

## PEREGRINE BIRD TOURS

### INDIA

10 – 29 MARCH 2001

### TOUR REPORT

**LEADER:** CHRIS DOUGHTY

India proved to be every bit as exciting, as we all hoped it would be. With a tally in excess of 350 species of birds and 26 mammals, a good time was had by all, with the possible exception of Maurice.

We began our journey with a city sightseeing tour of Delhi, including a visit to old Delhi and the famous Red Fort. While we marveled at the splendor of the Red Fort and admired the skill of the mogul craftsman who had built it, we also found plenty of birds to look at. Highlights included Brown-headed Barbet, Indian Grey Hornbill, Egyptian Vulture, Dusky Crag-Martin, Ashy Prinia, White-browed Wagtail and Tawny Pipit. We also enjoyed great looks at Rhesus Macaque, Small Indian Mongoose and Northern Palm Squirrel; the tour was off to a good start.

Leaving Delhi, we drove to Sariska National Park, where we spent two enjoyable days looking for birds and mammals, mainly from the back of small jeeps. We followed narrow tracks through the densely forested hills and open jungle, it didn't take us long to impress upon our local drivers that we were just as interested in birds as we were in mammals. The park was full of colourful birds, some of the more interesting ones included the uncommon Painted Spurfowl, splendid Indian Peafowls, our first look at a Black-rumped Flameback, a very striking species of woodpecker, a delightful Spotted Owlet, family parties of beautiful Small Minivets, the localised Brown Rock-Chat and large flocks of very flighty Common Rosefinches. We made a short stop at a small temple inside the park, Marion and Howard entered the temple and received a special

blessing from a Hindu holyman, which stood them in good stead for the rest of the trip. At a nearby small stream we found a pair of Olive-backed Pipits, which was our only sighting of this species, we also found a perched Crested Serpent-Eagle. There were good numbers of mammals in the park, which included Hanuman Langur, Golden Jackal, Wild Boar, Chital, Sambar and Nilgai. As we were leaving our hotel at Sariska, which at one time had been a maharajas hunting palace, we spotted a Large Cuckoo-shrike perched in the top of a tree, as we were watching the cuckoo-shrike a pair of Short-toed Snake-Eagles flew overhead, which rounded the day off perfectly.

The following day we drove from Jaipur to Ranthambore National Park. We broke the long drive with a couple of very rewarding birding stops. The first, was at the Palace Lake on the outskirts of Jaipur, the palace and the lake were used to great effect during the filming of one of the James Bond movies, Octopussy. The lake was absolutely teeming with birdlife, just some of the birds we saw here included splendid male Garganeys, Common Snipe, Black-tailed Godwit, Marsh, Green, Wood and Common Sandpipers, Common Redshank, Common Greenshank, Temminck's Stint, Ruff, Black-bellied Tern and a delightful black-headed race of the Yellow Wagtail. As we were watching the waders a Brahminy Kite flew over the lake. By far the rarest bird we saw there was an immature Common Tern, a rare straggler to inland areas of India. Our second stop was at Kuchida Dam, where there were some very annoying school children but a tremendous variety of wetland birds. In the shallows of the lake there were large flocks of Bar-headed Geese, Eurasian Wigeon, Northern Shoveler, Northern Pintail and Tufted Ducks, a few Eurasian Curlews, Little Stints, Pied Avocets, a solitary River Lapwing, several Greater Flamingos, a few Black-headed Ibis and a small flock of Eurasian Spoonbills. Close to the edge of the lake there was a small flock of Sarus Cranes and huge flock of the very beautiful, but all too rare Demoiselle Cranes, a few Great Thick-knees and several Gull-billed Terns flying over the lake. A flying Booted Eagle also caused some excitement.

We next enjoyed an extended stay at Ranthambore National Park, where we hoped to find India's 'king of the jungle', the Tiger, we were not to be disappointed. We followed a pattern of early morning and late afternoon jeep rides inside the park. The occupants of one jeep were lucky enough to drive around a bend in the track and find a superb Tiger sprawled across the track ahead of them, the rest of us had to be content with a mating pair of Tigers half hidden in the grass. We spent most of our time driving around the rocky hills which were draped in dry deciduous forest, some of the more uncommon species we encountered here included Alexandrine Parakeet, Collared Scops-Owl, Brown Fish-Owl, Eurasian Nightjar, Oriental Turtle-Dove, Grey-headed Fish-Eagle, Long-legged Buzzard, Grey-breasted Prinia and the delightful Crested Bunting. Around the lakes in the park we added Cotton Pygmy Goose, Mallard, Common and Pied Kingfishers, Bronze-winged Jacana, Whiskered Tern, Osprey and Purple Heron. We also enjoyed good looks at Indian Flying-Fox, Indian Gazelle and Indian Hare. Unfortunately, it was here that Marge dislocated her hip and could take no further part in the tour and had to be evacuated to Delhi by helicopter, I am sure we all wish Marge the best of luck for the future.

Continuing our journey we spent two wonderful days at Bharatpur National Park, without doubt one of the greatest bird sanctuaries in the world. Once the hunting reserve of a maharajah, the low-lying marsh was flooded to attract large numbers of waterfowl, which winter in the area. Huge numbers still winter here each year, in and around the jheels we found flocks of Spot-billed Ducks, small family groups of Common Cranes, a large flock of Great White Pelicans, which do not normally occur here and scattered pairs of Woolly-necked Storks, a few Black-crowned Night-Herons and best of all a stunning Black Bittern, which we were able to enjoy in the scope. In the dry scrub between the jheels we added our only Eurasian Wryneck and Brown-capped Pygmy-Woodpecker for the trip, as well as a Dusky Eagle-Owl sitting on a nest with a full-grown chick by its side, other species included Red-collared Dove, Chestnut-bellied Nuthatch, White-eared Bulbul and Oriental Skylark. Another of the highlights here were the *phylloscopus* warblers, everyone favourites, well at least one of Chris' favourite families, we found Booted, Greenish and Sulphur-bellied Warblers, Common Chiffchaff and the rare Brook's Leaf-Warbler. We also found three very beautiful but skulking species, Orange-headed Thrush, Siberian Rubythroat and Bluethroat. Bharatpur always plays host to a large variety and number of birds of prey and we saw Eurasian Marsh-Harrier, Greater Spotted, Tawny and Steppe Eagles and Common Kestrel.

Following a visit to Fatehpur Sikri and the incomparable Taj Mahal, we flew to Bangalore in southern India, where we spent the night. The following day we drove to our lodge on the edge of Mudumali National Park. As we were boarding our bus in Bangalore we spotted a White-cheeked Barbet sitting in a tree, the first of the peninsular endemics. We broke the long journey with a very pleasant boat ride at Ranganathittha Bird Sanctuary, where large numbers of herons, egrets Eurasian Spoonbills and Asian Open-billed Storks were nesting. We also observed a large nesting colony of the extremely localised Streak-throated Swallow. Later in the day a brief stop at a roadside lake produced a small flock of the endangered Spot-billed Pelican.

The pre-dawn sighting of a Jerdon's Nightjar the following morning, got the day off to a good start. We spent the rest of the morning enjoying an excellent birding drive through the thorn-scrub in Bardipur National Park. Here we found the endemic Red Spurfowl and the beautiful Grey Junglefowl, our only Streak-throated Woodpecker for the trip, hanging to the side of a termite mound, the elusive Changeable Hawk-Eagle perched in a tree, but the star of the show was a group of three Large Hawk-Cuckoos. In the afternoon we drove deep into the Nilgiri Hills heading for Ootacamund, a rather faded hill station and a real relict of the Raj. On our arrival in 'Ooty' we visited the botanical gardens and were rewarded with fine looks at Scaly Thrush, Eurasian Blackbird, the very uncommon Ultramarine Flycatcher and a Northern Goshawk which flew overhead, this is a very uncommon winter visitor to peninsular India.

