up feed. Afterwards we do a bit of shopping before heading to the last bit of culture in the shape of the huge Agra Fort. Liman does his bit and we all enjoy the views of the Taj and the river from this perspective. Rajveer takes us on a slight detour to look at some roosting mammals (naked-rumped tomb bats no less) at the end of our visit. Afterwards we spend a short

time birding by the river which produced much closer views of wintering waders and we see some splendid Indian bushlarks and our first citrine, yellow and white wagtails. Saying goodbye and thank you to Liman we drive off through the gathering dusk back to the Bagh. A good day.

Day 5 5th December Bharatpur

Back to nature this morning, an early start for a slightly depleted team sees us searching the trees of the small nursery opposite the park gates. Here Rajveer finds us a superb brown hawk owl which stares down at us furiously. Also in the gardens here we find our first Oriental white-eye flock. Our first stop in the park is once again the temple where we hope for a sighting of the fishing cat. No sign though and so we move on in the rickshaws and head towards Khadam Kunj – the Maharajah's former hunting lodge, now in a sorry state of disrepair but rather atmospheric.

The ride takes us around a series of good jheels. One contains a huge mixed flock of perhaps 800 duck, mostly teal and pintail but including our first gadwall, wigeon and garganey. We get better views of glossy ibis (at least 100) and both pheasant-tailed and bronze-winged jacanas are numerous. Phil spots two new dragonflies in the shape of the gorgeous yellow *Ceriagrion coromandelianum* and a rather drab *Acisoma panorpoides*. Butterflies too are much in evidence, one nectaring *Lantana* produces a crop that includes three species of pansy (peacock, lemon and grey) and our first danaid egg-fly. Rajveer spots a fine imperial eagle and we also see the *fulvescens* morph of spotted eagle. As we dodder up the trail we hope to bump into a flock of small birds but have to be content with occasional chiffchaff and Blyth's reed warbler. Heading back for lunch at the temple we stop to admire a few shed snake-skins and wonder if we will ever see a full one!

We meet up with Peter for lunch and enjoy a rest in the shade. Afterwards Rajveer produces an electric trishaw and we head back up to Khadam Kunj and beyond. We walk some distance along the new canal and enjoy a number of new bird species. Most popular are the the strawberry-coloured red avadavats but we also see our first Indian silverbills, common woodshrikes and are treated to a flyby by a fine ringtail pallid harrier. A little further on we find a pair of Indian spotted eagles perched on trees. Moving on again we gain access to the top storey of a tall ranger post that offers excellent views over the surrounding grassland. From here we have a splendid sighting of a jungle cat as it trots down the road towards us. The disturbance caused by us and our entourage eventually puts him off though and he does a U-turn back up the road before finally slinking off into the grassland. On the return journey we stop to take sunset photographs and we are lucky enough to see an Indian cobra crossing the road, albeit briefly.

After dinner Phil heads out alone to check out the fishing cat pool and has a number of unsatisfactory encounters with various cats before the spotlight battery fades.

Day 6 6th December Bharatpur

This morning we gather early again and head into the town to look around some of the canals and temporary wetlands that can offer great birding. The first canal we check produces six fine painted snipe including one close female. We also have an opportunity here to examine wading birds at close range and enjoy close views of marsh and wood sandpiper, Temminck's stint and ruff. Another area that we check can be good for the elusive jack snipe but we draw a blank, however we do add a clamorous reed warbler to the trip list for our trouble.

We head into the park and Rajveer suggests a punt ride. Sounds like a nice idea! The sun shines, we punt along through the dragonflies and admire the birds. We find a few trees with active stork nests, but the vegetation has grown up to such an extent during the drought years that we do not feel like we are floating about on a large wetland and the view is somewhat restricted. You cannot accuse the park authorities of standing idly by anymore though, as the effects of their massive ongoing scrub clearance programme are only too apparent. The entrance road to the park looks like a battlefield, all the non-native mature *Prosopis* scrub has been removed and there is little tall vegetation remaining as a result.

But back to the boat ride. As we cruise along the channel we get excellent close views of our first crested serpent-eagle, which flushes only when we are right beside it. Being in the boat allows us close views of many things, although our efforts to photograph damselflies invariably result in us running them down with the punt. Otherwise our driver demonstrates a perfectly sound grasp of boatmanship. After the promised hour we arrive back at the start and the heat has built up enough for us to begin our search for rock pythons – today's designated task.

Cycling up the road to the blue temple, where we intend to begin our search, we are stopped in our tracks by two good-sized pythons (an eight-footer and a six-footer) by the side of the road. It is not normally this easy. We get out and approach them carefully. These animals get disturbed a lot and it is best to treat them with respect. We get some great images and enjoy watching these gentle giants a great deal. What good fortune. We head on looking for larger pythons near their burrows but cannot find any active burrows and so head for a picnic spread in the grounds of the Salim Ali Visitor Centre. Here we have time to look around the interpretation and admire a pair of Swarovski's cranes (sub-species *liberace*).

After lunch we head for a python that Rajveer has found us. This is very big, although it is under a low bush and we cannot see it all. An examination of its large head reveals that the eyes are opaque and so we deduce that it is about to start shedding its skin. With no roosting large-tailed nightjars close to the main road through the park, we are forced to walk out behind Shanti Kuthir next. This walk takes us past a big flooded jheel that holds large numbers of teal. We finally spot our first common tailorbird, get great views of a shikra and Phil finds our first garden lizard. Tony spots a fine sambar stag feeding out in the wetland. Rajveer shows us the nightjar and we set about finding it and photographing it. Just as we start to get our cameras properly set up to take the shot in the rather low light conditions, we are astonished. A palm squirrel appears from nowhere, hops

onto the nightjar's back, gets the fright of it's life and goes berserk. The nightjar flies off. We can only assume the interaction is accidental – these nightjars are very well camouflaged. The walk back to the main road produces three great large grey mongooses and a solitary spotted owlet. Before we head back to the hotel we try a few areas out of town looking for yellow-wattled lapwing. The first site is quiet, the second though produces two yellow-wattled lapwing and a small number of tawny pipit.

After dinner some of us return to the temple area of the park and try again for fishing cat. On the way we come across a wedding procession. The groom is at the rear of the procession mounted on a white horse in full bridal uniform, in front of him sits a 'mini-groom' (a small, male family member dressed identically). The cortege consists of close family and many are dancing and having fun as they wind up the road. Rajveer tells us that they are all on their way to the bride's family and much eating before the wedding proper.

Our time at the temple is quiet and we so head out for a night walk. This too is quiet but we get good views of jackal and also find spotted owlet, Indian hare and plenty of chital. Saying our goodbyes to the holy man and the temple we head for bed.

Day 7 7th December Bharatpur and Bayana

Another early start sees us tackling the Sapan Mori area of the park. We enjoy a peaceful, relaxed potter along the bund here and have time for a leisurely look at a great many wetland species. New birds include fly-over red-crested pochard, tufted duck and a splendid immature steppe eagle. We also dive into an area of woodland that usually produces some passerines but today it is rather quiet. We do see our first striped tiger here though and a splendid immature pallid harrier flies past. Guy and Penny's plan to walk back early from here is quickly scuppered by some aggressive bulls, which bellow and roar as we quietly leave the area.

We take lunch back at the Bagh and then head out on a two hour drive to the nearest vulture colony at Bayana. En route we once again drink in the sights and sounds of rural India. We stop briefly to look at a large roadside flock of passerines that includes plenty of Spanish sparrows and smaller numbers of black-throated and Baya weavers and the migrant 'Bactrian' race of house sparrow. A little further on we stop to examine a group of waders in a flooded field and are rewarded with two curlew and a single Kentish plover.

Arriving at Bayana we immediately find four long-billed vultures flying along the cliff and these soon perch up for good views. A good start. We spend an enjoyable hour here finding many new birds. Phil gets a glimpse of a small gang of three rain quail, other good birds include our first yellow-eyed babblers, dusky crag martin, blue rock thrush and common babblers. A big hit is our first ruddy mongoose which fossicks about in a dry gully in front of us and occasionally shows very well. Before we leave we check the fort area hoping for white-rumped vulture. The fort towers above us and Rajveer tells us about it – it is the third largest in India apparently and is an

impressive sight. Two kestrels have made it their home but we cannot find any more vultures. The rapidity of the decline in the populations of *Gyps* vultures in the sub-continent still shocks even those who live here.

The drive back takes us through the gathering dusk and we see many more weddings – the trip falls during the start of the short Indian wedding season and huge weddings are a constant backdrop to our journey. After dinner some of us take a quick walk around the garden and find a single skittish common palm civet, which unfortunately quickly retreats to its bolt-hole under the swimming pool patio. Other things of interest include roosting grey hornbill and shikra and good views of skittering frog.

Day 8 8th December Canal area and Ranthambhore (Zone 3)

This morning a small group of us head out pre-breakfast to take a short walk along the nearby canal. We start the walk by the gates of the Maharajah's palace and stop frequently for birds. Waders predominate and we get plenty of opportunity to go through the various species present. Most we have encountered before but we see our first spotted redshanks. Wagtails are numerous too and include migrant yellow, citrine (including some good male *calcarata*) and resident white-browed. At the end of the walk Caroline finds us a powerline festooned with swallows and we are able to watch four species perched up through the telescope. The highlight here is good numbers of our first streak-throated and more wire-tailed swallows. Vote-counting in town means a police check-point to negotiate just before the Bagh but we get back in time for breakfast and checkout.

Saying our goodbyes to the staff at the Bagh we board the bus for the short transfer to the railway station at Bharatpur Junction. Here we spend a relaxing hour having our shoes polished, reading the 'Times' and re-distributing unwanted elements of our box lunches to ragged little urchins. The train arrives a little late and we all climb aboard. We spend the journey reading the papers and eating our lunches, as usual the windows are so dirty we can see little of what is going on outside! Two and a half hours flash by and we soon find ourselves in Sawai Madhopur. Here we are met by an open-topped bus and taken to the hotel. The location as always is greatly admired as we approach and soon the bus is labouring in low gear up the final ascent to our hilltop retreat. We do not have long to look about though, as soon as we have located our rooms and sorted ourselves out we are off into the park with Pankaj, our chief guide for our stay at Ranthambore.

