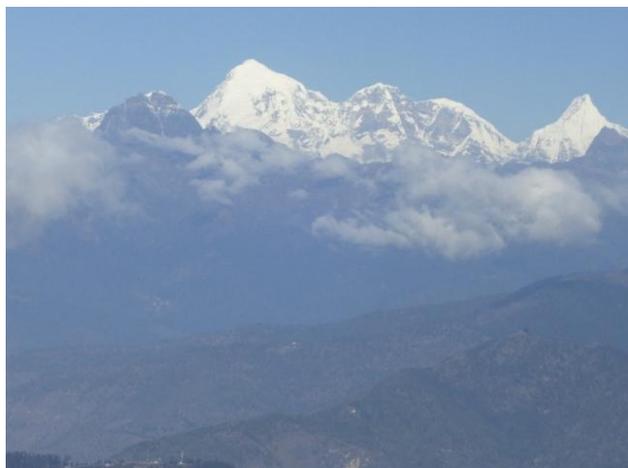


India - Assam, Darjeeling & Bhutan

Naturetrek Tour Report

7 - 27 November 2010



The Himalayas on the approach to Paro Airport, Bhutan



Punakha Dzong, Bhutan

Report compiled by Aditya Singh Rathore

Images by kind courtesy of Dave Riley & Andrea Jackson



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Day 0

Saturday 6th November

Travel from the UK

Day 1

Sunday 7th November

Kolkata

The guests were picked up at Kolkata Airport in the morning. We waited to pick up the luggage and then drove to the Hyatt Hotel in Saltlake City and the guests checked in. We decided to meet up at 1.15 pm. After a small briefing we headed off to visit the historical monuments of Kolkata with our local guide Arjan. Our first stop was at the Marble Museum built by Raja Rajendro Mullick in 1835. The Marble Palace exhibits the art forms of Italy, Netherlands, England, and other European countries. Interestingly it was also the first private zoo in India, but now only empty cages and a few exotic parakeets remain. The next destination was the Victoria Memorial. Designed by Sir William Emerson it is a splendid architectural structure in white marble built in the 20th Century in memory of Queen Victoria. Then we visited Birla Planetarium, but the show was in hindi, so decided to skip it and headed to St. Pauls Cathedral. By now it was getting dark so we decided to head back. On our way back we stopped to get a quick look at Mother Teresa's home. David and Andrea had been throughout the day very keenly scanning the sky and trees and we did spot some Black Kites, House Sparrows, Asian Pied Starlings, Palm Squirrel, Asian Palm Swifts, House Swifts and a few more.

Day 2

Monday 8th November

Kolkata

At 7.00 am we headed to Santragachi Jheel. The first birds to greet us were Little Cormorants. Walked a little further and we were rewarded with Golden Oriole, Lesser Whistling Duck, Cattle Egret, Plain Prinia, Chestnut-tailed Starling, Common Mynas, Black Kites, House Crows, Tailorbird, Spotted Doves, Indian Roller, Coppermith Barbet and a few more. We even managed to see a family of Small Indian Mongooses huddled below a few wooden planks. After this we proceeded to the Botanical Garden. As we entered we saw a few Jungle Babblers. We could hear Stork Billed Kingfisher but only I got a glimpse as it flew by.

Here we saw the Shikra, Yellow-footed Green Pigeon, White-throated Kingfisher, Cormorants, Lineated, Coppersmith and Blue-throated Barbet, Black-crowned Night Heron, Indian Pond Heron, Pheasant-tailed and Bronze-winged Jacana, Greater Coucal, Green Bee-eater, White-breasted Waterhen and a few others. Arjan then took us to see the Butterfly Garden where he has his own garden as well. The guests even got a chance to release a few butterflies which were bred in captivity. Some of the butterflies we saw were Striped Tiger, White Tiger, Common Tiger, Common Grass Yellow, Common Crow, Common Mormon, Blue Tiger, Peacock Pansy, Grey Pansy, Great Egg Butterfly and many more. We also saw a few Asian Openbill Storks gliding in the sky. Finally we called it a day and headed back to the hotel.

Day 3

Tuesday 9th November

Kolkata – Paro (Bhutan)

Early in the morning we headed to the airport to catch our flight for Paro. En route we saw a few Cattle Egrets, Asian Openbill Storks and Black Kites. I even saw a Painted Stork flying across. At the Airport Gillian spotted a flock of Rose-ringed Parakeets roosting on a dead tree. At Paro we were greeted by our local guides Karma and Tsewang Norbu. We then went to the Jigmeling Hotel to check-in. It was a small but very comfortable, warm hotel with very helpful and courteous staff. Lunch was at 12.00 pm and after that we visited the National Museum which was initially a watch tower for the main Paro Dzong. Today the first bird to add to our list was the Green-backed Tit, followed by a flock of Red-billed Choughs and a few Russet Sparrows. Some of us even saw a juvenile of a Blue Whistling-thrush.

The next destination was the massive and impressive Paro Dzong. From here we decided to walk down the valley. Our walk paid off and we were rewarded by a Plumbeous and White-capped Redstart. Later we drove along the river and tried for the Ibisbill and Black-tailed Crake. Our efforts went in vain but we did see a River Lapwing, White Wagtail, Brown Dipper and a few Redstarts. I even saw a Eurasian Sparrowhawk but by the time others arrived it was on its way. By now it was dark so we went back to the hotel and after an early dinner, we retired to our rooms.

