

Northern India, February 2005

11th February

Left Heathrow on Air India flight AI112 at 08.45 and arrived at Indira Gandhi International Airport, Delhi at around 22.45 local time. Flights were booked through www.ebookers.com. Met up with Hugh Harrop who had been in the country since early February & Mike Prince who had flown in earlier on a Virgin flight. Met up with the representative of Asian Adventures who had made all our ground arrangements then headed through the city to stay at the Rosy Pelican Hotel, Sultanpur, about 45kms from Delhi, arriving at about 02.00.

12th February

After breakfast we walked around Sultanpur National Park including the desert area until lunch. After lunch we drove to Okhla on the Yamuna River on the other side of Delhi and spent the last few hours there until dark. We then had a long drive to Bharatpur where we spent the night at the Hotel Sunbird.

Birding highlights:

Sultanpur NP, Ferruginous Duck, White-tailed Lapwing, Indian Courser, Pallid Harrier, Eastern Imperial Eagle, Southern Grey Shrike, Bay-backed Shrike, Desert Wheatear, Greenish Warbler, Indian Bushlark, Ashy-crowned Sparrow-lark, Bimaculated Lark, Sind Sparrow, Long-billed Pipit and Black-headed Munia.

Okhla, Yellow-footed Green Pigeon, Brown Crake, Gull-billed Tern, Long-legged Buzzard, White-tailed Stonechat, Streak-throated Swallow, Yellow-bellied Prinia, Ashy Prinia, Striated Grassbird, Common Babbler, Spanish Sparrow, Rosy Pipit, Black-breasted Weaver & Red Avadavat.

13th February

After an early breakfast we took rickshaws into the very dry Keoladeo Ghana National Park where we spent all day until the park closed at 18.00hrs. Overnight at the Hotel Sunbird.

Birding highlights:

Keoladeo Ghana NP, Bar-headed Goose, Alpine Swift, Dusky Eagle Owl, Brown Hawk Owl, Long-tailed Nightjar, Sarus Crane, Grey-headed Lapwing, Sociable Lapwing, White-tailed Lapwing, Indian Courser, River Tern, Black-bellied Tern, Spotted Eagle, Indian Spotted Eagle, Indian Cormorant, Striated Heron, Black Bittern, Woolly-necked Stork, Black-necked Stork & Orange-headed Thrush.

14th February

Left Bharatpur at 06.00 for drive to Chambal Safari Lodge where we had breakfast. Drove to the Chambal River where we spent the rest of the morning and early afternoon on a boat trip. Took lunch back at the Chambal Safari Lodge before spending the late afternoon at Bateshwar Temple on the Yamuna River. Drove to Mathura via Agra to catch the 23.20 sleeper train to Lal Kuan.

Birding highlights:

Chambal Safari Lodge, Brown-headed Barbet, Red Collared Dove & Verditer Flycatcher.

Chambal River, Lesser Whistling-duck, Goosander, Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse, Great Thick-knee, Small Pratincole, Indian Skimmer, Pallas's Gull, River Tern, Black-bellied Tern, Bonelli's Eagle, Black Ibis, Desert Wheatear, White-eared Bulbul & Sand Lark.

Bateshwar Temple, Great White Pelicans, Indian Cormorant, Asian Openbill & Black-bellied Tern.

15th February

Arrived Lal Kuan at 09.00 then driven in two vehicles via Ramnagar to Tiger Camp near the entrance to Corbett National Park for brunch. After lunch transferred to two jeeps ('gypsies') and driven to Dhikala Forest Lodge within Corbett National Park via Dhangari gate for an overnight stay.

Birding highlights:

Lal Kuan to Ramnagar, Oriental Pied Hornbill.

Tiger Camp, Lineated Barbet, Blue-throated Barbet, Himalayan Swiftlet, Crested Treeswift, White-rumped Needletail, Golden-fronted Leafbird & Orange-bellied Leafbird.

Corbett NP, Kalij Pheasant, Great Hornbill, Crested Kingfisher, Small Pratincole, Lesser Fish Eagle, Maroon Oriole, Ashy Bulbul, Blue-winged Minla & Whiskered Yuhina.

16th February

Elephant ride to look for Tigers from 06.30 until breakfast then a jeep safari into the chaur (grasslands) until lunch. Ate a packed lunch at the Dhikala tower hide then drove out of the park in the afternoon to spend the night at Tiger Camp www.tiger-camp.com

Birding highlights:

Corbett NP, Kalij Pheasant, Wryneck, Fulvous-breasted Woodpecker, Streak-throated Woodpecker, Greater Flameback, Stork-billed Kingfisher, Crested Kingfisher, Red-breasted Parakeet, Brown Fish Owl, Asian Barred Owl, Jungle Owl, Emerald Dove, River Tern, Pallas's Fish Eagle, Lesser Fish Eagle, Black Vulture, Red-headed Vulture, Changeable Hawk-eagle, Collared Falconet, Woolly-necked Stork, Black-necked Stork, Large Cuckoo-shrike, White-bellied Drongo, Little Pied Flycatcher, Hodgson's Bushchat, Wallcreeper, Black-crested Bulbul, Bright-capped Cisticola, Rosy Pipit, Crested Bunting & Chestnut-eared Bunting.