The hills around Ootacamund have been badly deforested, and plantations of pines and eucalypts are a sorry replacement for the splendours of the original forest. However, there are one or two small patches of relict woodland still intact, notably, the Avalanche Shola Forest. We spent a very interesting day here and were rewarded with Indian Swiftlet, Alpine Swift, Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrike, the endemic Niligiri Flycatcher,

Grey-headed Canary- Flycatcher, Indian Blue Robin, the stunning Black-lored Tit, Hill Swallow, Black Bulbul, Tickell's Leaf-Warbler, the endemic Niligiri Laughingthrush, Crimson-backed Sunbird and best of all the endemic and endangered Black-and-orange Flycatcher.

Our final destination in the Western Ghats was the superb Periyar National Park. With the aid of two local guides we enjoyed a splendid walk through the forest. A wealth of birds here included Rufous Woodpecker, Common Flameback, the brilliant Heart-spotted Woodpecker, Crimson-fronted Barbet, the endemic Malabar Grey Hornbill, Chestnut-headed Bee-eater, Common Hawk-Cuckoo, the elusive Drongo Cuckoo, flight views of Vernal Hanging-Parrot, the endemic Malabar Parakeet, the highly localised White-rumped Needletail, Jungle Owlet, the stunning Asian Fairy-bluebird, the endemic and endangered White-bellied Treepie, several stunning Eurasian Golden Orioles, Bronzed Drongo, Large Woodshrike Southern Hill Myna, Velvet-fronted Nuthatch, the endemic Yellow-browed Bulbul, wintering Large-billed Leaf-Warbler, Rufous Babbler, Plain Flowerpecker and nesting Loten's Sunbird. We also enjoyed great looks at a small pack of Dholes, or Indian Wild Dogs. An afternoon boat trip added Chestnut-tailed Starling, Ashy Woodswallow, a couple of family parties of Smooth-coated Otters, several Indian Elephants and good numbers of Gaur, a very impressive species of bison.

On the last day of the tour we spent a very productive morning exploring the Gudalur Range, a small range of hills at the southern end of the Western Ghats, which are at a slightly lower elevation than Periyar National Park. Some of the more interesting species included Indian and Plaintive Cuckoos, Blue-faced Malkoha, Black-hooded Oriole, Black-headed Cuckoo-shrike, Asian Brown Flycatcher, the endemic White-bellied Blue-Flycatcher, another endemic the White-browed Bulbul and Tawny-bellied Babbler.

## SYSTEMATIC LIST

### PHASIANIDAE

- Grey Francolin *Francolinus gularis* A common bird of dry grassland and thorn scrub, this species occurs throughout most of India.
- Jungle Bush Quail *Perdicula asiatica* A fairly common bird of plains and hills below 1500 metres; only observed on one occasion, during a jeep ride in Ranthambore National Park.
- Red Spurfowl *Galloperdix spadicea* A locally common bird of dry scrub, found throughout peninsular India. We observed this species well during our bus drive in Bardipur National Park, Chris also observed this species from the bus near Ootacamund.
- Painted Spurfowl *Galloperdix lunulata* We enjoyed good sightings of both males and females of this attractive species, in both Sariska and Ranthambore National Parks.
- Grey Junglefowl *Gallus sonneratii* This locally common endemic of peninsular India, was observed particularly well in Bardipur National Park.
- Indian Peafowl *Pavo cristatus* Locally very common, wherever it is protected, we observed it in most national parks.

#### ANATIDAE

- Greylag Goose *Anser anser* A locally common winter visitor, we enjoyed good close looks in Bharatpur National Park.
- Bar-headed Goose *Anser indicus* This species is also a locally common winter visitor, large flocks were present in the Bharatpur National Park.
- Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna feruginea* Large numbers of this locally common species were wintering throughout most wetland areas in northern India.
- Comb Duck *Sarkidiornis melanotos* This widespread but uncommon resident was only observed on one occasion. A party of four birds flew overhead and then settled on Marsarowar Dam, where we enjoyed good scope views of them.
- Cotton Pygmy-goose *Nettapus coromandelianus* Small numbers of this locally common resident were observed throughout northern India.
- Gadwall *Anas strepera* This locally common winter visitor, was frequently encountered in northern India.
- Eurasian Wigeon *Anas penelope* This common winter visitor was present on most wetland areas throughout northern India.
- Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* This uncommon winter visitor, was recorded on two occasions, the same solitary male was present on one of the larger lakes in Ranthambore National Park.
- Spot-billed Duck *Anas poecilorhyncha* Good numbers of this locally common resident were to be found throughout most wetland areas both in northern and southern India.
- Northern Shoveler *Anas clypeata* This very common winter visitor was recorded throughout most wetland areas in northern India.
- Northern Pintail *Anas acuta* This common winter visitor was recorded in small numbers in several wetland areas in northern India.
- Garganey *Anas querquedula* This species is also a common winter visitor to northern India, where we enjoyed superb looks at full-plumaged males, in most wetland areas.

Common Teal *Anas crecca* Yet another common winter visitor, large numbers observed throughout most wetland areas in northern India.

Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula* This locally common winter visitor, was only recorded on two occasions. Small numbers were present on Kuchida and Marsarowar Dams, this species prefers deeper water, as it is a diving duck.

#### TURNICIDAE

Barred Buttonquail *Turnix suscitator* This locally fairly common species of buttonquail was only observed on one occasion, the bicycle brigade enjoyed good looks at a pair of birds walking along a track in Bharatpur National Park.

#### PICIDAE

Eurasian Wyrneck *Jynx torquilla* This migratory species of woodpecker is a fairly common winter visitor to northern India. We only observed this species on one occasion, we enjoyed very good looks at a bird in Bharatpur National Park.

Brown-capped Pygmy-Woodpecker *Dendrocopos nanus* This locally fairly common species of diminutive woodpecker, was only observed on one occasion, we enjoyed scope views of a solitary bird in Bharatpur National Park.

Yellow-crowned Woodpecker *Dendrocopos mahrattensis* This locally common species was observed well on several occasions in northern India.

Rufous Woodpecker *Celeus brachyurus* This locally fairly common bird was recorded on two occasions in Periyar National Park

Streak-throated Woodpecker *Picus xanthopygaeus* This locally fairly common species was only recorded on one occasion, we enjoyed good looks at a male bird clinging onto the side of a termite mound in Bardipur National Park.

Common Flameback *Dinopium javanense* This locally fairly common species of woodpecker only occurs in southwestern and northeastern India. We enjoyed one sighting in Periyar National Park.

Black-rumped Flameback *Dinopium benghalense* A common bird of the plains and foothills throughout India. We enjoyed splendid looks on many occasions.

Heart-spotted Woodpecker *Hemicircus canente* This very thinly distributed resident of hilly areas was recorded on only one occasion. A family party, were observed well in Periyar National Park.

#### MEGALAIMIDAE

Brown-headed Barbet *Megalaima zeylanica* This locally common species was observed on several occasions in northern India.

White-cheeked Barbet *Megalaima viridis* This species is endemic to the Western Ghats, where it is a common bird, we recorded it on several occasions.

Crimson-fronted Barbet *Megalaima rubricapilla* This common, but localised species is endemic to the Western Ghats and Sri Lanka. A solitary bird was observed well on the last afternoon of the tour, in Periyar National Park.

Coppersmith Barbet *Megalaima haemacephala* A common and widespread species, this species was recorded on most days of the tour.

#### BUCEROTIDAE

Indian Grey Hornbill *Ocyceros birostris* This widespread and locally common species was recorded on several occasions in northern India.

Malabar Grey Hornbill *Ocyceros griseus* A locally common species, which is endemic to the Western Ghats of southwestern India. We enjoyed several sightings in Periyar National Park.

