

Wild India

A Greentours Trip Report December 2016

Lead By Amanda Borrows & Fiona Dunbar

Daily Report by Fiona Dunbar & Species Lists by Amanda Borrows



Day 1 1st December Arrival in Delhi and to Bharatpur, via Kosi Wetland

So we landed without incident, though the pilot had to make two attempts at landing because of the thick fog. Then a long, slow lesson in Indian multi Queues, and we were on our way. After a night flight we were all rather quiet, but even so the journey was punctuated with calls of 'Sarus Cranes'! 'White-throated Kingfisher'! or 'Look! Fifteen sari'd ladies in one Tuktuk'! The hand painted writing on all the gloriously decorated lorries became a regular feature (**Blow Horn...**) Half way we took a break at a place designed to break the journey between Delhi and Agra, offering a quick and quiet break with clean loos, rapidly produced teas and homemade pakoras and samosas, a Shikra on a stone carving, Rose-ringed Parakeets, Plain Tiger and Lime butterflies. We enjoyed our first show by Five-striped Palm Squirrels here too. A couple of miles further and we pulled off the road for a bit of birdwatching at the Kosi Wetland. There

were shallow channels between cereal fields, full of Great and Cattle Egrets, a Brown Crake, White-breasted Kingfisher, White-eared Bulbuls, an unusual Graceful and the more usual Plain Prinia, Citrine Wagtails, Purple Gallinules and a Grey Mongoose along with waders, such as Black-winged Stilts, Red-wattled Lapwings, Common and Spotted Redshanks. Generally while we watched the wildlife, the locals watched us with good humour. A goat effortlessly produced twins in front of us and the goatherd was on hand to move the youngsters to a quiet spot.

There were many roadworks and our journey was slow, but it was still a pleasure to watch the world go by, Indian style, with ladies in saris, tiny fruit and veg stalls on wheels, innumerable tuktuk and moped repair stalls, and the cow pat huts. (ie surprisingly well built and decorated stores of dried cow pats for fuel - stored in huts made of... cow poo.

We arrived at the lovely Bagh hotel, were shown to our huge rooms, before a cheerful supper and bed.

Day 2 2nd December Entrance Road and Barrier, Keoladeo Nursery



After a relatively late start to allow for a good nights sleep we drove the two kilometres to Keoladeo Park. The sanctuary was created 250 years ago and is named after a Keoladeo (Shiva) temple within its boundaries. Initially, it was a natural depression; and was flooded after the *Ajan Bund* was constructed by Maharaja Suraj Mal, then the ruler of the princely state of Bharatpur, between 1726–1763. The bund was created at the confluence of two rivers, the Gambhir and Banganga. The park was a hunting ground for the maharajas of Bharatpur, a tradition dating back to 1850, and duck shoots

were organised yearly in honour of the British viceroys. In one shoot alone in 1938, over 4,273 birds such as mallards and teals were killed by Lord Linlithgow, the then Governor-General of India. The park was established as a national park on 10 March 1982. The area was designated as a bird sanctuary on 13 March 1976 and a Ramsar site under the Wetland Convention in October 1981.

We began by walking the entrance track leading to the park, and despite thick fog we had some wonderful birds. A frequent roadside tree was Kadam or *Mitrogyna parviflora*, and Pilu or *Salvadora persica* with tiny white flowers and little red fruits which were popular with the birds. A very close Black-rumped Flameback was one star, as well as the first of quite a few Coppersmith Barbets. Our first mammal – a Wild Boar rootling just by the track. Plain and Ashy Prinias were very obliging.

We did not have to wait long for our next mammal, a beautiful female Nilgai grazing 10 metres from us, closely followed by a Bluethroat that Amanda spotted. One of the few butterflies – the fog meant an unusually cool day – was a chilly Common Grass Yellow. A Jackal sat calmly in a clearing before loping off.

Stopping by the Salim Ali Information Centre to use the facilities gave us some fantastic close views of Hoopoes, Brahminy Starlings, Jungle Babblers and White-eared Bulbuls and a beautiful posing Plain Tiger. Moving on towards the park, we spent quite some time with a tree which was home to a photogenic family of Spotted Owlets, who showed some fabulous, enraged, bobbing behaviour when an Oriental Honey Buzzard perched too close for comfort. In the Park tree nursery, Ring-necked Parakeets were frequent, and we spent some time at a spot overlooking a lake with Purple Herons, Pied and White-throated Kingfisher. Behind us was a shallow area of water overhung with trees where another Bluethroat stayed for quite sometime giving us lovely views. One of today's Greater Coucal was seen feasting rather gorily on a dead Jackal, then there was the rather more endearing sight of Silverbills bathing in a puddle, and a couple of

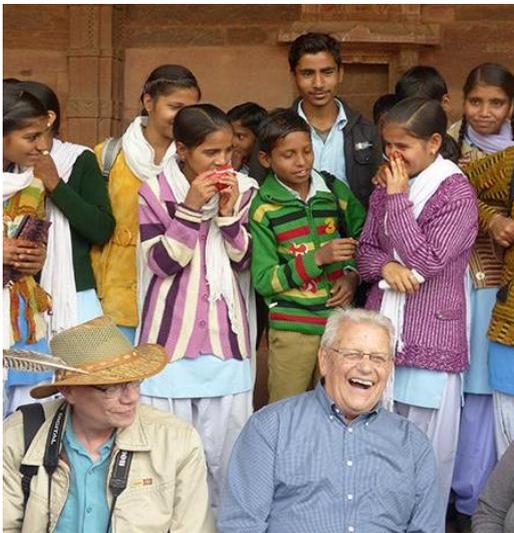
Common Woodshrike were perched on telegraph wire. Circling back round to the information centre we had a hot lunch served in the garden, with the spectacle of circling Painted Storks overhead, and Red-breasted Flycatcher in the trees.

For a gentler afternoon, we boarded cycle rickshaws and entered the reserve proper. Almost immediately we were dismounting again to see a nine foot long Rock Python in the undergrowth!

With shallow water underneath the trees on either side of the track we had excellent views of fishing Cormorants and White-throated Kingfishers. Coming to a more open area we watched good numbers of Coot, Lesser Whistling Duck, Garganey, Shoveler and Ferruginous Duck feeding in flooded grasslands with five female Nilgai in the background. Pygmy and Indian Cormorants and Anhinga sat with basking wings to dry. The mist had now largely cleared and the light much improved. A large group of local school children came past in a line of rickshaws, and then Harish called us over for a really wonderful bird, an Orange-headed Ground Thrush that we were able to watch for several minutes. A richly coloured Rose-ringed Parakeet was well worth photographing as it perched near a hole in a tree trunk in the afternoon sun. Then at the far point of our journey for today, we reached the colony of Painted Storks. We spent a good, long time watching the adults feeding young at the nest, and the inexperienced juveniles practicing feeding just a couple of metres away from us. In amongst these were Purple Gallinules, Night Herons and Black-headed Ibis.

Finally it was time to head back towards the gate and our waiting bus, pausing frequently for the many Nilgai and Chital on the way, including close-up males of both species as well as an unusual tusked Wild Boar.

Day 3 3rd December Fatehpur Sikri and the countryside around Kumbar



Due to the weather (it was still foggy), we changed the itinerary round and spent the morning at the sublime palace of Fatehpur Sikri, as luck would have it, a place James had always wanted to visit. The city was founded in 1569 by the Mughal Emperor Akbar, and served as the capital of the Mughal Empire from 1571 to 1585, when it was abandoned. Fatehpur Sikri is one of the best preserved examples of Mughal architecture in India. We had a local guide to tell us about the three palaces one for each of three queens of the Maharaja, and interspersed we even found the odd bird; A Red-breasted Flycatcher at the entrance, Brown Rock Chat in the palace itself along with nesting Rose-ringed Parakeets which contrasted nicely with the red carved sandstone. Hongie was adopted by a large school party and they entertained each other and everyone else for

some time. We returned for lunch to the Bagh, and after a quick wash and brush up, headed out into the agricultural countryside. Stopping to scan the fields we had our first real taste of the Indian sun as we watched Yellow-wattled Lapwings and a Jackal in the fields. Much closer were a very obliging Hoopoe, Black Drongos, a Southern Grey Shrike and a superb fly-by by a Red-headed Falcon.

A little way further on, passing bespangled tractors and ladies carrying terracotta water pots on their heads, we stopped to scan the fields again. Just fantastic. We had found a group of 10 Indian Coursers, (*I've taken out Stone Curlew as no-one else saw other than us*) and a number of Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse.

Once we had all had scope views of the Coursers we made our way across the dry field to the shade of a tree to watch these beautiful birds from closer range. Once we had had our fill, and been joined by a selection of locals and a motorbike in the middle of the field, we returned to the bus. Indian Rollers and White-breasted Kingfishers were frequent on the wires, too.

Back in Bharatpur, some of us braved the bustle and noise of the town to visit the local shops in search of spices to take home. The noise, the friendly atmosphere and the splendidly dressed wedding band packed into one small tuktuk will long stay in my mind! Little Swifts whirled around the noisy bustle above our heads.



Day 4 4th December Maleh Village, Bayana and Bhund Barata

A gloriously mixed day began with a stroll through the nearby Malah (meaning village of the boatmen). We had a cheerful if somewhat smelly walk through the village itself, which was truly a pleasure, walking amongst locals, tethered water bison, old men smoking hookahs, and infants washing at water pumps. A very smeggy-looking pool was home to a most beautiful group of at least eleven Painted Snipe, whom we could photograph at close quarters. A Bluethroat was an additional bonus. We were standing in an orderly area of drying cow dung cakes, with a slight mist over the fields of tiny chick pea seedlings and acacia

trees behind.

Driving on, we were pleased to see the Aravali Hills after the flat agricultural lands. Stopping at an area of tall grass grown for weaving huts and rattan-type chairs, Harish found us a small flock of gorgeous Red-headed Buntings. Walking along to the train crossing, we regained the bus and moved on to an area of flooded fields where water chestnuts were being harvested. The workers were in amongst Great and Intermediate Egrets, and many other waders like Ruff, Snipe Temminck's Stints, and White-tailed Lapwing.

Bayana. Here an outcrop of red sandstone cliffs were home to a colony of Indian Vultures, and as it is just next to a Government boarding school there was again much excited 'hello-ing' from the school children. Other birds here included Hoopoe, Purple Sunbird, mammals included a happy pig and tiny piglets plus rat, and butterflies included Grass Blue spp, and lots of Plain Tigers. Our lunch stop was just before Bhund Barata, at the Forest Recreation Centre, where we were entertained by a colony of Fruit Bats. There were Red-breasted and Grey-headed Canary Flycatchers too.

At the Bhund or Dam itself, we had frequent White-throated, Pied and Common Kingfishers in good light. The fine sandy dust was good for spoor, and Fi found Jungle Cat prints. We took an ancient path paved with large hand-cut slabs of red sandstone leading to a 10th century fort overlooking the lake, owned by the Maharajah of Bharatpur. With the lake on one side and a rocky hill on the other, and shaded by trees, it was very pleasant. We had great views of a Common Kingfisher and also several White-throated. A Striated Heron flew past very close, which led us to examine the vegetation for such birds, leading us to find a fine Black Bittern. Yellow-eyed Babblers hopped around a bush by the path, and Harish pointed out Grey-breasted Prinia. Butterflies were out in good numbers, with Orange Tips, Plain Tigers, Common Limes and Grass Yellows all around. Dragonflies included Common Green Marsh Hawk, Crimsontail Marsh Hawk and Orange-wing Groundling. We reached a point where the lake waters covered the track, and had to turn back at a noble Banyan tree. Two young goatherds appeared carrying young goat kids who were polite but

curious as to what we were doing. As a finale to the walk, James spotted a pair of large Jungle Cats in the undergrowth next to the path. The return drive was good for mammals too, with Sambar, a fine male Nilgai and a Jackal seen in the fields.

Day 5 5th December Agra Fort and the Taj Mahal

A day of culture! Despite this we managed to spot and Red-headed Ibis in the fields on the way to Agra. collected our cultural guide at a hotel where we also use the facilities and then our bus dropped us at magnificent Agra Fort which we had a couple of to explore. It was the main residence of the emperors Mughal Dynasty till 1638, when Mughal capital was shifted from Agra to Red Fort in Delhi. It is also a UNESCO World Heritage site. 70% is and always has



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used by the military since; the part which is open to the public is the royal quarters. Here there are many splendid rooms; the mirrored bathing room the walls of which are composed entirely of a mosaic of curved mirrors, the many-columned public audience hall with numerous cuspid arches, royal bed chambers with white marble walls inlaid with floral images of irises and *Fritillaria imperialis* made from semi-precious stones like lapis lazuli and carnelian. Lunch was in a pleasant restaurant nearby, after which we took an electric bus to the entrance of the Taj Mahal. This is a building that needs no description, as our guide took quarter of an hour to tell us. Standing on the south bank of the Yamuna river in the Indian city of Agra, It was commissioned in 1632 by the Mughal emperor, Shah Jahan to house the tomb of his favourite wife, Mumtaz Mahal. In the gardens leading up to the famous mausoleum a beautiful Blue Pansy perched, and a Black Kite paddled in a pool where the lawn was being watered. Black Kites and Egyptian Vultures filled the blue skies above, and on the banks of the River Yamuna behind there were Bar-headed Geese, Ruddy Shelduck, several Indian and Egyptian Vultures on a carcass, Avocets, Woolly-necked Storks and River Lapwings.