We stick together in one vehicle hoping to get lucky with tiger and take the pressure off. It was not to be but we get a great introduction to this beautiful area and see some great birds. Pankaj tells us a little about the park and explains that often we will have to sit quietly whilst he listens for, and interprets, alarm calls from prey species so that he can get us on to a tiger. We do have one alarm, peacocks rocket out of some tall grass and a spotted deer gives an anxiety call. We wait patiently but nothing pops out. The birds are great and we see a huge flock of yellow-footed green pigeons, our first large cuckoo-shrikes, white-browed fantails and white-bellied drongos. The deep afternoon call of the dusky eagle owl floats over the lake. Despite all this the real star as usual is

the park itself, we approach along the road and get stunning views of the hilltop fort, before winding under the walls and passing a huge banyan at the gate. Zone 3 is dominated by a huge lake – an osprey sits overlooking the water and the shoreline is littered with the occasional mugger crocodile and a variety of wetland birds familiar to us from Bharatpur.

The afternoon passes quickly and before we know it, it is time to go. On the way home we stop briefly at a pool. Here we get close views of a small number of painted sandgrouse and are treated to a brief flyby by a savannah nightjar. A good day.

Day 9 9th December Ranthambhore (Zones 1, 3 &4)

This morning we wrap up warm and head into the park, this time we are split into two teams in two jeeps. Luckily for us it is not too cold but a thin mist hangs in the air. We both get the same zone (1) so are never far from each other during the morning. We work the tracks hard looking for tiger but despite finding pugmarks left during the night we cannot find one. Occasionally Ranthambhore has quiet days and it makes us feel better to know that no-one has seen tiger during the morning. The drive is not without excitement though, those with Phil start with an excellent brown fish-owl. Other good birds during the morning include our first alexandrine parakeets and grey-headed canary flycatchers. We are single-minded and focussed on larger prey though and the morning is mostly spent scanning for tiger. On our way back to the hotel we stop at a great little shop and many of us order silk shirts and buy fabrics and Christmas presents.

After lunch it is back into two jeeps and away into the park. Phil's team have a great time on Zone 4 with Dinesh. On the way in we spot a Bonelli's eagle overhead. The lake on route four never disappoints and we get some great wildfowl and waders including our first black-tailed godwit. But as usual most of our time is spent patrolling the many tracks for tiger. Eventually we hear from some rangers that a female is showing back by the lake. We head off and soon join a group of jeeps waiting patiently for the animal to reappear. We are more proactive and circle the likely area that the tiger may be concealed in. Dinesh gets it spot on and soon Phil spots the big cat emerging from the lakeside grass. The driver does his best to manoeuvre us for a good, close view and we are soon watching a radio-collared female walk past us. She completely ignores us and continues on her way.

When we get back we find that the other group have had bad luck with the tigers on route 3. The good news is that Guy has seen a leopard cub crossing the road. So we cannot fully relax yet and pin our hopes on a happy ending in the morning. After dinner some of us head out for a nightwalk in the hotel grounds. We find nilgai and Indian gazelle but no small mammals. We do find a long grass stalk being noisily chewed from underground by a rodent, presumably a bandicoot-rat. Things do get exciting though when we hear alarm calls and glimpse a big set of orange eyes in the distance. A big cat? We never find out and drift back to the hotel keeping a more than usually watchful eye out.

Day 10 10th December Ranthambhore (Zone 4) and Soorwal Lake

Back again into the park this morning, we all go in together in one canter (open-topped minibus) and are lucky to get Zone 4 allotted to us (where some of us had seen tiger yesterday). We quickly go to the same area and after a brief bit of tracking unfortunately we conclude that the tigress has walked off into Zone 3! This dictates a long drive into the depths of the park to search for another animal. We find tracks of this tigress too and hear alarm calls but we just cannot get into where it is. We enjoy a brief bit of birding on the lake but we have been searching so hard for tiger that our time has slipped away. On the way out Phil spots a fantastic pair of painted spurfowl, that show very well before slipping back into the jungle.

After lunch we take a break from the tiger hunt and go looking for blackbuck on the other side of Sawai Madhopur. We search an area of agricultural land that is dominated by tall crops of mustard. After just ten minutes Phil spots three females on the edge of a field, we watch them for a while before continuing on our journey. Dry areas en route hold good numbers of yellow-wattled lapwings and desert and isabelline wheatears. Rajveer spots the first of about 15 chestnut-bellied sandgrouse and we get good views through the 'scope. Roadside wires have abundant little green bee-eaters and we see our first southern grey shrikes. Winding and bumping along the dirt road, our route takes us through really rural Rajasthan. Many of the mud-brick houses are decorated with attractive animal motifs and we are greeted with smiles all round by masses of children when we go through the small villages dotted along our route. Eventually we reach Soorwal Lake, the monsoon rains have been good and this artificial waterbody is massive. We see a lot of duck, geese and pelicans out on the water. The new birds we see are familiar ones including avocet and pochard. Resting on the mud we see our first gull-billed terns, and nearby Penny finds two nice great thick-knees.

We drive out along the refurbished dam wall and enjoy views of several chequered keelbacks (a new snake) swimming in the water. We search hard for new birds but have to wait till we are on our way home when we find a roost of at least ten Eurasian thick-knees. A pleasant end to the day.

Day 11 11th December Ranthambhore (Zones 5) and fort

Another day, another attempt to see tiger. It really is unfortunate when half the group have seen tiger and the other half have not. No-one can relax and we just have to keep at it till we score. This morning was no exception, we drew Zone 5 in the lottery which made a change. We worked hard, tracking a pair of big cubs, but we could not locate them. They had been very active in the night though and there were few other animals around. Fortune was clearly not favouring us. We do see one new bird though – a brown crane, caught feeding in the small pools below one of the dams. After the drive some elect to visit the fort and temple to Ganesh on the plateau above the park with Rajveer and Pankaj.

We have jeeps in the afternoon and both get the same zone again (Zone 5). We both work hard and cover all the available ground in the zone but in many ways this is the least hopeful of our many sessions. We see no pugmarks and hear no alarm calls. We do see a few nice birds including our first long-billed vulture and a brace of black stork. Other interesting things include another, rather

lethargic, garden lizard and a pale grass-like mantid. The afternoon passes too quickly and soon we are bumping out of the park.

After dinner we head out in a canter for a drive around spotlighting. The first thing spotted is an excellent Indian hedgehog, which gets all shy when we approach it on foot. A couple of Eurasian thick-knees are spotted. This is followed up incredibly by a new nightjar for everyone – a lovely pale grey, Sykes's nightjar, which we approach to a very close range for photographs. A phenomenally good bird for this part of India. Another flight view of a savannah nightjar is also welcome. Amongst the abundant Indian hares and nilgai we also spot a curious Indian fox, which comes in fast when squeaked and allows good views. And so to bed.

Day 12 12th December Ranthambhore (Zones 3 & 4) and Amlidhe

Well with no change in our tiger status, we all head into the park again this morning. We give the tiger-free team, first dibs on picking a jeep and they elect to try in Zone 4. The rest of us head into Zone 3 and have a relaxed session in this most beautiful of areas within the park. The lakes and fort look fantastic in the early morning light. We enjoy taking time to look at the various birds we find along the way. Our guides show us a number of collared scops-owls and spotted owlets. We find two close great thick-knees around the lake. Rufous treebies feed from our hands during a snack break. It really is idyllic.

Our only hint of a tiger though during the morning is early on when we hear some single alarm calls followed by a frenzied bout of calling – a kill or unsuccessful charge? Unfortunately we cannot get into the area and though we wait for a tiger along a potential route away from the area we see no sign of it. Incredibly as we leave the park we discover that no-one, anywhere in the park has seen a tiger. Extraordinary. We wait a while for the others to come back, hoping that they have scored but of course they have not. They seem in good spirits though – stiff upper lip and all that. We swing the emergency arrangements into place to allow them another go whilst the rest of us go to Amlidhe in the afternoon.

The trip to Amlidhe is punctuated by stops for various birds, the most outstanding being a large flock of short-toed larks. En route we visit a small pool that is sometimes visited by tiger. Here by an illegal quarry, we find our first variable wheatear and rufous-fronted prinia. Driving on we eventually get to the Banas River. The water level is high and we are immediately going through the good numbers of birds out on the resulting wetland. There are plenty of waders including our second white-tailed plover, plenty of river lapwing and even some bronze-winged jacana, In amongst the purple gallinules and moorhens we find two brown crake. The floodplain area is extensively cultivated, the sand supporting tomatoes, melons and such-like. We head for the deep water channel and here we see some great birds too. At least three black-bellied terns are foraging over the wetland area on the otherside of the river and occasionally fly past at close range. We finally get mallard on the trip list when a pair are flushed off the marsh and fly upriver. Dusk approaches so we park up to wait for dark. The tiger team ring us to tell us that they have finally scored with two tigers after a combined total of 24 hours of looking. What a relief and the details of the sighting and the photos leave us green with envy. Invariably on this trip if you struggle to see tiger you are eventually rewarded with an amazing sighting, but this one just sounded amazing, two 15 month-old cubs playing and swimming in front of the jeep for 10-15 minutes.

As the sun goes down, a full moon rises, and we set off back through the cold night air. Almost immediately Dinesh spots a superb rock eagle-owl, which sits on the track staring at us for some time. A great bird. The drive back is quiet, we squeak in a superb Bengal fox, which shows really well. We also see a large number of jackals and hares but otherwise it is quiet, although we do see another female blackbuck on the edge of a mustard field. Halfway back we get excellent views of a perched savannah nightjar by the road and then we call it a night and head for the warmth of the hotel and dinner. A good session but lacking the high excitement of last year's effort.