Day 4

Wednesday 10th November

Paro (Bhutan)

It was a very early start today. At 4.30am we gathered over a cup of tea and then headed for Chele La. This pass separated the Paro Valley from the Ha Valley and is a high pass at 3,998 metres. The weather was cloudy when we started but as we reached Chele La, it had nearly cleared. We could see the sunrise and with the mountains at the back, and clouds surrounding it, it seemed we were in heaven! The first bird of the day was a Coal Tit and then a flock of Snow Pigeons. At Chele La we all had our breakfast and then carried on our walk down hill. Karma stopped a Monal Pheasant flying across the road but unfortunately we all missed it. But very soon we saw about 15 Blood Pheasants just a few feet away from us! A little further on, we spotted a Black Eagle and Collared and White-winged Grosbeak. Andrea managed to spot a Rufous-winged Bushlark.

After a rewarding morning we headed for the hotel and had an early lunch at 11.30pm. Our day was not over yet, and post lunch we headed towards the Tiger's Nest. It was a steep climb and not all of us managed to reach the top.

Andrea and I on our way spotted a few Yellow-billed Blue Magpies and Dave saw a Crested Hawk Eagle. We even saw a raptor soaring high in the sky that looked like a Bonelli's Eagle. We also saw a few Spotted Nutcrackers and White-browed Fulvetta. Then we drove along the river scanning for birds and especially the Ibisbill. We added a Common Buzzard, Common Sandpiper, Plumbeous and White-capped Redstart and a Black-tailed Crake.

Day 5

Thursday 11th November

Punakha (Bhutan)

Breakfast was at 7.00am and by 7.45am we were on the road. Today we were heading to Punakha. The first stop we made we saw a Common Buzzard and a few House Sparrows. We made a few more stops but there was not much luck and spotted only a Spotted Nutcracker. Then finally we stopped at the Dochu la pass. Here we saw a Himalayan Griffon gliding in the valley. On our way we also saw a Wallcreeper and Rufous-fronted Accentor.

Further on our journey we crossed Thimphu, the capital of Bhutan. From the bus we could see the Thimphu Dzong and one of the largest Lord Buddha statues. Later we stopped at the Botanical Garden. First we all saw a short documentary of the garden before proceeding for our walk. Guests were even presented CD's and pamphlets of the garden as souvenirs. Our stop at the botanical garden was fruitful and we saw a few Blue-fronted Redstarts. Then we saw a flock of mixed birds. Most of them were Chestnut-tailed and Red-tailed Minlas, Green-backed Tits, White-throated Laughing Thrush and Grey-hooded Warbler. As we were heading for the bus, Dave spotted a Eurasian Jay and it gave us excellent scope views. Then we all stopped at a restaurant at Punakha and all of us got great views of a Common Kestrel.

Then we proceeded to the Punakha Dzong where we managed to see a Wallcreeper, Ruddy Shelduck, River Lapwing, White-capped and Plumbeous-water Redstarts and a few Cormorants. We even saw a raptor flying very high but it was very difficult to identify. We finally checked into our hotel and Dave and Andrea were lucky to spot a pair of Common Kestrels roosting right in front of their room. At night we could hear a Collared Scops Owl, but could not manage to see it.

Day 6

Friday 12th November

Punakha (Bhutan)

At 5.00am we all met up for an early breakfast and in no time we were on our way to the Jigme Dorje National Park. Today the weather was playing up as it was very cloudy and misty. As the sun rose, Dave spotted an owl on a pole and it was identified as an Asian Barred Owl. A little further ahead and we saw a few Grey Treepie's and then I spotted a Rufous Sibia perched right on top of a bare tree. In no time we were in the national park and saw a few Little Forktails and a Wallcreeper. The first mammal we saw was an Assamese Macaque and then an Orange Bellied Squirrel. The weather played a spoilsport and it started to rain. We took refuge under a roof top and there we got a glimpse of a Striated Laughing Thrush. Once the rain stopped a little, we started our walk again. Very soon we managed to spot a few Common Kestrels, White-browed Fulvetta, White-throated and Yellow-bellied Fantail, Common Myna, Grey-hooded Warbler, Red-vented Bulbul and a few more. We even spotted a few Scaly-breasted Munia. As the weather was not showing any signs of clearing up, we drove to the town to have lunch. Post-lunch we drove along the river scanning for some new birds.

I noticed a pair of Gadwall Ducks. Andrea noticed a Long-tailed Shrike and in no time we saw a few Ruddy Shelduck, Indian Cormorants, Plumbeous, Blue-fronted and White-capped Restarts. We were finally rewarded with a White-bellied Heron. This is a critically endangered species with a total population of only 200 with Bhutan having around 30. We all got good scope views of this magnificent bird. Tshewang Norbu informed us that unfortunately they had lost 9 fledglings this year to predators. Andrea also managed to spot an Ibisbill and was thrilled as she was the most keen to see this bird. A little further ahead and we saw a Crested Kingfisher. Everyone was thrilled to see it dive into the river and catch a fish. The other mammal we saw was a Smooth-coated Otter. It had caught a trout and busy enjoying its feast. Another bird to add to our list was the Common Stonechat. By 7.00pm we had our dinner and called it a day.

