

Wild India

Bengal Tigers and Ibisbills

November 27th – December 17th 2011

A Greentours Trip Report

Led by Phil Benstead and Ansar Khan

report by Phil Benstead

28th November **travel to Jaipur**

Ansar and Phil were up bright and early and waited at the airport for the arrival of the group. They eventually got clear of the rigmarole of the airport and were soon out and into the van and on their way to a quick spruce-up and breakfast.

The five-hour drive to Jaipur started with an appreciation of the smog and congestion of Delhi. People were busy hurrying to work and buses and lorries filled the roads. After an age we broke out into open countryside and started to see more birds. Black-shouldered kites and black kites were seen in small numbers and nearing Jaipur we had a single short-toed eagle.

After lunch Alf and Hannah took a tour of the city and Alan, Phil and Ansar headed out to the nearby Nagarhar Biological Reserve to look for white-naped tit. The park director accompanied us to a couple of small water holes within the enclosure and we waited patiently to see if any birds came to drink. The waterholes were quite busy with lesser whitethroats, rufous treepies and red-vented bulbuls buzzing about. A single long-tailed shrike hunted nearby. A pair of white-browed fantails hawked over the pools and a pair of Marshall's iora appeared as if by magic. This was a great late afternoon location humming with birds. Finally Ansar called us in a state of high excitement. He had spotted a pair of white-naped tits. As they flew into nearby trees we watched them for the next fifteen minutes feeding in the acacias around us. A great bird to see and a fitting start to what was to be an exciting trip.

29th November **Jaipur to Ranthambore**

With a city tour and quite a rough road ahead of us we opted for a fairly easy start to the day. After breakfast we split into two teams again. Hannah and Alf took in another city tour with Bharat Singh, this time the high point was an elephant ride to the Amber Fort and a quick look around. Meanwhile the rest of us had a look at the small wetland at the foot of the hill on which the fort sits. Plenty of water in this this year and it had attracted various waterbirds that we

perused at leisure, only occasionally being interrupted by hawkers and snake charmers. Plenty of new birds for us here, with close views of little ringed plovers and Temminck's stints being appreciated.

With time in hand the bird team then headed to the big lake opposite our hotel. Here we walked the promenade and had close views of a number of wetland birds. We indulged in a bit of photography, especially enjoying a close view of a white-throated kingfisher. Out on the water familiar birds such as coot, moorhen and great crested grebe were present. Children pestered us to buy chappatti-dough fish-food and the water teemed with small tilapia keen to be fed.

Eventually the culture vultures returned in the van and we began the long drive to Ranthambore. Road works had made our usual route unavailable or unwise (not sure which), so we launched off into an unknown diversion route. Plenty of good birds along the roadside and we stopped to check dry fields (small numbers of yellow-wattled lapwings being the highlight). We stopped in Dausa, Ansar scoring some tasty chilli pakoras and some other snacks whilst we watched a bit of argy-bargy between rival bus operators that got very physical. Later we took some tea at another quieter village.

Driving on we stopped again (!) for lunch at a restaurant catering for tourists. Some very tasty samosas and beer were consumed and then we were off again. A nearly dry agricultural wetland produced some great birds; waders here included dunlin and Kentish plover, three spoonbills gave us a flyby, our only whiskered terns sat around on the mud and a single open-billed stork was nice to see. Over the agricultural fields surrounding the reservoir were hawking wire-tailed swallows, numerous yellow wagtails and tripping along the bund were tawny and paddyfield pipits.

We arrived at Sawai Madhopur and we picked our way through the town and out the other side and finally drove up the winding hill to the quirky Jhoomer Baori hotel. Here we were soon into our rooms and looking forward to a crack at some Bengal tigers. Our pre-dinner reverie was interrupted by a coughing male leopard in the grounds and we could see a vehicle watching it through the trees somewhere down the hill. We mobilised, but not swiftly enough to catch up with this difficult mammal. Surely a good omen although one that made us disinclined to go for a nightwalk, at least for tonight.

30th November Ranthambore NP (Zone 2 & 4)

Our first day dawned chilly so we wrapped up very warm and sped off in a jeep piloted by a bright, alert driver. We drove about finding ample evidence of night-time use of the tracks by at least two tigers, including a huge adult male. But the animals were long gone and we heard just one alarm call. Tigers were just not moving in our neck of the woods. Chital, sambar and nilgai were all admired and the odd wild boar made an appearance.

We did rather better for birds, but could spare little time to stop and look at them whilst engaged in the hunt for tigers. We did stop early on to admire a pair of roadside painted spurfowl,

beautiful birds and something of a park speciality. The park was the star though, we all drank in the splendid scenery and enjoyed the wonderful light just after dawn. We all enjoyed a comfort break by the new loo block where rufous treepies and jungle babblers could be fed by hand on crushed biscuits. Before we knew it though we were out of the park (stopping for two snakes in the river – chequered keelbacks – and a brace of muggers) and off to a ‘Wild Women’ textile emporium. Here we happily looked at carpets and other bits and bobs and even bought a few things.

Before lunch we sat out on the terrace and enjoyed good views of short-toed eagle, oriental honey buzzard and kestrel. After lunch we got back into the jeep. But again we did not get close to a tiger, no alarm calls were heard and we came across many peaceful pastoral scenes of contented herbivores grazing quietly. Alf found us our first golden jackal, which Phil squeaked in for closer views. It was interested but quickly reverted to scent-marking and going about its business. Another pair of painted spurfowl were found on a low cliff-face, scratching about noisily in the leaf litter.

High above us at one point were a collection of five vultures, good species diversity here with one red-headed vulture and one Himalayan griffon vulture in the mix. Eventually we had to bump out of the park to meet our deadline and on the way home we stopped off at a small pool and waited for painted sandgrouse to come in to drink at dusk. Sure enough as light levels fell we were treated to an arrival of noisy, thirsty sandgrouse. Pitching in at speed they walked slowly to the water, tanked up and then whizzed off. Driving from here Phil found a small jungle cat (jungle kitten?) and also another jackal. The hotel driveway had no leopard for us this evening, instead a couple of savannah nightjars were seen very well.

1st December

Ranthambore NP (Zone 3) and Amlidhe

Another month, another morning ride into the park. Leaving after an early breakfast, Alf scored our first adult jungle cat in the garden but it was skittish and we saw it only briefly. At the park gates we were cleared for zone 3 and amazingly spent another session inside without hearing a single alarm call. So we had little chance of seeing a tiger yet again. Tiger pugmarks were less commonly spotted this morning along the sandy roads, but we found some lovely striped hyaena tracks. Two ruddy mongooses (our first) ran up the road ahead of us at one point

With no sightings reported by others either we relaxed slightly and enjoyed some birdwatching. Ansar showed us a dusky eagle-owl and nearby a brown fish owl showed poorly. Black-rumped flamebacks gave themselves up and appeared on several occasions in nearby trees. Eventually though time got the better of us yet again and we had to turn for the gate. Near the hotel we stopped to enjoy our first crested hawk-eagle.

A quick turnaround at the hotel saw us all heading for town and a quick shopping session. Unfortunately the town was striking against the proposed arrival of western shopping chain stores (I think...) and all the shops we wanted were closed. We did get a chance to visit a pharmacy though and soak up the ambience of the town.

After lunch we took a jeep along the road towards Amlidhe. We spotted a few new birds along the way, notably variable wheatear, rufous-tailed lark and long-billed pipit, but most enjoyed the rural scenes that unfolded as we chugged through the small villages and outlying fields. Dropping down into the floodplain at Amlidhe always comes as a shock, suddenly wetland birds abound in shallow rivers and sandy islands. Working the arid scrubby grassland on the other side we found our first Indian bushlark and then took a walk along a deeper section of the river. Here we found a number of dragonflies were on the wing and the birding was fantastic. High on the list of good birds are the handful of black ibis we spot and two superb black-bellied terns that treat us to slow flybys in beautiful light. Huge softshell turtles and muggers basked on the bank. A gang of four great thick-knees gave close views and we also found our first bronze-winged jacanas and purple swamphens. Munching on fresh guavas we continued on – a large gathering of great cormorants included a single Indian shag.

Back in the jeep we drove north to look at another drier area. Here we found our first desert wheatears and as the sun dipped to the horizon and stuff started to go to roost we connected with a single pallid harrier and several marsh harriers. We all enjoyed the steady stream of open-billed storks against the setting sun.

Returning to the start point we got our warm gear on and waited a short while for it to get dark enough to use our spotlights. Around us Indian foxes made preparations for their night-shift – we were to see over ten of these engaging mammals during our drive. The night drive was hard work mostly due to an appallingly cocky young driver. Much to his frustration we did find numerous reasons to stop. Hares, foxes and jackals were commonplace. We interrupted one gang of jackals in the final stages of cleaning a buffalo carcass. A potential desert cat gave us the runaround but we had to concede that it had some domestic DNA in its makeup. Closer to the hotel we found the best mammal – a striped hyaena – but our driver misbehaved yet again and the animal was lost after a painfully brief view. A great animal to see though. Chilled, but happy, we headed straight for dinner and a bowl of warm soup.

2nd December Ranthambore NP (Zones 1 & 4)

The gods did not smile on us again this morning and we received Zone 1 – a zone that is good for leopard and occasionally produces a sloth bear, but has a low density of prey animals and thus is hard for tiger spotting. Sure enough we tracked a leopard for some time along the road, ending up at a single alarm-calling langur that could probably see the leopard up on a crag somewhere but out of sight to us. Otherwise we amused ourselves by putting biscuits on Alf's head for the ever-hungry treepies. Phil got excited when we were overtaken by a huge *Anax immaculifrons* – this year's late monsoon was paying huge dividends in the *Odonata* department. Driving out and on to the fort, we had to endure the grins of the Zone 3 punters, all of whom had spent time with a big male tiger during the morning session. Rats!