Day 13 13th December transfer to Jaipur and a tour of the town

Today we have a leisurely start and leave the hotel at 8 o'clock for the journey to Jaipur. We stop a lot in the early part of the trip to look at roadside birds. Large flocks of rosy starlings are evident and we stop to admire them and also get a fabulous close view of a feeding Alexandrine parakeet. We stop frequently after this hoping for Indian courser but eventually admit defeat. India surrounds us and we bump slowly through a variety of small towns with a distinctly mediaeval atmosphere. We take our lunch boxes to a roadside restaurant and take a quick meal before heading on our way. Eventually at 1330 we pull into the security-conscious Hilton and get our rooms. Peter and Caroline elect to go on a cultural tour of the palace and observatory, whilst the rest of the team enjoy the amenities of the hotel. The cultural tour takes in the ancient observatory and the palace and a few handicraft places.

Day 14 14th December Jaipur and transfer to Delhi

Most spend the morning on another cultural tour, this time taking in the Ambar fort, with its elephant ride and photographic opportunities. We all meet up for a big Indian lunch back at the hotel and then take to the road for 'the big journey'. The five and a half hour journey takes us out of the dry scrubby hills around Jaipur, into more fertile areas and about fifty miles from Delhi we hit the first smog. The approach to Delhi is not as tedious as in previous years as the new expressway is open. Glorious.

We have dinner in Delhi, but most of us are still full from lunch, something the restaurant staff struggle to believe. From the restaurant we travel another hour, right across New Delhi and on to Old Delhi railway station. Rajveer guides us through the chaos and we are soon installed on the platform waiting for the arrival of our train on a crowded platform 3. The tracks are busy with scurrying black rats, making a living from the discarded waste of the hordes of travellers. Boarding the train we find that our ticket allocation leaves quite a lot to be desired, and so Rajveer springs into action to try and secure the required number of lower berth bunks. Eventually at midnight we are all ensconced in suitable bunks and settle down to some sort of sleep.

Day 15 15th December Nainital area

We wake to find ourselves close to Kathgodam and get ready for the day ahead. We leave the train at dawn and quickly find that Vipin has arrived as planned to pick us up. We drive up the hill to

Naini Tal, without stopping but taking time to enjoy the many road safety platitudes painted on the signs littering the climb ("Sharp bend, carefully wend"). A few blue whistling thrushes perch by the road and a red-billed blue magpie swoops low in front of the van. We beat the vehicle curfew and Vipin drives us all the way up to the hotel. The hotel is undergoing extensive renovation, but the rooms are all done up very nicely. We quickly settle in and head for a most welcome breakfast.

The day is sunny and fine so our first stop is Snow View. From here we gaze out at a superb panorama that takes in part of the Himalayan range 50 miles away. From here we can see Nanda Devi, Trisul and even peaks in Nepal to the east. After a good look and plenty of photos we move on. We bird the Pangot Road. The morning is reasonably successful. Rajveer spots a hill partridge close to the road and we get out to try and see it. Unfortunately it flushes but we get reasonable flight views. Walking the road we bump into a huge canopy flock, it will not come down to our level so we have to work hard to get to grips with its contents. We track down black-throated, yellow-browed and spot-winged tits, grey-hooded warbler and white-tailed nuthatch. A large flock of slaty-headed parakeets keeps us amused. A little further on Phil spots a superb spotted fork-tail and we watch it for some time as it feeds along a small stream. Our last flock before lunch contains six beautiful black-faced warblers and our first black-lored yellow tit.

We take lunch at Jungle Lore. The garden is quiet this year but we enjoy some tasty pakoras and our first Himalayan bulbuls. Indian tortoiseshells are abundant on the flowers here. Peter sees our first Himalayan greenfinch. The afternoon is staggeringly quiet. We cannot believe it, we do see a number of streaked laughingthrushes but that is the only bird of any note. We try the Snow View ridge on the way back but it too is devoid of birds. As we head into town Phil spots a Kalij pheasant in the outskirts but it gets away when we reverse back for it. The end of a tiring day.

Day 16 16th December Sat Tal

A very birdy day today as we head downhill to Sat Tal. We stop first at a ruined church where we go through our first bird flock of the day and get very good views of rufous sibia. Stopping next at Mehraagaon we wander through the village, checking gullies, fields and gardens. We find a superb male Mrs Gould's sunbird nectaring in a garden. Further on we hear a calling grey-sided bush-warbler and get fleeting glimpses as it picks its way through the roadside *Lantana*. Roadside scrub and pines produces a fine pair of very showy long-tailed minivets, more subtle but no-less welcome is a couple of female scarlet rosefinch. Down on the abandoned fields by the factory we chase after accentors and get great views of both black-throated and rufous-breasted. Nearby small groups of russet sparrows entertain and we get fleeting, shadowy glimpses of rusty-cheeked scimitar-babblers. A female slaty-blue flycatcher gives us the run-around and a brief male blue-fronted redstart is equally unobliging. Hard work this.

We drove down to Sat Tal for a 'packed' lunch at one of the lakeside restaurants. We stopped beforehand to check out a forest clearing packed with birds, most were white-throated laughingthrushes, but in amongst them we had our first blue-winged minlas and yellow-bellied fantail. Woodpeckers were present too and we added grey-headed, and lesser and great

yellownape in quick succession. Nearby Rajveer spots three red-billed blue magpies that put on a great show and are much admired. Special birds. A single goosander male floated about on the lake when we finally got there. Here we served ourselves from large pots of curry provided by the hotel and helped down with freshly-cooked chappattis. Whilst here our first bar-tailed treecreeper searched for food in nearby trees.

Lunch over, we went for a walk down the 'temple trail'. At the beginning we find a splendid jungle owlet which sits out in the open before being hounded away by a stropy red-billed blue magpie. Here we things got frustrating with more skulkers. First up was another grey-sided bush-warbler and then Phil finds a dark morph scaly-bellied wren-babbler, that just will not behave. More obliging is a superb male orange-flanked bush-robin that sits out in the open scolding us. We also find a shikra trying to subdue a captured blue whistling-thrush – it fails, and the thrush flies off shrieking. Walking back we find a large flock of birds but it does not yield up any new birds, nearby though we hear the call of the black-headed jay and find him perched on a tree.

Driving back we stop off again at Mehragaon and find a few new birds including grey treepie, black-chinned babbler and white-capped bunting. Tired, we head back to the hotel.

Day 17 17th December Bajun Valley, Ramnagar and Quality Inn

This morning the pre-breakfast option of a trip up to Snow View is taken up by a few of us and we head out at dawn. Snow View is quiet on the way out (and lacks a Snow View!) but heats up on the way back. We get great views of tame white-throated laughingthrushes and find a huge flock of obliging black-headed jays. As always nice to be out at this time of day but we reckoned we deserved a new bird for our troubles. After breakfast we say goodbye to the Vikram and its friendly staff.

The drive downhill to the Quality Inn is punctuated by frequent stops and takes all day. Our first stop is the 'low fields' area of Naini Tal. Here we walk a fair way down the road before we are finally rewarded with a small flock of close whiskered yuhinas. We also check the roadside waterfall but it is largely bird-free, although a large green mantid is much admired. Our main exercise of the day is a circular walk around the pleasant Bajun Valley. We install Guy in a sunny spot, with coffee and a chair and head off.

The walk takes us through forest edge habitat and open agricultural fields in the valley bottom. This little valley is always quiet and serene and looks a picture. The scenery is becoming somewhat marred however by the presence of several large poly-tunnels (growing carnations!). The birds are good as usual and we almost immediately find a great flock of small birds that produces great views of many of the birds we have become familiar with over the last two days but also some new species. A hyperactive speckled piculet is most welcome and Penny finds a glorious male pink-browed rosefinch. Nearby we find our first brown-fronted woodpecker and bronzed drongos hawk from treetops.

The remainder of the walk is rather quiet although we all enjoy excellent views of a small gang of irrepressible white-crested laughingthrushes. The sunny side of the valley on the way back is alive with invertebrates and the dragonflies and butterflies are entertaining. We also come across a

small group of yellow-breasted greenfinch. Hauling ourselves back up the hill we rendezvous with Guy and sit down for a welcome packed lunch.

Our next stop is the barrage at Ramnagar where we see huge numbers of ruddy shelduck, our first crested tree-swifts and the hugely impressive crested kingfisher, alongside its smaller cousin the pied. We fail to see wallcreeper here but all is not lost as Rajveer has another site on the other side of town. We head straight there and scan the riverside cliffs for any sign. No sooner has Phil located one when it disappears off. We have to make do with good views of blue rock thrush and crested serpent eagle.

The Quality Inn is most welcome after a long day and we settle in quickly and have dinner. Afterwards Phil and Rajveer go for a night drive, it is rather quiet, although a fishing tawny fish-owl sitting on a rock in the river is good value. Luckily those that regretted missing this bird did not have to wait long before they got a chance at another.

Day 18 18th December Quality Inn area and drive into Dhikala

An early start sees most of us down at the river for first light. Here Rajveer produces a splendid little forktail from a side channel. We have to wait a little longer for the brown dipper but eventually one flies into the nest. Back at the hotel we find a flowering tree in the garden containing several crimson sunbirds. After breakfast we take to the the jeeps and begin our journey into the park. We do not get far before we stop for the first in a succession of great birds. A huge tawny fish-owl staring down at us through hooded lids. A little further on we are shown a splendid Pallas' fish-eagle sitting in a tree. Before entering the park we cannot resist another crack at the ibisbill but have to admit defeat. Phil finds a wallcreeper during the search and in the air we find our first black vulture together with a red-headed vulture and a steppe eagle. But it is time to enter the park.