Day 6 6th December Keoladeo Reserve; Boat Trip in L Block and Sapan Mori to Aghapur



An early start saw us on the bus by 6.30, and in the reserve before dawn. Our boat man arrived and we boarded the little metal punt. The sun was just rising, and the combination of trees and the flooded ponds was very pleasing. At first there were relatively few birds, Paddyfield Warbler, Wryneck and a gorgeous Bay-backed Shrike, Anhingas and Cormorants. Spot-billed Ducks were nice to look at and a Black-necked Stork was spotted over the other side of the earth bund. This was where we left our boat to walk back along an ancient raised brick walkway lined with trees and overlooking flooded grassland on

either side. The pair of Black-necked Storks were much photographed, and wetland birds abounded. Grey and Purple Herons, Pied, White-throated and Common Kingfishers, Anhingas and Pygmy Cormorants, Intermediate and Great Egrets, Red-crested and Common Pochard, Garganey, the list went on. Amongst these and throughout the day we were with grazing Nilgai and Chital in the background, the latter with fawns. A pair of Common Hawk-cuckoo warmed themselves in sunny spots in the trees above us, and Bluethroats regularly popped up. We spent a very long time moving only a short way, with the Black-

necked Storks, three Marsh Harriers and an Indian Eagle all jostling for the remains of a large fish. Harish pointed out plants such as the aquatic Sensitive Plant *Neptunia oleracea*. The floating fern *Azolla pinnata* covered much of the open water.

Making our way to the Monkey temple the priests' elderly assistant called in a large, probably 30 – 40 year old Indian Soft-shelled Turtle *Nilssonia gangetica*, around a metre long. A large troop of Macaques were here also, so we opted to have our excellent picnic lunch at the Information centre garden, where butterflies were becoming active and included Common Rose, many Yellow Orange Tips and Pioneers.

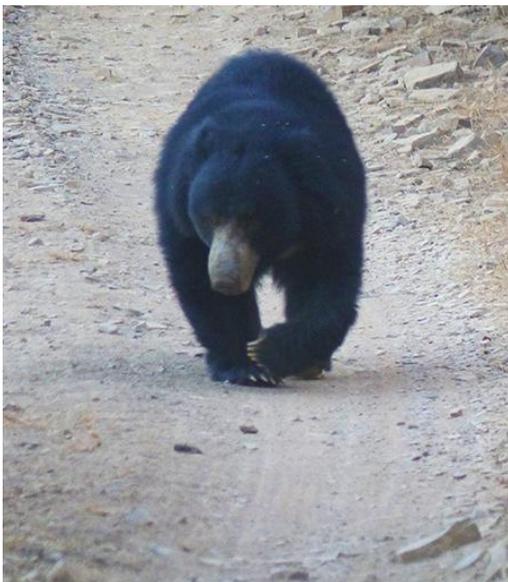
For the afternoon we had the company of our bicycle rickshaws, so we were transported comfortably along until there was a new sight to see, when we would descend to observe and photograph. A lovely sunlit family of Grey Francolin, many male and female Nilgai feeding quietly, Sambar and Chital, both female and large-horned males, one or two Jackals. Over the course of the afternoon there were frequent good views of Osprey, Indian Spotted Eagle and Booted Eagle, an Imperial was a bit of a bonus, even at a distance. We passed the Painted Stork Heronries once more, and one of the rickshaw drivers spotted a Black Bittern for us. Having reached the central temple of the reserve, we mounted the watch tower to look out over the scene. Although a wonderful spot to stay in, we quite quickly as the Sarus Cranes could be heard not too far away. What a time we had! The Cranes danced, and fed, and called, and danced. One must not forget the backdrop of Nilgai, headed Ibis, Spoonbill and Comb-billed Ducks. Eventually we made our way back, sinking gratefully into the cycle rickshaws and trying not to spot too many things on the way out, though the and Jackals on the track were hard to ignore. A visit to the book shop (lovely paintings of birds in reserve, and a good selection of wildlife books), back to the Bagh. What a fab day.



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Day 7 7th December

To Ranthambhore



Our planned early morning birding around Keoladeo was thwarted by heavy fog – on the news as 120m thick over Delhi! This also made the train very slow, so we opted for our reserve plan and drove to Ranthambhore in our bus. The fog thinned and stopped quite quickly and we people-watched for the rest of the journey.

We reached the Tiger Den in time for lunch before heading straight out for our first entrance into the park. Ranthambhore was established as the *Sawai Madhopur Game Sanctuary* in 1955 by the Government of India and was declared one of the Project Tiger reserves in 1973. Ranthambore became a national park in 1980. In 1984, the adjacent forests were declared the *Sawai Man Singh Sanctuary* and *Keladevi Sanctuary*, and in 1991 the tiger reserve was enlarged to include the Sawai Man Singh and Keladevi sanctuaries.

We had three jeeps, each assigned to a different zone of the park; these are allocated in strict rotation to prevent richer clients hogging the best routes and drivers. I was in Zone 3 with Jenny & Jean, but Jean wasn't feeling too bright so had decided to sit this afternoons' activity out. We entered through a gorge and then under/through one of the largest of the many stately Banyans of the park, the cliffs topped with the fortress walls of the 11 hundred year old fort and palace complex that is Ranthambhore. Our zone is a particularly scenic one with old temples and palace buildings scattered amongst lakes and arid grassy areas. We saw few birds, but of note were Spotted Dove, a pair of Woolly-necked Storks and a White-throated Fantail. Two fluffy Spotted Owlets were sleeping in a round hole in a tree trunk a few metres above the ground. Chital and Sambar grazed everywhere, with females and small calves, and males with antlers of varying magnificence. We drove to a lake area and stopped by the shores, where Sambar were grazing with Pond Herons on their backs. Then a Sambar warning call from across the lake and we were on high alert – the Sambar ran from an area of woodland and... there was a Tiger, a large, muscular male striding with deceptive speed through the small trees on the far edge of the lake. After walking for some way, he settled down. We waited and were rewarded by spotting him several more times as continued his progress. We were quite happy where we were, and waited still, surrounded by Sambar who walked and fed within a couple of metres of us, until it was time to head out to the gate – all vehicles must exit the park by 5.30 sharp. The other side of the lake was actually zone four, and Amanda's jeep were having close-up views of the tiger! We stopped for sunlit Chital and Sambar, the sunset, crocodiles etc. Then our driver got very excited – he had spotted a Sloth Bear ahead on our track. We held on tight as he hared round bends to get us to the right area, then slowed right down, and there was the bear, glossy, healthy and completely unconcerned lumbering down the track towards us. We reversed out of his way as he made his way down the track, and were able to watch and photograph him for ten minutes before the time restrictions of the park meant that we really had to move off. Fantastic, and rarer to see here than Tiger. The population is apparently doing very well as the reserve matures and the woodland increases.

Meanwhile, Amanda's van with James and Hongie were in Zone 4, adjacent to Zone 3 and had been, watching the same Tiger at close range, as he casually wandered along spraying the occasional tree, before heading to the lake to drink. From here he headed for the woodland area, scanning the area to see if we could see him better we could see Fi & Jenny in their vehicle. We also had Plum-headed Parakeets, Painted Spurfowl, Wild Boar, and Mugger 'sunbathing' as our guide put it along the lake edge. Not to forget the usual large groups of deer suspects.

Harish's van with Mark Alison and Alex were in Zone five, which had a lot of foot traffic from locals heading up to the temples within the reserve. Their highlights included a superb Brown Fish Owl spotted by Mark, and Ruddy Mongoose.



Day 8 8th December Ranthambhore

This morning was a not too chilly early start after tea and biscuits. Coats hats and blankets donned, we were in the canter and inside the park by 7, in Zone 2. This took us through more superb scenery with large and beautiful *Ficus bengalensis* (Banyan), *Ficus racemosus* (Gular) and *Ficus religiosa* (Peepal). By the stony rivers were Wild Date Palms *Phoenix sylvestris* and Flame of the Forest *Butea monosperma*, and the delicate leaved *Anageissus pendula*. Interspersed with the forest areas were open grassy areas dominated by the long golden tussocks of *Veitivaria zizoides* grass. This morning we had some really excellent views of Sambar - antlered males in pursuit of smaller females, young fawns were

frequent. The Chital stags in amongst the does with small fawns had very fine antlers, some in velvet and some not. Wild Boar were frequent, and there were a number of Nilgai, though more skittish than at Bharatpur. Troops of Northern Plains Langur crunched hard fruits, and the Chital were happy to clear up fallen leaves and fruit below. Although we could hear the warning bark of Sambar, we were not to see the cause this morning. Birds of note included Painted Spurfowl, Small Minivets, White-fronted Drongo and an excellent spot by Mark, a sunlit Grey Nightjar. Back at the Tiger Den, a large brunch was served and then we caught up on lists while a Common Tailorbird flitted in the shrubbery.

The afternoon Jeeps saw us in Zones 2, 6 and 4. Zone 2 was relatively quiet, if you do not count all the superb Chital, Sambar, and Wild Boar. Twice we had fantastic Black-backed Flamebacks, two and then one, twice had Painted Spurfowl, a photographic pair the first time. Some great Mugger Crocodiles, scenery, the ramparts of the fort topping the red sandstone cliffs. By one lake as we waited for warning calls, there were some lovely Plum-headed Parakeets and Yellow-footed Green Pigeons on the tops of nearby trees. On the way out, we were very close to, but could not really see, a tiger in the grass.

Meanwhile in Amanda's van we were heading to Zone 6 a twenty minute drive through the town of Sawai Madhopur at one point we got stuck in a bit of a traffic jam of buses, bikes & very decorated camels. This zone is dominated by valleys, dry riverbeds and dry plateaus. One area is particularly abundant in *Diospyros melanoxylon* a favourite fruit of Sloth Bear, and as if on que we were watching a large male Sloth Bear casual making its way through the tree shade, just our van how fantastic was that. The views from here were amazing, but no Tiger today. We had good views of Rufous-tailed Lark, Alexandrine Parakeet with a Plum-headed perched above, giving a good example of size difference, along with the usual deer suspects. Harish's van spent an hour and forty minutes watching a male Tiger rolling around and dozing, tail twitching, around 15 m from the van, superb.

Day 9 9th December Ranthambore – Canter in Zone Afternoon Jeeps in Zones 1, 2, 5

Our morning canter started well with Mark spotting a Black-backed Flameback at the gate to the reserve. were fresh Tiger (heading into zone three, darnit) as well as fresh Sloth Bear, Palm Civet and Jungle Cat on the same stretch. A little further on you could see a tiger had lain down and there were fresh Striped Hyaena footprints. Alison spotted a Jungle Cat in the vegetation and most of us got a good view as it climbed and over a tree stump. We heard plenty of Sambar and Northern Plains Langur warning calls, and the Tiger was clearly nearby, sleeping in the long grass, but did not emerge for us. However we did have a tree full of Yellow-footed Green Pigeons by a lake, and some active White-browed Fantails. A pair of large Alexandrine Parrots displayed their red shoulder patches from a top, and a couple of jungle crows sat above us, imitating the Treepies biscuit-begging behaviour and showing their very hooked bills. A nice sight over the lake was a quartering female Pallid Harrier. We returned to the hotel for a brunch of omelettes, puri breads and chickpea dhal.



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In the afternoon we were in jeeps. My jeep was assigned to Zone 5, and as there was word of a Tiger seen at the edge of the zone we were driven quickly over a steep and rocky track to where it had been seen. We waited, hearing the warning calls from Sambar that could smell the sleeping Tiger, but she did not move. We decided to check some other areas and come back later. The wooded valley was home to some very fine Ghost, Pipal and Banyan trees, under which there were plenty of Sambar, Chital and Langurs. We stopped for a pair of Black-backed Flamebacks, and for a vulture overhead – new for the trip, King or Red-headed. Having checked back on the sleeping tiger – no movement – it was time to head out of the park. One final treat for the afternoon was a Chinkara (Indian Antelope) grazing on an arid hillside.