The fort interlude was very pleasant – the short climb up was a pleasure. The walk to the 5th Century fort zigzags up the slope and is punctuated by occasional huge, offset gates, studded with

spikes. Once up, we joined the small number of Indians heading for the Ganesh temple and took in the 32-pillar pavilion, the many old buildings and the murky green, half-full tanks. Alf and Hannah went into the small temple and then we headed back down to the jeep. Birds were quiet in the midday heat, but being on foot allowed a number of butterflies to be added to the trip list.

Our fifth attempt at seeing a tiger was blessed with zone (4) but again we were unlucky. A male tiger had evidently been moving during the lunch interlude but had wandered away from the tracks. No alarm calls were heard and the only excitement came from a curious-looking Indian grass mantis (*Schizocephala bicornis* – think predatory stick-insect) and the fact that we got a puncture and left the park late. After five trips without tiger I think it would be fair to say the leader was getting concerned, but mercifully the group remained commendably philosophical and the mood buoyant.

After dinner some of us headed out for a jeep ride around the fields on the other side of the road. The news that we had just missed a tiger in the 'garden' was taken well. We had now missed both leopard and tiger in the grounds of the hotel! Our drive around the fields netted us a nice little collection of birds and mammals. We got great views of Indian gerbil, squeaked in a barn owl and found a roosting Indian robin. Back on the main road we checked last night's hyaena area and to our surprise found two animals. We got sensational views over the next five minutes and turned for home happy. But it was not over yet, Ansar spotted a small cat hiding in a hole in the boundary wall of the park. It was headed for a drink in a nearby pool and when we parked up and switched off the engine it relaxed enough to come out twice for stunning views. A bona fide desert cat – far harder to see than a tiger but not for us! A great end to a productive session.

3rd December

Ranthambore National Park (Zone 3 & 6)

So the time for our sixth trip arrived, unlike our jeep which was uncharacteristically late. To cut a long story short we trundled about hearing no alarm calls and picking up no recent sign. Either side of us in Zones 2 & 4 people emerged beaming after good contacts with tiger. It is hard to miss tiger for this length of time at Ranthambore but it can be done and we were doing it. We had to make do with fleeting glimpses of various good birds (including ultramarine flycatcher) as we drove the tracks of zone 3.

A rest stop produced the first *Lestes umbrinus* ever recorded on the trip, together with another grass mantid. Our team left the park slightly early and then panicked when they heard of a tiger just behind us, getting back against the tide of canters proved impossible and they eventually called it a day.

On the way home we checked the shrine pool along the entrance track and had great views of a brown fish-owl spotted by Hannah when disturbed by some pishing from Phil. Also here our first views of coppersmith barbet. Shopping took some time too on the way home and then there was a little time for lunch to relax on the rooftop of the hotel with a sweet lime soda or a kingfisher beer. After lunch we were off to zone 6 – a new zone created in the former buffer zone that we were assured was good for tigers...

We all enjoyed the drive through town and out on the road to Mansarovar to the start of the zone 6 drive. Sawai Madhopur was bustling with life and we passed through narrow streets filled with tiny shops, a crazy temple sprawling up a vertical cliff-face and piles of rubbish and rooting pigs.

Oh the horror! The horror! Zone 6 proved to be a very scenic drive, related as it is to Zone 1. There was even a female tiger on the prowl but she was sleeping in the heat of the day when we passed by and we heard no signs of her moving. Apart from the scenery we all enjoyed the close views of a red-headed vulture scavenging on an old carcass and being gawked at by the gatehouse barn owls. Can Phil can persuade the team to take one last shot in the park in the morning?

4th December

Ranthambore (Zone 4) to Bharatpur

It took some negotiating by Phil over dinner yesterday to get the team back in the jeep for one last bone-rattling roll of the dice, but it was well worth it. Today we had a good zone, thanks to some hard behind-the-scenes work from Jothi, and we also had an excellent guide and driver.

Things were quiet in the park though, no alarm calls and no reports of sightings, but piecing together the various clues available our guide got us into a good area. We just had to find the tiger. Needle in a haystack time then! But then driving up and away from a nice view of a brown fish-owl, it happened. Phil from his lofty perch in the back of the jeep looked down into a shallow roadside depression to find himself staring into the eyes of a beautiful tigress. The jeep shuddered to a halt and there we all were. The tigress stood up and ignoring us in typically disdainful cat fashion, hissed at a jeep close behind us before walking slowly parallel to the track and off into some nearby scrub. Finally we heard concerted alarm calls for the first time as a small group of sambar 'belled' and scattered in front of her. The light was perfect and our photographs and videos were stupendous. We had finally been rewarded for our perseverance after eight drives, the release of tension was huge and at least one of us burst in to tears! Although this technically left us a bit of time to look at birds we were on a high and our trip out of the park passed in a blur.

Back at the JB we packed and thanked the excellent staff and then we were on our way to the railway station with an entourage to see us off. The Golden Temple Mail arrived bang on time, not bad having travelled from Mumbai, and soon we were burrowing into the cozy fug of an overnight train looking for our seats. We were temporary birds of passage amongst more serious long-distance migrants. Three hours later we were at Bharatpur and being met at the station and off for a quick look at a rather smelly but excellent painted-snipe site. At least nine birds here, including one splendid adult female.

Checking in at the Bagh, produced an unwelcome discovery, Alan had lost his passport, probably on the train. The Indian team whirred into action. Calls were made to head office and Ansar was dispatched to the station to talk directly to people on the train which was still chugging towards Delhi. We were optimistic that it would turn up but time would tell. Walking to our rooms we were shown not just roosting Indian scops-owl but also a fine brown hawk-owl right next to our rooms.

In the last 40 minutes of daylight we headed out the back of the Bagh and poked around in the fields. A flock of painted storks headed towards the park to roost and a ploughed field contained four species of wagtail. The back gate was locked when we got back so we walked the boundary wall through the village and around to the front gate. Wedding decorations were being set up just yards from the back wall of our rooms, we were in for an authentically Indian night!

5th December

Bharatpur

Alan's passport failed to turn up despite a huge amount of effort trying to relocate it by the Indian team. So although he came out for the first few hours of the day at Bharatpur he was eventually carted off and embroiled in what was to become a three-day affair to get an emergency passport from the High Commission in Delhi and then get an exit visa before his flight on the 11th. We wished him good luck.

To add to our woes as a team, Phil was very definitely under the weather, having had a very disturbed night and feeling rather 'drained'. He struggled more-or-less manfully through the day though and we did see some good birds, largely due to Ansar's sterling efforts. A good look around the nursery first thing netted us an excellent view of a scaly thrush but we could not find a Siberian rubythroat or any other thrushes. Our first brown-headed barbet gave itself up though and we then wandered around to the temple and out.

Waving off Alan and taking to the electric bus we trundled off to search for a nightjar that had been reported the day before. We found it roosting in a tree and puzzled over it, but eventually assigned it to Indian jungle nightjar. Dropped by the temple some of us had lunch, whilst 'sick note' had a sleep in the shade. We spent the afternoon checking out L and E block, huge expanses of wet grassland that were busy with coot and duck and produced numerous familiar wetland species and a number of less familiar ones including our first bar-headed geese and black-headed ibis. We all enjoyed spending time taking in the sights and sounds of the painted stork colony. Adults regurgitated catfish to eager fluffy young, whilst older youngsters bounced up and down in static flight exercising their wings for their first leap from the nest.

E block had a splendid pair of impressive black-necked storks. They mooched about before flying to their nest and indulging in a bit of vigorous 'pair-bonding'. Sambar munched grass, spoonbills dozed and our first cotton pygmy-geese dropped in right in front of us. A small island held a flock of silent lesser whistling-duck. We had heard sarus crane calling occasionally since lunchtime but it took some before we got our first views, we eventually caught up with one as dusk approached. Sitting in the late afternoon sun we looked out over Sapan Mori, enjoying not just good views of our first sarus crane but also a small gang of painted-snipe. Our rickshaw men trundled us back up the road to the ever-patient Ranbir and we were home. Phil fell asleep and was rather late for dinner but managed to brief everyone and get updates from Alan before heading back to bed.

6th December

Agra day out – the Taj Mahal

A day in which Alan headed to Delhi and bureaucracy, Phil stayed in bed, and Alf and Hannah went to Agra and the Taj Mahal. Alan eventually stayed over in Delhi, unable to get an exit visa in his emergency passport because of the Muslim holiday of Muharram. Alf and Hannah returned with wild tales of the Taj Mahal, shopping and partaking in a bit of the Muharram street parade with some of Ansar's in-laws as a bodyguard.

7th December

Bharatpur and outside somewhere dry!

With Phil nearly back to full speed we headed out today with our reduced team and did a morning of walking in the park. The smog was bad this morning, mixed in with real fog to make visibility poor. A quick look for the Siberian rubythroat secured brief views of this avian jewel. First real stop though was the temple where the holy man showed us the favourite location of his orange-headed thrush which duly obliged with great views. Young men bathed in the tank nearby and washed under the pump – it was all rather Indian really. We thanked the holy man and told him we would return in the evening to look at his porcupines. As you do!

We walked a good stretch of trail taking us out to the main track at Sapan Mori. Ansar's friend Rajinder had found us a large-tailed nightjar so we walked through the smog until he loomed out of the darkness. Finding the well-camouflaged nightjar was more of a challenge despite it being close and in the open. Nice bird. Walking on we spent sometime looking out over Sapan Mori. A few new birds were evident, notably three black-tailed godwit and a single white-tailed lapwing. From here we walked out to the gate picking up our first booted eagle at last and checked out the shop and the crystal-encrusted sarus cranes in the visitor centre. Lunch on the lawn was pleasant, the mutton samosas going down very well. An orange blister beetle (*Mylabris pustulata*) was a nice find, the red-and-black colouration warning us of the danger posed by this otherwise splendid-looking beetle.