#### UPUPIDAE

Common Hoopoe *Upupa epops* This common resident was observed on many occasions throughout the tour.

#### CORACIIDAE

Indian Roller *Coracias benghalensis* This common and widespread resident was observed on most days of the tour.

#### CERYLIDAE

Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis* Numbers of this resident species of kingfisher, increase in winter owing to an influx of migratory birds from northern Europe and Asia. We only observed a solitary bird, on a few occasions in Ranthambore National Park.

Stork-billed Kingfisher *Halcyon amauroptera* A locally common bird of the plains and foothills, we observed it in Ranthambore National Park and again in Ranganathitto Bird Sanctuary.

White-throated Kingfisher *Halcyon smyrnensis* This very common species, was recorded on most days of the tour.

Pied Kingfisher *Ceryle rudis* Another widespread and common species, which we recorded on most days of the tour.

#### MEROPIDAE

Green Bee-eater *Merops orientalis* This very common and widespread species of bee-eater, was recorded on most days of the tour.

Chestnut-headed Bee-eater *Merops leschenaulti* This locally common resident is subject to local movements, moving out of heavy-rainfall areas during the monsoon season. We enjoyed good looks at this species in Periyar National Park.

#### CUCULIDAE

Large Hawk-Cuckoo *Hierococcyx sparveriioides* This uncommon species of cuckoo breeds in the Himalayas, and is a rare winter visitor to peninsular India, with only a handful of records from the southwest. We were extremely fortunate to observe a party of three birds in Mudumali National Park, in the Western Ghats. We all commented on how very much they resembled the Shikra, a small species of *accipiter*.

Common Hawk-Cuckoo *Hierococcyx varius* This widespread locally common resident proved to be common in Periyar National Park.

Indian Cuckoo *Cuculus micropterus* This uncommon resident is subject to migratory movements and frequents dense foliage in the canopy of tall trees. Following a game of hide-and-peek with this species, we eventually enjoyed good looks at a solitary bird in the canopy of a tall tree in the Gudalur Range, at the southern end of the Western Ghats.

Plaintive Cuckoo *Cacomantis merulinus* Very recent taxonomic revision has now made the Grey-bellied Cuckoo a race of the more widespread Plaintive Cuckoo. This species is locally fairly common in southern India, we observed a solitary male in the Gudalur Range, at the southern end of the Western Ghats.

Drongo Cuckoo *Surniculus lugubris* This uncommon forest cuckoo was observed on one occasion in Periyar National Park. Our two young local guides were very pleased, as this was a life bird for them!

Asian Koel *Eudynamis scolopacea* This locally common resident was recorded on most days of the tour.

Blue-faced Malkoha *Phaenicophaeus viridirostris* This locally fairly common resident is endemic to peninsular India and Sri Lanka. It proved to be fairly common in the Gudalur Range, at the southern end of the Western Ghats.

Greater Coucal *Centropus sinensis* This large species of cuckoo is common throughout India and we recorded it on most days of the tour.

#### PSITTACIDAE

Vernal Hanging-Parrot *Loriculus vernalis* This locally common diminutive species of parrot is endemic to peninsular and far eastern India. We enjoyed several sightings in Periyar National Park.

Alexandrine Parakeet *Psittacula eupatria* This large species of parakeet, occurs throughout India, we only saw it on two occasions, once in Ranthambore National Park and again at Marsarowar Dam.

Rose-ringed Parakeet *Psittacula krameri* Common and widespread throughout India, we recorded it on most days of the tour.

Plum-headed Parakeet *Psittacula cyanocephala* This fairly common resident was recorded on numerous occasions throughout the tour.

Malabar Parakeet *Psittacula columboides* This locally common species of parakeet is endemic to the Western Ghats, found nowhere else in the world. It was a common bird in Periyar National Park and in the Gudalur Range.

#### APODIDAE.

Indian Swiftlet *Collocalia unicolor* This common species of small swift is endemic to the Western Ghats of India and Sri Lanka. We observed small flocks of birds flying over the Avalanche Shola Forest and again on the eastern slope of the Western Ghats.

White-rumped Needletail *Zoonavena sylvatica* This uncommon species of swift is a patchily distributed resident of India. We encountered several small flocks in Periyar National Park.

Asian Palm Swift *Cypsiurus balasiensis* A widespread bird of the Indian plains, it is closely associated with palm trees, particularly the Palmyra Palm. Surprisingly, we only recorded it on one occasion, several birds were nesting in palm trees at a service station, where our bus was being refueled, in the town of Coimbatore, in peninsular India.

Alpine Swift *Tachymarptis melba* An uncommon resident of the Western Ghats, small numbers were observed flying overhead in the Avalanche Shola Forest and again in Periyar National Park.

Little Swift *Apus affinis* Very recent taxonomic revision now affirms that all the swifts occurring in India and Nepal, that were previously thought to be House Swifts, are in fact the same species as the Little Swift of Africa. The House Swift is now thought to only occur east of India, throughout Indochina. The Little Swift is a common resident throughout India and we recorded it on most days of the tour.

#### HEMIPROCNIDAE

Crested Treeswift *Hemiprocne coronata* This widespread, but very local bird is an uncommon bird throughout eastern and peninsular India. We recorded this species on two occasions, Chris saw a solitary bird in Mudumali National Park and two or three birds were observed on the last afternoon of the tour in Periyar National Park.

#### STRIGIDAE

Collared Scops-Owl *Otus baklamoena* A locally common species, which occurs throughout India, we saw it well on a few occasions.

Dusky Eagle-Owl *Bubo coromandus* This large, uncommon species of owl was observed on one occasion, in Bharatpur National Park. An adult bird and a full-grown young bird were observed very well in the scope.

Brown Fish-Owl *Ketupa zeylonensis* Another large, uncommon species of owl, some members of the group in one jeep, were fortunate enough to observe this species in Ranthambore National Park.

Jungle Owlet *Glaucidium radiatum* This common species of owl, is active in the daytime, we observed a few individuals in Periyar National Park.

Spotted Owlet *Athene brama* This common species of owl was often observed at its daytime roost.

#### CAPRIMULGIDAE

Eurasian Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus* A surprise find, a pair of birds were roosting together in a small tree in Ranthambore National Park. This species is a passage migrant in India, it breeds from western Europe to central Asia and almost all birds winter in Africa. The two birds were probably on spring migration from central Asia to Africa, which normally occurs a little further to the west of

Ranthambore, in particular through Pakistan, Gilgit and the Sind. However, one or two birds have been recorded even further east in India than our sighting. Jerdon's Nightjar *Caprimulgus asiaticus* This locally fairly common species is endemic to peninsular India and Sri Lanka. A solitary bird was observed briefly in the headlights of our bus, pre-dawn one morning in Mudumali National Park.

#### COLUMBIDAE

Rock Pigeon *Columba livia* Large feral populations in all the towns and cities.  
Oriental Turtle-Dove *Streptopelia orientalis* This species is an uncommon winter visitor in northwestern India, a small group were observed by occupants of one of our jeeps in Ranthambore National Park.  
Laughing Dove *Streptopelia senegalensis* Common and widespread throughout India.  
Spotted Dove *Streptopelia chinensis* Also common and widespread throughout India.  
Red Collared-Dove *Streptopelia tranquebarica* Common and widespread throughout northern and central India.  
Eurasian Collared-Dove *Streptopelia decaocto* Also common and widespread throughout northern and central India.  
Pompadour Green-Pigeon *Treron pompadora* In India this locally common species is confined to the Western Ghats of peninsular India. One bird was observed in flight in Periyar National Park.  
Yellow-footed Green-Pigeon *Treron phoenicoptera* Common and widespread throughout India.