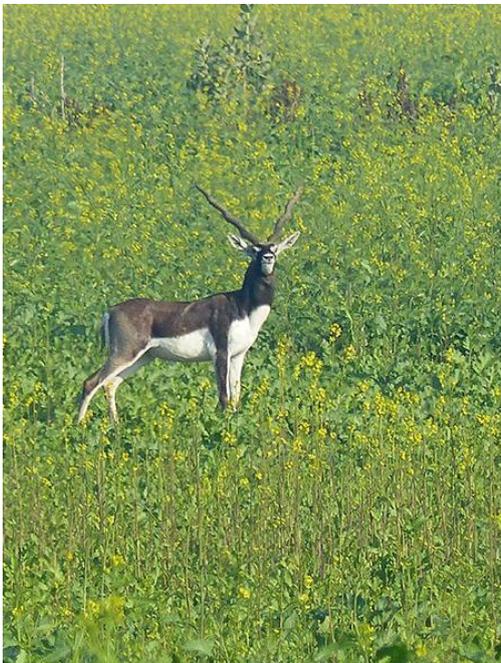
Harish's van were in Zone 2. They had some good birding with White-headed and Indian Vultures, Crested Serpent Eagle, Shikra and Red-breasted Flycatcher. Their van also had fantastic views of a Jungle Cat posing nicely in the middle of the road, superb.

Amanda, James and Hongie had started on the G and Ts by the time we arrived back at the hotel, brought on by the half hour they had spent in Zone 1 with a magnificent male Leopard and a Tigress that chased it off, do I need to say anymore than that? Cheers.

Unfortunately, Jean tripped over a step this evening, and took a tumble.

Day 10 10th December The Blackbuck Area and Sawai Madipur Dam, Zone 5 and a Night Drive

Today the jeeps took us out into rural Rajasthan. It was a pleasure to pass through the fields and villages on small roads, seeing the goings-on of village life. Houses and camels decorated with beautiful drawings and patterns in the Rajasthani style for Diwali. Motorbikes being washed in the ponds, ladies carrying lunch out to the workers in the fields, balanced perfectly on their heads, necklaced livestock being watered at the



village pump, school children in their uniforms on the way to school. Few tourists go here so we were treated to smiles and waves from everyone. There were Bay-backed, Long-tailed and Great Grey Shrikes, along with Red-collared Doves on wires and bushes, along with Rollers and White-breasted Kingfishers. Isabelline Shrike was a good find, by Amanda. We saw flocks of Baya and Black-breasted Weavers, and Ashy-crowned Sparrow Lark. After much searching in fields planted with chickpea and wheat seedlings and mustard in yellow flower, we found two Blackbuck, which, after we had all seen them in the scope, we walked quietly toward along the field edge for a closer view. We got one field closer before the older male got up and stood facing us. We stopped and watched them for a couple of minutes before they turned and bounded effortlessly away through the yellow mustard flowers.

The jeeps then headed to the dam cross-country mostly via dirt tracks. We stopped for birds and scenery. Sharing the tracks with us were a few motorbikes, the odd car, an oxen cart pulled by two oxen with painted horns, and a few camel carts. A dry area had three hoopoes, Silverbills and Pied Bushchat. A few Painted Storks flew overhead, and we stopped to admire some of the houses painted with stylized peacocks and other designs. In a village pond surrounded by an earth dam there were Avocets and other waders and a cheerful audience of local children. Then Sorwal Bund, a reservoir so large that the far side was barely visible. Driving along the road at the top of

the earth dam, there were numerous White-throated Kingfishers, a Muggler floating log-like in deep water, and distant Pelicans. The banks at the far side hosted a flock of Bar-headed Geese, feeding Black-tailed Godwits, Comb-headed Duck, large flocks of the wonderful Pintail, while River Terns gracefully flew by the vehicles. Looking on the other side of the dam there were Purple Herons, and Green Bee-eaters on the wires. The crops just here sported sari'd scarecrows to discourage the geese!

The return drive was cross country through arable land and small villages, never have I been waved and greeted by so many people in passing, and we waved and returned greetings. Amanda's vehicle stopped for a pair of inquisitive Grey Mongoose, which also turned out to be a good spot for birds with Common Babbler, Spanish Sparrow, Grey Bush & Pied Chat, along with Desert Wheatear hopping in the dry fields. Moving further along we slowed next to a grassy field which turned out to be the cemetery. A good number of Indian Thick-knee sat or stood still, watching us watching them.

In the afternoon we all were in a canter together in Zone 5. It was quite on the warning call and stripy cat front, but we saw lots of activity from the Sambar and Chital. We stopped underneath a scarred tree bough to admire a pair of sunning Collared Scops Owl. We often stopped to check out the mixed flocks of Small Minivet, White-browed Fantail and Drongos - Ashy and White-bellied, with the nosy rebels Jungle and Large Grey Babblers chattering around the bushes underneath. The Rufous Treepies would land on the vehicle in hope of scraps.

After supper, we went out for a night drive in two Jeeps. Within a few minutes one jeep had fantastic views of a Striped Hyaena in a clearing near the local village. Unfortunately the following jeep was a bit too late. Later on in the evening we watched possibly two Indian Foxes, one wearing a tracking collar of some sort. I set the trap camera to look out over the road just by the hotel...

**Day 11 11th December Banas River
Canter in Zone Three**

...and there were pictures of a Desert Wild cat on it in the morning.

After Breakfast we headed out towards Banas River area along small roads and tracks. Enroute were quite a number of shouldered Kites. Our route took us the boundary wall of the far side of Ranthambore reserve. Stopping at a sandy area we had some great birds, Yellow-eyed Babbler, Variable Wheatear, Crested Bunting and also a of Grey Mongooses. We also had fantastically close views of Greater



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Coucal feeding on the top of a hay or rather millet stack. The 'traffic jam' in one village consisted of a herd of goats, two camel carts, a couple of water buffalo, us and a couple of motorbikes. In this village were three gorgeous, large Alexandrine Parakeets feeding on seeds on some scrubby shrubs.

We emerged quite suddenly from a small village onto the banks of the meandering Banas River with sandy banks. It was quite a skill for the jeeps to cross the sandy banks and then ford the river but we were soon on the other side. The birds attracted to this habitat included Asian Openbills, flocks of Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse, Rufous-tailed Lark, Rosy Starling and River Terns. We did not stop too much on the way back other than for the odd photo stop, and just about had time to visit a Women's craft cooperative set up to

provide work for some of the villages who have been moved out of the Park to create new zones in recent years.

Our canter took us into scenic Zone 3. We drove past the old hunting lodges, lakes and temple from the days when the palace was occupied. We were admiring a particularly fine view of a temple surrounded by a lake with a Muggar Crocodile on the bank and an Anhinga drying its wings on one of the turrets when a Sambar warning cry sounded and we were off. A few hundred metres on our driver spotted the Tiger – a female known as Arrowhead – and we watched her strolling through tall golden grass and by a lake, sniffing trees and marking her territory, before she disappeared into the long grass once more. We waited for a little while for her to re-emerge, but the news of the sighting was out and other jeeps and canters began to arrive, so we headed off, not least as there were loudly buzzing honey bees around. We watched families of Wild Boar, Chital feeding on berries dropped by Peacocks, Sambar sparring, and then circled back, but she had not been seen. Moving on we watched Spotted Owlet, White-browed and White-throated Fantail, along with Black, Ashy & White-bellied Drongo. There were some younger Muggers on the edge of a lake. Last thing before we headed out of the park, we heard the unmistakable sound of the young female tiger calling. We had arranged for Jean to be taken by taxi to the Womens Co-operative for a spot of shopping.



Day 12

12th December

Ranthambhore

Our last trip to the Park was in Zone 1 where Amanda's van had seen the leopard and tiger. We had a very quiet morning, and although we heard warning calls, the tiger did not emerge. Even the usual running buffet of tiger food was largely missing. There was a gorgeous Brown Fish Owl that we had very good views of, a sunlit Spotted Owlet, and a Sambar Stag rubbing the last of his velvet off on a tree. We also spent some time with a family of Northern Plains Langurs feeding on berries, with some adventurous and playful youngsters and a mother nursing a very small baby. There were Plum-headed Parakeets and Fi spotted if what briefly a lovely Aquamarine Flycatcher. A comfort break to stretch our legs met with numerous begging from Rufous Treepies, noisy Large Grey & Jungle Babblers, before we were distracted by a booming Dusky Eagle Owl, but we couldn't find it.

We loaded our bus which had reappeared, had brunch and said our goodbyes to the Tigers Den, setting off for the drive to Jaipur.

A muslim festival meant we were diverted round the city, but we arrived at the Trident Hotel by 5.30. After a brief walk along the bustling lake-front to photograph the Summer Palace in the lake, and take in the fascinating range of fast food stalls including old-fashioned glass bottles with glass marble stoppers. We returned to enjoy the luxury of the hotel and a very good dinner.

Day 13

13th December

Jaipur, and the train to Nainital

This morning we headed out in the bus to view the nearby Palace of the Winds. A stunning façade, it was purportedly built so the ladies of the harem could look out on the activities in the streets below. From there we walked – or in Jean's case was wheeled - past the emporiums to Jantar Mantar. Completed in 1724, it consists of 13 architectural astronomy instruments. The site is one of five built by Maharaja Jai Singh II of Jaipur, from 1723 onwards, as he was given by Mughal emperor Muhammad Shah the task of

revising the calendar and astronomical tables. The primary purpose of the observatory was to compile astronomical tables, and to predict the times and movements of the sun, moon and planets. Some of these purposes nowadays would be classified as astronomy.

This is next to the City Palace, still one of the 14 homes of the 18 year-old Maharaja of Jaipur, which has one section open to the public as a museum. The textile display of Royal clothing is quite beautiful, and the weapons room stunning. There is a hall where the Jaipur art of Miniature painting is demonstrated, and of course the wares available to buy. The quality is very good and the group bought a number of lovely paintings.



We had a relaxed lunch at a lovely old hotel, where an old photo of a chariot pulled by two Blackbuck caught my eye, and a White-breasted King Fisher fished the lotus pool next to our table while we ate. We said our goodbyes to Jean, who was flying home as her bruised back would not allow further jeep rides. Then to the station, and after a wait, on to the train! The first class waiting room was very well equipped with western loos, a shower and power sockets for charging. We made our way through the not too crowded platform and with the help of porters load our luggage into our cabin. We were in aircon sleeping carriages, so after a late supper (we were late into Delhi where our packed suppers were being put on the train) we retired to our bunks and mostly got a reasonable nights sleep.

Day 14 14th December
Kathgodem to The Den

Harish woke those still asleep at 7 as we near to Kath Nagar station. We donned layers of clothing, decanted from the train were met by our jeep drivers. All the luggage went in one, we went in the other It was rather chilly in the open jeeps, but with enough layers!. We stopped for a hot masala chai, where Fi pointed out a Striated along with Grey-headed Canary Flycatchers. Overlooking a dam we scanned through the flock of Ruddy Shelduck, as we checked the boulder area for Ibisbill, but no luck there.



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However, we saw our first Plumbeous Water Redstart. Stops after that were for birds such as a Steppe Eagle (there had been six early but it was still misty), a tree full of gorgeous Spangled Drongos with curved, spatulate tails. Scarlet Minivets flashed from branch to branch, Red-whiskered Bulbuls and a very obliging Jungle Owlet. A welcome hot breakfast was next at a restaurant in Ramangar, and then into the buffer zone of the Jim Corbett Tiger Reserve. Next we pulled over and parked at a spot by the Kosi River. Walking through the trinket stalls we followed a walkway which led to a temple to the goddess Garjia, the local Hindu goddess of the river, to whom Hindus will go to be blessed on their wedding day or other momentous occasions. The atmosphere was cheerful and lively, with sparkling sari'd ladies preparing themselves by the rivers' edge and helping each other on with jewellery and adornments, youngsters bathing in the river downstream, and a flow of worshippers crossing the walkway to the temple which

stood on the top of a jagged rocky outcrop. It was while enjoying this background, Amanda spotted three flying Ibisbill which landed conspicuously in the boulders, and eventually everyone got to see them through the scope. During all the directions for the Ibisbill Amanda spotted a Wallcreeper fly over the bridge landing on an exposed area of cliff, where another flew off. Jenny found a wonderful White-capped Water Redstart below us on the bridge, lovely. Leaving this spot we soon after had lovely views of a great bird – two Blue-bearded Bee-eaters on a wire.