Day 7

Saturday 13th November

Punakha – Gangtey – Wangdue (Bhutan)

Today was again an early start. At 4.30am everyone got together for tea and headed for Phubjika to see the Black-necked Crane. The weather was cloudy initially but luckily later it cleared off. On our way, Michael got a glimpse of the Kalij Pheasant on the road side. En route we also spotted a Collared Owlet, Common Buzzard and Striated Laughing Thrush. At around 8.00am we stopped for breakfast where we managed to see quite a few Blue Whistling Thrush and Large-billed Crows. In no time after breakfast we were in Phubjika. First we visited the 16th Century Phubjika Monastery. It was interesting to see the monks being trained in the local art, sculpture making and paintings. Here we spotted a pair of Red-billed Choughs. After this we visited the Black-necked Crane Centre where we were loaded with all the information about this beautiful bird. All of us also got good views of the Black-necked Crane.

Then we decided to walk through the fields doing a little birding before heading for lunch. Here we managed to get closer views of the crane. We also saw many Oriental Skylarks, a few Green-backed Tits, Large-billed Crows, Common Kestrel and a Tickel's Leaf Warbler. We also saw an Upland Buzzard soaring in the sky. By now our stomachs were grumbling and we headed to Phuntshocholing Guest House for lunch.

Post-lunch we drove for Wangdue where we were planning to spend the night. On our way Andrea saw a Chestnut-bellied Rock Thrush and later I spotted a Honey-guide bird. This was the last bird for the day as by now it had become nearly dark. At the hotel we organized a cake and all of us celebrated Gillian's birthday and after dinner we had a few drinks and retired to our rooms.

Day 8

Sunday 14th November

Wangdue – Thimphu (Bhutan)

In the morning we got a good view of a flock of about 50 Ruddy Shelducks. Dave, Kay and Andrea had also managed to spot a Mallard and Common Pochard. From the scope we also got good views of Grey-headed Gulls, Blue Whistling Thrush, Spotted Doves, Wallcreeper, Oriental Magpie Robin, Eurasian Tree Sparrows and a Common Kestrel. At around 8.15 am we headed on our journey and on our first stop we managed to see Indian Cormorants, Common Pochard, Ruddy Shelduck, and Yellow Wagtail. Further down we saw some Rufous-vented, Fire-capped and Green-backed Tits, Rusty-flanked Treecreeper, Black Bulbul, a few Warblers and an Assamese Macaque. En route we stopped for lunch before finally checking-in at the Jumolhari Hotel in Thimphu.

After a brief stop we visited the Sunday market. Everyone was very impressed by the cleanliness of this place. Then we visited a 16th Century nunnery and finally to the Thimphu Zoo. Here we got to see the national animal of Bhutan, the Takin. We also saw Sambar Deer and Muntjac. After this we returned to our hotel and everyone was free to visit the town for shopping.

Day 9

Monday 15th November

Thimphu – Phuntsholing (Bhutan)

Today we started a little late at 8.00am and headed towards Phuntsholing. We did make a few stops en route but the forest was very quiet. After driving for sometime we stopped again and this time we managed to see a few Streak-breasted Scimitar Babblers. We even heard a Brown Parrotbill but could not manage to see it. Another stop ahead and we managed to see a Black Eagle being harassed by two Large-billed Crows and also a Goral. It was very impressive seeing it rest so comfortably on an edge of a steep cliff. Unfortunately for us as we drove a little ahead we were stuck in an unexpected road block. Here we were stuck for quite some time but still managed to see a Mountain Hawk-eagle, Ashy-throated Warbler and a flock of Snow Pigeons. After a long wait the roads were opened and we proceeded further towards Chukha where a massive hydro-electric project welcomed us with dust and heat. However there was a nice restaurant and we had a lovely lunch here.

We headed to Phuntsholing now passing through towns and villages with names that were difficult to pronounce – Takti, Chasakha – Gedu – Kamji – Sorkhen. As we were reaching Phuntsholing we even managed to see a pair of Rufous-necked Hornbills. This was the first hornbill to our list and everyone got good views. It was dark by the time we reached Druk Hotel in Phuntsholing and after an early dinner we retired to our rooms.

Day 10

Tuesday 16th November

Phuntsholing – Darjeeling

Today we were going to say good-bye to Bhutan as we were heading for Darjeeling. In the morning we did manage to see a few Eurasian Tree Sparrows, Laughing Dove and some Common Myna's and Crows. We also saw a vulture flying very high and looked like an Egyptian Vulture. Post-breakfast and after our paper work at the border we entered India and headed to Darjeeling. On our way we did see a few Assamese Macaques, Black Drongos, Black Kites, Egrets, Brown Shrike and a few of us even stopped a mongoose!

By 2.00pm we were at the Elgin Hotel Darjeeling for a late lunch. Today we decided to just rest and walk around the town. Darjeeling is famous for its tea and some of us were very keen get our hands over some quality tea. The weather today was very cloudy and thick mist. The visibility was very poor and we were hoping that it would be a clear the next day.