#### GRUIDAE

Sarus Crane *Grus antigone* A locally common species throughout northern India, which we saw on several occasions.  
Demoiselle Crane *Grus virgo* This very beautiful species of crane is an uncommon winter visitor to northern India. We were very fortunate to observe two very large flocks, one at Kuchida Dam and the other at Soorwal Dam.  
Common Crane *Grus grus* This species of crane is also an uncommon winter visitor to northern India. We enjoyed very good looks of good numbers of birds at Bharatpur National Park.

#### RALLIDAE

Brown Crake *Amaurornis akool* This uncommon species of crake was observed in swampy areas on a few occasions throughout the tour.  
White-breasted Waterhen *Amaurornis phoenicurus* Widespread and common throughout India.  
Purple Swamphen *Porphyrio porphyrio* This species is locally common and widespread throughout India, unlike Australian birds, those in India are shy and secretive.  
Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* Widespread and common resident.  
Common Coot *Fulica atra* Another widespread and common resident.

#### PTEROCLIDAE

Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse *Pterocles exustus* Fairly common and widespread throughout the drier areas of India. We observed small numbers flying overhead early one morning in farmland near Bharatpur National Park.

#### SCOLOPACIDAE

Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* A common and widespread winter visitor throughout India, we enjoyed many fine looks at this species.

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa* A common and widespread winter visitor throughout India, we saw several large flocks.

Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata* An uncommon but widespread winter visitor, mainly to coastal India, less common inland. We observed a few birds at Kuchida and Soorwal Dams.

Common Redshank *Tringa totanus* A common and widespread winter visitor throughout western India.

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis* A widespread and locally common winter visitor throughout western India, which we saw on several occasions.

Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia* A widespread and locally common winter visitor, which we observed on many occasions.

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus* This widespread winter visitor proved to be common throughout India.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola* Another widespread and locally common winter visitor, which we saw frequently.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* A common and widespread winter visitor which we observed on many occasions.

Little Stint *Calidris minuta* A less common but widespread winter visitor, which we observed on several occasions.

Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii* Much more numerous than the preceding species and could often be seen frequenting the same flock.

Dunlin *Calidris alpina* An uncommon winter visitor mainly to coastal areas of northwestern India. It is very uncommon inland, with few records, we were very pleased to observe two birds together amongst the thousands of waders at Soorwal Dam.

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax* Fairly common winter visitor, mainly to western India. We enjoyed observing, many of this species throughout the tour.

#### JACANIDAE

Pheasant-tailed Jacana *Hydrophasianus chirurgus* This uncommon species was only observed on one occasion, at the Banas River, near Ranthambore.

Bronze-winged Jacana *Metopidius indicus* A widespread and generally common resident throughout India.

#### BURHINIDAE

Eurasian Thick-knee *Burhinus oedicnemus* This uncommon resident is subject to local movements, depending on rainfall. A solitary bird was observed near Alwar in northwestern India and a small party was observed by some members of the group in Bharatpur National Park.

Great Thick-knee *Esacus recurvirostris* A resident bird, subject to local movements depending on water conditions. We recorded this species on several occasions, we enjoyed very good close looks during our boat ride at Ranganathitto Bird Sanctuary.

#### RECURVIROSTRIDAE

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* A widespread and common resident throughout India.

Pied Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta* An uncommon winter visitor, which we saw on a few occasions.

#### CHARADRIDAE

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius* A widespread resident and winter visitor, which we saw on several occasions.

Snowy Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus* A widespread but uncommon winter visitor to India. This species was recorded from Soorwal Dam and Bharatpur National Park.

Yellow-wattled Lapwing *Vanellus malarbaricus* This uncommon resident was glimpsed on two occasions, unfortunately only by Chris.

River Lapwing *Vanellus duvaucelii* This uncommon resident is subject to local movements, we were very fortunate to observe solitary birds at Kuchida Dam and Banas River.

Red-wattled Lapwing *Vanellus indicus* Common and widespread throughout India.

White-tailed Lapwing *Vanellus leucurus* An uncommon winter visitor to northwestern India, we enjoyed particularly good looks at this species in Bharatpur National Park.

#### GLAREOLIDAE

Indian Courser *Cursorius coromandelicus* This uncommon resident inhabits the drier areas of northern India. We were very pleased to enjoy a couple of good sightings in dry country near Ranthambore National Park.

Small Pratincole *Glareola lactea* A uncommon resident and partial migrant, usually moving downstream outside the breeding season. We were very pleased to enjoy good looks at a pair of birds at Soorwal Dam.

#### LARIDAE

Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus* An uncommon winter visitor mainly to the west coast of India, more uncommon inland. We were very fortunate to observe a solitary bird in winter plumage at the Banas River.

## STERNIDAE

Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica* This uncommon winter visitor was seen on a few occasions in northern India.

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo* An uncommon winter visitor, mainly to coastal India, with only a handful of sightings away from the coast. We were very fortunate to enjoy good scope views of an immature bird at the Palace Lake in Jaipur.

Black-bellied Tern *Sterna acuticauda* A widespread and uncommon resident, we enjoyed several sightings in northern India, most birds were in non-breeding plumage.

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybridus* This species is an uncommon winter visitor to India. We observed this species on two occasions, in Ranthambore National Park and again at the Banas River.

## PANDIODAE

Osprey *Pandion halliaetus* An uncommon winter visitor which we saw on a few occasions.

## ACCIPITRIDAE

Oriental Honey-buzzard *Pernis ptilorhyncus* A locally common resident, we enjoyed particularly good looks in Bharatpur National Park.

Black-shouldered Kite *Elanus caeruleus* Common and widespread throughout India.

Black Kite *Milvus migrans* Another common and widespread raptor, found throughout India.

Brahminy Kite *Haliastur indus* A widespread and fairly common resident, which we saw on several occasions.

Grey-headed Fish-Eagle *Ichthyophaga ichthyaetus* This uncommon resident was observed on one occasion in Ranthambore National Park, by the occupants in one of our jeeps. It is particularly uncommon in northwestern India, with only one or two other sightings from Ranthambore.

Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus* A widespread and locally common resident, which we saw on several occasions.

White-rumped Vulture *Gyps bengalensis* In the past this species has been a common and widespread bird, unfortunately numbers of this and the following species have crashed dramatically in the last few years. Much research is now being conducted to ascertain what is causing this marked decline, initial research points to a virus, which is spreading through the population. We did observe this species on several occasions but numbers were well down when compared to previous years.

Long-billed Vulture *Gyhyps indicus* A fairly common resident, whose numbers have also seriously declined. We observed several birds throughout the tour.

Red-headed Vulture *Sarcogyps calvus* A sparsely distributed resident which we observed on a few occasions throughout the tour.

Short-toed Snake-Eagle *Circaetus gallicus* An uncommon resident, we enjoyed good looks at a pair of birds flying over our hotel at Sariska National Park, with an additional sighting in Ranthambore National Park.

Crested Serpent-Eagle *Spilornis cheela* This uncommon resident was observed on a few occasions, with particularly good looks at a perched bird in Sariska National Park.