Driving away we headed for a dry area recently discovered by Rajinder who had popped up again and accompanied us. The dry area was 20 km away but well worth the drive. Here we found some new birds including short-toed lark, crested lark, rufous-tailed shrike, Indian silverbill and best of all eight fantastic Indian coursers. These birds really are rather special and we enjoyed watching them feeding and indulging in a little desultory display. On the way back we screeched to a halt as a pair of red-necked falcons flew past. We tracked them on foot to a nearby tree and got fantastic views of this difficult species. Superb. On the outskirts of Bharatpur we looked at some urban wetlands hoping for jack snipe and then we checked several sites along the poo canal. More painted-snipe (10) followed and we added several new species of wetland bird to the list including spotted redshank, marsh sandpiper and black-crowned night-heron. We had set ourselves the target of 125 bird species at the start of the day and the two owls roosting in the garden put us exactly on 125 for the day. A fun day out with some very good birds.

The day may have been over but we were on a late shift tonight. Ansar picked us up after dinner and shuttled us back to the temple in the park. Jackals scrapped in the car headlights on the road

ahead. The holy man was waiting for us and put out the porcupine food when we arrived. The trees all around us were full of roosting rhesus macaques and that and the almost full moon were making the civets nervous of using the the usual roof feeding station. Instead we got lucky with a common palm civet coming to the porcupine food on the ground. With our time up and the gate about to shut we said our thanks and goodbyes and headed home. A pleasant visit with this gentle, animal-loving man.

8th December

Bharatpur and Fatehpur Sikri

We all met back up with Alan at breakfast, he was full of tales of the two-day struggle with Western and Indian bureaucracy but had emerged from the mayhem clutching his emergency passport and the all important exit visa. He could go home!

Heading for the park once more we walked the trail behind Shanti Kutir, we were chasing Indian stone-curlew, but had to settle for a nice view of our first yellow-crowned woodpecker. We also got great views of bluethroat that were much appreciated and enjoyed tramping the trails of the park. Alan appeared in the electric van and we drove the long way round to Python Point. We checked several python burrows , without success, although Ansar found a hunk of shed skin.

The morning was fast disappearing but we had a quick look for more pythons beyond the old moated hunting lodge and then trundled around E-block. Here we had great views of a pair of sarus cranes and also a fine imperial eagle. Down at the water's edge we finally got views of a pair of red avadavat, the male was a stunning confection of a bird. Driving back we headed for the hotel and had a large lunch ahead of the afternoon programme. Phil, Alf and Hannah headed to Fatehpur Sikri for some culture and tomb-bats, whilst Alan and Ansar headed back into the park for some of the waterbirds that had been missed during Alan's enforced stay in Delhi.

Our visit to Fatehpur was great fun, we had a good guide and he put up with us occasionally looking at wildlife during his spiel. Phil poked about finding quite a few bat-filled crevices in the ancient structures. Our guide quickly entered into the spirit of things and as well as giving us the history took us to some dark smelly corners for bats. The bats photographed proved to be mostly naked-rumped tomb-bats (although the darker, more furry-rumped long-winged tomb bat was present too in small numbers).

9th December

Bund Bhareta and Bayana

A day out of the park for us today. We drove the road out to Bund Bhareta. Usually the roadside offers a number of good ponds that make interesting birding but despite the late monsoon these were bone dry this year. Roadside stops produced very little although our first red-headed buntings were most welcome. Our first real stop was at the forestry office, where we enjoyed watching the antics of a large roost of Indian flying-foxes.

A short drive took us to the dam wall which we walked along looking through the large number of diving duck present on the reservoir this year. Most were pochard but careful sifting produced a number of tufted and ferruginous ducks and also some rather obvious red-crested pochard. Nearing the end we found our first and only pheasant-tailed jacanas and were able to compare them with the nearby bronze-winged.

The day was rather warm and we enjoyed our walk around the reservoir towards the former hunting lodge, all the time against a tide of women carrying firewood. Birds were few and far between unfortunately but we all enjoyed nosing about through the windows of the lodge and noshing on chef's mutton samosas.

Driving on we headed out to Bayana to check out the Indian vulture colony. A handful of occupied nests were noted and several adults were on the wing over the cliff. High on the cliff were our first blue rock thrushes but a mystery bunting eluded us in the rocky jumble below. We had a quick look from the road at Bayana fort (10th century) and then turned for home, picking up black-breasted weaver by the roadside.

10th December Bharatpur to Delhi and beyond

Up and out bright and early again this morning for a two hour electric van ride into the dry area of the park. We tried hard to find a flock of birds reputed to include the hard-to-find spotted creeper but it sadly stayed that way. Other highlights included a pair of jackals scavenging on a sambar carcass and good views of the female black-necked stork.

Driving out of the park we had plenty of time to pay our bills and pack before heading for Delhi. This is always a rather tedious journey and today was no exception. Plenty to see out of the window though with a single hunting common Indian mongoose (Rikki Tikki Tavi himself) being the nature highlight and the usual Indian hubbub keeping us goggle-eyed for the rest of the time. The brickpits at Kosi were a disappointment failing to provide us with a wigeon!

A wedding was in full swing at our hotel in Delhi and we swapped between watching events unfold at the proceedings in the garden and enjoying a total lunar eclipse. We were sad to see Alan leave us but we had a train to catch. Ranbir discharged his duties by running us up to the fantastic Old Delhi railway station. We got in and picked our way through the throng to our waiting train...

11th December Kathgodam to Nainital, "Low Fields" and Snow View

Unbelievably the train was on time at Kathgodam and we had to be shaken awake before we got shunted into a siding somewhere. We had all slept reasonably well and once we had gathered ourselves together we were out on the platform and heading for the bus. We got up to Naini Tal just after dawn, the first blue whistling-thrushes scattering in front of us.

Settling into our rooms , we quickly headed for breakfast and then we were off out, eager to see the many new sights, sounds and smells of the Himalayan foothills. We walked out of the hotel and climbed up to the top of the ridge, taking a small track downhill we passed through good hillside habitat and the occasional small village on our way down to the temple by the road. Our first mixed-species flock appeared and we started to add a lot of new birds to the trip-list. Tits, treecreepers and nuthatches – all were new species. Lower down the trail we bumped into a small flock of rufous-breasted accentors, a species that we were not to see elsewhere. Rosefinches appeared too with female common and pink-browed popping up. Rock buntings played hide-and-seek in the rocky jumble. Ansar spotted a grey-headed woodpecker and we also saw a Himalayan pied woodpecker. A great introduction to birding in the foothills. At the bottom of the trail we checked out the ‘low fields’ picking up two female kalij pheasants, that scolded us from a tree across the road.

On the way back we drove up the road to enjoy the panorama of the Himalayas. Visibility was not brilliant but we could see the huge mountain range floating in the sky 75 miles away. The roadside here was busy with tourists taking in the view and drinking tea and it took some time to extricate ourselves and the vehicle and drive back to the hotel.

After lunch we were out again and drove down to Sat Tal. Our first stop used to be a regular spot for wintering accentors but the area had been completely cleared of vegetation. Part of a huge development of a new university. We walked around the periphery of the site and found some obliging white-capped buntings and our first black-headed jays and rufous sibilias.

Rather late in the day we arrived down at Sat Tal. We walked the short stretch of trail from the dam end and it was surprisingly quiet. In the distance we could hear a flock of slaty-headed parakeets and an alarm-calling langur kept us on the look-out. Birds were very thin on the ground down here but we enjoyed a big flock of white-throated and white-crested laughingthrushes. Just before we climbed in the van for the drive home we had our first of many spotted forketails – a great bird.

The drive back was seriously affected by wedding traffic (it was Sunday) and we walked part of the way back to the hotel due to blockages caused by traffic jams or dancing hordes!

12th December

Vinayak, Pangot and Snow View

A cruel early 0500 start this morning for us in order to look at a new area and the chance of cheer pheasant. We carefully wended our way through the foothills arriving at Vinayak at first light. Koklass pheasant called briefly and then we had to wait for the light to improve. As the light improved it became apparent that we were in a stunning landscape of grass-covered vertiginous slopes. Altai accentors started flying about and they landed nearby for good looks through the ‘scope. Then Ansar found us two smashing male cheer pheasants on a nearby slope. We watched them for some time as the sun came up, one basking on a rock. Eventually after over half an hour we left them to it and headed back a little into the oak woodland for breakfast.

We spent the rest of the morning walking back towards Pangot. A big flock of black-headed and Eurasian jays included some great woodpeckers. A single rufous-bellied was the star prize but nearby we found a pair of stunning greater yellownapes. A maroon oriole popped up for a too short look at us before drifting away. Likewise a chestnut-bellied rock thrush and a scaly thrush appeared and disappeared.

Walking on we checked out several flocks, one producing a good number of rather snazzy white-browed shrike-babblers. We took a tasty Nepali lunch at Jungle Lore, where the gardens got busy at midday with a variety of birds including excellent views of our first rusty-cheeked scimitar-babblers.

The walk up the Killbery road from Pangot was cold and quiet, the only highlight being another spotted forktail. Eventually we dragged the driver away from his fire and drove up to Snow View. Here we worked the rubbish-covered slopes (!) for Oriental turtle dove, a male Kalij and another rusty-cheeked scimitar-babbler.

13th December Bajun Valley, Ramnagar and Quality Inn area

A big day for us, with plenty of places to check out en route to our hotel by the Kosi River down in the lowlands. An early breakfast went down well as usual, chappattis and honey, omelettes and puri bhaji. Mmmm, nice. That was our breakfast but we stopped a little way below the 'low fields' at a waterfall to allow the driving team to have theirs! Whilst they ate we watched some red-flanked bluetails along the river, whilst a party of kalij pheasants shot overhead.

Driving on we were soon at the entrance to the Bajun valley. We did not have to go far for our first slaty-headed parakeets, they fed just feet above our heads on the track up towards the temple, sending down showers of fruit peel and partially eaten fruit. Bajun Valley is often very birdy and today was no exception. Flocks were frequently encountered and contained several new birds with ashy-throated warbler and lemon-rumped warbler well overdue additions. Striated laughingthrushes appeared and disappeared too quickly. At the bottom of the valley we had an excellent and rather fiesty white-throated fantail and a collection of green-tailed sunbirds, including some excellent males. On the way back up the other side of the small valley we had good 'scope views of chestnut-crowned laughingthrushes tossing leaves about as they fed.

