

BIRDING TOUR
of
Kaziranga, Nameri Tiger Reserve(Assam), Dirang and the Sangti
Valley and Eagle's Nest (Uranachal Pradesh) NE India
Jan 29th-Feb 12th 2008

By
John van der Dol

Participants:

Jo Thomas, Steve Lister, Kath and Mick Claydon. Roger Hughes, Sue Pollard, John van der Dol, Mohit Aggarwal ,and our guide Peter Lobo plus a huge logistics/back-up team.

This report is a list of birds of interest seen by the group in the different areas we visited. It is by no means the comprehensive list.

Okhla Barrage, Delhi Jan 29th pm only.

Black-headed Ibis
Greater Flamingo- 350
Spot-billed Duck- 100
Northern Shoveler- 10,000
Peregrine
Grey Francolin
Purple Swamphen- many
White-tailed Lapwing- 2
Hume's Warbler
Hume's Whitethroat- 2

Nameri Tiger Reserve, Jan 30th-Feb 1st
Accommodation at Nameri Eco camp
Forest and lowland river valley.

Lesser Adjutant- 6 and 5 en route
Greater Adjutant- 95 just outside Guwahati
Black-eared Kite- 15
Pallas's Fish-Eagle
Crested Serpent Eagle
Crested Goshawk
Mountain Hawk Eagle
Osprey
Red-headed Falcon
Oriental Hobby- pair breeding at Nameri
Shaheen Falcon
Black-necked Crane- Dirang Valley
River Lapwing- 6
Ibisbill- 2
Small Pratincole- 100+
River Tern- 10
Barred Cuckoo-Dove- 6

Wedge-tailed Green Pigeon- 3
Green Imperial Pigeon- 20
Red-breasted Parakeet -20, 10
Vernal Hanging Parrot- 5,1
Green-billed Malkoha- 2
Collared Owlet- 2
Asian Barred Owlet- 3
Red-headed Trogon- 1
Crested Kingfisher- 2
Great Pied Hornbill- 6
Wreathed Hornbill- 2,2
Lineated Barbet- 1,6
Blue-throated Barbet- 3,6
Grey-capped Woodpecker- 4
Fulvous-breasted Woodpecker
Lesser Yellownape
Grey-headed Woodpecker
Greater Flameback- 4
Sand Lark- 2
Citrine Wagtail-2
Olive-backed Pipit- 2,4
Long-tailed Minivet- 20
Black-crested Bulbul- 3
White-throated Bulbul- 2
Black Bulbul- 100s
Golden-fronted Leafbird
Orange-bellied Leafbird
Common Iora
Blue Whistling Thrush- 1,20
Scaly Thrush- single by single observer
Black-breasted Thrush- 3
Thick-billed Warbler 1,1
Lemon-rumped Warbler- 2
Yellow-browed Warbler- 6
Greenish Warbler-2
Yellow-vented Warbler- 2
Hume's Warbler
Buff-barred Warbler
Yellow-bellied Warbler
Striated grassbird
Rufous-gorgeted Flycatcher
Little Pied Flycatcher
Verditer
Large Niltava
Small Niltava
Rufous-bellied Niltava
Grey-headed Canary Flycatcher
Siberian Rubythroat
Red-flanked Bluetail
Golden Bush Robin

Rufous-breasted Bush Robin
Hodgson's Redstart
Blue-fronted Redstart
White-capped River-chat
Plumbeous Water Redstart
Little Forktail
Black-backed Forktail-4
Spotted Forktail
Striated Laughingthrush
Abbott's Babbler
Buff-breasted Babbler- 2
Snowy-throated Babbler
Striped Tit-babbler
Silver-eared Mesia 20 en route to Dirang
Sultan Tit
Chestnut-bellied Nuthatch
Velvet-fronted Nuthatch
Wallcreeper- 5
Maroon Oriole
Asian Fairy Bluebird- 4
Spot-winged Starling

Dirang and Shangti Valley Feb 2nd and 3rd

Sela Pass up to 3500m only

We were unfortunately not able to get to the top of the pass due to heavy snow falls. Although the pass was just about open the roads were getting dodgy at 3500m and with two wheel drive cars with no snow chains we were not prepared to risk it. The heavy snow probably contributed to us missing some high altitude species but we are still in one piece and able to return another day.