17th February

Spent the early morning at Kumeria on the Kosi River before returning to Tiger Camp for lunch. The afternoon was spent driving up to Pangot via Nainital to spend the night at Jungle Lore Birding Lodge www.pangot.com

Birding highlights:

Kumeria, Lesser Yellownappe, Great Barbet, Crested Kingfisher, Tawny Fish Owl, Yellow-bellied Fantail, Brown Dipper, Grey-winged Blackbird, Rufous-gorgeted Flycatcher, Little Forktail, Velvet-fronted Nuthatch, Wallcreeper, Whistler's Warbler and Rusty-cheeked Scimitar-babbler.

Ramnagar to Pangot, Lammergeier, Slaty-backed Forktail, Russet Sparrow & Altai Accentor.

18th February

From first light we searched the road back to Nainital for Koklass Pheasant without luck. After breakfast the rest of the day until dark was spent birding the area below Pangot down to Bagar and Timla Pani. Overnight at Jungle Lore Birding Lodge.

Birding highlights:

Pangot area, Brown-fronted Woodpecker, Himalayan Woodpecker, Greater Yellownappe, Great Barbet, Oriental Turtle Dove, Lammergeier, Himalayan Griffon Vulture, Mountain Hawk Eagle, Grey-backed Shrike, Black-headed Jay, Ashy Drongo, Bronzed Drongo, Chestnut-bellied Rock Thrush, Little Forktail, White-tailed Nuthatch, Yellow-browed Tit, Striated Prinia, Smoky Warbler, White-throated Laughingthrush, Chestnut-crowned Laughingthrush, Rusty-cheeked Scimitar-babbler, Green Shrike-babbler, Fire-tailed Sunbird, Russet Sparrow, Upland Pipit, Altai Accentor, Black-throated Accentor, Rufous-breasted Accentor, Himalayan Greenfinch, Pink-browed Rosefinch & Spot-winged Grosbeak.

19th February

Following another fruitless pre-breakfast search for Koklass Pheasant along the road and at Kilbury the rest of the day was spent working the area above Pangot to Gugukan before taking wonderful views over the Kumaon Hills to the Himalayas proper. Overnight at Jungle Lore Birding Lodge.

Birding highlights:

Pangot area, Black Francolin, Hill Partridge, Rufous-bellied Woodpecker, Chestnut Thrush, Slaty-backed Forktail, Bar-tailed Treecreeper, Black-crested Tit, Ash-throated Warbler, Black-faced Warbler, White-browed Shrike-babbler & Rock Bunting.

20th February

After an early breakfast we transferred the short distance to the Green Glen Lodge at Sat Tal. We then spent the morning working the fields above the Lodge. The afternoon was spent working the area down to the Sat Tal tea stalls. Overnight at Green Glen Lodge.

Birding highlights:

Sat Tal area, Red-crested Pochard, Mountain Scops Owl, Oriental Turtle Dove, Grey Treepie, Bronzed Drongo, Tickell's Thrush, White-collared Blackbird, Himalayan Rubythroat, Siberian Rubythroat, Mountain Bulbul, Grey-sided Bush Warbler, Red-billed Leiothrix, Black-throated Sunbird, Altai Accentor, Rufous-breasted Accentor, Black-throated Accentor & White-capped Bunting.

21st February

Our final morning was spent along the river at Ashram Shri Kainchi-Dham until 11.00. We then had a final look around the Green Glen Lodge area before the 8hr drive out of the hills and back to Delhi. Overnight at a hotel in Delhi.

Birding highlights:

Sat Tal, Lammergeier, Bonelli's Eagle, Grey-winged Blackbird, Siberian Rubythroat, Rufous-chinned Laughingthrush and Olive-backed Pipit.

Ashram Shri Kainchi-Dham, Crested Kingfisher, Brown Dipper, Rufous-gorgeted Flycatcher, Little Forktail, Chestnut-headed Tesia, Whistler's Warbler, Striated Laughingthrush & Scaly-breasted Wren-babbler.

Sat Tal to Delhi, Indian Skimmer, Pallas's Gull and Citrine Wagtail.

22nd February

Very early morning transfer to the airport for our 07.20 Air India AI111 flight back to London Heathrow. Hugh departed on an earlier British Airways flight.

All of our ground arrangements were made by Asian Adventures and due to their excellent planning and guides the trip was a great success without a single hitch. They can be contacted on www.indiawildlife.com or wildindiatours@vsnl.com