The road wound on down out of the hills and eventually we dropped into the lowlands and things got noticeably cooler. We stopped to commiserate with another tour group, who were travelling in open jeeps. Chilly! Lunch was taken by the barrage at Ramnagar, an excellently birdy spot and the sun finally broke through the fog. Out on the water a big raft of ruddy shelduck included a few gadwall and a single male red-crested pochard. Our first white-backed vulture was a relief, they still exist! Walking across the barrage is always interesting in traffic but provided great views of wallcreeper and crested kingfisher. A black stork circled high in a thermal with a collection of unidentifiable vultures.

More identifiable were the collection of breeding white-backed vultures at a small colony outside town. We watched a pair copulating on the nest in what was starting to become a recurring theme on the tour... Good to see these threatened birds making a comeback, after an appalling low point several years ago. The next stop was even more exciting. Driving in to the Gajira temple carpark we scanned the river and Ansar quickly found three ibisbills feeding about 500 metres downstream. We walked down to them and were treated to close views of this special wading bird. The cameras burst into action and we all came away with good images. Thrilling stuff.

Last stop of a busy day was a short walk in the woods above Mohan. Collared falconet and jungle owlet were the stars in an otherwise rather quiet patch. As we left we found our first group of bar-winged flycatcher-shrikes in the canopy.

Check in involved the tedious Foreigner Arrival form again but then there was time for a quick walk down to the river. We were treated to a fine pair of brown-fish-owls which were starting to wake up in nearby trees and three brown dippers arrived on cue to roost in a jumble of riverside rocks. Bronzed drongos hawked over the river as we turned for home and some routine force-feeding before bed.

14th December Quality Inn to Dhikala (Corbett NP)

Dawn arrived at the same time as our jeep and we jumped aboard for a great, slow 10-hour drive to the park gate and beyond to Dhikala. On the way to the gate we stopped by the river for a great view of an incubating Pallas' fish-eagle and an equally good view of a noisy great barbet. Next stop was Mohan where we screeched to a halt for a small gang of red-breasted parakeets and then went on further for a short walk up the road. It was quiet again above Mohan though and we only added yellow-bellied fantail to our list.

Corbett is a magical place and the sun shone down on us this morning as we crept into the park. It took all day to cover the 35 km to Dhikala, the first 5 kilometres early on being very good for birds. Flocks cropped up with astonishing regularity and by sitting quietly in the jeep we were treated to great views of many new birds, including red-billed leiothrix, blue-winged minla and Himalayan rubythroat. New bulbuls appeared in amongst the regulars; black-crested and red-whiskered. Canopy flocks passed over us and we struggled to keep up with the birds as they were called out. Velvet-fronted nuthatch proved particularly elusive but we all got views of the stunning chestnut-bellied nuthatch. Himalayan flamebacks and grey-capped pygmy woodpeckers were added to the list and we saw a good few grey-headed woodpeckers during the day.

We took lunch at the crocodile viewpoint. A hectic five minutes saw us taking in our first gharial and lesser fish-eagle, as well as checking out the huge catfish and mahseer in the river. No imagination required to see where the gharial were getting their food. Driving on we stopped at High Bank for another overview of the river here we had a large male gharial, a black-necked stork and best of all two more ibisbill. The latter is a scarce bird in the park and this was one of the finds of the trip without a doubt. Driving on we read a sorry story on the road ahead of us. We tracked a walking female tiger until it had spurted slightly ahead and then drifted off the road and away.

The tale was one of discovery by a vehicle and sure enough we heard later that one of the canters that had gone past us had seen her briefly.

Later on we chanced across a hog deer out in the open in the riverbed – another good find. Also here in the grass were a fine rosy pipit that fed unconcerned near the jeep and a few female-type common rosefinches (no males for us this year). An osprey repeatedly attacked a perched crested serpent-eagle. Driving on the driver showed us a spotted deer carcass up a tree (leopard kill) and two separate tawny fish-owls were new for us. We stopped in the late afternoon for a cup of masala chai with the rangers at Khinanauli – a pleasant interlude.

Check-in finally, more forms in triplicate and negotiating for extra blankets ahead of what promised to be a cold night in our accommodation.

15th December Dhikala and Corbett

One full day in the park, a luxury to be sure and one we did not waste. Our pre-breakfast session was foggy and cold. We chased a tiger that had killed a sambar deer in an inaccessible area. The animal was still there, evidenced by the occasional deer and monkey alarm calls that we could hear. But after an hour waiting we moved on and were rewarded with the phenomenal bellowing of a female tiger nearby. Superb.

After breakfast we headed out for a wonderful session in the grasslands bordering the bank full reservoir. Raptors really put on a airshow for us here. We had stunning views of Pallas' fish-eagle when one caught a good-sized mahseer and flew directly towards us and landed on the jeep track ahead of us. We watched it for some time before it flew on. Also here lots more raptors including peregrine, hen harrier, collared falconet, changeable hawk-eagle, osprey and a feisty lesser fish-eagle. A large group of Asian elephants nearly went unnoticed amongst all these goings-on. We watched the group of females and young animals, watched over by a large bull and a small male. On the way back our guide spotted a single pin-tailed green pigeon and we were to see more of these delightful birds during the day.

After lunch our afternoon session produced another rather prolonged attempt at seeing the tiger on the sambar kill. We elected to move on in the end and look for birds (missing a rapid tiger crossing the road an hour later). Birds were less obvious than in the morning but we finished the afternoon having had great views of beautiful lesser yellownape and a fleeting contact with four great slaty woodpeckers.

We eventually reached High Bank. Today's surprise was a single distant wallcreeper. On the way home we had a splendid close encounter with an adult female elephant and her two youngsters. The teenage female trumpeted and squeaked comically in fury whilst kicking dirt in our direction – displaying her displeasure. We were pleased enough though, a great end to a memorable day.

16th December

Corbett National Park to Delhi

From Dhikala to Delhi is always a rather gruelling 12-hour undertaking (and today was no different!) but the first two hours is at least comprised of the drive out of the park and often produces one last goodbye from the park. Hannah spotted the best of it this morning, pulling two smooth otters from the rapids of the Ramganga as we passed by. We stopped and watched enchanted as they happily fed on a succession of small mahseer. Another great mammal sighting in Corbett. Arriving at the gate we relocated back into our trusty van and drove into Ramnagar for one last Indian breakfast.

The drive onwards was blighted by thick smog around Kashipur but enlivened by a jog down to the Ganges (just one great black-headed gull of note). We declined drinking the waters but tucked into our packed lunch instead as we rattled on towards Delhi. Finally arriving we said our heartfelt goodbyes to Ansar and packed him off to the railway station and five days off before his next job. Aryia took us to the airport after one last meal and then we were sucked into the tedium that is international jet travel.

17th December

flight home

The flight passed uneventfully and we said our goodbyes in Heathrow after what had been a very memorable trip with an excellent team, plenty of memorable mammal sightings and some great birds. That last gasp tiger will take some beating as wildlife moment, at the very least for one very relieved leader!

Systematic List Number 1 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 Ranthambhor and Bharatpur as does 'Rajasthan'.

Black francolin	<i>Francolinus francolinus</i>	Single at Bharatpur on our last morning in the park.
Grey francolin	<i>Francolinus pondicerianus</i>	Common in Rajasthan.
Jungle bush-quail	<i>Perdica asiatica</i>	Small numbers on three dates at Ranthambore and a covey exploding underfoot at Bayana.
Painted spurfowl [Koklass pheasant]	<i>Galloperdix lunulata</i> <i>Pucrasia macrolopha</i>	Small numbers every day at Ranthambore. Several males heard calling at first light at Vinayak.
Red junglefowl	<i>Gallus gallus</i>	Noted in small numbers at Corbett. Many others heard there.
Kalij pheasant	<i>Lophura leucomelanos</i>	Two females above the low fields at Naini Tal. Single male at Snow View (Naini Tal). Three at the waterfall below the 'low fields' and a pair seen well in the Bajun Valley on the same day. Small group encountered during the full day Corbett.
Cheer pheasant	<i>Catreus wallichii</i>	Two superb males at Vinayak were the high point of our time at Naini Tal.
Indian peafowl	<i>Pavo cristatus</i>	Noted at every site and in the wider countryside in the first two weeks.
Lesser whistling-duck	<i>Dendrocygna javanica</i>	Small numbers at Bharatpur.
Greylag goose	<i>Anser anser</i>	Small numbers at Bharatpur.
Bar-headed goose	<i>Anser indicus</i>	Bharatpur only this year.
Ruddy shelduck	<i>Tadorna ferruginea</i>	Widspread.
Comb duck	<i>Sarkidiornis melanotos</i>	Amlidhe and Bharatpur.
Cotton pygmy-goose	<i>Nettapus coromandelianus</i>	Small numbers at Bharatpur and Bund Bhareta.
Gadwall	<i>Anas strepera</i>	Bharatpur, Bund Bhareta and Ramnagar barrage.
Spot-billed duck	<i>Anas poecilorhyncha</i>	Jaipur, Amlidhe, Bharatpur and on the Ganges.
Northern shoveler	<i>Anas clypeata</i>	Bharatpur.
Northern pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>	Bharatpur.
Garganey	<i>Anas querquedula</i>	Just one at Bharatpur.
Common teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>	Ranthambore and Bharatpur.
Red-crested pochard	<i>Rhodonessa rufina</i>	Recorded in small numbers at Bund Bhareta. Single male at Ramnagar barrage.
Common pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>	Good numbers at Bund Bhareta this year.
Ferruginous pochard	<i>Aythya nyroca</i>	Single at Bharatpur and a few at Bund Bhareta.