The shop at the Dhangiri Gate of the park is our last real chance for retail activity and many of us purchase Jim Corbett books to read on the way home. The drive is a feast of birds and butterflies. At one stop we all enjoy 15 minutes of photographing a number of butterflies which includes our first common jezebel, the stunning blue-spotted crow, glassy tiger, rustic and vagrant. Birds seen include the spectacular canopy-feeding scarlet minivet and the drabber but no less exciting long-billed thrush, a species that habitually grubs around in wet seeps and boggy parts of the forest floor. A white-tailed rubythroat close to one of the jeeps whilst we wait for alarm calls is most welcome. We stop to enjoy several scenic outlooks en route to Dhikala. Many of these are high above the Ramganga River. From one we spot our first gharials, huge fish-eating crocodiles. Huge fish cruise nearby. Penny spots a fine male rufous-bellied niltava.

At the next stop, we have a quick scan and then one jeep leaves, the other jeep is about to leave when the cry of 'tiger' comes from behind them. They quickly send their driver to search for the first jeep and then settle down to watch the big male tiger lounging in the river and then swimming to the other bank. The other jeep arrives back just in time for some of us to see the tiger stroll out of view. We do not give up though and half an hour later we are watching the same male as he crosses the road in front of us. Fantastic. The rest of the journey passes in a blur, though we

see another tawny-fish owl roosting in a tree and a feeding group of pin-tailed green pigeons in a fruiting tree.

Arriving at Dhikala we look out over the reservoir whilst Rajveer sorts out our rooms. The water-level is high this year and as we take in the spectacle a fine immature Pallas' fish-eagle sails past. A short nightwalk around the compound after dinner produces just two jackals and then we head to bed.

Day 19 19th December jeep and elephant safaris (Dhikala)

A pre-breakfast trip takes the form of either an elephant ride or a jeep ride. The elephant-borne contingent report back favourably but fail to find a tiger. The jeep-borne birders also fail to scare up a tiger but see some good birds including stork-billed kingfisher, jungle owlet and two roosting brown fish-owls.

The morning session sees us out in the grassland areas near Dhikala and working the forest edge. As we leave Dhikala we grind to a halt – two splendid blue-bearded bee-eaters pose for us in a nearby dead tree before drifting off. The grassland is notable for the huge flock of Himalayan greenfinches (at least 120) but best of all are the chats. We get brief views of a female white-tailed stonechat and good views of a splendid male white-throated bush-chat. Raptors feature too with perched osprey and black-winged kite, as well as hunting hen harrier and our first collared falconet. The grassland is full of calling bright-headed cisticolas and we stop to pish some into view. A great morning session.

The afternoon jeep session starts with great views of a gang of Kalij pheasants and then a huge feeding flock of passerines. The flock contains many of the species that many of us have been struggling to catch up with and so is most welcome. Even though we are in jeeps the flock is amenable and we all get great views of two species of nuthatch, grey-capped pygmy woodpecker and many others. Nearby we get a whiff of a tiger and spend the rest of the afternoon, patiently trying to work out a way of seeing it. It stays in deep cover though and we draw a blank.

Day 20 20th December transfer to Delhi including the Ganges

The big 'day' of travel dawns and some of us go out for a last dawn jeep ride in the grassland and along the edge of the forest. We see another cracking male white-throated bushchat and a couple of hen harriers, although we fail to find the roost as hoped. Despite finding fresh tiger tracks we head to breakfast empty-handed.

After breakfast we begin our drive to Delhi. The park section takes time as we stop frequently for new and exciting things that include our only Oriental pied hornbills of the trip and a huge flock of about 60 pin-tailed green pigeons. Magnificent.

Meeting up with the bus and Vipin at the gate we resign ourselves to the long haul to Delhi. We stop occasionally en route but the rapid growth of the highway system has removed many of our

former lunch and rest stops and left us with some rather less salubrious options. Luckily Rajveer has packed a lunch and we eat this in a restaurant that is apparently still under construction. At the Ganges we realise that we have run out of time and we have to miss the chance of a quick walk here. By the time we hit Delhi the smog is so bad that we can barely see anything and miss the spectacle of the huge rubbish dump at Noida too!

At Delhi we are saying goodbye to Peter and Caroline so we have a hearty last supper and bid them goodnight. The rest of us bide our time before heading for the airport and check-in. This process has been drastically stream-lined recently and seems almost normal. We quickly negotiate all the hurdles and settle in to departures to wait for our flight to be called.

Day 21 21st December flight home

A 0330 departure from Delhi is always painful, but sleeping on the flight is not usually a problem. We arrive about an hour late and say our goodbyes at the baggage carousel before heading off in different directions.

Systematic List Number 1 Mammals

Itinerary

- 2/12 Delhi to Bharatpur
- 3/12 Bharatpur
- 4/12 Agra and Fatepur Sikri
- 5/12 Bharatpur
- 6/12 Bharatpur
- 7/12 Bharatpur and Bayana
- 8/12 Bharatpur (canal area) and transfer to Ranthambhore
- 9/12 Ranthambhore and fort
- 10/12 Soorwal Lake, blackbuck area and Ranthambhore
- 11/12 Ranthambhore
- 12/12 Amlidhe and Ranthambhore
- 13/12 Ranthambhore and transfer to Jaipur
- 14/12 Jaipur and transfer to Delhi (and ultimately Kathgodam)
- 15/12 Kathgodam to Nainital; Snow View area and Pangot
- 16/12 Sat Tal
- 17/12 Nainital to Quality Inn via Bajun Valley and Ramnagar Barrage, Koshi River
- 18/12 Quality Inn area and transfer to Corbett
- 19/12 Dhikala area (Corbett)
- 20/12 Corbett to Delhi.

Rhesus macaque	<i>Macaca mulatta</i>	Widespread and common.
Northern plains grey langur	<i>Semnopithecus entellus</i>	The langur at Bayana and Ranthambhore was this recently split species.
Terai grey langur	<i>Semnopithecus hector</i>	The langur on the extension is now considered to be this species.
Tiger	<i>Panthera tigris</i>	A radio-collared adult female in Zone 4 at Ranthambhore for one team. Two playful full-grown cubs at length on the last drive at Ranthambhore for the other team. A very low number of individuals at Ranthambhore this year, but one excellent encounter. Few of us will forget our encounter with a large male on the drive into Dhikala (Corbett).
Leopard	<i>Panthera pardus</i>	Guy and the local guides saw a small leopard cub crossing the road at Ranthambhore in zone 3. The cream always rises to the top!
Jungle cat	<i>Felis chaus</i>	One seen well by all during the day at Bharatpur.
Common palm civet	<i>Paradoxurus hermaphroditus</i>	Single seen briefly at the Bagh one night.
Common grey mongoose	<i>Herpestes edwardsii</i>	Several around Bharatpur, including in the Bagh garden.

Ruddy mongoose	<i>Herpestes smithi</i>	One seen well at Bayana. Small numbers at Ranthambhore.
Golden jackal	<i>Canis aureus</i>	Widespread and frequently seen.
Indian fox	<i>Vulpes bengalensis</i>	Single on the night drive near Ranthambhore and another at Amlidhe at night.
Indian hedgehog	<i>Paraechinus micropus</i>	Single on short night drive at Ranthambhore. Difficult to find and mammal of the trip for one observer!
Indian flying fox	<i>Pteropus giganteus</i>	Single seen at dusk at Ranthambhore.
Short-nosed fruit bat	<i>Cyanopterus sphinx</i>	Small numbers around the Bagh (Bharatpur) at night.
Naked-rumped tomb bat	<i>Taphozus nudiventris</i>	Small numbers at one roost in the Agra Fort, were low enough for good photos.
Indian pygmy bat	<i>Pipistrellus tenuis</i>	Small numbers at Bharatpur.
Five-striped palm squirrel	<i>Funambulus pennanti</i>	Widespread and often very common during the Rajasthan leg.
House rat	<i>Rattus rattus</i>	Abundant amongst the tracks at Old Delhi Station. One at Dhikala was probably this species.
Indian porcupine	<i>Hystrix indica</i>	Quills at Bharatpur.
Rufous-tailed hare	<i>Lepus nigricollis</i>	Small numbers noted at night in the Bharatpur and Ranthambhore/Amlidhe area. One at Sat Tal during the day.
Indian gazelle	<i>Gazella gazella</i>	Ranthambhore – only in the grounds of the Jhoomer Baori this year. Up to 8 at night there.
Blackbuck	<i>Antilope cervicapra</i>	Three females near Soorwal, Ranthambhore area. Another spot-lighted on the way back from Amlidhe.
Nilgai	<i>Boselaphus tragocamelus</i>	Widespread in lowlands, commonest at Bharatpur and Ranthambhore.
Sambar	<i>Cervus unicolor</i>	Bharatpur, Ranthambhore and Corbett area.
Chital	<i>Axis axis</i>	Bharatpur, Ranthambhore and Corbett area.
Muntjac	<i>Muntiacus muntjak</i>	Quality Inn and Corbett.
Wild boar	<i>Sus scrofa</i>	Bharatpur, Ranthambhore and Corbett.

Systematic List Number 2 Birds

The systematic order is taken from the 'Birds of the Indian Subcontinent' (1998) by Grimmett, Inskipp and Inskipp.

Where a species was seen by only one observer the observation is annotated with their initials. 'Himalayan foothills' refers to all areas around Nainital and also Quality Inn and Corbett whereas 'lowlands' refers to Ranthambhore and Bharatpur as does 'Rajasthan'.