Driving through the buffer zone with the river on one side and in forest dominated by Sal Trees, which our driver was just telling us were good for woodpeckers when we came across a flurry of activity. We were surrounded with so many woodpeckers - 15 plus individuals with Grey-capped Pygmy, Brown-fronted, Lesser & Greater Yellownape, Grey-headed, Himalayan and Black-backed Flameback. There were fantastic views of all of these plus Scarlet Minivets, Indian Golden Oriole, Indian Nuthatch and my favourite, Green Magpie.

Back in the jeeps we followed the Kosi River until reaching the Den, where we would stay for the night.

The chalets are set in gardens overlooking the rocky Kosi River below and steep sided forested hills beyond. Map and Jezebel butterflies were on the garden flowers. After lunch we walked down to the boulder river over which the clear water ran. There were a good number of Bronzed Drongos, a troupe of Macaques, and James saw a number of Wild Boar very close who headed downhill towards the river. Mark pointed out Himalayan Bulbuls, perched on the various bushes, while Blue Whistling Thrushes scurried in the undergrowth. Along the river there were numerous Plumbeous Water Redstarts, White-capped Water Redstart, Common Kingfisher and a pair of Brown Dippers.

As we stood bird-watching on the stony shores of the river, we clearly heard a Sambar warning call, and the monkeys were shouting too – sure signs that a Leopard was nearby. The Wild Boar seemed reluctant to go into the forest there and stayed out on the edge of the stony river bed, keeping one eye on us and one

on the forest. The largest male had a truly magnificent crest of bristles running down his neck and back, and these beasts looked very different to the smaller, dustier boars of Ranthambore. The jeep came and collected those who did not want to walk back up the hill; the rest of us strolled back, and saw a Muntjac very well in the undergrowth on the way.



Day 15 15th December The Jim Corbett Tiger Reserve and Dikala Forest Lodge

After a relatively late breakfast we boarded the jeeps and set off for the interior of the reserve. Jim Corbett is the oldest national park in India and was established in 1936 as Hailey National Park, and was the first to come under the Project Tiger initiative.

We started with good views of one of the common but beautiful Blue Whistling Thrush, then a pair of Tawny Fish Owls, lovely views, a pair of Grey-headed Woodpeckers and sunlit Pin-tailed Pigeons. There were several flocks of noisy White-crested Laughing Thrushes over the morning.

There was some old-style Indian form filling to do at the gate, and we were in. Corbett is three-quarters woodland, with the bouldery rivers Kosi and Ramangar running through, with more open areas (10 %) of grassland and elephant grass. As soon as we were through the gate there was the sound of the warning call of Sambar. Probably a Leopard nearby. We saw fresh footprints of both male and female Tiger. Stopping at a view-point over the river there were Mugger Crocodiles on the bank and easily visible in the clear blue water below, around a dozen huge black catfish around 1m20 long with large whiskered heads. The footprints of a large male tiger and a flock of Long-tailed Minivets were here also. At a second view point Mugger and Gariel could be seen in the water, the latter a fish-eating croc with a very long, thin snout. Amongst a flock of Ruddy Shelduck were around ten Black Storks. Harish pointed out the delightful Black-throated Tits & Red-billed Leothrix.

We arrived at the Forest Rest House and after more tedious form-filling, took our bags to our spartan rooms before lunch. The restaurant here is more efficient than elegant but the food was good. The domestic Elephants used for game viewing were walking past with their mahouts and a Slaty Grey Woodpecker was calling. There was time to scan the panorama of the river and elephant grass with the forested hills behind (a herd of Chital resting in the foreground) before heading out for a game drive. Very near the camp a male tiger had been seen half an hour before and also in the morning, but was not moving when we were there. Then, round the corner, and across the river, wild Indian Elephants. In the end we counted around twenty grazing, including a tusker and a number of babies, one of which was suckling. Raptors included a Pallas's Fish Eagle, Upland Buzzard and an unusual and rare sighting of a Rufous-bellied Eagle. Our two jeeps were the first to cross a partly-submerged wooden bridge – great fun – and great views of White-headed and Plumbeous Water Redstarts. Nice hot supper and then an early bed with extra blankets.

Day 16 16th December
Corbett Tiger Reserve

The Jim



Masala Chai and coffees and then up the elephant mounting block. The elephants and their mahouts arrived and we climbed the two flights of stairs to the platform from which to board the elephant. Almost straight away, in a stand of large Sal trees by the Forest Lodge, we could hear Slaty-grey Woodpeckers, and were lucky enough to spend some time watching a family of around five woodpeckers chasing each other round the bole. For the first three quarters of an hour the mist was lifting slowly, and we stopped for odd birds such as a Crested Serpent Eagle and admired the scenery. We crossed the river – the elephants picking

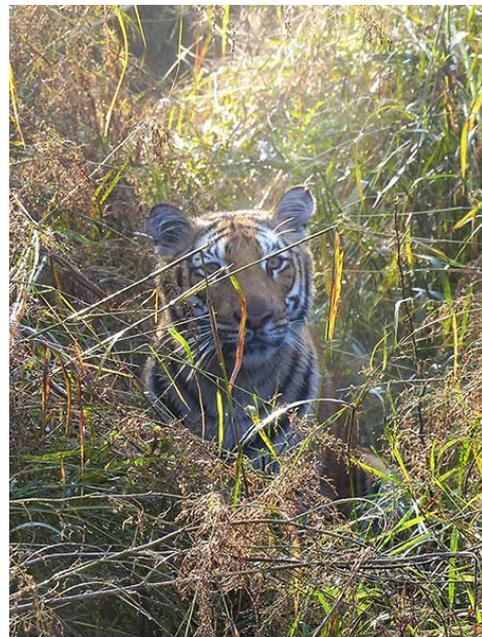
their way slowly over the rounded stones in the water – and into the plain of Elephant Grass on the opposite bank to the lodge. There were flocks of Brown-headed Laughing Thrushes, Black-shouldered Kites, and a Baya Weaver nest hanging from an inverted basket of elephant grass. Egrets flew upstream in the morning light, and the drops of dew highlighted everything. Then a call came over the walkie talkie and our Mahout Mohamed said a tiger had been seen in our area. Our elephant took us at slightly increased and swaying pace and must have been heading straight for the tiger because he suddenly appeared directly in front of us! The mahout told us to be quiet and skilfully moved us into a position where we could see the tiger watching us. The other two elephants arrived and were carefully positioned for views. What a moment. We were so close. It was a male tiger known as Padwalai, quite young, about 4 years old. The mahouts took us away after a few minutes and Padwalai was left in peace. Regaining the jeep track, the

mahut spotted what he thought was an oriole in a tree top, but in fact it was a Black-crested Bulbul, oriole-yellow with a black crested head. A Hog Deer was glimpsed, and there were one or two Muntjac. We met up with Amanda who had not gone out on the elephants, for breakfast. She had been birding round the enclosure and enjoying the sight of the mist lifting over the river as the sun came up, and watching the herd of wild elephants grazing over the river, along with a very large herd of Chital.

After breakfast we were out in the jeeps. . As we rounded a corner, we came into view of Wild Elephants across the river. A little further on there was a group of five around 40m from us, beautiful in the long yellow grass and blue hills behind. A Besra sat in plain sight giving us time to puzzle out an identification, and back at the Slaty-backed Woodpeckers tree, Blue-bearded Bee-eaters were flashing in and out in the sunlight, with a Black-backed Flameback giving good views at the base. Amanda and I went to take some photos of the Blue-bearded Bee-eaters, fantastic before lunch as they were in a Eucalyptus inside the compound, and also had an Oriental Barred Owl!

We started the jeep drive with a selection of vultures – Cinereous was new for the trip, Red-headed and Himalayan Griffon too. Around the same time an Osprey flew back and forth over the river, hunting.

Butterflies were out in the afternoon sun including Common Jezebel and Glassy Tiger. We stopped at a guard house from which we could look back across the valley at Dhikala in the distance. We could use the there, and were able to stretch our legs and do a bit of birdwatching in the trees at the back of the enclosure, were full of Velvet-fronted and Indian Nuthatches and of woodpeckers, - Black-backed Flameback, Grey-capped, Grey-headed and Fulvous-breasted, also and Spangled Drongos. In the mid-distance, between Dhikala and the river, a cloud of sunlit dust was rising group of dust-bathing wild Elephants. Moving on there Blue-throated and Lineated Barbets in a tree, and a flock of sunlit Plum-headed Parakeets, a pair of Pallas’s Eagles. Allison spotted a female Hen Harrier quartering the dry grass. A second stop at a forest guard house supposedly for a comfort stop, but all the drivers whipped their mobiles out and made use of the signal which is mostly absent from Dhikala. Lesser Coucal was seen, and again Harishes jeep were in position to see a pair of Yellow-throated Martens. Our guide pointed out a Brown Fish Owl at this spot too. A lovely afternoon to compliment a wonderful morning.



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Day 18 17th December

Corbett and to Naini Tal

Our last game drive in wonderful Corbett. A Lesser Fish Eagle flew right past us downstream as we sat in our jeep by the river. Then a flurry of excitement – there was an otter in the river. The river itself was fast and shallow and we watched and photographed the Smooth-coated Otter for quite a while. We were perfectly positioned to look down into the clear water of the rapids and watched it hunting and catching fish at incredibly high speed, then sitting to eat each catch with very long white teeth. Fantastic. There was a perched Lesser Fish Eagle a Stork-billed Kingfisher at the same time. We returned to Dhikala compound to drop off our local guides, use the facilities and load the luggage into the jeep before taking a leisurely drive out of the park, stopping to bird along the way. We had a great mixed party with Long-tailed Minivets, Velvet-fronted Nuthatch, Lesser Yellownappe, numerous Bar-winged Flycatchers, Black-headed Orioles and Grey-headed Pygmy and Fulvous-breasted Woodpeckers. At last we found the Pied Falconet

we had been searching for! Harishes jeep had also spotted Puff-throated Babbler and Rusty-cheeked Scimitar Babbler. Jungle Fowl, and even better, two male and one female Kalij Pheasants were seen by the track. Then out through the gate and back to the roads and – the sound of horns which had been completely absent for three days as they are banned in the park. A quick stop was made to check out a White-rumped Vulture site, but the birds were out enjoying the day. However we had superb views of Blue-throated, Lineated and Coppersmith Barbets, along with Common Tailorbird, Spangled Drongo and Plum-headed Parakeet. The spot proved an opportunity to buy Corbett Park fleeces. Approaching Naini Tal we started to climb and the scenery changed dramatically from flat arable to increasingly steep and pine-covered mountainous slopes. The views are stunning. Arrived at Nainital (having stopped for more Kalij Pheasants and Grey Treepie) around five and settled into our very nice rooms at the Vikram Vintage Inn.



Day 18 18th December The Vantage Point and Naini Tal

After an early cooked breakfast we were back in the jeeps armed with thick blankets as the sun was not up yet! We climbed up and up on the winding tarmac road above Naini Tal, with breath-taking vistas at every turn, looking back over the town and its lake, and better still, over a series of misty hills which ranged on and on, up and up until the furthest line was the snow-capped Himalayas, The dawn light was perfect and many photos were taken at various points. We started the birding off with lovely views of Striated and White-cheeked Laughing Thrushes in noisy parties. Amanda had set us the goal of either thirty new birds or more in total than the last Wild India tour, so the former was a good start! Next was one of two brief views of Gorial or Mountain Goat, Russet Sparrow (new again) and gorgeous Black-headed Jay and Eurasian Jay (new and new). Spot-winged Tits were very pretty (new). Then Harish heard a call and we were all straining to see into the vegetation under the pine trees. After a few minutes, Harish had spotted them – a stunning male Koklass Pheasant. We caught glimpses of this rarely seen beauty as it made its way down the valley by the side of the road, and all of us got good views of the female too. Flocks of Altai Accentors flew around a rock face, and shortly after we stopped to scan an area of open golden grassland where Cheer Pheasant can be found. There was a photographer at the same spot who had been waiting for two days and not seen it. There were butterflies including Indian Tortoiseshell and a Rock Agama. Moving a little further on we stopped and had a really lovely stroll the quiet road, listening and watching and admiring view and the forest. There were some wonderful – Himalayan Woodpecker (new) stunning little Black-throated Tit, Rufous Sibia (new), very nice views, Bar-Treecreeper(new), Kashmir Nuthatch (new) and bright Grey-headed Warblers. We were at the highest point we were going to. Raptors included a Steppe Eagle, Upland Buzzard, and Eurasian Sparrowhawk. Heading down to a mountain village where we were to have



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there were several active flocks of Laughing Thrushes, including Striated Laughing Thrush.

Our lunch had been driven up to us by the third jeep, so we sat in the sun with chairs brought out from the little shop and had a very good hot meal of rice, chapatis, dal, muttar paneer and potatoes cooked with coriander, with water or masala chai. Himalayan Griffons circled low over the hilltop behind.