Tufted duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>	Recorded on two dates in Rajasthan.
[Brown-capped pygmy-woodpecker]	<i>Dendrocopos nanus</i>	Heard at Ranthambore on two occasions.
Grey-capped pygmy-woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos canicapillus</i>	Often seen in canopy flocks at Quality Inn and Corbett.
Brown-fronted woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos auriceps</i>	One or two on the way down to the low fields at Naini Tal. More next day along the Pangot road. Also one at the Bajun Valley.
Yellow-crowned woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos mahrattensis</i>	Just one at Bharatpur.
Rufous-bellied woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos hyperythrus</i>	Single on Pangot road (Naini Tal).
Himalayan woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos himalayensis</i>	Single male on trail down to the low fields at Naini Tal.
Grey-headed woodpecker	<i>Picus canus</i>	Single on the way down to the low fields at Naini Tal. Small numbers daily in Quality Inn and Corbett area.
Greater yellownape	<i>Picus flavinucha</i>	Two along the road at Pangot.
Lesser yellownape	<i>Picus chlorolophus</i>	Single near Khinanauli at Corbett on our last full day.
Black-rumped flameback	<i>Dinopium benghalense</i>	Ranthambore and Bharatpur.
Himalayan flameback	<i>Dinopium shorii</i>	Noted at Quality Inn and Corbett
Great slaty woodpecker	<i>Mulleripicus pulverulentus</i>	Four at Corbett were sadly only seen in flight.
Great barbet	<i>Megalaima virens</i>	Single in Bajun Valley, only seen in flight. A much better view of one the next day near Quality Inn.
Brown-headed barbet	<i>Megalaima zeylanica</i>	Recorded in small numbers at Bharatpur only this year.
Lineated barbet	<i>Megalaima lineata</i>	Recorded at Quality Inn and Corbett.
Blue-throated barbet	<i>Megalaima asiatica</i>	Just one at Corbett.
Coppersmith barbet	<i>Megalaima haemacephala</i>	Widespread – recorded on four dates.
Indian grey hornbill	<i>Oxyceros birostris</i>	Widespread – recorded on four dates.
Oriental pied hornbill	<i>Anthraceros coronatus</i>	Two noted in flight as we drove into Corbett.
Common hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>	Commonly encountered in Rajasthan, less so elsewhere.
Indian roller	<i>Coracias benghalensis</i>	Small numbers throughout the first two weeks.
Common kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>	Widespread and not uncommon.
White-throated kingfisher	<i>Halcyon smyrnensis</i>	Recorded on nearly every day.
Crested kingfisher	<i>Megaceryle lugubris</i>	Noted at Ramnagar Barrage, Quality Inn and Corbett.
Pied kingfisher	<i>Ceryle rudis</i>	Noted on five dates.
Green bee-eater	<i>Merops orientalis</i>	Frequently recorded in Rajasthan.
Common hawk-cuckoo	<i>Hierococyx varius</i>	Two birds seen poorly at Bharatpur.
Sirkeer malkoha	<i>Phaenicophaeus leschenaultii</i>	Two at Ranthambore and two at Bharatpur – a great year for this difficult species.
Greater coucal	<i>Centropus sinensis</i>	Ranthambore, Bharatpur and Corbett.
Alexandrine parakeet	<i>Psittacula eupatria</i>	Small numbers daily at Ranthambore and Amlidhe. Single at Corbett.

Rose-ringed parakeet	<i>Psittacula krameri</i>	Recorded daily in Rajasthan.
Slaty-headed parakeet	<i>Psittacula himalayana</i>	Recorded at [Sat Tal] and the Bajun Valley.
Plum-headed parakeet	<i>Psittacula cyanocephala</i>	Recorded at Nahargar (Jaipur), Jaipur, Ranthambore, Bund Bhareta and Corbett.
Red-breasted parakeet	<i>Psittacula alexandri</i>	Four near Mohan (Quality Inn).
White-rumped spinetail	<i>Zoonavena sylvatica</i>	Noted at Mohan and Corbett.
House swift	<i>Apus affinis</i>	Recorded on three dates.
Crested treeswift	<i>Hemiprocne coronata</i>	Noted near Ramnagar and Quality Inn.
Barn owl	<i>Tyto alba</i>	Single flyby individual seen well on night drive at Ranthambore. Two more roosting inside the Zone 6 gate-tower were excellent value.
Indian scops-owl	<i>Otus bakkomoena</i>	Ranthambore and Bharatpur. Two roosting in the Bagh garden were a favourite. Heard at Corbett.
Dusky eagle owl	<i>Bubo coromandus</i>	Single roosting bird at Ranthambore. At least one individual at Bharatpur.
Brown fish-owl	<i>Ketupa zeylonensis</i>	Two seen well at Ranthambore, another seen poorly. A pair near Quality Inn and one in Corbett the next day.
Tawny fish-owl	<i>Ketupa flavipes</i>	Two roosting birds found at Corbett.
[Collared owlet]	<i>Glaucidium brodiei</i>	Single heard calling near Vinayak.
Jungle owlet	<i>Glaucidium radiatum</i>	Single birds at Mohan and Corbett. Others heard.
Spotted owlet	<i>Athene brama</i>	Ranthambore and Bharatpur.
Brown hawk-owl	<i>Ninox scutulata</i>	Single roosting individual in the Bagh garden (Bharatpur).
Indian jungle nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus indicus</i>	A single roosting bird at Bharatpur.
Large-tailed nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus macrurus</i>	Only at Bharatpur – single roosting bird one one day.
Savannah nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus affinis</i>	Several along access track to the Jhoomer Baori (Ranthambore).
Rock pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>	Ubiquitous. Mostly pure intermedius birds that are rather smart birds.
Oriental turtle dove	<i>Streptopelia orientalis</i>	Naini Tal (small numbers) and Mohan (Quality Inn).
Laughing dove	<i>Streptopelia senegalensis</i>	Widespread.
Spotted dove	<i>Streptopelia chinensis</i>	Just one at Ranthambore this year.
Red collared dove	<i>Streptopelia tranquebarica</i>	Small numbers in farmland in Rajasthan.
Eurasian collared dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	Common in Rajasthan.
Emerald dove	<i>Chalcophaps indica</i>	Three, typically in fast flight, at Corbett on the full day in the park.
Yellow-footed green-pigeon	<i>Treron phoenicoptera</i>	Frequently encountered in Rajasthan.
Pin-tailed green-pigeon	<i>Treron apicauda</i>	Small flock in Corbett on two days.
Sarus crane	<i>Grus antigone</i>	Only seen at Bharatpur.
Brown crane	<i>Amaurornis akool</i>	Small numbers at Ranthambore only this year.
White-breasted waterhen	<i>Amaurornis phoenicurus</i>	Frequently encountered in Rajasthan.

Purple swamphen	<i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i>	Small numbers at Amlidhe, Bharatpur and en route to Delhi.
Common moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	Recorded on suitable wetlands on ten dates.
Common coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	Recorded on suitable wetlands on five dates.
Painted sandgrouse	<i>Pterocles indicus</i>	Small numbers most evenings at dusk at Ranthambore. Several seen coming to drink at the pool by the Tiger Den hotel. A pair seen well during the day at Amlidhe.
Common snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	Recorded on three dates in Rajasthan.
Black-tailed godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>	Just three at Bharatpur this year.
Spotted redshank	<i>Tringa erythropus</i>	A few in the canal at Bharatpur.
Common redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>	Noted on three dates in Rajasthan.
Marsh sandpiper	<i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>	One or two on the canal at Bharatpur were the only records this year.
Common greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>	Noted on five dates in a variety of wetland habitats.
Green sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>	Widespread.
Wood sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>	Noted on seven dates in Rajasthan.
Common sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	Widespread.
Temminck's stint	<i>Calidris temmincki</i>	Noted on three dates in Rajasthan.
Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>	30+ at the reservoir en route to Ranthambore.
Ruff	<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>	Recorded at Jaipur, en route to Ranthambore and around Bharatpur.
Greater painted-snipe	<i>Rostratula benghalensis</i>	Ten birds at the usual site on the smelly canal in Bharatpur town on two dates. Three in the late afternoon in the park at Bharatpur.
Pheasant-tailed jacana	<i>Hydrophasianus chirurgus</i>	Small numbers at Bund Bhareta only.
Bronze-winged jacana	<i>Metopidius indicus</i>	Amlidhe, Ranthambore, Bharatpur and Bund Bhareta.
Ibisbill	<i>Ibidorhyncha struthersii</i>	Three on the Kosi River at Gajira temple and amazingly two more from High Bank on the Ramganga in Corbett NP. The latter a great record.
Black-winged stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>	Widespread in Rajasthan, often in the most appalling locations. A few at Ramnagar barrage.
Great thick-knee	<i>Esacus recurvirostris</i>	Recorded in small numbers at Amlidhe and Ranthambore.
Little ringed plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>	Noted on just one date in Rajasthan. Two singles on the river at Corbett.
Kentish plover	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>	Noted only en route to Rantahmbore this year.
River lapwing	<i>Vanellus duvaucelli</i>	Present in small numbers along all major rivers.
Red-wattled lapwing	<i>Vanellus indicus</i>	Widespread and common.
Yellow-wattled lapwing	<i>Vanellus malabaricus</i>	Good numbers along a short stretch of the road between Jaipur and Ranthambore.