- Eurasian Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus* A fairly common winter visitor throughout India, which we observed on two occasions. Once in Bharatpur National Park and again during our boat ride in the Ranganathitto Bird Sanctuary.
- Pied Harrier *Circus melanoleucos* An uncommon winter visitor to the northeast, a rare winter visitor elsewhere in India. We observed an adult female quartering farmland early one morning near Bharatpur National Park.
- Shikra *Accipiter badius* A common and widespread resident, which we recorded on every day of the tour.
- Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* A rare winter visitor to India, Chris had an adult female bird almost fly into him at our lodge, close to Mudumali National Park.
- Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis* Another rare winter visitor to India, we were fortunate to observe a bird in the Ootacamund Botanical Gardens and a second bird flying over the Avalanche Shola Forest, near Ootacamund.
- Long-legged Buzzard *Buteo rufinus* This species is an uncommon winter visitor to the plains of northern India. Only observed on one occasion, the occupants of one of our jeeps observed this species fly across the road in front of them in Ranthambore National Park.
- Greater Spotted Eagle *Aquila clanga* This large species of eagle is an uncommon winter visitor to India. Small numbers were present in Bharatpur National Park.
- Tawny Eagle *Aquila rapax* This uncommon resident species of eagle was only observed on one occasion, in Bharatpur National Park.
- Steppe Eagle *Aquila nipalensis* A widespread and locally common winter visitor, a few birds were observed in Bharatpur National Park.
- Imperial Eagle *Aquila heliaca* This species of eagle is a very uncommon winter visitor mainly to the plains of northern India. We enjoyed one sighting in Bharatpur National Park.
- Bonelli's Eagle *Hieraaetus fasciatus* This large species of eagle is an uncommon resident throughout much of India. Great spotting by Michael enabled the group to enjoy a bird flying over the town of Ootacamund in peninsular India.
- Booted Eagle *Hieraaetus pennatus* This fairly common winter visitor was observed on two occasions, once at Kuchida Dam and again during our boat ride in the Ranganathitto Bird Sanctuary.
- Changeable Hawk-Eagle *Spizaetus cirrhatus* This species of crested eagle is an uncommon resident throughout much of India. We enjoyed two sightings, the first at Ranthambore National Park, which only some of the group saw, followed by a second sighting of a perched bird in Bardipur National Park, which all the group saw.

## FALCONIDAE

- Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* In the areas we visited this species is an uncommon winter visitor, which we saw on a few occasions.
- Red-necked Falcon *Falco chicquera* This beautiful species of falcon is now unfortunately becoming increasingly rare in India. We enjoyed one sighting of a bird in flight at Marsarowar Dam.

#### PODICIPEDIDAE

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis* Common and widespread throughout India.

#### ANHINGIDAE

Darter *Anhinga melanogaster* Common and widespread throughout India.

#### PHALACROCORACIDAE

Little Cormorant *Phalacrocorax niger* Common resident throughout India.

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo* Uncommon resident, which we saw on several occasions.

#### ARDEIDAE

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* A common and widespread resident throughout India. Very recent taxonomic revision now includes the Western Reef Egret as a geographical race of this species.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* A widespread and locally common resident and winter visitor.

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea* This uncommon resident was only observed on two occasions, once in Ranthambore National Park and again at Marsarowar Dam.

Great Egret *Casmerodius albus* A widespread and locally common resident throughout India.

Intermediate Egret *Mesophoyx intermedia* A widespread and locally common resident throughout the plains of India.

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* Common and widespread throughout India.

Indian Pond-Heron *Ardeola grayii* Another very common and widespread species, found throughout India..

Striated Heron *Butorides striatus* This uncommon resident species of heron, is the same species that occurs in Australia. We recorded it at Marsarowar Dam and it proved fairly common at Bharatpur National Park.

Black-crowned Night-Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* A fairly common but patchily distributed bird throughout India, we enjoyed several sightings.

Black Bittern *Dupetor flavicollis* This very uncommon resident also occurs in Australia. We enjoyed great scope views of a bird in Bharatpur National Park.

#### PHOENICOPTERIDAE

Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus ruber* This species nests in the Great Rann of Kutch, elsewhere it is an uncommon winter visitor which wanders erratically according to feeding conditions. We were fortunate to observe a couple of birds at Kuchida Dam and a small flock at Marsarowar Dam.

#### THRESKIORNITHIDAE

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* Throughout India this species is mainly an irregular year-round visitor in small numbers. We observed a couple of birds at Soorwal Dam and again at the Banas River.

Black-headed Ibis *Threskiornis melanocephalus* A widespread locally common resident, which we observed on many occasions.

Black Ibis *Pseudibis papillosa* A widespread locally common resident, which we observed in farmland near Bangalore and found a pair roosting in the top of a tree at dawn in Bardipur National Park.

Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia* Common and widespread throughout most wetland areas.

#### PELECANIDAE

Great White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus* An uncommon and sporadic winter visitor throughout India. A large flock was present at Bharatpur National Park, which is an unusual occurrence.

Spot-billed Pelican *Pelecanus philippensis* A locally common resident, we enjoyed very good looks at a flock of birds swimming on a lake near Mysore, in peninsular India.

#### CICONIIDAE

Painted Stork *Mycteria leucocephala* A widespread and locally common resident, which we saw on several occasions.

Asian Openbill *Anastomus oscitans* Another locally common resident, we observed small numbers at the Banas River and then large numbers nesting at the Ranganathitto Bird Sanctuary.

Woolly-necked Stork *Ciconia episcopus* A fairly common resident species, which we saw on several occasions.

Black-necked Stork *Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus* This resident species also occurs in Australia, unfortunately this species has recently become rare in India. We enjoyed sightings at the Banas River and in Bharatpur National Park.

#### IRENIDAE

Asian Fairy-bluebird *Irena puella* In India this species is mainly confined to the Western Ghats, where it is fairly common. We observed a pair of birds on the last afternoon of the tour, in Periyar National Park.

#### CHLOROPSEIDAE

Golden-fronted Leafbird *Chloropsis aurifrons* This uncommon species was observed on one occasion, close to our lodge near Mudumali National Park, unfortunately it was only observed by Chris.

#### LANIIDAE

Brown Shrike *Lanius cristatus* This locally common winter visitor was recorded on a few occasions.

Bay-backed Shrike *Lanius vittatus* A fairly common resident throughout India.

Long-tailed Shrike *Lanius schach* A locally common resident which we observed on several occasions throughout the tour.

Southern Grey Shrike *Lanius meridionalis* An uncommon resident of dry country and open scrub. We enjoyed good looks at this species near Ranthambore and again near Agra.

## CORVIDAE

Rufous Treepie *Dendrocitta vagabunda* A common resident throughout much of India.

White-bellied Treepie *Dendrocitta heucogastra* This species is an uncommon resident, which is endemic to the Western Ghats of peninsular India. We observed this extremely attractive species in Periyar National Park.

House Crow *Corvus splendens* A common and widespread inhabitant of villages and towns throughout India.

Large-billed Crow *Corvus macrorhynchos* The common and widespread crow of India.

## ARTAMIDAE

Ashy Woodswallow *Artamus fuscus* A locally common but patchily distributed species which was observed by Chris near Mudumali National Park and later in the tour seen well by the whole group, during the boat trip in Periyar National Park.

## ORIOOLIDAE

Eurasian Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus* Both a resident and winter visitor in India, observed on one occasion in Bharatpur National Park by Jill and later in the tour seen well by the whole group in Periyar National Park.

Black-hooded Oriole *Oriolus xanthornus* An uncommon resident, which we saw well in the Gudalur Range, at the southern end of the Western Ghats.

## CAMPEPHAGIDAE

Large Cuckoo-shrike *Coracina macei* Fairly common resident, which we saw on several occasions.

Black-headed Cuckoo-shrike *Coracina melanoptera* An uncommon resident and winter visitor to the Indian peninsula, we observed a pair of birds in the Gudalur Range, at the southern end of the Western Ghats.

Small Minivet *Pericrocotus cinnamomeus* Common and widespread throughout much of India.

Scarlet Minivet *Pericrocotus flammeus* Common and widespread throughout peninsular India.

Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrike *Hemipus picatus* This uncommon resident was only observed on one occasion, in the Avalanche Shola Forest, near Ootacamund, in the Western Ghats.

## RHIPIDURIDAE

White-browed Fantail *Rhipidura aureola* A common and widespread resident throughout India.

## DICRURIDAE

Black Drongo *Dicrurus macrocercus* Common and widespread throughout the whole of India.

Ashy Drongo *Dicrurus leucophaeus* Locally common winter visitor, which we saw on a few occasions.

White-bellied Drongo *Dicrurus caerulescens* Widespread but uncommon resident, which we saw on several occasions.