Black francolin	<i>Francolinus francolinus</i>	Singles at Bharatpur and Corbett.
Grey francolin	<i>Francolinus pondicerianus</i>	Common in Rajasthan.
Rain quail	<i>Coturnix coromandelicus</i>	Three at Bayana.
Hill partridge	<i>Arborophila torqueola</i>	Single seen at close range in flight at Nainital. Many others heard.
Painted spurfowl	<i>Galloperdix lunulata</i>	Scarce at Ranthambhore this year, but seen well by all on a number of occasions.
Red junglefowl	<i>Gallus gallus</i>	Just one flock seen at Dhikala (Corbett). Many others heard.
Kalij pheasant	<i>Lophora leucomelanos</i>	Pair at Nainital. Several at Bajun Valley and a great flock of five at Dhikala (Corbett).
Indian peafowl	<i>Pavo cristatus</i>	Noted at every site and in the wider countryside (except days up at Nainital).
Lesser whistling-duck	<i>Dendrocygna javanica</i>	Recorded at Bharatpur only, where small numbers present.
Greylag goose	<i>Anser anser</i>	Bharatpur and Ranthambhore (1).
Bar-headed goose	<i>Anser indicus</i>	Bharatpur and Soorwal.
Ruddy shelduck	<i>Tadorna ferruginea</i>	Widespread. Large flock of 100+ at Ramnagar Barrage.
Comb duck	<i>Sarkidiornis melanotos</i>	Good numbers at Bharatpur and Lake Soorwal.
Cotton pygmy-geese	<i>Nettapus coromandelianus</i>	Small numbers at Bharatpur.
Gadwall	<i>Anas strepera</i>	Small numbers at Bharatpur and Soorwal.
Eurasian wigeon	<i>Anas penelope</i>	Small numbers at Bharatpur, Ranthambhore and Soorwal.
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	Pair at Amlidhe.
Spot-billed duck	<i>Anas poecilorhyncha</i>	Widespread in lowlands.
Northern shoveler	<i>Anas clypeata</i>	Widespread in lowlands.
Northern pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>	Bharatpur, Soorwal and Ranthambhore.
Common teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>	Widespread in lowlands.
Garganey	<i>Anas querquedula</i>	Small numbers at Bharatpur and Soorwal.
Red-crested pochard	<i>Rhodonessa rufina</i>	Single males at Bharatpur and Soorwal. Strangely, a single female at Sat Tal.
Common pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>	Recorded at Soorwal only (small numbers).
Tufted duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>	Single small flock at Bharatpur on last day. Small numbers at Soorwal.
Ferruginous duck	<i>Aythya nyroca</i>	Just three at Bharatpur this year.
Common merganser	<i>Mergus merganser</i>	Single male at Sat Tal. Five watched feeding on the Ramganga River (Corbett).

Speckled piculet	<i>Picumnus innominatus</i>	Single agitated bird in feeding flock in Bajun Valley.
Grey-capped pygmy-woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos canicapillus</i>	Several in Corbett area.
Brown-fronted woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos auriceps</i>	Single male in Bajun Valley.
Fulvous-breasted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos macei</i>	Small numbers at Corbett.
Yellow-crowned woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos mahrattensis</i>	Three seen well at Bharatpur.
Grey-headed woodpecker	<i>Picus canus</i>	Single at Sat Tal. Several at Corbett.
Greater yellownape	<i>Picus flavinucha</i>	Single in mixed-species flock at Sat Tal. Several in the Quality Inn/Corbett area.
Lesser yellownape	<i>Picus chlorolophus</i>	Single in mixed-species flock at Sat Tal. A few in woodpecker flocks at Corbett.
Black-rumped flameback	<i>Dinopium benghalense</i>	Small numbers at Bharatpur and Ranthambhore.
Greater flameback [Great barbet]	<i>Chrysocolaptes lucidus</i>	Several birds at Corbett.
Brown-headed barbet	<i>Megalaima virens</i>	Heard in the Bajun Valley.
Lineated barbet	<i>Megalaima zeylanica</i>	Recorded in small numbers at Bharatpur and Agra.
Coppersmith barbet	<i>Megalaima haemacephala</i>	Common in Corbett.
Indian grey hornbill	<i>Megalaima lineata</i>	Seen very well at Bharatpur one morning.
Oriental pied hornbill	<i>Oxyceros birostris</i>	Recorded on four dates in Rajasthan.
Common hoopoe	<i>Anthracoceros albirostris</i>	Two on the way out of Corbett on the last day.
	<i>Upupa epops</i>	Commonly encountered in Rajasthan, less so elsewhere.
Indian roller	<i>Coracias benghalensis</i>	Small numbers throughout Rajasthan.
Common kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>	Widespread and not uncommon.
Stork-billed kingfisher	<i>Pelargopsis capensis</i>	Single seen well at Corbett.
White-throated kingfisher	<i>Halcyon smyrnensis</i>	Recorded on nearly every day.
Crested kingfisher	<i>Megaceryle lugubris</i>	Noted along the Koshi and at Quality Inn and Corbett.
Pied kingfisher	<i>Ceryle rudis</i>	Scarce in Rajasthan, but common in the north.
Blue-bearded bee-eater	<i>Nyctyornis athertoni</i>	Two near the compound at Dhikala. Another on a game drive later on in the day.
Green bee-eater	<i>Merops orientalis</i>	Frequently recorded in Rajasthan, mostly around Ranthambhore.
Asian koel	<i>Eudynamis scolopacea</i>	Male in garden on one day at the Bagh (Bharatpur). Another at Ranthambhore.
Common hawk-cuckoo	<i>Cuculus varius</i>	Three birds at Bharatpur.
Greater coucal	<i>Centropus sinensis</i>	Widespread and common.
Alexandrine parakeet	<i>Psittacula eupatria</i>	Small numbers daily at Ranthambhore. Single seen well en route to Jaipur.
Rose-ringed parakeet	<i>Psittacula krameri</i>	Recorded daily in Rajasthan.
Slaty-headed parakeet	<i>Psittacula himalayana</i>	Recorded at Sat Tal, Nainital and Corbett.
Plum-headed parakeet	<i>Psittacula cyanocephala</i>	Recorded at Bayana and Ranthambhore.
Red-breasted parakeet	<i>Psittacula alexandri</i>	Several fly-overs at the Quality Inn.
House swift	<i>Apus affinis</i>	Widespread in Rajasthan, recorded on five dates.
Crested treeswift	<i>Hemiprocne coronata</i>	Noted at Ramnagar Barrage and at Corbett.
Indian scops-owl	<i>Otus bakkomoena</i>	Several roosting birds observed at Bharatpur and Ranthambhore.

Rock eagle-owl	<i>Bubo bengalensis</i>	Single at night at Amlidhe. A stunning bird.
Dusky eagle owl	<i>Bubo coromandus</i>	Single incubating individual at Bharatpur, others heard. Also heard at Ranthambhore.
Tawny fish-owl	<i>Ketupa flavipes</i>	1 seen at night near the Quality Inn. Others seen during the day near Quality Inn and in Corbett.
Brown fish-owl	<i>Ketupa zeylonensis</i>	Three seen at Ranthambhore. Two roosting birds at Corbett.
Asian barred owl	<i>Glaucidium cuculoides</i>	Single seen well at Sat Tal.
Jungle owl	<i>Glaucidium radiatum</i>	Single seen well at Corbett.
Spotted owl	<i>Athene brama</i>	Widespread in lowlands.
Brown hawk-owl	<i>Ninox scutulata</i>	Single roosting individual at Bharatpur.
Large-tailed nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus macrurus</i>	Single roosting bird at Bharatpur, seen very well before a palm squirrel bounced on it.
Sykes's nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus mahrattensis</i>	Single on the short night drive at Ranthambhore, easily the surprise bird of the trip.
Indian jungle nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus indicus</i>	One seen well at Bharatpur during the day, roosting in a tree. The small nightjars seen at night in the grounds of the Jhoomer Baori (Ranthambhore) were this species. A recent split from grey nightjar (now <i>Caprimulgus jotaka</i>).
Savannah nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus affinis</i>	Single bird at sandgrouse pool at Ranthambhore and singles on both nightdrives there.
Rock pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>	Ubiquitous. Impressive numbers of pure intermedia birds in the wider countryside.
Laughing dove	<i>Streptopelia senegalensis</i>	Widespread.
Spotted dove	<i>Streptopelia chinensis</i>	Small numbers at Ranthambhore and Corbett.
Red collared dove	<i>Streptopelia tranquebarica</i>	Lake Soorwal, Amlidhe and en route to Jaipur – small numbers.
Eurasian collared dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	Common in Rajasthan.
Emerald dove	<i>Chalcophaps indica</i>	Two birds in Corbett on the last day.
Pin-tailed green pigeon	<i>Treron apicauda</i>	Five birds in a fruiting tree on our way into Corbett. A single the next day and a huge flock of 50-60 birds on the last day. A good year for this erratic species.
Yellow-footed green-pigeon	<i>Treron phoenicoptera</i>	Small numbers at Ranthambhore on three days.
Sarus crane	<i>Grus antigone</i>	Recorded on the first day in small numbers as we drove to Bharatpur. Several at Bharatpur too.
Brown crane	<i>Amaurornis akool</i>	Several at Ranthambhore and Amlidhe.
White-breasted waterhen	<i>Amaurornis phoenicurus</i>	Frequently encountered in Rajasthan.
Purple swamphen	<i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i>	Small numbers en route to, and at Bharatpur. Also at Amlidhe.
Common moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	Recorded on suitable wetlands on 11 dates.
Common coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	Recorded on suitable wetlands on five dates.
Chestnut-bellied sandgrouse	<i>Pterocles exustus</i>	Fifteen birds near Lake Soorwal.
Painted sandgrouse	<i>Pterocles indicus</i>	Small numbers most evenings at dusk and several seen coming to drink at the pool by the entrance to the Park at Ranthambhore. Two seen well in the park too. Single over Amlidhe at dusk.