White-tailed lapwing	<i>Vanellus leucurus</i>	Noted on two dates at Bharatpur only and in very small numbers.
Indian courser	<i>Cursorius coromandelicus</i>	Eight in a dry area about 20 km from Bharatpur.
Pallas's gull	<i>Larus ichthyaetus</i>	Single flew past at Bund Bhareta during lunch. Another in the Ganges on the last day.
Brown-headed gull	<i>Larus brunnicephalus</i>	Alf and Hannah reported this species on the Jamuna River at Agra on Phil's day off!
River tern	<i>Sterna aurantia</i>	Widespread. Recorded on five dates.
Black-bellied tern	<i>Sterna acuticauda</i>	Two on the river at Amlidhe.
Whiskered tern	<i>Chlidonias hybridus</i>	Noted in small numbers only at the wetland en route to Ranthambore.
Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	Noted in small numbers at Ranthambore and Corbett.
Oriental honey-buzzard	<i>Pernis ptilorhynchus</i>	Odd singles at Ranthambore and Bharatpur.
Black-shouldered kite	<i>Elanus migrans</i>	Widespread in lowlands.
Black kite	<i>Milvus migrans</i>	Abundant in the vicinity of towns. Huge numbers over the Delhi tip at Noida on the last day.
Pallas's fishing-eagle	<i>Haliaeetus leucoryphus</i>	Single on nest near Quality Inn. Two adults performed superbly at Corbett with one adult with a small mahseer feeding on the track in front of us for half an hour. Magic stuff.
Lesser fish-eagle	<i>Ichthyophaga humilis</i>	Several at Corbett.
Egyptian vulture	<i>Neophron percnopterus</i>	Small numbers throughout.
White-rumped vulture	<i>Gyps benghalensis</i>	At least ten birds around Ramnagar, signs of a recovery for this threatened species.
Indian vulture	<i>Gyps indicus</i>	We had to make a special trip to the colony at Bayana to see this beleaguered species. Perhaps ten birds present.
Himalayan griffon	<i>Gyps himalayensis</i>	A single at Ranthambore was a surprise. Noted in small numbers around Naini Tal.
Eurasian griffon	<i>Gyps fulvus</i>	Although birds at Rantambore were hastily identified as Indian vultures, photographs of these birds only showed this scarce wintering species! Present around Naini Tal too.
Red-headed vulture	<i>Sarcogyps calvus</i>	Widespread in small numbers.
Short-toed snake-eagle	<i>Circaetus gallicus</i>	Singles on most days at Ranthambore.
Crested serpent-eagle	<i>Spilornis cheela</i>	Almost daily at Ranthambore, small numbers at Bharatpur and Corbett.
Hen harrier	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>	Several over the grasslands around Dhikala (Corbett).
Pallid harrier	<i>Circus macrourus</i>	Single first-year bird at Amlidhe.
Eurasian marsh harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	Bharatpur and Amlidhe only this year.
Shikra	<i>Accipiter badius</i>	Widespread.
Eurasian sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>	Single at Naini Tal.

White-eyed buzzard	<i>Butastur teesa</i>	Single at Amlidhe perched at close range. Others at Ranthambore and Bharatpur.
Common buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	Just one at Bharatpur this year.
Greater spotted eagle	<i>Aquila clanga</i>	Small numbers at Bharatpur only.
Steppe eagle	<i>Aquila nipalensis</i>	Noted in small numbers around Naini Tal.
Imperial eagle	<i>Aquila heliaca</i>	Just one on one date at Bharatpur.
Booted eagle	<i>Hieraettus pennatus</i>	One at Bharatpur.
Mountain hawk-eagle	<i>Spizaetus nipalensis</i>	Three birds in the Naini Tal area.
Changeable hawk-eagle	<i>Spizaetus cirrhatu</i>	A single near the JB at Ranthambore was of the race sometimes considered to be separate species – crested hawk-eagle. One at Quality Inn and another Corbett.
Collared falconet	<i>Microheirax caerulescens</i>	A pair at Mohan and frequently observed in Corbett this year.
Common kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	Small numbers in Rajasthan.
Red-necked falcon	<i>Falco chicquera</i>	Pair seen well perched in a tree near Bharatpur town. Superb!
Peregrine	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	Single calidus-type bird gave us a flyby at Dhikala during our raptor fest.
Little grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	Widespread in Rajasthan.
Great crested grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>	Noted at Jaipur only (2).
Darter	<i>Anhinga melanogaster</i>	Widespread – recorded on six dates.
Little cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax niger</i>	Widespread in Rajasthan.
Indian cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax fuscicollis</i>	Single bird at Amlidhe. Present in small numbers at Bharatpur.
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.
Intermediate egret	<i>Mesophoyx intermedia</i>	Recorded on five dates but probably overlooked.
Cattle egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	Widespread.
Indian pond heron	<i>Ardeola grayii</i>	Widespread and common.
Little heron	<i>Butorides striatus</i>	Recorded daily at Ranthambore, another at Bund Bhareta.
Black-crowned night-heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	A few at Bharatpur.
Glossy ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>	Small numbers at Bund Bhareta.
Black-headed ibis	<i>Threshkiornis melanocephalus</i>	Bharatpur.
Black ibis	<i>Pseudibis papillosa</i>	Two or three at Amlidhe.
Eurasian spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>	Three on the lake en route to Ranthambore. Occasional roosting flocks at Bharatpur.
Painted stork	<i>Mycteria leucocephala</i>	Widespread especially abundant at Bharatpur where breeding in large numbers this year.
Asian openbill	<i>Anastomus oscitans</i>	Recorded en route to Ranthambore, good numbers at Amlidhe and at Bharatpur.

Black stork	<i>Ciconia nigra</i>	Noted on two days at Ranthambore, and also small numbers at Ramnagar Barrage and Corbett.
Wooly-necked stork	<i>Ciconia episcopus</i>	Widespread in small numbers on ten dates.
Black-necked stork	<i>Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus</i>	One pair seen well daily and even copulating on the nest at Bharatpur. Single from High Bank in Corbett.
Rufous-tailed shrike	<i>Lanius isabellinus</i>	Single en route to Ranthambore. A few in the dry areas around Bharatpur.
Bay-backed shrike	<i>Lanius vittatus</i>	Very few this year, just a handful at Bharatpur.
Long-tailed shrike	<i>Lanius schach</i>	Widespread.
Southern grey shrike	<i>Lanius meridionalis</i>	Good numbers on three dates in Rajasthan.
Eurasian jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>	Good numbers along the Pangot road.
Black-headed jay	<i>Garrulus lanceolatus</i>	Noted in good numbers both days at Naini Tal.
Red-billed blue magpie	<i>Urocissa erythrorhyncha</i>	Only seen at Sat Tal and along the Pangot road.
[Common green magpie]	<i>Cissa chinensis</i>	Only heard in Corbett this year.
Rufous treepie	<i>Dendrocitta vagabunda</i>	Widespread and common in lowland areas.
Grey treepie	<i>Dendrocitta formosae</i>	A large gathering coming to food left out on a roof in Mohan. The only record this year.
House crow	<i>Corvus splendens</i>	Recorded almost daily.
Large-billed crow	<i>Corvus macrorhynchus</i>	Recorded almost daily.
Eurasian golden oriole	<i>Oriolus oriolus</i>	Single male bird at Bharatpur, only seen in flight sadly.
Black-hooded oriole	<i>Oriolus xanthornus</i>	Heard only at Mohan, several seen at Corbett.
Maroon oriole	<i>Oriolus traillii</i>	One along the Pangot road was unfortunately rather elusive.
Small minivet	<i>Pericrotus cinnamomeus</i>	Recorded on six dates at Ranthambore and Bharatpur.
Long-tailed minivet	<i>Pericrotus ethologus</i>	Recorded along the Pangot road, Bajun Valley, Quality Inn and Corbett.
Scarlet minivet	<i>Pericrotus flammeus</i>	Small numbers in Quality Inn/Corbett area.
Bar-winged flycatcher-shrike	<i>Hemipus picatus</i>	Small numbers in Quality Inn/Corbett area.
Yellow-bellied fantail	<i>Rhipidura hypoxantha</i>	Quality Inn and Corbett.
White-throated fantail	<i>Rhipidura albicollis</i>	Single vociferous individual in the Bajun Valley. Common at Quality Inn and Corbett..
White-browed fantail	<i>Rhipidura aureola</i>	Recorded only at Nahagarh and Ranthambore this year.
Black drongo	<i>Dicrurus macrocercus</i>	Widespread in open habitats.
Ashy drongo	<i>Dicrurus leucophaeus</i>	Only seen in the garden of the Jhoomer Baori (Ranthambore)..
White-bellied drongo	<i>Dicrurus caerulescens</i>	Noted at Nahagarh and Ranthambore only this year.

Bronzed drongo	<i>Dicrurus aeneus</i>	Single noted along the Pangot road (Naini Tal) and numerous at dusk over the rivers at Quality Inn and Corbett.
Lesser racquet-tailed drongo	<i>Dicrurus remifer</i>	Several in one bird flock at Corbett.
Common iora	<i>Aegithina tiphia</i>	Only one seen, at Corbett.
Marshall's iora	<i>Aegithina nigrolutea</i>	Pair at Nahagar during an amazing half hour of birdwatching with the reserve manager.
Common woodshrike	<i>Tephrodornis pondicerianus</i>	Noted in dry woodland at Nahargarh, Ranthambore and Bharatpur.
Brown dipper	<i>Cinclus pallasi</i>	Three on the River Kosi near the Quality Inn.
Blue rock thrush	<i>Monticola solitarius</i>	Two males at Bayana (Bharatpur).
Chestnut-bellied rock thrush	<i>Monticola rufiventris</i>	Single male along the Pangot road.
Blue whistling-thrush	<i>Myophoneus caeruleus</i>	Common in Uttaranchal.
Orange-headed thrush	<i>Zoothera citrina</i>	Single bird seen very well at Bharatpur.
Scaly thrush	<i>Zoothera dauma</i>	Singles at Bharatpur and along the Pangot road..
Rufous-gorgeted flycatcher	<i>Ficedula strophhiata</i>	A few in Corbett.
Red-breasted flycatcher	<i>Ficedula parva</i>	Widespread recorded on nine dates.
Red-throated flycatcher	<i>Ficeduila albicilla</i>	Single at Bharatpur.
Slaty-blue flycatcher	<i>Ficedula tricolor</i>	Single female recorded at Quality Inn and a male for Alf and Hannah at Dhikala..
Small niltava	<i>Niltava macgrigoriae</i>	Single female on drive into Corbett.
Rufous-bellied niltava	<i>Niltava sundara</i>	Single male on drive into Corbett.
Tickell's blue flycatcher	<i>Cyornis tickelliae</i>	Single male at Ranthambore.
Grey-headed canary flycatcher	<i>Culicicapa ceylonensis</i>	Widespread, recorded on seven days.
Siberian rubythroat	<i>Luscinia calliope</i>	Single seen quite well at Bharatpur, though more throat would have been nice.
White-tailed rubythroat	<i>Luscinia pectoralis</i>	Single male seen well on drive into Corbett.
Bluethroat	<i>Luscinia svecica</i>	Common in wetland habitats recorded on five dates.
Orange-flanked bush-robin	<i>Tarsiger cyanurus</i>	Two on the waterfall below the 'low fields' at Naini Tal and one in the Bajun Valley on the same day.
Oriental magpie robin	<i>Copsychus saularis</i>	Widespread.
Indian robin	<i>Saxicoloides fulicata</i>	Widespread.
Blue-capped redstart	<i>Phoenicurus coeruleocephalus</i>	Recorded in small numbers around Naini Tal and in the Bajun Valley.
Black redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochrurus</i>	Widespread in small numbers – recorded on ten days.
Blue-fronted redstart	<i>Phoenicurus frontalis</i>	Single female at Naini Tal.
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 stream in the Himalayan foothills.
Spotted forktail	<i>Enicurus maculatus</i>	Total of three noted at Sat Tal and around Quality Inn.
Common stonechat	<i>Saxicola torquata</i>	Recorded on ten dates.