Further interesting additional

White-eyed Buzzard
Black Eagle
Black-necked Crane again in the Shangti Valley
Snow Pigeon 16
Black-tailed Crake- 3
Long-billed Plover- 5
Ibisbill- another 5
Nepal House Martin- 60
Rufous-breasted Accentor- 4,7
Maroon-backed Accentor- 4,1
Alpine Accentor- 12
Plain-backed Thrush again- 8
White-collared Blackbird- 12
Ashy-throated warbler
Grey-hooded Warbler
White-spectacled Warbler
Slaty-blue Flycatcher- male
White-browed Bush Robin – 2 males
Rufous-breasted Bush Robin- another male

White-throated Redstart- 4 males and two females all together
 Streaked (Bhutan) Laughingthrush
 Black-faced Laughingthrush- 16
 Chestnut-crowned Laughingthrush- 15,2
 Spotted Laughingthrush- 3
 Streak-breasted Scimitar Babbler - 3,3
 Rufous-capped Babbler- 10
 Green Shrike Babbler- 2
 Hoary-throated Barwing
 Chestnut-tailed Minla- 8,6
 Red-tailed Minla- 1,1
 Brown-throated Fulvetta- 12
 Beautiful Sibia
 Whiskered Yuhina- 20
 Stripe-throated Yuhina
 Rufous-vented Yuhina
 Black-throated Tit- 10
 Grey-crested Tit
 Rufous-vented Tit
 Rufous-fronted Tit- 4
 Green-backed Tit
 Yellow-browed Tit
 Rusty-flanked Treecreeper
 Wallcreeper again- 1,1
 Spotted Nutcracker- 5,1
 Russet Sparrow- 6,3
 Blanford's Rosefinch- 25+
 Dark-rumped Rosefinch – 12
 Dark-breasted Rosefinch- 12
 Common Rosefinch- 1
 White-browed Rosefinch - 10
 Pink-browed Rosefinch- male
 Himalayan (Yellow-breasted) Greenfinch- 2
 Red-headed Bullfinch- female
 Grey-headed Bullfinch- 11
 Gold-naped Finch- 4,2
 Plain Mountain Finch- 6
 Little Bunting

Eagles Nest Wildlife Sanctuary- Feb 4th-10th

An area of forest ranging 500 to 2900m at Eagles Nest Pass. We stayed at Lama Camp (2400m), Bompu Camp (1900m) and Sesni (1200m). Lama Camp is where the Bugun Liocichla was first discovered in 1996 and named in 2006 after the Bugun tribe. All the camps are temporary affairs (Lama is semi permanent) and one needs to take along a whole logistical team as there are no permanent facilities.

Our visit coincided with the first snow at Lama Camp for 17 years and consequently a lot of the birds had moved out. Despite that we still had a great time and a few bonus birds which had moved down to this elevation. It was however very cold at night but during the day when the sun came out we were able to shed one or two of our six layers of clothing.

Further interesting additional

Long-legged Buzzard – 2 at Bomdila (2500m)
Black Eagle – 3
Rufous-bellied Eagle –juv
Rufous-throated Partridge- heard most days
Blyth's Tragopan- Unfortunately heard only
Grey Peacock-Pheasant- heard only on three days
Mountain Imperial Pigeon- 3, 1
Large Hawk-Cuckoo
Red-headed Trogon- 4 singles
Wards Trogon- single male by single observer
Rufous-necked Hornbill- 1,2,2,2
Golden-throated Barbet- 1,2,7
Rufous-bellied Woodpecker- two singles
Crimson-breasted woodpecker- 2,1,3
Bay Woodpecker- seen and heard daily
Long-tailed Broadbill- Single at Sesni
Black-winged Cuckooshrike
Scarlet Minivet
Grey-chinned Minivet
Striated Bulbul
Mountain Bulbul
Golden-fronted Leafbird
Orange-bellied Leafbird
Brown Dipper
Maroon-backed Accentor- up to 10
Plain-backed Thrush- Up to 5 a day
Long-tailed Thrush- one or two a day
Chestnut-headed Tesia- 2 seen and another heard
Brownish-flanked Bush Warbler- One or two at Sesni
Grey-cheeked Warbler
Chestnut-crowned Warbler
Back-faced Warbler- common
Broad-billed Warbler- 2 singles
Red-flanked Bluetail- common
White-browed Bush-Robin- 4,3
Rufous-breasted Bush-Robin- another male
White-throated Laughingthrush
White-crested Laughingthrush- heard only
Striated Laughingthrush- daily in small numbers
Grey-sided Laughingthrush- 4,2,10
Streaked (Bhutan) Laughingthrush- 3,3,2
Scaly Laughingthrush- 2,2
Blue-winged Laughingthrush- 4
Black-faced Laughingthrush- fairly common
Chestnut-crowned Laughingthrush- fairly common
Spotted Laughingthrush-3
Red-faced Liocichla- very brief view of a single
Bugun Liocichla- 3,1 plus one heard