Common snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	Recorded throughout Rajasthan on eight dates.
Black-tailed godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>	Recorded in small numbers at Ranthambhore, Soorwal and Amlidhe.
Eurasian curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>	Two en route to Bayana. Small numbers at Soorwal.
Spotted redshank	<i>Tringa erythropus</i>	Noted on just three dates in Rajasthan.
Common redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>	Noted on seven dates in Rajasthan.
Marsh sandpiper	<i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>	Small numbers on six dates.
Common greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>	Noted on eight dates in a variety of wetland habitats.
Green sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>	Widespread.
Wood sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>	Noted on 10 dates in Rajasthan.
Common sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	Widespread.
Little stint	<i>Calidris minuta</i>	Small numbers at Agra and Lake Soorwal.
Temminck's stint	<i>Calidris temmincki</i>	Noted on eight dates in Rajasthan.
Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>	Small numbers at Lake Soorwal.
Ruff	<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>	Small numbers at Agra, Bharatpur and Lake Soorwal.
Greater painted-snipe	<i>Rostratula benghalensis</i>	Bharatpur – a fantastic total of six on canal-side wetland in outskirts of town.
Pheasant-tailed jacana	<i>Hydrophasianus chirurgus</i>	Small numbers at Bharatpur only.
Bronze-winged jacana	<i>Metopidius indicus</i>	Small numbers at Bharatpur and Amlidhe.
Great thick-knee	<i>Esacus recurvirostris</i>	Always impressive, recorded at Ranthambhore (3), Lake Soorwal (5) and Amlidhe (2).
Eurasian thick-knee	<i>Burhinus oedicnemus</i>	Small roost at Lake Soorwal (10+). Some on night drives from Ranthambhore and Amlidhe. This race is considered to be a full species by Rasmussen and Anderton (2005).
Black-winged stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>	Widespread in Rajasthan.
Pied avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>	Five at Lake Soorwal.
Little ringed plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>	Noted on five dates in Rajasthan.
Kentish plover	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>	Noted on two dates in Rajasthan.
River lapwing	<i>Vanellus duvaucelli</i>	Present in small numbers along all major rivers and at Lake Soorwal.
White-tailed lapwing	<i>Vanellus leucurus</i>	Singles at Bharatpur and Amlidhe.
Yellow-wattled lapwing	<i>Vanellus malabaricus</i>	Two near Bharatpur town, at least 20 en route to Soorwal and also en route to Amlidhe and Jaipur.
Red-wattled lapwing	<i>Vanellus indicus</i>	Widespread and common.
Pallas's gull	<i>Larus ichthyaetus</i>	Five on the Jamuna River in Agra. Single at Lake Soorwal.
Black-headed gull	<i>Larus ridibundus</i>	Singles at Bharatpur and the Ganges crossing.
River tern	<i>Sterna aurantia</i>	Widespread, recorded on eight dates.
Black-bellied tern	<i>Sterna acuticauda</i>	At least three birds at Amlidhe.
Gull-billed tern	<i>Gelochelidon nilotica</i>	Small numbers at Lake Soorwal.
Whiskered tern	<i>Chlidonias hybridus</i>	Noted in small numbers at Ranthambhore.
Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	Singles at Ranthambhore, Lake Soorwal and at Dhikala, Corbett.
Oriental honey-buzzard	<i>Pernis ptilorhyncus</i>	Small numbers throughout the lowlands.
Black-shouldered kite	<i>Elanus migrans</i>	Widespread.

Black kite	<i>Milvus migrans</i>	Abundant in the vicinity of towns. A few lineatus birds recorded, including a close immature at Lake Soorwal.
Pallas's fishing-eagle	<i>Haliaeetus leucoryphus</i>	Bird on nest near Quality Inn. Several, often vociferous, adults at Corbett and a few immatures.
Lesser fish-eagle	<i>Ichthyophaga humilis</i>	At least two birds at Corbett.
Egyptian vulture	<i>Neophron percnopterus</i>	Widespread in small numbers.
Indian vulture	<i>Gyps indicus</i>	Four birds at Bayana. An additional four birds recorded at Ranthambhore. A very poor year for this critically endangered species.
Eurasian griffon	<i>Gyps fulvus</i>	Several noted at Corbett.
Himalayan griffon	<i>Gyps himalayensis</i>	Noted in good numbers around Nainital.
Cinereous vulture	<i>Aegypius monachus</i>	Small numbers daily at Corbett. Single along the Koshi River.
Red-headed vulture	<i>Sarcogyps calvus</i>	Just two at Bharatpur. Singles along the Koshi River and at Corbett.
Short-toed snake-eagle	<i>Circaetus gallicus</i>	Singles at Ranthambhore, en route to Amlidhe and near Jaipur.
Crested serpent-eagle	<i>Spilornis cheela</i>	Singles at Bharatpur and along the Koshi River. Small numbers daily at Ranthambhore.
Eurasian marsh harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	Several at Bharatpur. Single at Lake Soorwal.
Hen harrier	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>	Single ringtail and male at Dhikala, Corbett.
Pied harrier	<i>Circus melanoleucos</i>	Single male at Dhikala, Corbett.
Pallid harrier	<i>Circus macrourus</i>	At least two birds at Bharatpur, one immature seen very well.
Shikra	<i>Accipiter badius</i>	Widespread and frequently encountered.
Common buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo vulpinus</i>	Single at Bharatpur. One at Nainital was of the Himalayan race considered a separate species by some authorities.
Indian spotted eagle	<i>Aquila hastata</i>	Two in the dry area at Bharatpur.
Greater spotted eagle	<i>Aquila clanga</i>	Small numbers at Bharatpur this year.
Steppe eagle	<i>Aquila nipalensis</i>	Single immature at Bharatpur. Noted in good numbers around Nainital and single at Corbett.
Imperial eagle	<i>Aquila heliaca</i>	Single adult bird at Bharatpur. A very poor year.
Bonelli's eagle	<i>Hieraaetus fasciatus</i>	Singles at Bharatpur and Ranthambhore.
Booted eagle	<i>Hieraaetus pennatus</i>	Singles at Bharatpur and Ranthambhore.
Mountain hawk-eagle	<i>Spizaetus nipalensis</i>	Single at Sat Tal.
Changeable hawk-eagle	<i>Spizaetus cirrhatus</i>	Reasonably frequent at Corbett.
Collared falconet	<i>Microhierax caerulescens</i>	A total of six seen at Corbett, an excellent result.
Common kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	Noted at Bharatpur, Bayana, Ranthambhore. Nainital and en route to Delhi on the last day.
Peregrine	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	Pair in the Bajun Valley.
Little grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	Widespread in Rajasthan.
Darter	<i>Anhinga melanogaster</i>	Recorded on nine dates.
Little cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax niger</i>	Widespread in Rajasthan. Small numbers at Ramnagar Barrage.

Indian cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax fuscicollis</i>	Good numbers at Bharatpur but breeding well over by December this year.
Great cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	Widespread.
Little egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	Widespread.
Grey heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	Widespread.
Purple heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>	Widespread in Rajasthan.
Great egret	<i>Casmerodius alba</i>	Widespread and common.
Intermediate egret	<i>Mesophoyx intermedia</i>	Recorded on three dates in Rajasthan, but probably overlooked.
Cattle egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	Widespread. This race is considered a separate species by Rasmussen and Anderton (2005).
Indian pond heron	<i>Ardeola grayii</i>	Widespread and common.
Little heron	<i>Butorides striatus</i>	Single at Ranthambhore.
Black-crowned night-heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	Good numbers at Bharatpur. Two at Amlidhe at night.
Black bittern	<i>Ixobrychus flavicollis</i>	Single on first day at Bharatpur.
Glossy ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>	A flock of 100 birds at Bharatpur.
Black-headed ibis	<i>Threshkiornis melanocephalus</i>	Widespread in Rajasthan.
Black ibis	<i>Pseudibis papillosa</i>	Five between Bharatpur and Agra on the Taj Mahal day out.
Eurasian spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>	Small numbers at Bharatpur.
Great white pelican	<i>Pelecanus onocrotalus</i>	Small numbers at Bharatpur, Agra and Soorwal.
Dalmatian pelican	<i>Pelecanus crispus</i>	Small numbers at Bharatpur on one day.
Painted stork	<i>Mycteria leucocephala</i>	Good numbers breeding at Bharatpur this year (apparently 500 pairs). Small numbers at Ranthambhore and Lake Soorwal.
Asian openbill	<i>Anastomus leucocephala</i>	Small numbers at Bharatpur and Soorwal.
Black stork	<i>Ciconia nigra</i>	Small numbers at Ranthambhore only.
Woolly-necked stork	<i>Ciconia episcopus</i>	Seen en route to, and at, Bharatpur, as well as Ranthambhore, Soorwal and Corbett.
Black-necked stork	<i>Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus</i>	Just one at Bharatpur on one date. A poor showing for this spectacular stork.
Rufous-tailed shrike	<i>Lanius isabellinus</i>	Noted on two days at Bharatpur.
Brown shrike	<i>Lanius cristatus</i>	Single seen well at Corbett.
Bay-backed shrike	<i>Lanius vittatus</i>	Small numbers on 6 dates in Rajasthan.
Long-tailed shrike	<i>Lanius schach</i>	Widespread.
Southern grey shrike	<i>Lanius meridionalis</i>	Common at Lake Soorwal and en route to Amlidhe. Single along Koshi River near Ramnagar.
Black-headed jay	<i>Garrulus lanceolatus</i>	Frequently encountered around Nainital.
Eurasian jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>	Locally common in Nainital area.
Red-billed blue magpie	<i>Urocissa erythrorhyncha</i>	Several flocks encountered en route to Nainital and at Sat Tal.
Common green magpie	<i>Cissa chinensis</i>	Several in feeding flocks at Corbett.
Rufous treepie	<i>Dendrocitta vagabunda</i>	Widespread and common in lowland areas.
Grey treepie	<i>Dendrocitta formosae</i>	Single at Mehraon (Sat Tal).
House crow	<i>Corvus splendens</i>	Recorded almost daily.