From this spot we walked down a side road, nice to be able to stretch legs again. Alex and I saw a Muntjac. Although the middle of the day, and birds were not active, those that we saw were sitting or feeding and we all got a good look at them. Particularly the pair of big, bright, Large Barbets – the books really do not do them justice – feeding on red berries. Red-billed Blue Magpies were another goodie, along with Streaked Laughingthrush and Rock Bunting.

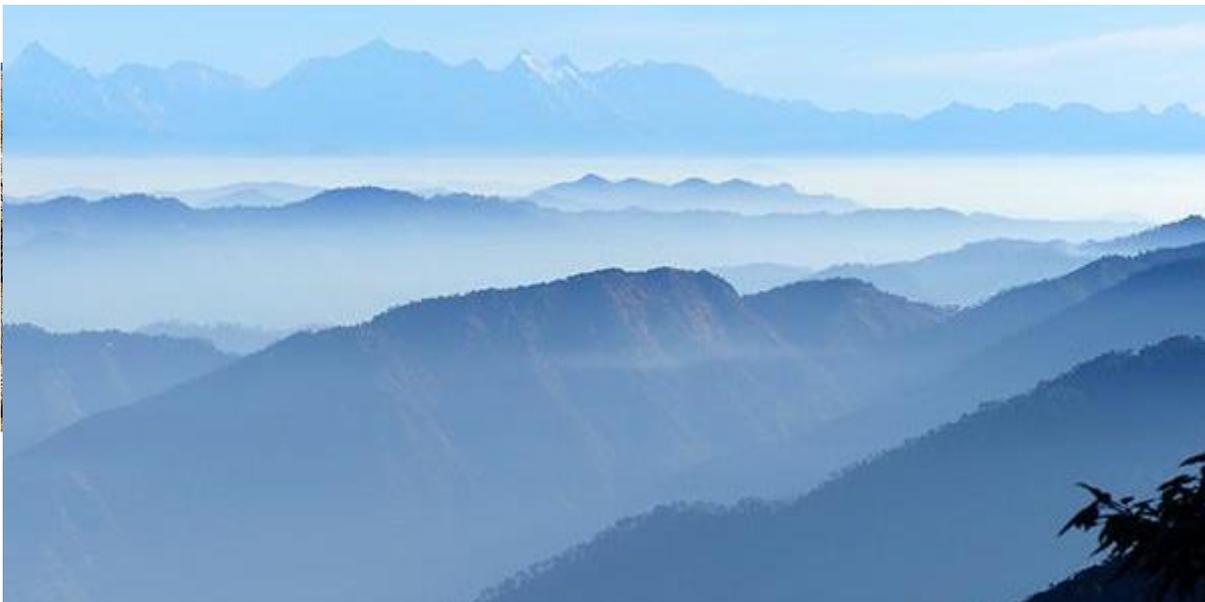
On the drive back down we had two fantastic Yellow-throated Martens that frolicked on a tree together - these creatures were over a metre long, muscular and flexible! Having had a relatively early finish to the day there was time to take a jeep into the market at Nainital, having said goodbye to our Corbett jeep drivers. The local market is set beside the lake, where locals were shopping and hire rowing boats. This was a fun place to shop for trinkets and clothes, wooden carvings and lovely woollen shawls without any

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The



long and winding road to Delhi

A rather swish coach met us and we loaded up for the journey to Delhi. We had a pleasant lunch stop, eating our picnic at a small restaurant who supplied teas. A second stop was on the banks of the Ganges where devout Hindus were bathing in some numbers; downstream cremations were taking place on the banks and upstream we looked for but did not see Ganges River Dolphins. Entering Delhi we passed various notable landmarks, the huge tip which was home to thousands, literally thousands of Black Kites; it was quite staggering; the Red Fort, the Indian Gate. We had a very good supper at an airport hotel and were met by Chandler and Vinod, old friends to Amanda and myself from previous travels. Then off to the airport for our night flight home, having said goodbye to Amanda who was off to Australia the following day. All went smoothly, and as Jenny and I were unexpectedly upgraded, the whole group flew back in first or business class!

Itinerary – Wild India 2016

Day 1	Wed/Thur 31st – 1st Dec	London Heathrow T3 – overnight flight to Delhi IGI for morning arrival – transfer to Bharatpur via Kosi Wetland
Day 2	Fri 2nd Dec	Keoladeao National Park
Day 3	Sat 3rd Dec	Fatehpur Sikri – Kumher area
Day 4	Sun 4th Dec	Malah Village – Bayana – Bund Bhareta
Day 5	Mon 5th Dec	Agra Fort – Taj Mahal
Day 6	Tues 6th Dec	Keoladeao National Park
Day 7	Wed 7th Dec	Transfer day to Ranthambore – Jeep Safari Zones 3, 4 & 5
Day 8	Thurs 8th Dec	Ranthambore Canter Zone 2 – Zones 2, 5 & 6
Day 9	Fri 9th Dec	Ranthambore Canter Zone 4 – Zones 1, 2 & 5
Day 10	Sat 10th Dec Sherpur area	Devpura environs – Ranthambore Canter Zone 5 – night drive
Day 11	Sun 11th Dec	Banas River – Ranthambore Canter Zone 3
Day 12	Mon 12th Dec	Ranthambore Canter Zone 1 – transfer to Jaipur
Day 13	Tues 13th Dec	City tour of Jaipur – overnight train to Kathgodam
Day 14	Wed 14th Dec	Kathgodam – Kosi Barrage – Woodpecker Bend – Garjiya Devi Temple Quality Inn – river walk
Day 15	Thurs 15th Dec	Transfer to Dhikala Corbett Tiger Reserve – Jeep Safari Dhikala Zone
Day 16	Fri 16th Dec	Elephant ride – Jeep Safari Dhikala Zone
Day 17	Sat 17th Dec	Jeep Safari Dhikala Zone – transfer to Nainital
Day 18	Sun 18th Dec	Pangot – Vinayak – Nainital Town
Day 19	Mon 19th Dec	Nainital – Delhi
Day 20	Tues 20th Dec	Delhi IGI – London Heathrow T3

Systematic Lists

Systematic List – Birds

The taxonomic nomenclature & systematic order follows both that of Helm Field Guides 'Birds of the Indian Subcontinent', 2011 by Grimmett, Inskipp & Inskipp. A total of 312 species were recorded over the three week trip. The numbers indicate the day on which a species was seen.

Grey Francolin	<i>Francolinus pondicerianus</i>	Good views at Keoladeao (2& 6); very common around Ranthambore (7-12)
Painted Spurfowl	<i>Galloperdix lunulata</i>	Good views occasional at Ranthambore (7,8 &12)
Koklass Pheasant	<i>Pucrasia macrolopha</i>	A pair were eventually spotted along a hill-side, Vinayak (18)
Red Junglefowl	<i>Gallus gallus</i>	Only recorded at Corbett by some of the group (15-17)
Kalij Pheasant	<i>Lophura leucomelanos</i>	A pair were spotted walking up a hillside enroute back to Nainital (18)
Indian Peafowl	<i>Pavo cristatus</i>	Seen everyday in the first two weeks, occasional at Corbett
Lesser Whistling-duck	<i>Dendrocygna javanica</i>	Large flocks at Keoladeao, smaller numbers at Ranthambore
Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>	Only recorded in the morning at Keoladeao (5 & 6)
Bar-headed Goose	<i>Anser indicus</i>	Behind the Taj Mahal (5); small numbers in the morning around Devpura (10)
Knob-billed (Comb) Duck	<i>Sarkidiornis melanotos</i>	Good views near the Sarus Cranes, Keoladeao (10 & 11)
Ruddy Shelduck	<i>Tadorna ferruginea</i>	Frequently encountered across the trip, often in large rafts
Cotton Pygmy-goose	<i>Nettapus coromandelianus</i>	A hard species to find only on the one day at Keoladeao (6); four individuals were on the large lake in Zones 3&4 at Ranthambore
Gadwall	<i>Anas strepera</i>	Only recorded at Keoladeao (2 & 6)
Wigeon	<i>Anus penelope</i>	Recorded the once on our first day at Keoladeao (2)
Indian Spot-billed Duck	<i>Anas poecilorhyncha</i>	This beautiful duck was only recorded in the first two weeks of the trip (2,6,11 & 13)
Northern Shoveler	<i>Anas clypeata</i>	Keoladeao (2 & 6)
Northern Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>	Keoladeao (2 & 6); large numbers at the dam (10)
Garganey	<i>Anas querquedula</i>	Four individuals in the morning, Keoladeao (6)
Common Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>	Regularly recorded over the first two weeks.
Red-crested Pochard	<i>Rhodonessa rufina</i>	Small numbers, Keoladeao (6)
Common Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>	Small numbers (2 & 10)
Ferruginous Duck	<i>Aythya nyroca</i>	Small numbers on the first day at Keoladeao (2)
Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	Frequently encountered over the first two weeks.
Painted Stork	<i>Mycteria leucocephala</i>	It is always wonderful to this attractive stork, which was very common (1-6), there after only a couple of sightings (10-11)
Asian Openbill	<i>Anastomus ocsitans</i>	Small numbers around water bodies (4,6,7 & 11)
Black Stork	<i>Ciconia nigra</i>	Noted on three days (11, 15 & 16), including a small mustering of over 10 at High Bank, Corbett
Woolly-necked Stork	<i>Ciconia episcopus</i>	Widespread & frequently across the first two weeks

Black-necked Stork	<i>Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus</i>	The morning light on this elegant bird was stunning, unfortunately only seen on the one day, Keoladeao (6)
Black-headed Ibis	<i>Threshkiornis melanocephalus</i>	Frequently recorded over the first two weeks of the trip
Red-naped Ibis	<i>Pseudibis papillosa</i>	Unfortunately only from the bus (5 & 19)
Glossy Ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>	Small numbers, Keoladeao (6)
Eurasian Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>	Small groups recorded over the first two weeks (1,2,6,7 & 10)
Black Bittern	<i>Ixobrychus flavicollis</i>	It was a pleasant to find this gorgeous often hard to find species, and we had it on two days (4 & 6)
Striated Heron	<i>Butorides striatus</i>	Occasional across the trip (4,6,7,10 & 15)
Black-crowned Night-heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	Recorded occasional in the first part of the trip
Indian Pond Heron	<i>Ardeola grayii</i>	Common seen everyday
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	Widespread & frequently encountered across the trip
Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>	Widespread & common in the first two weeks
Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	Widespread & frequently encountered across the trip
Great Egret	<i>Casmerodius alba</i>	Widespread & frequently encountered across the trip
Intermediate Egret	<i>Mesophoyx intermedia</i>	Only recorded in the first week (4,6-9)
Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	Widespread & frequently encountered across the trip
Great White Pelican	<i>Pelecanus onocrotalus</i>	A wonderful display of 24 over the Taj Mahal (5); some of the group saw this species again on 10th
Darter	<i>Anhinga melanogaster</i>	Widespread & frequently encountered across the trip
Little Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax niger</i>	Widespread & frequently encountered across the trip
Indian Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax fuscicollis</i>	Widespread & frequently encountered across the trip
Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	Occasionally often in mixed flocks across the trip (2,5, 14-19)
Collared Falconet	<i>Microheirax caerulescens</i>	A beautiful male was perched nicely for everyone to see as we were leaving Dhikala (17)
Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	Regularly encountered across the trip
Red-necked Falcon	<i>Falco chicquera</i>	This attractive species was only seen on the one day has a fly-by over our heads (3)
Black-shouldered Kite	<i>Elanus migrans</i>	Widespread & common seen nearly every day
Black Kite	<i>Milvus migrans</i>	Abundant around urban areas & into thousands at & near the rubbish tip at Delhi on our last day, quite an amazing sight
Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	Individuals spotted near large water bodies over the course of the trip (6,11,14,15-17)
Pallas's Fish Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus leucoryphus</i>	Good views of this species in the last week of the trip (14-17)
Lesser Fish Eagle	<i>Ichthyophaga humilis</i>	Stunning views of this eagle perched over the stream, Dhikala (17)
Oriental Honey-Buzzard	<i>Pernis ptilorhynchus</i>	Scattered sightings (2,8,10, 16-17), with an obliging bird near the Nursery at Keoladeao(2)
Egyptian Vulture	<i>Neophron percnopterus</i>	Scattered sightings of this now endangered species (2-3); often in mixed flocks with circa 10 birds over the Taj Mahal (5); circling with black kites (17)
White-rumped Vulture	<i>Gyps benghalensis</i>	Only some of the group were fortunate enough to see this threatened species, whose populations have now been increasing each year (9)