Day 11

Wednesday 17th November

Darjeeling

Luckily the sky was absolutely clear today. We were planning to see the sunrise from Tiger Hill so had a very early start. By 4.00am we were already in the cars and on our way to Tiger Hill. In about 40 minutes we had reached our destination. But unfortunately as we were seeing the first rays of the sun, the weather completely changed.

The sky was over shadowed by the clouds and it became very misty. Visibility was very poor and all of us were disheartened. We waited for the crowds to move and once everyone had left, we decided to visit the Senchal Wildlife Sanctuary. As we were entering the sanctuary gates Dave spotted some Black-throated Tits. Due to the rain the road had become muddy and therefore we decided to walk. In our hunt we managed to see some Whiskered Yuhinas, Green-backed Tit, Black-chinned Yuhina, Ashy-throated Warbler, Grey-crested Tit, White-collared Blackbird, and Greenish and Hume's Warbler. We walked a little further and we saw Chestnut-tailed and Red-tailed Minlas and the Yellow-billed Blue Magpie. Peter and I even saw a Yellow-breasted Fulvetta. We had walked quite a distance and finally reached a lake which was a source of water for the town. Here some of the clients saw a Thrush-like bird but could not identify it. From the lake we decided to turn around and head back to our cars.

Post-breakfast our itinerary mentioned a visit to the Ghoom Monastery, Himalayan Mountaineering Institute and the zoo but all of us were keener to continue our birding and visit the Happy Valley Tea Factory. Our guide Paras took us all around the factory, showing us the different stages in which the tea was manufactured. Then we took a walk around the tea garden where we spotted some Rufous-capped Babblers. Later we managed to see a Yellow-rumped Flycatcher which is an extremely vagrant and rare bird. We did manage to see some more birds like the Southern Grey Shrike, Plain-backed Thrush and Black Redstart.

Then we headed back to the hotel and decided to rest for a while. In the evening at 4.00pm we boarded the famous toy train. The Toy Train (Darjeeling Himalayan Railway) is a narrow gauge train on a railway recognized as a World Heritage Site. The train made a brief stop at Ghoom where we visited a small museum which enlightened us with the train's history. After a two hour joy ride we were back to our hotel and had an early dinner.

Day 12

Thursday 18th November

Darjeeling - Kaziranga

After an early breakfast at 6.30am we were on our way to our next destination, Kaziranga National Park. First there was a 3 hour drive to the Bagdogra Airport. When we reached the airport we were informed that our flight was delayed by two and a half hours. We reached Guwahati by 3.45 pm and after getting our luggage together, proceeded towards Kaziranga. This was another long drive and we reached our hotel Wild Grass by 10.30pm. On our way we did manage to see a few Little, Cattle and Intermediate Egrets, Asian Openbill Storks, Lesser Adjutant Stork and a few Little and Indian Cormorants. It was a long and tiring day so immediately after dinner we called it a day.

Day 13

Friday 19th November

Kaziranga

Today we decided to visit the Western Range called Bagouri which is 16kms from the hotel and it took us half an hour to reach it. As we entered the park gates we were lucky and spotted a male Greater One-horned Rhino. Kaziranga is known for its One-horned Rhino population. In our hunt, we also managed to see a few Hog Deer, wild Water Buffalo and King Cobra. The King Cobra is the largest venomous snake in the world and we were extremely lucky to see three of them during the day! They were busy basking in the sun along the roadside. Kaziranga is a haven for birds and we had managed to see 82 varieties of birds today!

Nearly at the end of our drive we stopped at a lake where we were rewarded by a big flock of Bar-headed Geese and many varieties of duck and teal, like Gadwall, Ruddy Shelduck, Northern Pintail, Northern Shoveller, Mallard and Common Teal. We also saw many other birds like the Yellow-footed Green Pigeon, Common Sandpiper, Common Greenshank, Common and Spotted Redshank and many more. Post-lunch at around 2.00pm we headed for the Central Range and managed to see the Pallas Fish Eagle, Grey-headed Fish Eagle and an Osprey catching a fairly large fish. I managed to see a White Stork. After our drive we planned to enjoy the traditional Assamese folk dance organized by the hotel, but unfortunately it rained cats and dogs and there was nothing much we could do but to retire to our rooms.

Day 14

Saturday 20th November

Kaziranga

It was a bright sunny day today. Our birding started at the Wild Grass Hotel itself. The hotel is surrounded by trees and flowering plants and therefore is home to a variety of birds. We started by seeing a few House and Eurasian Tree Sparrows, Spotted Doves, Yellow-footed Green Pigeon, Scaly-breasted Munias, Golden Oriole and Red-vented Bulbuls. Dave even managed to spot a few Great Hornbills. Some of us even heard the calls of the Oriental Pied Hornbill.

Today we were visiting the Eastern Range. As we were entering the park, two jeeps spotted a rhino close to the road and had a close shave as he charged at the jeep. After a very long period, today we managed to spot a woodpecker. It was a Scaly-breasted Woodpecker and gave us good views. Later we stopped at a large water body and managed to see an Asiatic Elephant busy bathing itself. There were also a few Water Buffalo and Swamp Deer. This place had many water fowl – species included Mallard, Common Teal, Lesser Whistling Duck, Ruddy Shelduck, Eurasian Wigeon, Gadwalls, Pintail, Shoveller and Common Pochard. We even managed to spot the extremely rare and critically endangered Falcated Duck. There were also many Greylag and Bar-headed Geese. It was very interesting to watch the Lesser Spotted and Greater Spotted Eagle swoop over the ducks and scattering them all over the sky in fright. Some other birds which we saw were Rosy and Paddyfield Pipits, White, Yellow and Citrine Wagtails, Common and Wood Sandpiper, Purple Heron and a few more. Then by 10.30 we were back at Wild Grass for breakfast.