Pied bushchat	<i>Saxicola caprata</i>	Widespread.
Grey bushchat	<i>Saxicola ferrea</i>	Only recorded in the Himalayan foothills on the extension.
Variable wheatear	<i>Oenanthe picata</i>	Just one this year, en route to Amlidhe.
Desert wheatear	<i>Oenanthe deserti</i>	Only seen in the dry areas at Amlidhe and outside Bharatpur.
Brown rock-chat	<i>Cercomela fusca</i>	Widespread in Rajasthan (eight dates).
Brahminy starling	<i>Sturnus pagodarum</i>	Widespread (five dates).
Rosy starling	<i>Sturnus roseus</i>	Small numbers in the scrubby dry grassland by the river at Amlidhe.
Asian pied starling	<i>Sturnus contra</i>	Widespread (six 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 in small numbers at Quality Inn and Corbett.
White-tailed nuthatch	<i>Sitta himalayensis</i>	Common flock constituent in the Naini Tal area.
Velvet-fronted nuthatch	<i>Sitta frontalis</i>	Quality Inn and Corbett.
Wallcreeper	<i>Tichodromia muraria</i>	Singles recorded at Ramnagar Barrage and from High Bank in Corbett.
Bar-tailed treecreeper	<i>Certhia himalayana</i>	Common flock constituent at Naini Tal.
Spot-winged tit	<i>Parus melanolophus</i>	Single in Corbett.
White-naped tit	<i>Parus nuchalis</i>	Common flock constituent at Naini Tal.
Great tit	<i>Parus major</i>	Pair at Nahagar on the first day, a trip highlight for Phil.
Green-backed tit	<i>Parus monticollis</i>	Widespread on six dates.
Black-lored tit	<i>Parus xanthogenys</i>	Commonn flock constituent at Naini Tal and Sat Tal.
Black-throated tit	<i>Aegithalos concinnus</i>	Naini Tal and Corbett.
Plain martin	<i>Riparia paludicola</i>	Recorded in small numbers around Naini Tal.
Eurasian crag martin	<i>Hirundo rupestris</i>	Widespread (8 dates).
Dusky crag martin	<i>Hirundo concolor</i>	Frequent in area around Naini Tal.
Barn swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	Frequent around Jaipur, Ranthambore, and Amlidhe.
Wire-tailed swallow	<i>Hirundo smithii</i>	Widespread (just four dates this year, scarce).
Red-rumped swallow	<i>Hirundo daurica</i>	Wetlands en route to Ranthambore and Bund Bhareta and Bharatpur.
Nepal house martin	<i>Delichon nipalensis</i>	Widespread (seven dates).
Black-crested bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus melanicterus</i>	Four at Pangot (Naini Tal) and a small group over the Bajun Valley.
White-eared bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus leucotis</i>	Small numbers on two day at Corbett.
Himalayan bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus leucogenys</i>	Amlidhe and Bharatpur.
Red-vented bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus cafer</i>	Common in Himalayan foothills.
Red-whiskered bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus jocosus</i>	Common and very widespread.
Ashy bulbul	<i>Hemixos flava</i>	Noted only in Corbett.
		Recorded in small numbers almost daily on the extension.

Black bulbul	<i>Hypsipetes leucocephalus</i>	Small flocks round Naini Tal and in the Bajun valley
Zitting cisticola	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>	Bharatpur.
Bright-headed cisticola	<i>Cisticola exilis</i>	Corbett.
Striated prinia	<i>Prinia criniger</i>	One on the walk down to the 'Low Fields' at Naini Tal.
Jungle prinia	<i>Prinia syloatica</i>	Pair at Ranthambore.
Ashy prinia	<i>Prinia socialis</i>	Widespread (seven dates).
Plain prinia	<i>Prinia inornata</i>	Widespread (nine dates).
Oriental white-eye	<i>Zosterops palpebrosus</i>	Widespread (seven dates).
Blyth's reed warbler	<i>Acrocephalus dumetorum</i>	Small numbers at Bharatpur. Single at Corbett.
Clamorous reed warbler	<i>Acrocephalus stentoreus</i>	Small numbers at Bharatpur and Bund Bhareta.
Common tailorbird	<i>Orthotomus sutorius</i>	Widespread (nine dates).
Common chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	Widespread but scarce in lowland areas (just three dates this year).
Buff-barred warbler	<i>Phylloscopus pulcher</i>	Recorded in good numbers around Naini Tal.
Ash-throated warbler	<i>Phylloscopus maculipennis</i>	One or two in one flock in the Bajun Valley.
Lemon-rumped warbler	<i>Phylloscopus chloronotus</i>	Recorded on two dates on the extension.
Greenish warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochiloides</i>	Widespread and common winter visitor in Rajasthan. Small numbers daily at Corbett.
Golden-spectacled warbler	<i>Seicercus burkii</i>	Single at Corbett.
Grey-hooded warbler	<i>Seicercus xanthoschistos</i>	Common flock constituent in the Himalayan foothills.
Striated grassbird	<i>Megalurus palustris</i>	Bad views of one in the grassland at Dhikala (Corbett).
White-throated laughingthrush	<i>Garrulax albogularis</i>	Large flock along the trail at Sat Tal, another near Pangot.
White-crested laughingthrush	<i>Garrulax leucolophus</i>	Recorded at Sat Tal, Quality Inn and Corbett.
Streaked laughingthrush	<i>Garrulax lineatus</i>	Fairly common around Naini Tal.
Chestnut-crowned laughingthrush	<i>Garrulax erythrocephalus</i>	Small flock in the Bajun Valley.
Rusty-cheeked scimitar-babbler	<i>Pomatorhinus erythrogenys</i>	A pair at Pangot (Naini Tal), and another at Snow View. Common at Corbett.
Black-chinned babbler	<i>Stachyris pyrrhops</i>	Recorded at Naini Tal, Sat Tal and Corbett.
Yellow-eyed babbler	<i>Chrysomma sinense</i>	Recorded en route to Ranthambore, Amlidhe, Bharatpur and Corbett.
Common babbler	<i>Turdoides caudatus</i>	Widespread in lowlands but only recorded on four dates.
Large grey babbler	<i>Turdoides malcolmi</i>	Widespread in lowlands (nine dates).
Jungle babbler	<i>Turdoides striatus</i>	Widespread and frequently encountered.
Red-billed leiothrix	<i>Leiothrix lutea</i>	One or two on drive into Corbett.
White-browed shrike-babbler	<i>Pteruthius flaviscapis</i>	Small gang in a flock along the Pangot road.
Blue-winged minla	<i>Minla cyaneoptera</i>	One or two in a flock on the drive into Corbett.

Rufous sibia	<i>Heterophasia capistrata</i>	Three or four noted above Sat Tal near the University.
Lesser whitethroat	<i>Sylvia curruca</i>	Widespread in lowland areas (nine dates).
Orphean warbler	<i>Sylvia hortensis</i>	Single adult seen well at Bharatpur.
Indian bushlark	<i>Mirafra erythroptera</i>	Just one at Amlidhe this year.
Ashy-crowned sparrow lark	<i>Eremopteryx grisea</i>	Small numbers en route to Ranthambore, at Amlidhe and around Bharatpur.
Rufous-tailed lark	<i>Ammomanes phoenicurus</i>	A pair near Amlidhe.
Greater short-toed lark	<i>Calandrella brachydactyla</i>	Large flock seen poorly en route to Amlidhe and better views in the dry area outside Bharatpur.
Crested lark	<i>Galerida cristata</i>	Single in the dry area outside Bharatpur.
Purple sunbird	<i>Nectarina asiatica</i>	Common in lowlands.
Green-tailed sunbird	<i>Aethopyga nipalensis</i>	The sunbirds in the Bajun Valley were this species!
House sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	Present in towns and villages, many resembled the wintering 'Bactrian' race.
Russet sparrow	<i>Passer rutilans</i>	Small numbers at Naini Tal and Sat Tal.
Chestnut-shouldered petronia	<i>Petronia xanthocollis</i>	Only seen on one date in the dry area outside Bharatpur.
White wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	Widespread (10 dates).
White-browed wagtail	<i>Motacilla maderaspatensis</i>	Widespread, usually along rivers.
Citrine wagtail	<i>Motacilla citreola</i>	Widespread (seven dates).
Yellow wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>	Recorded on three dates in small numbers.
Grey wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>	Recorded by waterbodies and rivers throughout (nine dates).
Paddyfield pipit	<i>Anthus rufulus</i>	Recorded only at the wetland en route to Ranthambore.
Tawny pipit	<i>Anthus campestris</i>	Recorded on three dates.
Long-billed pipit	<i>Anthus similis</i>	Single near Amlidhe, and another at Dhikala.
Tree pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>	Dry area outside Bharatpur only this year.
Olive-backed pipit	<i>Anthus hodgsoni</i>	Small number noted at both Ranthambore and Bharatpur. Daily at Corbett.
Rosy pipit	<i>Anthus roseatus</i>	Single at Corbett.
Rufous-breasted accentor	<i>Prunella strophhiata</i>	Two or three on the walk down to the 'low fields' (Naini Tal).
Altai accentor	<i>Prunella himalayana</i>	Small flock at Vinayak.
Black-breasted weaver	<i>Ploceus benghalensis</i>	Small flock encountered in roadside grass on the way back from Bayana.
Baya weaver	<i>Ploceus phillippinus</i>	Small flocks encountered en route to Amlidhe. Plenty of nests of this species from the previous breeding season were seen.
Red avadavat	<i>Amandava amandava</i>	Several small flocks located in grassland at Bharatpur and Bund Bhareta.
Indian silverbill	<i>Lonchura malabarica</i>	Widespread.
Black-headed munia	<i>Lonchura malacca</i>	Small flock at Bharatpur.
Yellow-breasted greenfinch	<i>Carduelis spinoides</i>	A few around Naini Tal.