Indian Vulture	<i>Gyps indicus</i>	The commonest of the vultures with fine views of this species across the trip
Himalayan Vulture	<i>Gyps himalayensis</i>	Several sightings of this impressive species (16-18)
Cinereous Vulture	<i>Aegypius monachus</i>	Good views of a pair in flight, Corbett (16)
Red-headed vulture	<i>Sarcogyps calvus</i>	Only seen in flight (9 & 12)
Crested Serpent-eagle	<i>Spilornis cheela</i>	Frequently encountered (8-10,12,15-17)
Eurasian Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	Only recorded in the first week around reed areas (2,4 & 6)
Hen Harrier	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>	Allison & Harish had a ringtail over the grasslands, Corbett (16)
Pallid Harrier	<i>Circus macrourus</i>	A female quartering over the dry grass area in the morning, Ranthambore (9)
Shikra	<i>Accipiter badius</i>	Widespread & recorded everyday in the first two weeks
Besra	<i>Accipiter virgatus</i>	Excellent views of a peening bird, Corbett (16)
Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>	Only recorded in the higher altitudes of the foothills, (18)
Upland Buzzard	<i>Buteo hemilaisus</i>	A couple of sightings in the latter part of the trip (15 & 18)
Indian Spotted Eagle	<i>Clanga hastata</i>	Good views of this species, feeding & calling after the boat ride, Keoladeao (6)
Greater Spotted Eagle	<i>Clanga clanga</i>	Occasional across the first week (2,3 & 6)
Steppe Eagle	<i>Aquila nipalensis</i>	Good numbers of this species in the latter part of the trip (14, 17-19)
Imperial Eagle	<i>Aquila heliaca</i>	A distant of one bird at Keoladeao (6)
Booted Eagle	<i>Hieraettus pennatus</i>	Brief flight sightings of this common European species (6 & 11)
Rufous-bellied Eagle	<i>Hieraetus kienerii</i>	A superb individual, Corbett (15)
Changeable Hawk-eagle	<i>Spizaetus cirrhatu</i>	Good views of perched birds, Corbett (14-16)
Indian Spotted Eagle	<i>Clanga hastata</i>	Good views of this species, feeding & calling after the boat ride, Keoladeao (6)
White-breasted Waterhen	<i>Amaurornis phoenicurus</i>	Recorded everyday for the first two weeks of the trip
Brown Crake	<i>Amaurornis akool</i>	Scattered sightings of individuals (1-2 & 16-17)
Purple Swamphen	<i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i>	Kois Wetland (1), otherwise only at Keoladeao (2 & 6)
Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	Frequently encountered around water bodies across the first two weeks
Common Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	Occasional on suitable water bodies across the first two weeks, often in great numbers
Sarus Crane	<i>Grus antigone</i>	Several individuals from the vehicle (1 & 3); a pair displaying, Keoladeao (6)
Indian Thick-knee	<i>Burhinus indicus</i>	circa 20 birds in the Muslim Cemetery (10)
Great Thick-knee	<i>Esacus recurvirostris</i>	Individuals recorded at Ranthambore (7 & 10)
Pheasant-tailed Jacana	<i>Hydrophasianus chirurgus</i>	Keoladeao (2); several probing around in the water-chestnut wetland (4)
Bronze-winged Jacana	<i>Metopidius indicus</i>	Regularly encountered across a range of water habitats in the first two weeks
Ibisbill	<i>Ibidorhyncha struthersii</i>	Three on the Kosi River at Gajira temple (14)

Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>	Recorded every day in the first two weeks of the trip
Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>	Only recorded in small numbers on two dates (5 & 10)
River Lapwing	<i>Vanellus duvaucelli</i>	Scattered sightings of this attractive species across the trip mainly along river-beds
Yellow-wattled Lapwing	<i>Vanellus malabaricus</i>	Single sightings this lovely species (1 & 3)
Red-wattled Lapwing	<i>Vanellus indicus</i>	Common seen every day in the first two weeks.
White-tailed Lapwing	<i>Vanellus leucurus</i>	Scattered sightings of this species (4,6 & 11)
Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>	A couple of individuals at Waterchestnut area (4)
Kentish Plover	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>	An individual showing well on the river-bed Banas River (11)
Greater Painted Snipe	<i>Rostratula benghalensis</i>	A bogie bird for me, which I have now conquer with c.10 birds underneath vegetation. Not sure which was the smelliest, the canal they were standing in or the cow-pack dung area we were standing in! (4)
Ruff	<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>	Recorded around the water-chestnut wetland (4)
Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	Recorded only three days in the first part of the trip (2,4 & 6)
Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>	Large numbers at the dam of this migratory species (10)
Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>	Several feeding in a field as we watched from the dam bund (10)
Spotted Redshank	<i>Tringa erythropus</i>	Scattered across the first two weeks (1,4,6 & 9)
Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>	Scattered sightings across the first two weeks around suitable water bodies
Marsh Sandpiper	<i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>	Recorded on two occasions (4 & 7)
Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>	Found in most wetland habitats we visited.
Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>	Recorded around the water-chestnut wetland (4); Dhikala zone (16)
Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>	Scattered sightings across the first two weeks around suitable water bodies
Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	Scattered sightings across the first two weeks around suitable water bodies
Temminck's Stint	<i>Calidris temmincki</i>	Recorded around the water-chestnut wetland (4)
Indian Courser	<i>Cursorius coromandelicus</i>	An impressive number of birds found amongst the ploughed fields (3)
Pallas's Gull	<i>Larus ichthyaetus</i>	Distant views along the Gange River (19)
Brown-headed Gull	<i>Larus brunnicephalus</i>	Small flock of this species along the river behind the Taj Mahal (5); several individuals along the Gange River (19)
River Tern	<i>Sterna aurantia</i>	Some excellent views of this beautiful tern (9-11)
Whiskered Tern	<i>Chlidonias hybridus</i>	Noted on two occasions along river channels (1 & 16)
Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse	<i>Pterocles exustus</i>	Small flocks of this species were encountered across agricultural land (3-4); small flocks of c.24 circled & landing near Banas River (11)

Painted Sandgrouse	<i>Pterocles indicus</i>	A couple of individuals flying near Tiger's Den (8)
Rock Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>	Ubiquitous – seen everyday
Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	Common seen most days
Red Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia tranquebarica</i>	Only recorded on two days in small numbers around agricultural land (10-11)
Spotted Dove	<i>Streptopelia chinensis</i>	Infrequent (8-9 & 15)
Laughing Dove	<i>Streptopelia senegalensis</i>	Widespread & common seen most days
Yellow-footed Green-Pigeon	<i>Treron phoenicoptera</i>	Frequently encountered in large flocks (2,4,8,9 & 11)
Pin-tailed Green-Pigeon	<i>Treron apicauda</i>	Several individuals enroute to Dhikala (15)
Emerald Dove	<i>Chalcophaps indica</i>	Forested areas around Corbett (15-17)
Alexandrine Parakeet	<i>Psittacula eupatria</i>	Small numbers of this gorgeous parakeet, often giving good views in Ranthambore (8,9,11,12 & 17)
Rose-ringed Parakeet	<i>Psittacula krameri</i>	Heard or seen everyday
Slaty-headed Parakeet	<i>Psittacula himalayana</i>	A bit of a fly-by for some of the group (15)
Plum-headed Parakeet	<i>Psittacula cyanocephala</i>	This sweet species was regularly encountered over the last two weeks
Common Hawk-cuckoo	<i>Hierococcyx varius</i>	We had very obliging views as this species basked itself in the trees as we walked along Brick path after out boat trip (6)
Asian Koel	<i>Eudynamis scolopacea</i>	Fleeting views of this attractive species (8)
Greater Coucal	<i>Centropus sinensis</i>	Common & widespread, seen most days
Lesser Coucal	<i>Centropus bengalensis</i>	Mainly in the long grass at Corbett (15-16)
Indian Scops Owl	<i>Otus bakkomoena</i>	Some excellent views of this delightful species particularly at Ranthambore (6,8 & 10)
Oriental Scops Owl	<i>Otus sunia</i>	A single individual was unaware of the attention it was causing as it slept on an over-hanging bough across the main track at Keoladeao (2 & 6)
Asian Barred Owlet	<i>Glaucidium cuculoides</i>	Another lovely owl only seen around Corbett (15-17)
Jungle Owlet	<i>Glaucidium radiatum</i>	An individual was unperturbed as we drew up next to it from the road (14)
Spotted Owlet	<i>Athene brama</i>	This cheeky species caused great delight amongst the group (2,5,7,11-12)
Dusky Eagle owl	<i>Bubo coromandus</i>	Unfortunately we only heard the deep boom of this gorgeous owl, as we had a leg-stretch in Ranthambore (12)
Brown Fish-owl	<i>Ketupa zeylonensis</i>	Good views of this large species (7,12 & 16)
Tawny Fish-owl	<i>Ketupa flavipes</i>	An individual was found on the jeep safari at Corbett (15)
Grey Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus indicus</i>	Mark pulled a single perched individual high up in the tree whilst on a canter drive, Ranthambore (8)
White-rumped Spinetail	<i>Zonavena sylvatica</i>	Individuals noted in mixed Hirundines flock (4 & 6)
Asian Palm Swift	<i>Cypsiurus balasiensis</i>	Mainly around Corbett (14, 16-17)
Alpine Swift	<i>Apus melba</i>	Not to be confused with the European species, mainly see around Corbett & foothills
Little Swift	<i>Apus affinis</i>	Scattered sightings (3,6,14-16)

Crested Tree Swift	<i>Hemiprocne coronata</i>	Only recorded in the latter part of the trip (14-17)
Eurasian Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>	Common across the first two weeks of the trip
Indian Roller	<i>Coracias benghalensis</i>	Scattered sightings throughout the trip
Stork-billed Kingfisher	<i>Pelargopsis capensis</i>	Unfortunately only one individual was seen fishing on one day at Corbett, at one point startling the Lesser Fish Eagle that was perched nearby as it dived into the water below (17)
White-throated kingfisher	<i>Halcyon smyrnensis</i>	Common & seen every day
Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>	Frequently encountered across the trip around water bodies, with some very close up views
Crested kingfisher	<i>Megaceryle lugubris</i>	Only recorded on two days (14-15)
Pied kingfisher	<i>Ceryle rudis</i>	This lovely kingfisher was regularly spotted across the trip (2,4,6-7); mainly seen fishing along the stream on our jeep safari in Corbett (15-17)
Blue-bearded Bee-eater	<i>Nyctyornis athertoni</i>	I have a bit of a history with this species, so it was so rewarding to get some gorgeous views over four days whilst at Corbett (14-17)
Green Bee-eater	<i>Merops orientalis</i>	A delightful species but a bit elusive of this trip with only sightings over three days (2,10-11)
Indian Grey Hornbill	<i>Oxyceros birostris</i>	Frequent across the first half of the trip, otherwise only recorded the once (14)
Great Hornbill	<i>Buceros bicornis</i>	What a superb fine of 2 adults & in such wonderful light (15)
Great Barbet	<i>Megalaima virens</i>	Excellent views of a pair feeding on berries as we made our way back to Nainital after lunch (18)
Brown-headed Barbet	<i>Megalaima zeylanica</i>	Only recorded on three days (2, 4-5)
Lineated Barbet	<i>Megalaima lineata</i>	Small groups of this great Barbet around the grounds at Dhikala (15-17)
Blue-throated Barbet	<i>Megalaima asiatica</i>	Three individuals of this attractive species were giving good views amongst a mixed flock of Barbets (16)
Coppersmith Barbet	<i>Megalaima haemacephala</i>	This stunning little bird is a bit of a star & was often recorded in large numbers when spotted (2,6,9 & 17)
Wryneck	<i>Jynx torquilla</i>	Only some of the group saw this sulky bird on the boat trip, Keoladeao (6)
Great Slaty Woodpecker	<i>Mulleripicus pulverulentus</i>	Only recorded at Corbett near Dhikala, with some lovely of several individuals (15-16)
Brown-capped Pygmy-Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos nanus</i>	Good sightings of this little species mainly around Ranthambore (7-9 & 12)
Grey-capped Pygmy-Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos canicapillus</i>	Recorded in mixed flocks in the latter part of the trip (14, 16-17)
Fulvous-breasted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopus macei</i>	Frequently seen in the latter part of the trip, often in mixed flocks (16-18)
Brown-fronted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos auriceps</i>	Only seen the once on Woodpecker Bend (14)
Himalayan Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos himalayensis</i>	Good views of this species in the woodland area near Vinayak (18)
Lesser Yellownape	<i>Picus chlorolophus</i>	On seen on a couple of days with mixed flocks in the latter part of the trip.(14 & 17)
Greater Yellownape	<i>Picus flavinucha</i>	An individual seen by some of the group in the mixed woodpecker flock on Woodpecker bend (14)