Post-lunch we headed off for an elephant safari organized in the Central Range. The elephant ride was quite an experience and we got very close views of Rhino, Hog Deer, Wild Boar and a herd of Water Buffalo. We even saw a flock of Baya Weavers and a few Oriental Skylarks. Finally this evening we managed to enjoy the traditional Assamese folk dance organized by the hotel.

Day 15

Sunday 21st November

Kaziranga

At 6.30am in the morning we again headed towards the Central Range. The new birds to our list today were the Swamp Francolin, Great Thick-knee, Pied Kingfisher and Great Cormorants. By 10.30am we were back in our hotel for breakfast. After lunch we decided to do the Brahmaputra River cruise which was actually not a part of our itinerary. Dave preferred resting and birding around the hotel and the rest of us headed for the Brahmaputra hoping to see the Gangetic Dolphin.

But a little later in the day it became windy and only a few of us got a glimpse of the Dolphins...although we did manage to see a few Asiatic Elephants, Pied Kingfisher, Great Cormorants, Ruddy Shelduck and Common Greenshank. By the time we finished our boat ride it was nearly dark and we were hoping if we could spot a nightjar on our way back to the hotel, but there was no luck and after dinner we retired to our rooms.

Day 16

Monday 22nd November

Kaziranga – Kolkata

Today the group decided to divide in two halves. Andrea, Dave and Gillian headed in the jeep to the Central Range to carry on their birding and all the others decided to try their luck on the elephant again. The new birds seen today were the Dusky Eagle-owl, Chestnut-bellied Nuthatch and Spangled Drongo. By 10.00am we had packed our bags and were on our way to Jorhat Airport heading towards Kolkata. By 5.00pm we had checked in at the Hyatt Hotel. Today we wished Andrea, Dave, Michael and Clare a final good bye.

Day 17

Tuesday 23rd November

Kolkata – Sunderbans

POST TOUR – SUNDERBANS EXTENSION

We had a late breakfast and at 9.00am departed from the Hyatt to the Sunderbans. Sunderbans means beautiful forest in Bengali. There is also another interpretation that it is called so because of the long stretch of mangrove (sundari) trees. I prefer the first one as it has to be one of the most beautiful place I have been to! It is a perfect example of how beautiful nature can be when left alone by the ever-growing human occupation. Our mini-bus took three hours and we reached Gothkali. From here we were on our boat to the Sunderbans Jungle Camp located on the Bali Island. From our boat we spotted a Pacific Golden Plover and a Common Sandpiper. In the camp after lunch we headed for a walk around the village.

Day 18

Wednesday 24th November

Sunderbans

After breakfast we headed off on our boat cruise with our local guide Mr. Apurva. The weather was nice and sunny and we were hoping to see a lot of activity. We were going to explore the Chora Gajikhali and Sudhanyakhali areas. Initially we saw the usual birds, which were the Indian Cormorant, Great Egret, Common Redshank, and Common Sandpiper. The first new bird to our list was the Brahminy Kite which flew very close to our boat.

Later we stopped at the Saznekhali Wildlife Sanctuary tower where we saw a White-bellied Sea Eagle. Initially there was a high tide and there was not much movement but in the later half of the day as the water started receding we managed to see Rhesus Macaque, Red Jungle Fowl, Whimbrels, Eurasian Curlew, and Changeable Hawk-eagle. Another new bird to add to our list was the Peregrine Falcon. Some other birds were the Rose-ringed Parakeets, Eurasian Collared and Spotted Doves, Barn Swallow, Green Bee-eater, Bronzed Drongo and a few more. The new kingfishers to our list were the Black-capped and Brown-winged Kingfishers. At the tower we also saw the Orange-headed Thrush.

At Sundhanyakhali we even saw a small Bamboo Pit Viper curled around the Bonbibi Temple gate. We even managed to see a few Water Monitor Lizards, Spotted Deer, Wild Boar and fairly large Estuarine Crocodiles. Our lunch was on the boat and we enjoyed the local specialty called 'Khichidi' - a dish prepared by mixing rice, lentils and vegetables. During the low tide we managed to see very fresh Tiger pug marks. We had probably missed the majestic beast by only a few minutes!

Day 19

Thursday 25th November

Sunderbans

The boat cruise was a pleasure and today we moved deeper into the mangrove forest. We were going to visit Neti Dhopani in the hunt to find the king of the forest, the Tiger. Again today we saw very fresh pug marks of the animal but missed getting a glimpse. At the watch tower we got close views of Spotted Deer and also saw a Changeable Hawk-eagle roosting on a Sundari tree. Some of the birds seen today were Common Myna, Asian Pied Starling, Brahminy Kite, Rose-ringed Parakeets, Black-capped, Common, Brown-winged and White-throated Kingfishers.