Large-billed crow	<i>Corvus macrorhynchus</i>	Recorded almost daily. The races in lowland Rajasthan and the Nainital area are considered two species by Rasmussen and Anderton (2005).
Black-hooded oriole	<i>Oriolus xanthornus</i>	Several seen and many heard at Corbett.
Maroon oriole	<i>Oriolus trailli</i>	Single male and females in separate encounters at Corbett.
Large cuckooshrike	<i>Coracina macei</i>	Two at Ranthambhore on first drive. Single at Dhikala (Corbett).
Small minivet	<i>Pericrotus cinnamomeus</i>	Recorded at Bharatpur and Ranthambhore. Large group in a feeding flock at Corbett on last day.
Long-tailed minivet	<i>Pericrotus ethologus</i>	Recorded at Sat Tal and Corbett.
Scarlet minivet	<i>Pericrotus flammeus</i>	Only noted in Corbett.
Bar-winged flycatcher-shrike	<i>Hemipus picatus</i>	Small numbers in Corbett area.
Yellow-bellied fantail	<i>Rhipidura hypoxantha</i>	Sat Tal and Corbett.
White-throated fantail	<i>Rhipidura albicollis</i>	Noted almost daily in Nainital and Corbett areas.
White-browed fantail	<i>Rhipidura aureola</i>	Noted daily at Ranthambhore – often feeding in association with cattle and wild ungulates.
Black drongo	<i>Dicrurus macrocercus</i>	Widespread in open habitats.
White-bellied drongo	<i>Dicrurus caerulescens</i>	Noted in good numbers at Ranthambhore.
Bronzed drongo	<i>Dicrurus aeneus</i>	Common at Quality Inn and Corbett.
Lesser racket-tailed drongo	<i>Dicrurus remifer</i>	Two singles at Corbett – superb!
Common iora	<i>Aegithina tiphia</i>	Small numbers at Ranthambhore and Corbett.
Common woodshrike	<i>Tephrodornis pondicerianus</i>	Noted once in dry woodland at Bharatpur and Ranthambhore. Also Corbett.
Brown dipper	<i>Cinclus pallasi</i>	Two on the River Koshi near the Quality Inn.
Blue rock thrush	<i>Monticola solitarius</i>	Several males at Bayana.
Blue whistling-thrush	<i>Myophonus caeruleus</i>	Common in Uttaranchal.
Orange-headed thrush	<i>Zoothera citrina</i>	One at Bharatpur and another in the Bagh garden.
Rufous-gorgeted flycatcher	<i>Ficedula strophiiata</i>	Two in Corbett.
Red-breasted flycatcher	<i>Ficedula parva</i>	Widespread, recorded on 11 dates.
Red-throated flycatcher	<i>Ficedula albicilla</i>	Single at Dhikala (Corbett).
Little pied flycatcher	<i>Ficedula westermanni</i>	A male at Dhikala, Corbett.
Slaty-blue flycatcher	<i>Ficedula tricolor</i>	Female at Sat Tal. A male seen well in Corbett.
Rufous-bellied niltava	<i>Niltava sundara</i>	Two males at Corbett.
Grey-headed canary flycatcher	<i>Culicicapa ceylonensis</i>	Widespread, recorded on five days.
White-tailed rubythroat	<i>Luscinia pectoralis</i>	A male on the drive into Corbett.
Bluethroat	<i>Luscinia svecica</i>	Common in wetland habitats recorded on six dates.
Orange-flanked bush-robin	<i>Tarsiger cyanurus</i>	Several at Sat Tal, including a superb male. Also at Nainital. This race is considered a separate species by Rasmussen and Anderton (2005).
Oriental magpie robin	<i>Copsychus saularis</i>	Widespread.
White-rumped shama	<i>Copsychus malabaricus</i>	One seen poorly at Corbett.
Indian robin	<i>Saxicoloides fulicata</i>	Widespread in Rajasthan.
Black redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochrurus</i>	Widespread in small numbers – recorded on eight days.

Blue-fronted redstart	<i>Phoenicurus frontalis</i>	A male at Mehragaon.
White-capped water redstart	<i>Chaimarronis leucocephalus</i>	Recorded near most of the waterbodies visited in the Himalayan foothills.
Plumbeous water redstart	<i>Rhyacornis fuliginosus</i>	Frequents rivers and streams in the Himalayan foothills.
Little forktail	<i>Enicurus scouleri</i>	Single along Koshi River by Quality Inn.
Spotted forktail	<i>Enicurus maculatus</i>	Singles along Pangot Road and on way into Corbet.
White-throated bushchat	<i>Saxicola insignis</i>	A total of three birds in the grassland at Dhikala (Corbett).
Common stonechat	<i>Saxicola torquata</i>	Widespread, recorded on nine dates.
White-tailed stonechat	<i>Saxicola leucura</i>	A female in grassland at Dhikala, Corbett.
Pied bushchat	<i>Saxicola caprata</i>	Widespread.
Grey bushchat	<i>Saxicola ferrea</i>	Single male at Ranthambhore. Also Himalayan foothills area where common.
Variable wheatear	<i>Oenanthe picata</i>	Several birds en route to Amlidhe.
Desert wheatear	<i>Oenanthe deserti</i>	Only seen in the dry areas near Soorwal Lake and Amlidhe.
Isabelline wheatear	<i>Oenanthe isabellina</i>	Only seen in the dry areas near Soorwal Lake.
Brown rock-chat	<i>Cercomela fusca</i>	Widespread in Rajasthan (six dates). Small numbers in suitable habitata along the Koshi River on the extension.
Rosy starling	<i>Sturnus roseus</i>	Good numbers en route to Jaipur.
Brahminy starling	<i>Sturnus pagodarum</i>	Widespread (10 dates).
Asian pied starling	<i>Sturnus contra</i>	Widespread (13 dates).
Common myna	<i>Acridotheres tristis</i>	Widespread and ubiquitous.
Bank myna	<i>Acridotheres ginginianus</i>	Common in the wider countryside.
Chestnut-bellied nuthatch	<i>Sitta castanea</i>	Seen several times in flocks at Corbett.
White-tailed nuthatch	<i>Sitta himalayensis</i>	Pangot, Nainital and the Bajun Valley.
Velvet-fronted nuthatch	<i>Sitta frontalis</i>	Seen several times in flocks at Corbett.
Wallcreeper	<i>Tichodromia muraria</i>	Two along at the Koshi River between Mohan and and Ramnagar.
Bar-tailed treecreeper	<i>Certhia himalayana</i>	Regular flock constituent at Sat Tal and Bajun Valley.
Great tit	<i>Parus major</i>	Widespread, recorded on seven dates.
Green-backed tit	<i>Parus monticollis</i>	Common flock constituent at Nainital, Sat Tal and Bajun Valley.
Black-lored tit	<i>Parus xanthogenys</i>	Common flock constituent at Nainital and Sat Tal.
Yellow-browed Tit	<i>Sylviparus modestus</i>	Several between Nainital and Pangot.
Black-throated tit	<i>Aegithalos concinnus</i>	Recorded in most flocks in the Nainital area.
Plain martin	<i>Riparia paludicola</i>	Widespread (nine dates). This race is considered a separate species by Rasmussen and Anderton (2005).
Eurasian crag martin	<i>Hirundo rupestris</i>	Small flock en route to Sat Tal.
Dusky crag martin	<i>Hirundo concolor</i>	Frequent around the cliffs at Bayana, at Ranthambhore and Ramnagar Barrage.
Barn swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	Widespread but in small numbers (nine dates).
Streak-throated swallow	<i>Hirundo fluvicola</i>	Small numbers along the canal at Bharatpur only.
Wire-tailed swallow	<i>Hirundo smithii</i>	Several in canal area at Bharatpur and inside the park. Also recorded at Corbett this year.
Red-rumped swallow	<i>Hirundo daurica</i>	Widespread (seven dates).

Nepal house martin	<i>Delichon nipalensis</i>	Good flocks at Sat Tal and along the Koshi River.
[Black-crested bulbul]	<i>Pycnonotus melanicterus</i>	Heard only at Corbett.
White-eared bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus leucotis</i>	Recorded at Bharatpur (including one interesting leucistic individual) and en route to Amlidhe and Jaipur.
Himalayan bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus leucogenys</i>	Common in Himalayan foothills.
Red-vented bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus cafer</i>	Common and very widespread.
Red-whiskered bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus jocosus</i>	Good numbers in Corbett on two days.
Black bulbul	<i>Hypsipetes leucocephalus</i>	Common at Pangot and small numbers at Sat Tal and in the Bajun Valley. This race is considered a separate species by Rasmussen and Anderton (2005).
Rufous-fronted prinia	<i>Prinia buchanani</i>	Small numbers in Amlidhe area.
Ashy prinia	<i>Prinia socialis</i>	Widespread (7 dates).
Plain prinia	<i>Prinia inornata</i>	Widespread (10 dates).
Grey-breasted prinia	<i>Prinia hodgsoni</i>	Common in Corbett.
Bright-headed cisticola	<i>Cisticola exilis</i>	Common in grasslands at Dhikala, Corbett.
Oriental white-eye	<i>Zosterops palpebrosus</i>	Widespread (nine dates).
Common tailorbird	<i>Orthotomus sutorius</i>	Small numbers throughout (three dates).
Grey-sided bush-warbler	<i>Cettia brunnifrons</i>	Singles at Mehraagaon and Sat Tal.
Clamorous reed warbler	<i>Acrocephalus stentoreus</i>	Single seen very badly at Bharatpur. Treated as a separate species by Rasmussen and Anderton.
Common chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	Widespread in lowland areas (six dates).
Buff-barred warbler	<i>Phylloscopus pulcher</i>	Recorded in small numbers at Pangot, Nainital and Sat Tal.
Lemon-rumped warbler	<i>Phylloscopus chloronotus</i>	Recorded on three dates in the Himalayan foothills.
Hume's warbler	<i>Phylloscopus humei</i>	Widespread and common winter visitor in Rajasthan.
Greenish warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochiloides</i>	Occasional winter visitor in Rajasthan. Seen well in the nursery at Bharatpur and around the Bagh.
Grey-hooded warbler	<i>Seicercus xanthoschistos</i>	Common flock constituent in the Himalayan foothills.
Black-faced warbler	<i>Abroscopus schisticeps</i>	Small flock along road to Pangot.
White-throated laughingthrush	<i>Garrulax albogularis</i>	Large flocks at Sat Tal, Nainital and Corbett.
White-crested laughingthrush	<i>Garrulax leucolophus</i>	Recorded at Bajun Valley, Quality Inn and Corbett.
Streaked laughingthrush	<i>Garrulax lineatus</i>	Fairly common around Nainital.
Rusty-cheeked scimitar-babbler	<i>Pomatorhinus erythrogastrus</i>	Several at Sat Tal. Heard at Corbett.
Black-chinned babbler	<i>Stachyris pyrrhops</i>	Small flock at Mehraagaon.
Yellow-eyed babbler	<i>Chrysomma sinense</i>	Recorded at Bayana, Soorwal and Corbett.
Common babbler	<i>Turdoides caudatus</i>	Widespread in lowlands but only recorded on two dates this year. Very common on road to Amlidhe.
Large grey babbler	<i>Turdoides malcolmi</i>	Widespread in lowlands.
Jungle babbler	<i>Turdoides striatus</i>	Widespread and frequently encountered.
Blue-winged minla	<i>Minla cyanouroptera</i>	Small flock at Sat Tal.
Rufous sibia	<i>Heterophasia capistrata</i>	Not infrequent in the Nainital area.
Whiskered yuhina	<i>Yuhina flavicollis</i>	Small flock at the 'low fields' (Nainital).
Lesser whitethroat	<i>Sylvia curruca</i>	Widespread in lowland areas (seven dates).