Common rosefinch	<i>Carpodacus erythrinus</i>	Single bird at Naini Tal. Small numbers noted in the grasslands of Corbett.
Pink-browed rosefinch	<i>Carpodacus rodochrous</i>	Two females on path down to 'low fields' (Naini Tal).
Rock bunting	<i>Emberiza cia</i>	Recorded on the path to the 'Low Fields' at Naini Tal and at Vinayak.
White-capped bunting	<i>Emberiza stewarti</i>	Four one day at Ranthambore. Several near the University above Sat Tal.
Red-headed bunting	<i>Emberiza bruniceps</i>	A few seen along the roads on the day we went to Bund Bhareta and Bayana.

Systematic List Number 2

Mammals

Rhesus macaque	<i>Macaca mulatta</i>	Widespread and common.
Northern plains grey langur	<i>Semnopithecus entellus</i>	The langur at Bayana and Ranthambore was this recently split species.
Terai grey langur	<i>Semnopithecus hector</i>	Whilst the langur on the extension is now considered to be this species.
Tiger	<i>Panthera tigris</i>	Our hard work at Ranthambore was finally rewarded on our eighth and final game drive on the last morning. We had a superb and very close encounter with a five-year old tigress in perfect light in open grassland. A tiger was present in the 'garden' at the Jhoomer Baori during our stay but we failed to connect with it. One female heard 'roaring' at Corbett.
[Leopard]	<i>Panthera pardus</i>	Tracks only at Ranthambore this year. Heard and seen by some of our fellow guests in the 'garden' at the Jhoomer Baori! A dead spotted deer hanging in a tree near Dhikala (Corbett) was attributed to this species.
Jungle cat	<i>Felis chaus</i>	A jungle kitten seen well on our first night drive back from the sandgrouse pool at Ranthambore. Another in the garden of the Jhoomer Baori one morning and one seen well at Bharatpur.
Desert cat	<i>Felis libyca</i>	Single seen very well coming to drink at night at Ranthambore.
Smooth-coated otter	<i>Lutrogale perspicillata</i>	Two hunting in the Ramganga on our last morning in Corbett.
Common palm civet	<i>Paradoxurus hermaphroditus</i>	Single seen well at the temple at Bharatpur one night.
Common grey mongoose	<i>Herpestes edwardsii</i>	Several en route to Amlidhe. Single at Bharatpur.
Ruddy mongoose	<i>Herpestes smithi</i>	A total of three at Ranthambore.
Small Indian mongoose	<i>Herpestes auropunctatus</i>	One watched hunting along the road to Delhi from Bharatpur.
Striped hyaena	<i>Hyaena hyaena</i>	One seen on our way back to the JB (Ranthambore) from Amlidhe at night and two at the same site the next night.
Golden jackal	<i>Canis aureus</i>	Widespread and frequently seen.
Indian fox	<i>Vulpes bengalensis</i>	We saw 10+ on the nightdrive back from Amlidhe.
Indian flying fox	<i>Pteropus giganteus</i>	Single seen at dusk at Ranthambore by Alf and Hannah. Usual large roost inspected at Bund Bhareta.

Naked-rumped tomb bat	<i>Taphozus nudiventris</i>	Small numbers encountered throughout the ruins at Fatehpur Sikri.
Long-winged tomb bat	<i>Taphozus longimanus</i>	Poking our cameras up cracks at Fatehpur Sikri revealed the presence of this species. Less common than naked-rumped tomb bat and much more appropriately dressed.
Five-striped palm squirrel	<i>Funambulus pennanti</i>	Widespread and often very common during the Rajasthan leg.
Indian gerbil	<i>Tatera indica</i>	Single seen well at Ranthambore on night drive. Others seen scampering between holes during the day.
Black rat	<i>Rattus rattus</i>	Single at Sawai Madhopur station.
[Indian porcupine]	<i>Hystrix indica</i>	Tracks and quills at Ranthambore. Quills at Bharatpur.
Rufous-tailed hare	<i>Lepus nigricollis</i>	Small numbers noted at night in the Bharatpur and Ranthambhore/Amlidhe area.
Asian elephant	<i>Elephas maximus</i>	A total of 24 seen on our day inside Corbett, including two protective and rather cross females with a youngster just before dusk. A good year.
Goral	<i>Nemorhaedus goral</i>	Three at Vinayak – a long overdue return to the tour mammal list and a great find by Alf.
Indian gazelle	<i>Gazella gazella</i>	Ranthambhore – good numbers this year, even in the ‘garden’ of the Jhoomer Baori.
Nilgai	<i>Boselaphus tragocamelus</i>	Widespread in lowlands, commonest at Bharatpur and Ranthambhore.
Sambar	<i>Cervus unicolor</i>	Bharatpur, Ranthambhore and Corbett area.
Hog deer	<i>Axis procinus</i>	Single unspotty female wandering around in the open in a riverbed at Corbett was a great find, once we worked out what it was!
Chital	<i>Axis axis</i>	Bharatpur, Ranthambhore and Corbett area.
Muntjac	<i>Muntiacus muntjak</i>	Bajun Valley (1), Quality Inn (1) and Corbett (common).
Wild boar	<i>Sus scrofa</i>	Bharatpur, Ranthambhore and Corbett.

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>	Noted.
Lime	<i>Papilio demoleus</i>	Noted once at Ranthambore.

Pieridae

Psyche	<i>Leptosia nina</i>	Bharatpur.
Common wanderer	<i>Pareronia valeria</i>	Corbett area.
Indian small white	<i>Pieris canidia</i>	Nainital.
Striped albatross	<i>Appias libythea</i>	Photographed by Alan at Amlidhe.
White orangetip	<i>Ixias marianne</i>	Ranthambore, 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.
Common grass yellow	<i>Eurema hecabe</i>	Bharatpur.

Lycaenidae

Common gem	<i>Poritia hewitsoni</i>	Hannah found a resting male that had probably been hit by a bus on the road above Mohan.
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Nymphalidae

Common tiger	<i>Danaus genutia</i>	A few at Ranthambore and Bharatpur.
Plain tiger	<i>Danaus chrysippus</i>	Widespread but not common.
Glassy tiger	<i>Danaus aglea</i>	Several in Corbett.
Blue-spotted crow	<i>Euploea midamus</i>	Corbett.
Common evening brown	<i>Melanitis leda</i>	Corbett.
Common treebrown	<i>Lethe rohria</i>	Corbett.
Tawny coster	<i>Acraea violae</i>	Ranthambore.
Indian red admiral	<i>Vanessa indica</i>	Several around Naini Tal.
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>	Just one from van in first two weeks.
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>	Single at Amlidhe.
Orange-faced sprite	<i>Pseudagrion rubriceps</i>	Small numbers flying at Bharatpur.
a sprite	<i>Pseudagrion microcephalum</i>	Several at Amlidhe.
Shadow emerald	<i>Lestes umbrinus</i>	The brown Lestes noted one day at Ranthambore, inhabits dry grassland.
an emperor	<i>Anax indicus</i>	Good numbers flying at Amlidhe, small numbers at Bharatpur.
Magnificent emperor	<i>Anax immaculifrons</i>	A single overtook us one day in the jeep in Ranthambore.
Indian rock-dweller	<i>Bradinopyga geminata</i>	Single perched on cliff edge at Ranthambore. Numerous at Fatehpur Sikri this year.
Indigo dropwing	<i>Trithemis festiva</i>	Single at Ranthambore. Widespread and common in the north.
Crimson dropwing	<i>Trithemis aurora</i>	Just one at Ramnagar barrage this year.
Dancing dropwing	<i>Trithemis pallidinervis</i>	Widespread.
	<i>Brachythemis contaminata</i>	Small numbers in Rajasthan.
	<i>Crocothemis servilia</i>	Widespread.
Green skimmer	<i>Orthetrum sabina</i>	Widespread.
Pink skimmer	<i>Orthetrum pruinatum</i>	Widespread.
	<i>Sympetrum commixtum</i>	Many around pools and streams in the Bajun Valley.
	<i>Tramea basilaris</i>	Several at Ranthambore and common at Bharatpur this year.
Globe skimmer	<i>Pantala flavescens</i>	Impressive numbers at Ranthambore this year.
a percher	<i>Diplacodes trivialis</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>	Only shed skin and tracks for us at Bharatpur this year.
Northern house gecko	<i>Hemidactylus flaviviridis</i>	Ranthambhore and Fatehpur Sikri.
Chequered keelback	<i>Xenochrophis piscator</i>	Several daily at Ranthambore in the 'spewing cow' pool.
Garden lizard	<i>Calotes versicolor</i>	Singles at Jaipur and Bharatpur only this year.
Brahminy skink	<i>Mabuya carinata</i>	Single at Bund Bhareta.
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, including some huge males.
Softshell spp.	<i>Aspideretes spp.</i>	The big ugly ones! Adults difficult to identify. Those at Amlidhe were probably peacock softshells (<i>Aspideretes hurum</i>) whilst both <i>hurum</i> and <i>gangeticus</i> are present at Bharatpur apparently. There must be a way to separate adults on head pattern but the books are vague sadly.
Indian flap-shell turtle	<i>Lissemys punctata</i>	Seen well at Ranthambore and Bharatpur.
Indian sawback	<i>Kachuga tecta</i>	The spotty one recorded at Bharatpur and Amlidhe.
Common Indian toad	<i>Bufo melanostictus</i>	Alf and Hannah had one outside Lucky's JB shop (Ranthambore) one night.