Day 20

Friday 26th November

Sunderbans

Our breakfast and lunch were both organized on the boat so that we could utilize more time exploring the beautiful jungles of the Sunderbans. At the camp we managed to see the Tailorbird, Green Bee-eater, House Sparrows, White-breasted Waterhen and Purple-rumped Sunbird. As we were walking towards the boat we spotted the Common, White-throated and Brown-winged Kingfishers together. We visited the Dobanki area today.

Day 21

Saturday 27th November

Sunderbans – Kolkata

Today were heading back home, but before that we took an early morning walk around the village to do some birding. After an hours walk, and breakfast, we packed our bags and headed for our boat. We thanked the hospitable staff and said a final good-bye to the Sunderbans Jungle Lodge. Today was the last and final chance to see a tiger therefore our main focus was to cover as much area as we could. I would admit that spotting a tiger in the Sunderbans is like finding a needle in a hay stack. Although the maximum number of tigers is high, the terrain is such that it becomes extremely difficult to spot one. Today the luck was on our side and just as we were about to finish our search we spotted a beautiful tigress on the banks marking her territory. Everyone was overwhelmed as the hard work of the boat man and the forest guide had paid off! After getting a good view of the tigress we headed for Gothkali to board our mini-bus. After a three hour drive we finally reached the Kolkata International Airport and the beginning of the journey back to the UK. We wished everyone a final good bye - and thus ended a wonderful holiday – I wish to thank all those who were involved!

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Species Lists

Birds (H = heard only; L = seen by leader/guide only, ✓ commonly recorded but not counted)

	Common name	Scientific name	November																							
			7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27			
1	Spot-billed Pelican	<i>Pelecanus philippensis</i>															✓	✓	✓	✓						
2	Indian Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax fuscicollis</i>		✓			✓	✓			✓	✓					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
3	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>																	✓							
4	Little Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax niger</i>		✓													✓	✓	✓	✓						
5	Darter	<i>Anhinga melanogaster</i>															✓	✓	✓	✓						
6	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>															✓	✓	✓				✓			
7	White-bellied Heron	<i>Ardea insignis</i>							✓																	
8	Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>															✓	✓								
9	Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>															✓	✓	✓			✓		✓	✓	
10	Intermediate Egret	<i>Egretta intermedia</i>															✓	✓	✓	✓						
11	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>															✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
12	Indian Pond-heron	<i>Ardeola grayii</i>		✓													✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
13	Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>		✓													✓	✓	✓		✓					
14	Black-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>		✓																						
15	Asian Openbill	<i>Anastomus oscitans</i>		✓	✓												✓	✓	✓	✓						
16	Painted Stork	<i>Mycteria leucocephala</i>			L																					
17	Woolly-necked Stork	<i>Ciconia episcopus</i>															✓	✓	✓	✓						
18	Black-necked Stork	<i>Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus</i>															✓	✓	✓							
19	White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>															L									
20	Lesser Adjutant	<i>Leptoptilos javanicus</i>															✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					
21	Black-headed Ibis	<i>Threskiornis melanocephalus</i>																✓								
22	Lesser Whistling-duck	<i>Dendrocygna javanica</i>		✓														✓	✓	✓				✓		
23	Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>																✓	✓							
24	Bar-headed Goose	<i>Anser indicus</i>																✓	✓	✓	✓					
25	Ruddy Shelduck	<i>Tadorna ferruginea</i>						✓	✓	✓	✓						✓	✓	✓	✓						
26	Eurasian Wigeon	<i>Anas penelope</i>																✓	✓							
27	Falcatad Duck	<i>Anas falcata</i>																✓								
28	Gadwall	<i>Anas strepera</i>							✓									✓						✓		
29	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>											✓				✓	✓	✓							

	Common name	Scientific name	November																							
			7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27			
62	Red Junglefowl	<i>Gallus gallus</i>															✓		✓			✓		✓	✓	
63	Kalij Pheasant	<i>Lophura leucomelanos</i>									✓															
64	Black-necked Crane	<i>Grus nigricollis</i>									✓															
65	White-breasted Waterhen	<i>Amaurornis phoenicurus</i>		✓															✓				✓	✓		
66	Black-tailed Crake	<i>Amaurornis bicolor</i>				✓																				
67	Watercock	<i>Gallicrex cinerea</i>																							✓	
68	Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>		✓														✓								
69	Purple Swamphen	<i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i>																		H						
70	Common Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>																✓	✓							
71	Pheasant-tailed Jacana	<i>Hydrophasianus chirurgus</i>		✓																				✓		
72	Bronze-winged Jacana	<i>Metopidius indicus</i>		✓														✓	✓		✓					
73	Ibisbill	<i>Ibidorhyncha struthersii</i>								✓																
74	Pied Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>																								
75	Great Thick-knee	<i>Burhinus recurvirostris</i>																						✓		
76	Northern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>																✓	✓	✓						
77	River Lapwing	<i>Vanellus duvaucelii</i>				✓	✓	✓																		
78	Grey-headed Lapwing	<i>Vanellus cinereus</i>																✓	✓	✓						
79	Red-wattled Lapwing	<i>Vanellus indicus</i>		✓														✓	✓	✓	✓					
80	Little Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>																✓	✓							
81	Lesser Sand Plover	<i>Charadrius mongolus</i>																					✓	✓	✓	
82	Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>																✓			✓					
83	Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>																				✓	✓	✓	✓	
84	Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>																				✓	✓	✓	✓	
85	Spotted Redshank	<i>Tringa erythropus</i>																✓		✓						
86	Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>																✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
87	Marsh Sandpiper	<i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>																								
88	Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>																✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
89	Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>																✓	✓							
90	Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>																✓	✓	✓	✓					
91	Terek Sandpiper	<i>Xenus cinereus</i>																						✓	✓	
92	Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>				✓			✓									✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
93	Brown-headed Gull	<i>Larus brunnicephalus</i>											✓													