Indian bushlark	<i>Mirafra erythroptera</i>	Several at Agra, Soorwal and Amlidhe.
Ashy-crowned sparrow lark	<i>Eremopteryx grisea</i>	Several at Ranthambhore were our first. Small numbers in the environs of Lake Soorwal.
Crested lark	<i>Galerida cristata</i>	Single at Soorwal.
Greater short-toed lark	<i>Calandrella brachydactyla</i>	Only seen in the dry areas en route to Amlidhe and Jaipur.
Oriental skylark	<i>Alauda gulgula</i>	Single at dawn in the grasslands at Dhikal (Corbett).
Purple sunbird	<i>Nectarina asiatica</i>	Common in lowlands.
Mr's Gould's sunbird	<i>Aethopyga gouldae</i>	Single male at Mehragaon.
Crimson sunbird	<i>Aethopyga siparaja</i>	Several eclipse males seen at Quality Inn.
House sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	Present in towns and villages, many of the splendid wintering 'Bactrian' race.
Spanish Sparrow	<i>Passer hispaniolensis</i>	Noted en route to Bayana.
Russet sparrow	<i>Passer rutilans</i>	Small numbers at Mehragaon.
Chestnut-shouldered petronia	<i>Petronia xanthocollis</i>	Small numbers at Bharatpur, Soorwal and Amlidhe.
White wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	Widespread (seven dates).
White-browed wagtail	<i>Motacilla maderaspatensis</i>	Widespread, usually along rivers or canals.
Citrine wagtail	<i>Motacilla citreola</i>	Widespread (10 dates). Several excellent male black-backed calcarata birds noted.
Yellow wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>	Recorded on four dates in small numbers. Adult males identified belonged to the race beema or thunbergi.
Grey wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>	Recorded by waterbodies and rivers throughout (seven dates).
Tawny pipit	<i>Anthus campestris</i>	Bharatpur, Lake Soorwal and Amlidhe.
Tree pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>	Bharatpur and Ranthambhore.
Olive-backed pipit	<i>Anthus hodgsoni</i>	Small numbers noted at Bharatpur, Ranthambhore and Corbett.
Rufous-breasted accentor	<i>Prunella strophiatea</i>	Small numbers at Nainital and Mehragaon.
Black-throated accentor	<i>Prunella atrogularis</i>	At least three birds in the fields at Mehragaon (Sat Tal).
Black-breasted weaver	<i>Ploceus benghalensis</i>	Small numbers en route to Bayana and at Corbett..
Baya weaver	<i>Ploceus phillippinus</i>	Several en route to Bayana. Plenty of nests of this species from the previous breeding season were seen in Rajasthan and around Corbett.
Red avadavat	<i>Amandava amandava</i>	Small numbers at Bharatpur only this year.
Indian silverbill	<i>Lonchura malabarica</i>	Widespread in Rajasthan.
Yellow-breasted greenfinch	<i>Carduelis spinoides</i>	Single at Pangot. Small flock in the Bajun Valley. Huge flock (120) in the grasslands around Dhikala (Corbett).
Common rosefinch	<i>Carpodacus erythrinus</i>	Several at Mehragaon.
Pink-browed rosefinch	<i>Carpodacus rodochrous</i>	Single male in Bajun Valley.
White-capped bunting	<i>Emberiza stewarti</i>	Present in small numbers at Mehragaon.

Systematic List Number 3 Butterflies

The nomenclature generally follows 'Butterflies of the Indian Region' by Wynter-Blyth, 1957, still the most useful guide to the butterflies of the Sub-continent.

Papilionidae

Common Rose	<i>Pachliopta aristolochiae</i>	Bharatpur.
Lime	<i>Papilio demoleus</i>	Noted in Agra.

Pieridae

Psyche	<i>Leptosia nina</i>	Bharatpur.
Pioneer	<i>Belenois aurota</i>	Bharatpur area.
Indian small white	<i>Pieris canidia</i>	Nainital.
Common albatross	<i>Appias albina</i>	Bharatpur.
White orangetip	<i>Ixias marianne</i>	Bharatpur and Amlidhe.
Yellow orangetip	<i>Ixias pyrene</i>	Quite common at Bharatpur.
Small salmon arab	<i>Colotis amata</i>	A few at Bharatpur.
Large salmon arab	<i>Colotis fausta</i>	Common at Bharatpur.
Lemon emigrant	<i>Catopsilia pomona</i>	Scattered records on the extension.
Mottled emigrant	<i>Catopsilia pyranthe</i>	Not uncommon at Bharatpur, also Corbett.
Three spot grass yellow	<i>Eurema blanda</i>	Bharatpur.
Common jezebel	<i>Delias eucharis</i>	Corbett.

Nymphalidae

Common tiger	<i>Danaus genutia</i>	A few at Bharatpur.
Plain tiger	<i>Danaus chrysippus</i>	Widespread but not common.
Glassy tiger	<i>Danaus aglea</i>	Several in Corbett.
Common crow	<i>Euploea core</i>	Scattered in small numbers.
Blue-spotted crow	<i>Euploea midamus</i>	Corbett.
Common faun	<i>Faunis canens</i>	Corbett.
Common evening brown	<i>Melanitis leda</i>	Corbett.
Common treebrown	<i>Lethe rohria</i>	Corbett.
Tawny coster	<i>Acraea violae</i>	Ranthambhore
Rustic	<i>Cupha erymanthis</i>	Corbett.
Vagrant	<i>Vagrans egista</i>	Corbett.
Common leopard	<i>Phalanta phalantha</i>	Jhoomer Baori and Mehragaon
Tabby	<i>Pseudergolis wedah</i>	Bajun Valley.
Indian tortoiseshell	<i>Aglais cashmiriensis</i>	Daily in the Nainital area.
Blue pansy	<i>Junonia orithyia</i>	Scattered records in drier areas.
Chocolate pansy	<i>Junonia iphita</i>	North.
Grey pansy	<i>Junonia atlites</i>	Bharatpur.
Peacock pansy	<i>Junonia almana</i>	Bharatpur.
Lemon pansy	<i>Junonia lemonias</i>	The most numerous species of the genus on this trip.
Danaid eggfly	<i>Hypolimnias misippus</i>	Bharatpur

Systematic List Number 4 Odonata

Yellow waxtail	<i>Ceriagrion coromandelianum</i>	Small numbers at Bharatpur.
Blue sprite	<i>Pseudagrion microcephalum</i>	Bharatpur.
Common bluetail	<i>Ischnura senegalensis</i>	Bharatpur.
Indigo dropwing	<i>Trithemis festiva</i>	Widespread and common in the north.
Crimson dropwing	<i>Trithemis aurora</i>	Ranthambhore.
Dancing dropwing	<i>Trithemis pallidinervis</i>	Ranthambhore and Amlidhe.
	<i>Crocothemis servilia</i>	Bharatpur and Bajun Valley.
Green skimmer	<i>Orthetrum sabina</i>	Widespread.
Pink skimmer	<i>Orthetrum pruinatum</i>	Bajun Valley.
	<i>Sympetrum commixtum</i>	Many around pools and streams in the Bajun Valley.
Asian pintail	<i>Acisoma panorpoides</i>	Several at Bharatpur.
	<i>Rhodothemis rufa</i>	Single female at Bharatpur.
Blue pursuer	<i>Potamarcha congener</i>	Bharatpur.
	<i>Tramea basilaris</i>	Several at Bharatpur.
Globe skimmer	<i>Pantala flavescens</i>	Small numbers at Ranthambhore and Soorwal.
Black percher	<i>Diplacodes lefebvrii</i>	Small numbers at Bharatpur.

Systematic List Number 5 Reptiles and Amphibians

The nomenclature is taken from *The Book of Indian Reptiles and Amphibians* by Daniel (2002).

Indian rock python	<i>Python mularis</i>	Three superb individuals at Bharatpur – one an immense 12-foot specimen.
Chequered keelback	<i>Xenochrophis piscator</i>	Several at Soorwal.
Indian cobra	<i>Naja naja</i>	Single at Bharatpur.
Garden lizard	<i>Calotes versicolor</i>	Singles at Bharatpur and Ranthambhore.
Bengal monitor	<i>Varanus bengalensis</i>	Several at Bharatpur.
Mugger	<i>Crocodylus palustris</i>	Ranthambhore and Corbett.
Gharial	<i>Gavialis gangeticus</i>	Several at Corbett.
Northern house gecko	<i>Hemidactylus flaviviridis</i>	Bharatpur, Agra and Ranthambhore.
Indian flap-shell turtle	<i>Lissemys punctata</i>	Several of these ugly brutes at Bharatpur. One distant turtle at Corbett was probably this species.
Indian sawback	<i>Kachuga tecta</i>	Recorded at Bharatpur and Amlidhe, but not seen well. Single basking in weak sunlight at Corbett.
Skittering frog	<i>Euphlyctis cyanophlyctis</i>	Noted at Bharatpur. Other frogs seen there remain unidentified.