Large Scimitar-Babbler- one heard only
 Coral-billed Scimitar-Babbler- 18,2
 Slender-billed Scimitar-Babbler- excellent views of a single
 Long-billed Wren-Babbler- single
 Eye-browed Wren-Babbler- 3 heard only
 Scaly-breasted Wren-Babbler- One seen and another heard
 Rufous-throated Wren-Babbler- Three heard and one seen
 Sikim Wedge-billed Wren-Babbler- One seen plus another four heard
 Rufous-capped Babbler- 10,6,4
 Golden Babbler- 4,4
 Cutia- 20,3,11
 Black-headed Shrike-Babbler- 1
 White-browed Shrike-Babbler- 1
 Green Shrike-Babbler- 2+
 Black-eared Shrike-Babbler- 2
 Rusty-fronted Barwing-9,50,80,10
 Hoary-throated Bawing- 10
 Streak-throated Barwing- 2,4
 Blue-winged Minla- 1,2
 Chestnut-tailed Minla- common
 Red-tailed Minla- five singles
 Yellow-throated Fulvetta- Up to 100 a day
 Rufous-winged Fulvetta- 25
 Nepal Fulvetta- 10
 Rufous-backed Sibia- 3,1
 Rufous Sibia -1
 Beautiful Sibia- common
 Long-tailed Sibia- common at lower elevations
 Black-chinned Yuhina
 Fire-tailed Myzornis- two stunning males
 Black-throated Parrotbill- 20
 Rufous-headed Parrotbill- 1,4
 Rufous-vented Tit- 4
 Yellow-cheeked Tit- 6,2
 Sultan Tit- 3
 Beautiful Nuthatch- 3
 Green-tailed Sunbird
 Black-throated Sunbird
 Crow-billed Drongo
 Yellow-billed Blue Magpie
 Common Green Magpie
 Collared Treepie- heard only
 Scarlet-Finch- 2 males and one female

Kaziranga NP Feb 11th-12th

Kaziranga lies on the southern side of the Bramaputra floodplain where the habitat consists of loose woodland and vast areas of grassland. It is inhabited by many Indian Rhino, Wild Elephants and Buffalo as well as Hog Deer and the rare Swamp Deer. Tiger could be encountered here.

Birds here consist of open country species and species which prefer woodland where it exists.

The first day was spent in the Central ranges while the second day was spent in the Western ranges. The Eastern ranges were closed to the public as was a herd of 190 Wild Elephants which had come down from the hills and were causing chaos. No doubt to do with the unusual weather conditions. The Panbari Forest was also closed because of a Hoolock Gibbon breeding program and although we heard them we were unable to see them.

Further interesting additional

Spot-billed Pelican- 20,2
Oriental Darter- common
Woolly-necked Stork- 2,10,2
Black-necked Stork- 4,2
Greater Adjutant- 2
Pallas's Fish-Eagle- 4,4
Grey-headed Fish-Eagle- 6,4
Slender-billed Vulture- 2 (the only two vultures of the entire trip)
Pied Harrier- female
Changeable Hawk-Eagle- 3,1
Osprey
Swamp Francolin- 3 plus one heard
Bronze-winged Jacana
Grey-headed Lapwing- 5
Pintail Snipe- 6
River Tern- 20,10
Emerald Dove
Yellow-footed Green Pigeon- 40,20
Green Imperial Pigeon- 20,4,2
Stork-billed Kingfisher- 2,1
Oriental Pied Hornbill- 5 plus one heard
Great Hornbill- 1 plus 23 in one roost plus one other
Blue-eared Barbet- heard only
Greater Yellowthroat
Streak-throated woodpecker- 2
Grey-headed Woodpecker- 2,1
Black-rumped Flameback- 4 singles
Greater Flameback- 6
Blue-naped Pitta- heard only
Bengal Bushlark- 1,6
Plain Martin
Citrine Wagtail- 6
Rosy Pipit- 1,6
Large Cuckooshrike- 3
Long-tailed Minivet- 8
Black-breasted Thrush- another single
Dusky Warbler
Tickell's Leaf Warbler
Striated Grassbird
Slaty-backed Flycatcher- female

Little Pied Flycatcher- 3,2
Bluethroat
Lesser Necklaced Laughingthrush- a single by a single observer
Greater Necklaced Laughingthrush- 12
Rufous-necked Laughingthrush- 16,9
Striated Babbler
Ruby-cheeked Sunbird- pair
Crimson Sunbird- single male twice
Large Woodshrike- 12
Rufous Treepie
White-vented Myna- 2,4,1
Baya Weaver- 8,6
Finn's Weaver- 2

MAMMALS seen on the trip

Indian Rhinoceros
Wild Buffalo
Asian Elephant
Rhesus Macaque
Capped Langur
Hog Deer
Swamp Deer
Wild Boar
Smooth-coated Otter
Yellow-throated Marten
Hoary-bellied Squirrel
Himalayan Striped Squirrel
Himalayan Orange-bellied Squirrel
Indian Flying Fox sp
Hoolock Gibbon- heard only

Postscript

This was a fantastic tour despite the cold particularly at night. We were prepared. The snow was a problem in places and stopped us reaching some areas resulting in a few missing species, but some species were more common than they may otherwise have been. I personally got 78 new species out of a group total of about 390 recorded which was a pleasant surprise. The Laughingthrushes, Wren- Babblers and Rosefinches were particularly pleasing and there were many other highlights such as Fire-tailed Myzornis, Sultan Tit and the Scimitar-Babblers.

Thanks are due to Jo Thomas, Mohit Aggarwal and Peter Lobo and his amazing back-up team for putting this tour together.

Another tour is provisionally planned for early spring 2010.

John
February 2008