	Common name	Scientific name	November																							
			7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27			
158	Orange-headed Thrush	<i>Zoothera citrina</i>																		✓	✓					
159	Plain-backed Thrush	<i>Zoothera mollissima</i>												✓												
160	Scaly Thrush	<i>Zoothera dauma</i>							✓																	
161	White-collared Blackbird	<i>Turdus albocinctus</i>												✓												
162	Plain Prinia	<i>Prinia inornata</i>		✓																						
163	Common Tailorbird	<i>Orthotomus sutorius</i>		✓													✓	✓	✓				✓			
164	Clamorous Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus stentoreus</i>		✓																						
165	Tickell's Leaf-warbler	<i>Phylloscopus affinis</i>								✓																
166	Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>																								
167	Ashy-throated Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus maculipennis</i>											✓		✓											
168	Grey-hooded Warbler	<i>Seicercus xanthoschistus</i>					✓	✓	✓	✓																
169	Hume's Leaf Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus humei</i>																			✓					
170	Asian Brown Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa dauurica</i>																	✓							
171	Little Pied Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula westermanni</i>								✓																
172	Large Niltava	<i>Niltava grandis</i>												✓												
173	Small Niltava	<i>Niltava macgrigoriae</i>															✓		✓							
174	Rufous-bellied Niltava	<i>Niltava sundara</i>												✓												
175	Grey-headed Canary-flycatcher	<i>Culicicapa ceylonensis</i>															✓	✓	✓	✓						
176	Oriental Magpie-robin	<i>Copsychus saularis</i>	✓	✓					✓		✓						✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
177	Hodgson's Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus hodgsoni</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓		✓																
178	Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>												✓								✓	✓			
179	Blue-fronted Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus frontalis</i>				✓	✓			✓	✓															
180	White-capped Redstart	<i>Chaimarrornis leucocephalus</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓				✓														
181	Plumbeous Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus fuliginosus</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓																		
182	Little Forktail	<i>Enicurus scouleri</i>							✓																	
183	Slaty-backed Forktail	<i>Enicurus schistaceus</i>								✓																
184	Grey Bushchat	<i>Saxicola ferrea</i>												✓												
185	Yellow-bellied Fantail	<i>Rhipidura hypoxantha</i>				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓															
186	White-throated Fantail	<i>Rhipidura albicollis</i>							✓																	
187	Rufous-capped Babbler	<i>Stachyris ruficeps</i>												✓												
188	Streak-breasted Scimitar Babbler	<i>Pomatorhinus ruficollis</i>											✓													
189	Striated Laughingthrush	<i>Garrulax striatus</i>							✓	✓	✓															

	Common name	Scientific name	November																								
			7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27				
190	Jungle Babbler	<i>Turdoides striatus</i>		✓															✓								
191	Chestnut-tailed Minla	<i>Minla strigula</i>					✓						✓														
192	Red-tailed Minla	<i>Minla ignotincta</i>					✓						✓														
193	Golden-breasted Fulvetta	<i>Alcippe chrysotis</i>					✓						✓														
194	White-browed Fulvetta	<i>Alcippe vinipectus</i>				✓	✓	✓																			
195	Rufous Sibia	<i>Heterophasia capistrata</i>						✓			✓	H															
196	Black-chinned Yuhina	<i>Yuhina nigrimenta</i>										✓				✓											
197	Whiskered Yuhina	<i>Yuhina flavicollis</i>							✓							✓											
198	Coal Tit	<i>Periparus ater</i>				✓																					
199	Black-throated Tit	<i>Aegithalos concinnus</i>										✓				✓											
200	Black-browed Tit	<i>Aegithalos iouschistos</i>								✓	✓																
201	Grey-crested Tit	<i>Lophophanes dichrous</i>				✓	✓									✓											
202	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>														✓					✓						
203	Green-backed Tit	<i>Parus monticolus</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓											
204	Chestnut-bellied Nuthatch	<i>Sitta castanea</i>																		✓							
205	Wallcreeper	<i>Tichodroma muraria</i>					✓	✓				✓															
206	Rusty Flanked Treecreeper	<i>Certhia discolor</i>										✓															
207	Fire-capped Tit	<i>Cephalopyrus flammiceps</i>										✓	✓														
208	Purple-rumped Sunbird	<i>Leptocoma zeylonica</i>														✓						✓	✓	✓			
209	Gould's Sunbird	<i>Aethopyga gouldiae</i>										✓															
210	Crimson Sunbird	<i>Aethopyga siparaja</i>																	✓	✓	✓						
211	Thick-billed Flowerpecker	<i>Dicaeum agile</i>		✓																							
212	Fire-breasted Flowerpecker	<i>Dicaeum ignipectus</i>											✓														
213	Oriental White-eye	<i>Zosterops palpebrosus</i>							✓	✓	✓				✓			✓	✓	✓				✓			
214	Black-hooded Oriole	<i>Oriolus xanthornus</i>		✓														✓	✓	✓	✓		✓				
215	Brown Shrike	<i>Lanius cristatus</i>		✓											✓		✓						✓				
216	Long-tailed Shrike	<i>Lanius schach</i>							✓									✓	✓								
217	Grey-backed Shrike	<i>Lanius tephronotus</i>			✓	✓						✓						✓	✓	✓	✓						
218	Black Drongo	<i>Dicrurus macrocercus</i>	✓	✓														✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					
219	Bronzed Drongo	<i>Dicrurus aeneus</i>																				✓	✓	✓			
220	Spangled Drongo	<i>Dicrurus hottentottus</i>																			✓						
221	Gold-billed Magpie	<i>Urocissa flavirostris</i>				✓					✓		✓		✓												