Bronzed Drongo *Dicrurus aeneus* This common resident has a restricted range in India, we only saw it on one occasion, in Periyar National Park.

Greater Racket-tailed Drongo *Dicurus paradiseus* This locally common resident was observed fairly frequently throughout the Western Ghats.

#### MONARCHIDEA

Asian Paradise-Flycatcher *Terpsiphone paradisi* This very attractive species was observed on several occasions, early in the trip we observed it in Bharatpur National Park, where this species is only a passage migrant, these birds would have been migrating south as they are a summer visitor to central and eastern India. The species was more common in the south, were it is a resident species.

#### AEGITHINIDAE

Common Iora *Aegithina tiphia* Widespread and locally common throughout India, we enjoyed several sightings.

#### PRIONOPIDAE

Large Woodshrike *Tephrodornis gularis* A uncommon species which is patchily distributed throughout India. We only saw the species on once occasion, when a bird flew past the group and perched in a nearby tree in Periyar National Park.

Common Woodshrike *Tephrodornis pondicerianus* A much more widespread and more common bird than the preceding species. It was particularly common in northern India.

#### TURDIDAE

Blue Rock-Thrush *Monticola solitarius* This uncommon winter visitor was observed on a few occasions in northern India.

Orange-headed Thrush *Zoothera citrina* This very beautiful species is an uncommon winter visitor to peninsular India. It is a species of the forest floor, which we only observed on one occasion, in the nursery at Bharatpur National Park. Fortunately, we were able to enjoy very good looks at this gem amongst birds. This particular individual would have been in the middle of its migration, pausing momentarily to feed up, before continuing its migration to wintering grounds in southern India.

Scaly Thrush *Zoothera dauma* This species is an uncommon resident in the Western Ghats, elsewhere in India this species only occurs in the Himalayas. We enjoyed very good looks at a solitary bird, which perched on the branch of a tree, in Ootacamund Botanical Gardens. Until fairly recently, all *Zoothera* thrushes occurring in Australia, where thought to be of this species. We now consider them to form two separate species, which are endemic to Australia.

Eurasian Blackbird *Turdus merula* A locally common resident of the Western Ghats, in peninsular India, where we observed a few individuals.

## MUSCICAPIDAE

- Asian Brown Flycatcher *Muscicapa dauurica* This species is a scarce winter visitor to southern India. With the exception of the Western Ghats, where this species is resident. We recorded it on only one occasion, in the Gudalur Range, at the southern end of the Western Ghats.
- Red-throated Flycatcher *Ficedula parva* A common and widespread winter visitor throughout India, which we saw on several occasions.
- Ultramarine Flycatcher *Ficedula supercilialis* This species is a very uncommon winter visitor to India. We observed a female bird for quite some time, as it sat on the branch of a tree in Ootacamund Botanical Gardens.
- Black-and-orange Flycatcher *Ficedula nigrorufa* This very attractive flycatcher is endemic to the Western Ghats, where it is rather uncommon. Only observed on one occasion, a male bird was seen briefly in the Avalanche Shola Forest, near Ootacamund.
- Nilgiri Flycatcher *Eumyias albicaudaata* Another species of flycatcher which is endemic to the Western Ghats, where it is fairly common. A single bird was observed in the Ootacamund Botanical Gardens, followed by several birds observed the following day in the Avalanche Shola Forest.
- White-bellied Blue-Flycatcher *Cyornis pallipes* This species of flycatcher is also endemic to the Western Ghats, where it is an uncommon bird. We enjoyed good looks at a pair in the Gudalur Range, at the southern end of the Western Ghats. It was pleasing to be able to find all three flycatchers that are endemic to the Western Ghats.
- Tickell's Blue-Flycatcher *Cyornis tickelliae* A locally common resident throughout much of India, which we saw on several occasions.
- Grey-headed Canary-Flycatcher *Culicicapa ceylonensis* The only place in India where this species is resident, is in the Western Ghats. This is exactly where we recorded this species on two occasions. Chris observed one during the lunch stop in the Avalanche Shola Forest and later that afternoon a few of us observed a bird behind our hotel in Ootacamund.
- Siberian Rubythroat *Luscinia calliope* An uncommon winter visitor from Siberia. On its wintering grounds this species becomes an ultra skulker, creeping around on the ground in dense hedgerows and bushes. This was exactly the habitat, where we enjoyed the only sighting of the tour, in Bharatpur National Park.
- Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica* A locally common winter visitor throughout India, we enjoyed several good sightings.
- Indian Blue Robin *Luscinia brunnea* This uncommon species breeds in the Himalayas, with most birds wintering in the Western Ghats or Sri Lanka. We enjoyed watching a male bird in the Avalanche Shola Forest, at the southern edge of the Western Ghats.
- Oriental Magpie-Robin *Copsychus saularis* Common and widespread throughout India.
- Indian Robin *Saxicoloides fulicata* Another common and widespread species, throughout the whole of India.
- Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros* This species is a very common winter visitor throughout India, which we saw on many occasions.

Common Stonechat *Saxicola torquata* Another common winter visitor, which we saw on many occasions.

Pied Bushchat *Saxicola caprata* A common and widespread resident of the plains and hills throughout most of India.

Grey Bushchat *Saxicola ferrea* This species breeds in the Himalayas and is an altitudinal migrant, moving down to the lower foothills and plains of northern India. Only recorded on two occasions, Jill observed the bird at a waterhole at our hotel close to Sariska National Park and a second bird was observed from one of our jeeps in Ranthambore National Park.

Brown Rock-Chat *Cercomela fusca* Endemic to northern India, this species inhabits rocky hills, cliffs, old forts and walls and houses in towns and cities. We enjoyed good looks at this species on several occasions.

#### STURNIDAE

Chestnut-tailed Starling *Sturnus malabaricus* A bird of patchy distribution throughout the Indian subcontinent. This species is resident in the Western Ghats, where we observed good numbers in Periyar National Park..

Brahminy Starling *Sturnus pagodarum* Common and widespread throughout India.

Rosy Starling *Sturnus roseus* A fairly common but sporadic winter visitor to northern India. This is an irruptive species, some years hardly any birds visit India at all, while in other years large flocks can be commonly encountered. We observed a few small flocks in the northern part of the tour.

Asian Pied Starling *Sturnus contra* Common and widespread throughout northern India.

Common Myna *Acridotheres tristis* Common and widespread throughout towns and villages of India.

Bank Myna *Acridotheres ginginianus* Common and widespread throughout northern India.

Jungle Myna *Acridotheres fuscus* Common and widespread throughout the Western Ghats.

Southern Hill Myna *Gracula religiosa* A fairly common resident in the Western Ghats, we observed good numbers of birds in Periyar National Park.

#### SITTIDAE

Chestnut-bellied Nuthatch *Sitta castanea* This attractive species of nuthatch proved to be quite common in forested areas.

Velvet-fronted Nuthatch *Sitta frontalis* This species has a patchy distribution throughout India, we only recorded this species in Periyar National Park.

#### PARIDAE

Great Tit *Parus major* Common and widespread throughout open forest.

Black-lored Tit *Parus xanthogenys* Endemic to the subcontinent, we observed this attractive species on only one occasion, in dense forest in the Avalanche Shola Forest, near Ootacamund.

#### HIRUNDINIDAE

Plain Martin *Riparia paludicola* A common resident throughout northern India.

Dusky Crag-Martin *Hirundo concolor* A bird of cliffs and gorges, which will also use old forts and old buildings in towns and cities. It proved to be fairly common throughout northern India.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* A common winter visitor throughout the whole of India.

Hill Swallow *Hirundo domicola* Endemic to the Western Ghats of India and also Sri Lanka. We recorded a small flock flying above the Avalanche Shola Forest, near Ootacamund.