Streak-throated Woodpecker	<i>Picus xanthopygaeus</i>	Excellent views of this species right outside Dhikala (16)
Grey-headed Woodpecker	<i>Picus canus</i>	Frequently in the latter part of the trip (14-18)
Himalayan Flameback	<i>Dinopium shorii</i>	Scattered sightings in the latter part of the trip (14 & 16)
Black-rumped Flameback	<i>Dinopium benghalense</i>	The commonest of the woodpeckers frequently encountered across the trip
Common Woodshrike	<i>Tephrodornis pondicerianus</i>	A couple sitting on the telegraph wire, Keoladeao (2)
Large Cuckoo-shrike	<i>Coracina macei</i>	A pair were showing well at Tiger's Den (10)
Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrike	<i>Hemipus picatus</i>	Only noted in a mixed flock on the one day in wooded area, Corbett (17)
Common Iora	<i>Aegithina tiphia</i>	Scattered sightings amongst wooded areas (8,9 & 17)
White-bellied Minivet	<i>Pericrocotus erythropygius</i>	Nursery area, Keoladeao (2)
Small Minivet	<i>Pericrotus cinnamomeus</i>	Mainly in the latter part of the trip often in large mixed flocks (6,7,10,12,16-17)
Long-tailed Minivet	<i>Pericrotus ethologus</i>	Mixed flocks in the last week of the trip (15-17)
Scarlet Minivet	<i>Pericrotus flammeus</i>	Stunning views of this bright Minivet but only on two occasions (14 & 16)
Isabelline Shrike	<i>Lanius isabellinus</i>	This lovely shrike only recorded twice across the whole trip (3 & 10)
Bay-backed Shrike	<i>Lanius vittatus</i>	What stunning views we had of this species, thanks to the morning light on our boat trip (6, 10-11)
Long-tailed Shrike	<i>Lanius schach</i>	Common & regularly encountered across the trip on most days
Southern Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius meridionalis</i>	Scattered sightings across the first two weeks (3,7,10-11)
Spangled Drongo	<i>Dicrurus hottentottus</i>	Several locations across the last week of the trip
Black Drongo	<i>Dicrurus macrocercus</i>	Widespread & recorded nearly every day
Ashy Drongo	<i>Dicrurus leucophaeus</i>	Another common Drongo which was recorded nearly every day
White-bellied Drongo	<i>Dicrurus caerulescens</i>	This lovely Drongo we only met in the game reserves
Bronzed Drongo	<i>Dicrurus aeneus</i>	Recorded twice in the last week of the trip (14 & 16)
Indian Golden Oriole	<i>Oriolus kondoo</i>	In a mixed flock on Woodpecker Bend (14)
Black-hooded Oriole	<i>Oriolus xanthornus</i>	Only at Corbett (15-17)
Maroon Oriole	<i>Oriolus traillii</i>	Unfortunately it was only heard, Corbett (16)
Yellow-bellied Fantail	<i>Rhipidura hypoxantha</i>	Mixed flocks in the last week of the trip (15,17-18)
White-throated Fantail	<i>Rhipidura albicollis</i>	Only recorded in the latter part of the trip (14-15)
White-browed Fantail	<i>Rhipidura aureola</i>	Commonest of the fantails often in mixed flocks, only recorded at Ranthambore (7-12)
Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>	Several on the one day at Vinayak, (18)
Black-headed Jay	<i>Garrulus lanceolatus</i>	Numerous around Pangot & Vinayak area (18)
Red-billed Blue Magpie	<i>Urocissa erythrorhyncha</i>	Stunning bird (15 & 18), including good views in the town of Nainital
Common Green Magpie	<i>Cissa chinensis</i>	Another colourful stunner of a bird, mainly around Corbett (14-16)
Rufous Treepie	<i>Dendrocitta vagabunda</i>	Common seen nearly every day
Grey Treepie	<i>Dendrocitta formosae</i>	What a tail on this bird, we had good views of this species enroute to Nainital (17)

Large-billed Crow	<i>Corvus macrorhynchus</i>	Only really noted every day in the last week, possible over looked in the first two weeks
Indian Jungle Crow	<i>Corvus culminatus</i>	Nearly every day in the first two weeks
Northern Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	Large numbers in a mixed corvid flock over the town at Nainital (18)
House Crow	<i>Corvus splendens</i>	Recorded almost daily
Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	Scattered sightings (7-9,13 & 17)
Green-backed Tit	<i>Parus monticollis</i>	Frequent in mixed flocks on our day to Vinayak(18)
Spot-winged Tit	<i>Parus melanolophus</i>	Very common in mixed flocks on our day to Vinayak (18)
Yellow-browed Tit	<i>Sylviparus modestus</i>	Only recorded in a mixed tit flock in the wooded area, Vinayak (18)
Black-throated Tit	<i>Aegithalos concinnus</i>	What a gorgeous little tit, common in mixed flocks around wooded areas (15 & 18)
Plain Martin	<i>Riparia paludicola</i>	The commonest of the martins, frequently encountered across the trip, often in large numbers
Eurasian Crag Martin	<i>Hirundo rupestris</i>	Along the mountainous hill-sides, Vinayak (18)
Dusky Crag Martin	<i>Hirundo concolor</i>	Frequently encountered across the trip, often in large numbers, in mixed flocks
Asian House Martin	<i>Delichon dasypus</i>	Several spotted flying in the valley as we made our way down to Pangot (18)
Streak-throated Swallow	<i>Hirundo fluvicola</i>	Small flock in a river valley enroute back to Ranthambore (10)
Wire-tailed Swallow	<i>Hirundo smithii</i>	Only recorded at Keoladeao (6)
Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	Several in the first week (4-6)
Red-rumped Swallow	<i>Hirundo daurica</i>	Frequent sightings of this lovely species (8,11,14-18)
Rufous-tailed Lark	<i>Ammomanes phoenicurus</i>	Excellent views of this attractive species for some of the group (Z6) (8); Banas River area (11)
Greater Short-toed Lark	<i>Calandrella brachydactyla</i>	Small flocks around agricultural fields (3)
Ashy-crowned Sparrow Lark	<i>Eremopteryx grisea</i>	A handsome lark, which gave good views across three days (3,10-11)
Himalayan Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus leucogenys</i>	Common in the last week (14-18)
White-eared Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus leucotis</i>	Common across the first two weeks
Black-crested Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus melanicterus</i>	Unfortunately, only some of the group got to see this stunning Bulbul (16)
Red-whiskered Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus jocosus</i>	Only recorded in Corbett (14-17)
Red-vented Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus cafer</i>	Common & widespread seen everyday
Ashy Bulbul	<i>Hemixos flava</i>	Good views across two days (15-16)
Black Bulbul	<i>Hypsipetes leucocephalus</i>	An individual was briefly glimpsed by some of the group from the canter (18)
Striated Prinia	<i>Prinia criniger</i>	An individual with mixed flock of Minivets (14)
Grey-breasted Prinia	<i>Prinia hodgsoni</i>	Grassy agricultural area (4)
Graceful Prinia	<i>Prinia gracilis</i>	Apparently this species is a good find as we are normally out of its range (1)
Ashy Prinia	<i>Prinia socialis</i>	Almost every day for the first two weeks
Plain Prinia	<i>Prinia inornata</i>	Almost every day for the first two weeks
Zitting Cisticola	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>	Several were heard on a game drive, Dhikala (15)
Common Tailorbird	<i>Orthotomus sutorius</i>	A usually common species, but sightings were poor (8,12 & 17)

Paddyfield Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus agricola</i>	A LBJ for all purpose & intend, but we had good views of this species to say why it was a LBJ, boat ride, Keoladeao (6)
Blyth's Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus dumetorum</i>	Wetland area, Keoladeao (2)
Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	Scattered sightings in mixed flocks across the trip
Hume's Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus humei</i>	Amongst mixed flocks (2,4 & 17)
Greenish Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochiloides</i>	Amongst mixed flocks (2,5 & 6)
Grey-hooded Warbler	<i>Seicercus xanthoschistos</i>	Among the mixed tit flocks in wooded areas (18)
Lesser Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia curruca</i>	Scattered sightings of individual birds (2,4,8-9)
Puff-throated Babbler	<i>Pellorneum ruficeps</i>	Only one vehicle got to see this species on the morning drive, Dhikala (17)
Rusty-cheeked Scimitar-Babbler	<i>Pomatorhinus erythrogenys</i>	Only one vehicle got to see this species on the morning drive, Dhikala (17)
Common Babbler	<i>Turdoides caudatus</i>	Scattered sightings across the first two weeks (2,4,10-11)
Large Grey Babbler	<i>Turdoides malcolmi</i>	A noisy bunch of babblers mainly recorded at Ranthambore
Jungle Babbler	<i>Turdoides striatus</i>	Almost every day
White-throated Laughingthrush	<i>Garrulax albogularis</i>	Small flock on Vinayak day (18)
White-crested Laughingthrush	<i>Garrulax leucolophus</i>	Small flocks around Corbett (15-17)
Striated Laughingthrush	<i>Garrulax striatus</i>	Common on Vinayak day (18)
Streaked Laughingthrush	<i>Garrulax lineatus</i>	Common on Vinayak day (18)
Red-billed Leiothrix	<i>Leiothrix lutea</i>	Due to separate vehicles only some of the group got to briefly see this species (15)
White-browed Fulvetta	<i>Alcippe vinipectus</i>	Fi was the only person to see this species (18)
Rufous Sibia	<i>Heterophasia capistrata</i>	Individuals of this gorgeous species at various sites (18)
Yellow-eyed Babbler	<i>Chrysomma sinense</i>	Small groups of this lovely quiet species (4,11-12)
Oriental White-eye	<i>Zosterops palpebrosus</i>	Scattered small groups (9,12,15 & 18)
Brown Dipper	<i>Cinclus pallasi</i>	A pair along River Kosi near the Quality Inn (14)
Kasmir Nuthatch	<i>Sitta cashmirensis</i>	Several in a mixed tit flock in the wooded area, Vinayak (18)
Indian Nuthatch	<i>Sitta castanea</i>	There was some debate between this species & Chestnut-bellied, but there were no white chevrons on the undertail-coverts, found mainly in mixed flocks (14-17)
Velvet-fronted Nuthatch	<i>Sitta frontalis</i>	Mainly in mixed flocks in the higher altitudes (16-18)
Wallcreeper	<i>Tichodromia muraria</i>	A pair were spied at Garjiya Devi Temple (14)
Bar-tailed Treecreeper	<i>Certhia himalayana</i>	Just the one for some of the group in a mixed flock amongst the wooded area, Vinayak (18)
Bank Myna	<i>Acridotheres ginginianus</i>	An attractive Myna, often in large numbers around villages, very frequent across the first two weeks.
Common Myna	<i>Acridotheres tristis</i>	Everyday
Asian Pied Starling	<i>Sturnus contra</i>	Very frequent across the whole trip
Brahminy Starling	<i>Sturnus pagodarum</i>	Frequent across the first two weeks
Rosy Starling	<i>Sturnus roseus</i>	Mainly spotted in mixed flocks with other starlings (4 & 11)
Blue Whistling-Thrush	<i>Myophonus caeruleus</i>	Common most days in the last week of the trip