	Common name	Scientific name	November																								
			7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27				
222	Rufous Treepie	<i>Dendrocitta vagabunda</i>		✓														✓		✓	✓				✓		
223	Grey Treepie	<i>Dendrocitta formosae</i>							✓			H															
224	Eurasian (Spotted) Nutcracker	<i>Nucifraga caryocatactes</i>				✓	✓			✓	✓																
225	Red-billed Chough	<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>			✓					✓																	
226	House Crow	<i>Corvus splendens</i>	✓	✓	✓								✓		✓		✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
227	Large-billed Crow	<i>Corvus macrorhynchos</i>		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓				✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	
228	Jungle Crow	<i>Corvus macrorhynchos levaillantii</i>																								✓	
229	White-vented Myna	<i>Acridotheres grandis</i>																✓	✓	✓	✓						
230	Jungle Myna	<i>Acridotheres fuscus</i>		✓															✓		✓	✓					
231	Common Myna	<i>Acridotheres tristis</i>	✓	✓			✓	✓			✓																
232	Asian Pied Starling	<i>Gracupica contra</i>		✓														✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
233	Chestnut-tailed Starling	<i>Sturnia malabarica</i>		✓															✓		✓						
234	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	✓	✓			✓	✓										✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
235	Russet Sparrow	<i>Passer rutilans</i>			✓		✓	✓																			
236	Eurasian Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>										✓								✓							
237	Baya Weaver	<i>Ploceus philippinus</i>																		✓		✓					
238	Nutmeg Mannikin (Scaly Breasted Munia)	<i>Lonchura punctulata</i>						✓		✓								✓	✓	✓	✓						
239	Collared Grosbeak	<i>Mycerobas affinis</i>				✓																					
240	White-winged Grosbeak	<i>Mycerobas carnipes</i>				✓																					
241	Snow Pigeon	<i>Coumba rupestris</i>				✓							✓														
242	White Throated Laughing Thrush	<i>Garrulax albogularis</i>					✓	✓	✓			✓															
243	Lemon Rumped Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus chloronotus</i>						✓																			
244	Common Stonechat	<i>Saxicola torquata</i>						✓										✓		✓	✓						
245	Yellow-Rumped Honeyguide	<i>Indicator xanthonotus</i>								✓																	
246	Common Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>										✓															
247	Yellow-Rumped Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula zanthopygia</i>																✓									
248	Southern Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius meridionalis</i>															✓										
249	Pacific Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis fulva</i>																					✓				
250	Little Heron	<i>Butorides striatus</i>																						✓	✓		

	Common name	Scientific name	November																							
			7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27			
10	Common Emigrant	<i>Catopsilia pomona</i>	✓																							
11	Common Jezebel	<i>Delias eucharis</i>	✓																	✓	✓	✓				
12	Common Wanderer	<i>Pareronia valeria</i>	✓																							
13	Common Pierrot	<i>Castalius rosimon</i>	✓																							
14	Common Mormon	<i>Papilio polytes</i>	✓																	✓	✓					
15	Evening Brown	<i>Melanitis leda</i>	✓																							
16	Great Egg Butterfly	<i>Hypolimnas bolina</i>	✓																							
17	Common Jay	<i>Graphium doson</i>	✓																							
18	Common Five Ring	<i>Ypthima baldus</i>	✓																							
19	Tailed Jay	<i>Graphium agamemnon</i>	✓																							
20	Common Lime	<i>Papilio demoleus</i>	✓																		✓	✓	✓			

Reptiles & Amphibians

1	King Cobra	<i>Ophiophagus hannah</i>																		✓	✓			
2	Checkered Keelback	<i>Xenochrophis piscator</i>																		✓	✓		✓	
3	House Gecko	<i>Hemidactylus frenatus</i>																			✓	✓	✓	✓
4	Olive Ridley Turtle	<i>Lepidochelys olivacea</i>																						✓
5	Estuarine Crocodile	<i>Crocodylus porosus</i>																			✓	✓	✓	✓

Other Taxa

1	Mud Skipper	<i>Periophthalmus barbarus</i>																			✓	✓	✓	✓
2	Red Fiddler Crab	<i>Uca pugnax</i>																			✓	✓	✓	✓
3	Mangrove Crab	<i>Scylla serrata</i> ,																			✓	✓	✓	✓

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