Wire-tailed Swallow *Hirundo smithii* This attractive species of swallow is a fairly common resident, which we saw well on a few occasions.

Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica* Widespread and locally common throughout India, we enjoyed many sightings of this attractive species.

Streak-throated Swallow *Hirundo fluvicola* This uncommon species of swallow is endemic to India, it is highly gregarious all year round and is usually found foraging over water. We were very fortunate to be able to get close to one of their large breeding colonies during the boat trip in Ranganathitto Bird Sanctuary.

#### PYVNONOTIDAE

Red-whiskered Bulbul *Pycnonotus jocosus* Common and widespread throughout peninsular India.

White-eared Bulbul *Pycnonotus leucotis* A locally common bird of northwestern India, it was common at Bharatpur National Park.

Red-vented Bulbul *Pycnonotus cafer* Common and widespread throughout India, recorded on every day of the trip.

White-browed Bulbul *Pycnonotus luteolus* This uncommon species of bulbul is endemic to the Indian Peninsula. We enjoyed a couple of sightings of this species in the Gudalur Range, at the southern end of the Western Ghats.

Yellow-browed Bulbul *Lole indica* This fairly common species is endemic to the Western Ghats of peninsular India and also Sri Lanka. We observed this species on a few occasions in Periyar National Park, there was a nest of this species near the swimming pool at our hotel near Periyar National Park.

Black Bulbul *Hypsipetes leucocephalus* In India this species only occurs in the Himalayas and in the Western Ghats, of peninsular India. It was only recorded in the Avalanche Shola Forest, where it was common.

#### CISTICOLIDAE

Zitting Cisticola *Cisticola juncidis* This species is widespread throughout India and locally common, we recorded it at Soorwal Dam and Bharatpur National Park.

Grey-breasted Prinia *Prinia hodgsonii* A widespread and common species, surprisingly, we only recorded this species on one occasion, during one of the jeep rides in Ranthambore National Park.

Ashy Prinia *Prinia socialis* A widespread and common species, which we observed on several occasions.

Plain Prinia *Prinia inornata* Another widespread and fairly common species, which we observed on a few occasions.

## ZOSTEROPIDAE

Oriental White-eye *Zosterops palpebroosus* Widespread and common throughout India.

## SYLVIIDAE

Blyth's Reed-Warbler *Acrocephalus deumetorum* This species is a common winter visitor throughout India. We first recorded this species in the grounds of our lodge just outside Mudumali National Park, we recorded it a second time in the Gudalur Range, at the southern end of the Western Ghats.

Clamorous Reed-Warbler *Acrocephalus stentoreus* A fairly common winter visitor throughout India, which we recorded in reedbeds on a few occasions. The reed-warbler in Australia was thought to be this species, even today it is often referred to by this name. In reality, the two species are not even similar, there is a noticeable size difference, a large difference in the shape and size of the bill and the vocalisations differ greatly. The reed-warbler occurring in Australia is a separate species known as Australian Reed-Warbler *Acrocephalus australis*.

Booted Warbler *Hippolais caligata* Locally common winter visitor, mainly to peninsular India. We only recorded this species at Bharatpur National Park, where the bird was passing through on migration.

Common Tailorbird *Orthotomus sutorius* Common and widespread throughout India.

Common Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita* A common winter visitor to northern India, we observed a few birds of this species in Bharatpur National Park.

Tickell's Leaf-Warbler *Phylloscopus affinis* This species breeds on the Tibetan Plateau and in the Himalayas, wintering mainly in the foothills of the Himalayas and in the Western Ghats. We recorded this uncommon migrant in the Avalanche Shola Forest, near Ootacamund.

Sulphur-bellied Warbler *Phylloscopus griseolus* This species breeds in the hills of Pakistan, wintering mainly in northwestern and central India. We were very pleased to enjoy good sightings of this uncommon species in Bharatpur National Park, where it would often creep along trunks and branches of trees in a similar fashion to nuthatches, it is the only species of *phylloscopus* warbler that behaves in this way.

Brooks's Leaf-Warbler *Phylloscopus subviridis* This small and very uncommon species of warbler breeds in the Himalayas of northern Pakistan, wintering in the plains and hills of Pakistan and northern India. We were very pleased to find one of these birds on its wintering grounds in Bharatpur National Park.

Inornate Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus* This common species of leaf-warbler breeds throughout the Himalayas and winters in Pakistan, Bangladesh and most of India, with the exception of northwest and west central India and the southern part of the Indian Peninsula. We observed this species in Sariska National Park and again in the grounds of our lodge, on the edge of the Mudumali National Park, where it was at the very southern edge of its wintering range.

Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilliodes* This common species of leaf-warbler breeds throughout the Himalayas and winters throughout most of India. We observed this species on several occasions.

Large-billed Leaf-Warbler *Phylloscopus magnirostris* This uncommon species of leaf-warbler breeds in the Himalayas and winters mainly in the Western Ghats of peninsular India and in Sri Lanka. We were very pleased to observe this species in Periyar National Park.

Tytler's Leaf-Warbler *Phylloscopus tytleri* This very uncommon species of leaf-warbler breeds in the western Himalayas of Pakistan and Kashmir and winters mainly in the Western Ghats. We recorded this species only once, early one morning just after dawn in Bardipur National Park. While we were waiting for our bus to be prepared to take us for our birding drive, a couple of birds of this species were foraging in bare trees close to the car park.

Western Crowned Warbler *Phylloscopus occipitalis* This fairly common species of leaf-warbler breeds in the western Himalayas of Pakistan and India, wintering mainly in the Eastern and Western Ghats. We observed this species near the township of Ootacamund and again in the Avalanche Shola Forest. Nine species of leaf-warblers were possible on this itinerary, we did very well to find and observe every single one of them.

Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia minula* A common and widespread winter visitor throughout India, which we observed on many occasions.

#### TIMALIIDAE

Nilgiri Laughingthrush *Garrulax cachinnans* This fairly common species has a very restricted range, being endemic to the Nilgiri Hills of western Tamil Nadu State, in peninsular India. We enjoyed several good sightings in the Avalanche Shola Forest. The Nilgiri Hills are now almost totally devoid of forest and all the Nilgiri specialties are severally threatened by the destruction of their habitat.

Tawny-bellied Babbler *Dumetia hyperythra* This fairly common species of babbler is endemic to India. We only recorded it on one occasion, when we played hide-and-seek with a small family party in the Gudalur Range on the last day of the tour.

Yellow-eyed Babbler *Chrysomma sinense* This widespread and fairly common species was only observed on one occasion, as we were leaving Marsarowar Dam a small group of this species were observed foraging in scrub at the base of the dam wall.

Common Babbler *Turdoides caudatus* Common and widespread in the drier areas of India, we recorded it on a few occasions.

Large Grey Babbler *Turdoides malcolmi* Common and widespread throughout India.

Rufous Babbler *Turdoides subrufus* This uncommon species of babbler is endemic to the Western Ghats of peninsular India. We enjoyed good looks at this species on one occasion in Periyar National Park.

Jungle Babbler *Turdoides striatus* Common and widespread throughout India.

Yellow-billed Babbler *Turdoides affinis* This common species is endemic to peninsular India, where we recorded it on several occasions.

Brown-cheeked Fulvetta *Alicippe poioicephala* In India this species is confined to the southern peninsula, where it could often be found amongst the mixed species feeding parties.

#### ALAUDIDAE

Ashy-crowned Sparrow-lark *Eremopterix grisea* Common and widespread throughout India.

Rufous-tailed Lark *Ammomanes phoenicurus* This uncommon species of lark is endemic to India. We recorded it on two occasions, once at Soorwal Dam and again in Ranthambore National Park.

Greater Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla* A widespread and fairly common winter visitor to the plains of northern India. We recorded a large flock of approximately 100 birds in farmland near Tonk, not far from Ranthambore National Park.