Orange-Headed Thrush	<i>Zoothera citrina</i>	This gorgeous species graced us with its presence at Keoladeao (2)
Red-throated Thrush	<i>Turdus ruficollis</i>	Scattered sightings around Dhikala (16-17)
Bluethroat	<i>Luscinia svecica</i>	Scattered sightings around wetland habitats (2,4,6 & 16)
Oriental Magpie Robin	<i>Copsychus saularis</i>	Widespread & recorded nearly every day
White-rumped Shama	<i>Copsychus malabaricus</i>	Allison had spotted a female on the way out of Corbett (17)
Indian Robin	<i>Saxicoloides fulicata</i>	Widespread & recorded nearly every day
Plumbeous Water Redstart	<i>Rhyacornis fuliginosus</i>	Every day around Corbett (14-17)
White-capped Water Redstart	<i>Chaimarronis leucocephalus</i>	Every day around Corbett (14-17)
Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochrurus</i>	Widespread & recorded most days in the first two weeks
Common Stonechat	<i>Saxicola torquata</i>	Frequent across the trip, around dry grassy area
Pied Bushchat	<i>Saxicola caprata</i>	Only recorded in the first two weeks (3,4,6 & 10)
Grey Bushchat	<i>Saxicola ferrea</i>	Only recorded around the Himalayan foothills (15-18)
Desert Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe deserti</i>	Several occasions around agricultural land (3,10-11)
Variable Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe picata</i>	A lovely species recorded as we stopped for a comfort break (11)
Brown Rock Chat	<i>Cercomela fusca</i>	Recorded around ruin buildings (3,4,10 & 17)
Red-breasted Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula parva</i>	Widespread recorded frequently across the trip
Ultramarine Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula superciliaris</i>	An individual was briefly glimpsed by some of the group from the canter (12)
Slaty-blue Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula tricolor</i>	Again brief glimpses by some of the group for this species (17)
Grey-headed Canary Flycatcher	<i>Culicicapa ceylonensis</i>	This cheeky species often recorded in mixed flocks (4, 8, 14-18)
Purple Sunbird	<i>Nectarina asiatica</i>	Only three days in the first week (2,4 & 6)
Crimson Sunbird	<i>Aethopyga siparaja</i>	A stunning male was feeding around the grounds at Quality Inn (15)
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	Present around urban & rural areas across the trip
Spanish Sparrow	<i>Passer hispaniolensis</i>	In mixed flocks around rural areas (9)
Russet Sparrow	<i>Passer rutilans</i>	One was singing from buildings enroute back to Pangot (18)
Chestnut-shouldered Petronia	<i>Petronia xanthocollis</i>	Small groups around dry agricultural areas (3 & 11)
Black-breasted Weaver	<i>Ploceus benghalensis</i>	Only some of the group got to see this species (10).
Baya Weaver	<i>Ploceus phillippinus</i>	Scattered flocks across the trips, some fantastic nesting structures (3-4,10-11 & 17)
Indian Silverbill	<i>Lonchura malabarica</i>	Scattered sightings of small groups (2,4,6 & 10)
Red Avadavat	<i>Amandava amandava</i>	Grassy areas, Keoladeao (2); Bayana (4)
Altai Accentor	<i>Prunella himalayana</i>	Small flock around the mountainous hill-side, Vinayak (18).
Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>	Scattered sightings in the first two weeks (4,10 & 14)
Citrine Wagtail	<i>Motacilla citreola</i>	Frequent around waterbodies across the first two weeks
Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>	Scattered sightings across the first week (4,7,9 & 14)
White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	Frequent across the whole trip

White-browed Wagtail	<i>Motacilla maderaspatensis</i>	Frequent across the whole trip, usually seen by riverbeds or streams
Tawny Pipit	<i>Anthus campestris</i>	Dry areas (3, 10-11).
Tree Pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>	Near a dry channel, Ranthambore Z2 (8)
Yellow-breasted Greenfinch	<i>Carduelis spinoides</i>	Several seen in the higher altitudes (17-18)
Common Rosefinch	<i>Carpodacus erythrinus</i>	A female on bushes near the interpretation centre, Keoladeao (2)
Crested Bunting	<i>Melophus lathami</i>	What a stunning bird, again only seen on a comfort spot to Banas (11)
Rock Bunting	<i>Emberiza cia</i>	Mountainous hill-side, Vinayak (18)
Red-headed Bunting	<i>Emberiza bruniceps</i>	Small flocks along the road to the small railway junction (4).

Systematic List – Mammals

The taxonomic nomenclature & systematic order follows that of Vivek Menon 'Field Guide to Indian Mammals', 2014.

Rhesus Macaque	<i>Macaca mulatta</i>	Widespread & common.
Northern Plains Langur	<i>Semnopithecus entellus</i>	Good views of this beautiful species around Ranthambore.
Terai Langur	<i>Semnopithecus hector</i>	The beautiful woolly Langurs around the Himalayan Foothills were of this species
Asian elephant	<i>Elephas maximus</i>	It was a marvellous morning sight to watch the herd of elephants emerge from the morning mist as they came to drink from the river outside the lodge at Dhikala. Over 30+ including small ones across the two days
Indian Muntjac	<i>Muntiacus muntjak</i>	Frequently recorded around Corbett Nature Reserve
Sambar	<i>Cervus unicolor</i>	Frequently encountered, allowing stunning views of this wonderful deer, particularly in Ranthambore
Spotted Deer	<i>Axis axis</i>	Very very common . . . , but the jeep drivers still wanted to stop by them everyday
Hog Deer	<i>Axis procinus</i>	This species was only seen on the one day at Corbett
Nilgai	<i>Boselaphus tragocamelus</i>	What a stunning animal, especially so in the mustard fields, very common often in small groups
Indian Gazelle	<i>Gazella gazella</i>	Only one jeep (Z5) was lucky enough to spot these delightful antelope
Blackbuck	<i>Antilope cervicapra</i>	When it was decided to check more plastic bags, just in case, in the flowering mustard fields, our lucky was in. The bags were two very gorgeous sitting males. We managed to get some good views before they bounced off disappearing into the sea of yellow, lovely.
Himalayan Brown Goral	<i>Nemorhaedus goral</i>	A great spot by Amanda as we whizzed round the bend of this delightful animal, giving everyone some excellent views, Vinayak
Indian Wild Pig	<i>Sus scrofa</i>	Frequently encountered over the trip, with a fantastic male & tusks at Keoladeao
Tiger	<i>Panthera tigris</i>	Our main objective of the holiday was achieved in spectacular style at Ranthambore & Corbett. Everyone got to see at least three fantastic sightings of this truly magnificent beast; everyone will have a 'tail' to tell.
Leopard	<i>Panthera pardus</i>	Unfortunately, it was only one vehicle that got to see a magnificent male scenting (Z1), before being chased off by a female tigress, only escaping by climbing a nearby tree, fantastic.
Desert Cat	<i>Felis libyca</i>	Only seen on the trap camera, Ranthambore
Jungle Cat	<i>Felis chaus</i>	Most of the group got to see a glimpse of this lovely cat, but one jeep were treated with an individual sitting perfectly in the middle of the track (Z2)
Common Palm Civet	<i>Paradoxurus hermaphroditus</i>	An injured individual was seen at the lunch spot in Keoladeao, it was reported to the rangers.
Grey Mongoose	<i>Herpestes edwardsii</i>	Only over three days across the trip
Ruddy Mongoose	<i>Herpestes smithii</i>	Several individuals often in small groups around Rajasthan

Striped Hyaena	<i>Hyaena hyaena</i>	One seen very well by some of the group crossing the road on our night drive around Shrtpur
Golden Jackal	<i>Canis aureus</i>	Widespread & frequently seen.
Indian Fox	<i>Vulpes bengalensis</i>	Two seen on the night drive, one with a radio-tag collar
Sloth Bear	<i>Ursus ursinus</i>	This was a real unexpected treat for some of the group, with good views on both occasions (Z3 & Z6).
Yellow-throated Marten	<i>Martes flavigula</i>	With two excellent sightings of this rarely seen creature around the foothills, & the rest of the group pointing them out, you would have thought the group leader would have been able to spot them. No, another time Amanda.
Smooth-coated Otter	<i>Lutrogale perspicillata</i>	We spent over ½ an hour watching a male ride the river current catching prey at Dhikala, superb. We were all so engrossed that we unaware of the elephant squeezing pass the vans, until it was on top of us. They really are pongy.
Five-striped Palm Squirrel	<i>Funambulus pennanti</i>	Widespread & common often providing comedy moments.
Indian Flying Fox	<i>Pteropus giganteus</i>	First encountered in the evening around the grounds at The Bagh, before visiting the large roost site at Bund Bhareta.
Naked-rumped Tomb Bat	<i>Taphozus nudiventris</i>	Some numbers of this species in the crevices around Agra Fort.

Systematic List – Butterflies

The nomenclature follows that used by Phil Benstead in the Wild India Trip Report 2011, which follows 'Butterflies of the Indian Region' by Wynter-Blyth, 1957.

Papilionidae

Common Rose	<i>Pachliopta aristolochiae</i>	Frequently recorded
Common Mormon	<i>Papilio polyotes</i>	One at Corbett

Pieridae

Psyche	<i>Leptosia nina</i>	Keoladeao
Common Jezabel	<i>Delias eucharis</i>	Quite common at The Den
The Pioneer	<i>Belenois aurota</i>	Outside the Salim Ali Centre, Keolado
Common Wanderer	<i>Pareronia valeria</i>	Corbett
Indian Small White	<i>Pieris canidia</i>	Keoladeao
White Orange-tip	<i>Ixias marianne</i>	Scattered
Yellow Orange-tip	<i>Ixias pyrene</i>	Common
Large Salmon Arab	<i>Colotis fausta</i>	
Lemon Emigrant	<i>Catopsilia pomona</i>	Similar to Brimstone, Keoladeao
Mottled Emigrant	<i>Catopsilia pyranthe</i>	Ranthambore
Common Grass Yellow	<i>Eurema hecabe</i>	Keoladeao

Danaidae

Plain Tiger	<i>Danaus chrysippus</i>	Scattered
Common Crow	<i>Euploea core</i>	Tigers Den
Glassy tiger	<i>Danaus aglea</i>	Around the forested foothills

Satyridae

Common Evening Brown	<i>Melanitis leda</i>	
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Nymphalidae

Sailors	<i>Neptis sp.</i>	
Common Map	<i>Cyrestis thyodamas</i>	The Den
Indian Tortoiseshell	<i>Aglais cashmiriensis</i>	
Blue Pansy	<i>Junonia orithyia</i>	Taj Mahal
Chocolate pansy	<i>Junonia iphita</i>	
Grey pansy	<i>Junonia atlites</i>	
Peacock Pansy	<i>Junonia almana</i>	
Lemon Pansy	<i>Junonia lemonias</i>	
Danaid Eggfly	<i>Hypolimnias misippus</i>	Tiger's Den, Ranthambore
Common Leopard	<i>Phalanta phaantha</i>	

Systematic List – Reptiles and Amphibians

Indian Rock Python	<i>Python mularis</i>	We were graced with the presence of a 9' individual that was trying to shade from all the attention, Keoladeao
Indian Monitor Lizard	<i>Varanus bengalensis</i>	An individual in a tree hole, Keoladeao
Northern House Gecko	<i>Hemidactylus flaviviridis</i>	Around the hotel buildings at The Bagh & Tiger's Den
Garden Lizard	<i>Calotes versicolor</i>	A fine individual was showing well in a tree hole near the temple at Bharatpur
Mugger	<i>Crocodylus palustris</i>	Ranthambore & Corbett
Gharial	<i>Gavialis gangeticus</i>	Only recorded at Corbett
Ganges Softshell	<i>Trionyx gangeticus</i>	Several monsters were seen lurking underneath the clear mountainous water, near the Muggers at Corbett
Softshell spp.	<i>Aspideretes spp.</i>	Not sure what the priest was feeding to a freshwater species of this family, but it was huge. More individuals spotted in the water around Keoladeao

Systematic List – Trees and other plants

<i>Acacia catechu</i>		widespread
<i>Acacia nilotica</i>		the main Acacia at Keolado
<i>Anogeissus pendula</i>	Dhok	the majority of trees at Ranthambhore are this.
<i>Azadirachta indica</i>	Neem tree	Ranthambhore. Source of neem oil
<i>Calistemon viminalis</i>	Bottle Brush Tree	Delhi and Lucknow
<i>Capparis decidua</i>	Karir	Bharatpur and Amlidhe Small green fruits are commonly cooked into a chutney
<i>Capparis seiparia</i>	Wild Caper Bush	Keolado. very hooky to walk past
<i>Ficus benghalensis</i>	Banyan	Ranthambore
<i>Ficus religiosa</i>	Sacred Fig/Peepa	Ranthambore and Bund Bahreta
<i>Ficus racemosa</i>	Cluster Fig Tree	Ranthambore, Keolado Nursery
<i>Lannea coromandelica</i>	Indian Ash	Ranthambore. Lvs like our ash, very useful tree for everything!
<i>Mangifera indica</i>	Mango	Frequent
<i>Manilkara hexandra</i>	Palu Tree	Ranthambore
<i>Phoenix sylvestris</i>	Wild Date Palm	Ranthambore
<i>Saraca assoca</i>	Ashok	Compact crown of large, wavy-edged leaves. Ashok means to give no grief in sanskrit.
<i>Shorea robusta</i>	Sal	the main tree at Corbett
<i>Sterculia urens</i>	Gum Karaya	Ranthambore
<i>Tectona grandis</i>	Teak	Delhi, Corbett buffer zone, planted
Shrubs etc.		
<i>Asparagus racemosus</i>	Wild Asparagus/Satavar	Aligarhe
<i>Euphorbia caducifolia</i>	Leafless Milk Hedge/Thor	Widespread at Rathambore
<i>Euphorbia neriifolia</i>	Oleander-leaved Spurge	Ranthambore, scattered
<i>Euphorbia royleana</i>	Royle's Spurge/Danda Thor	Ranthambore, less common
<i>Tamarix indica</i>	Indian Tamarisk	Once at Bharatpur
<i>Vetivaria zizanioides</i>	Elephant Grass	Corbett