Crested Lark *Galerida cristata* This locally common resident species, is confined to northern India, where we observed this species on several occasions.

Malabar Lark *Galerida malabarica* This locally common species is endemic to the Western Ghats of peninsular India. We were very fortunate to observe this species in farmland near Ootacamund.

Oriental Skylark *Alauda gulgula* This fairly common resident was only recorded on one occasion, we enjoyed good scope views in Bharatpur National Park.

#### DICAEIDAE

Pale-billed Flowerpecker *Dicaeum erythrorhynchos* A widespread resident of India, which we recorded in the Mudumali and Periyar National Parks.

Plain Flowerpecker *Dicaeum concolor* In India this species is confined to the eastern Himalayas and the Western Ghats of peninsular India. This species proved to be fairly common in Periyar National Park.

#### NECTARINIIDAE

Purple-rumped Sunbird *Nectarinia zeylonica* A locally common resident of peninsular India, where we recorded it on several occasions.

Crimson-backed Sunbird *Nectarinia minima* This tiny species of sunbird is endemic to the Western Ghats of peninsular India. We only saw this species in the Avalanche Shola Forest, near Ootacamund.

Purple Sunbird *Nectarinia asiatica* Common and widespread throughout India.

Loten's Sunbird *Nectarinia lotenia* This uncommon species of sunbird is endemic to southern peninsular India. We only recorded it on one occasion, when we found a nest of this species in Periyar National Park.

#### PASSERIDAE

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* Common and widespread throughout India.

Chestnut-shouldered Petronia *Petronia xanthocollis* This species of sparrow is also common and widespread throughout India.

## MOTACILLIDAE

- Forest Wagtail *Dendronanthus indicus* This very interesting species is an uncommon winter visitor, wintering mainly in the Western Ghats of peninsular India. This species was observed briefly in Periyar National Park and then large numbers were observed very well in dense forest in the Gudalur Range, at the southern end of the Western Ghats.
- White Wagtail *Motacilla alba* This winter visitor is common and widespread throughout India.
- White-browed Wagtail *Motacilla maderaspatensis* A common and widespread resident throughout India.
- Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* A fairly common winter visitor throughout northern India, which we observed on several occasions.
- Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* A common and widespread winter visitor throughout India, which we observed on several occasions.
- Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea* Another common and widespread winter visitor throughout India, which we again observed on several occasions.
- Richard's Pipit *Anthus richardi* A fairly common and widespread winter visitor throughout India, which we saw on several occasions.
- Oriental Pipit *Anthus rufulus* A common and widespread resident throughout India.
- Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris* A fairly common winter visitor, wintering mainly in northwest India. We recorded this species on two occasions, once in Delhi and again in Bharatpur National Park.
- Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis* This uncommon winter visitor was recorded on one occasion from one of our jeeps, during a game drive in Ranthambore National Park.
- Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni* This fairly common winter visitor was recorded on only one occasion, along a forested stream in Sariska National Park.

## ESTILDIDAE

- Red Avadavat *Amandava amandava* A widespread and fairly common resident throughout India, this species was recorded on only one occasion. Those of us who cycled in Bharatpur National Park, made a stop at a small waterhole, where a few of this species came in to drink.
- Indian Silverbill *Lonchura malabarica* Widespread and common resident throughout India.

## FRINGILLIDAE

- Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus* This fairly common species is a widespread winter visitor throughout India. Large flocks were observed in Sariska National Park in northwestern India and a few birds were observed in the Avalanche Shola Forest, near Ootacamund in the Western Ghats.

## EMBERIZIDAE

- Crested Bunting *Melophus lathami* This fairly common species breeds in the Himalayas and central India, we recorded a few individuals in Ranthambore National Park. These birds were probably wintering birds from the Himalayas.

White-capped Bunting *Emberiza stewarti* This locally common species has a restricted range in northern India. We found it to be fairly common in Sariska and Ranthambore National Parks.

## MAMMALS

Indian Flying-fox *Pteropus giganteus* We observed several small colonies of this species of flying-fox.

Rhesus Macaque *Macaca mulatta* Common and widespread throughout northern India, we enjoyed many sightings.

Bonnet Macaque *Macaca radiata* This species of macaque replaces the above species in peninsular India, where we enjoyed several sightings.

Hanuman Langur *Presbytis entellus* We had lots of sightings of this common and widespread species.

Nilgiri Langur *Presbytis johnii* This attractive species of monkey is endemic to the Western Ghats of peninsular India. We enjoyed many fine looks in the latter half of the tour.

Golden Jackal *Canis aureus* We enjoyed good looks at this species in many of the national parks.

Dhole *Cuon alpinus* This all too rare species of Indian wild dog was observed on two occasions in Periyar National Park. On one occasion a small pack had cornered a Sambar in the middle of a river and were closing in for the kill.

Smooth-coated Otter *Lutra perspicillata* We enjoyed super looks at this very beautiful mammal during our boat ride in Periyar National Park, we observed a couple of family parties playing around both in the water and on shore.

Small Indian Mongoose *Herpestes auro punctatus* Restricted to northern India, we enjoyed several sightings including some in the centre of Delhi.

Indian Grey Mongoose *Herpestes edwardsii* We enjoyed several sightings of this common mongoose in a couple of the national parks.

Ruddy Mongoose *Herpestes smithii* We were very fortunate to enjoy several sightings of this uncommon species of mongoose, in northern India.

Stripe-necked Mongoose *Herpestes vitticollis* This uncommon species of mongoose is endemic to the Western Ghats of peninsular India and is also found in Sri Lanka. This is a very beautiful animal and we greatly enjoyed our sightings in Bardipur and Periyar National Parks.

Tiger *Panthera tigris* Undoubtedly the highlight of the whole tour, arguably the most impressive mammal in the world. Some members of the group were lucky enough to find a tiger sprawled out on the track in front of them. The rest of the group had to make do with a mating pair, half hidden in the grass!

Indian Elephant *Elephas maximus* Great looks at this splendid animal during our boat ride in Periyar National Park.

Wild Boar *Sus scrofa* Common and widespread throughout India, we saw it on many occasions. One almost knocked Joanna off her bicycle in Bharatpur National Park!

- Indian Muntjac *Muntiacus muntjac* This small and very shy species of deer usually remains hidden in dense jungle, only venturing out into the open in the early morning. We enjoyed good looks at a solitary animal during our early morning game drive in Bardipur National Park.
- Chital *Cervus axis* Common and widespread throughout India.
- Sambar *Cervus unicolor* This very large species of deer is also common and widespread throughout India and is the favorite food of the Tiger.
- Nilgai *Boselaphus tragocamelus* This species is also common and widespread throughout India, we enjoyed many sightings of this species, which is considered sacred by Hindus because it resembles a cow in appearance.
- Gaur *Bos guarus* We enjoyed many good looks at this huge species of bison, during our boat ride in Periyar National Park.
- Blackbuck *Antelope cervicapta* A few good looks at this very beautiful antelope, it is the only species of antelope that occurs in India.
- Indian Gazelle *Gazella bennettii* This uncommon species of gazelle is only found in northwestern and central India, we enjoyed a couple of good sightings in Ranthambore National Park. This is the only species of gazelle that occurs in India.
- Indian Palm Squirrel *Funambulus palmarum* Endemic to southern India and Sri Lanka, it proved to be very common in the Western Ghats.
- Northern Palm Squirrel *Funambulus pennantii* This species replaces the above species in northern India, where we enjoyed many sightings of this common animal.
- Indian Giant Squirrel *Ratufa indica* This delightful and very beautiful squirrel is aptly named, it is humongous. It is endemic to central and southern India; we enjoyed many sightings in the Western Ghats.
- Indian Hare *Lepus nigricollis* This species of hare is common and widespread throughout India, where we enjoyed several sightings.