

Nepal - A Birdwatching Tour

Naturetrek Tour Report

21st March – 4th April 2026



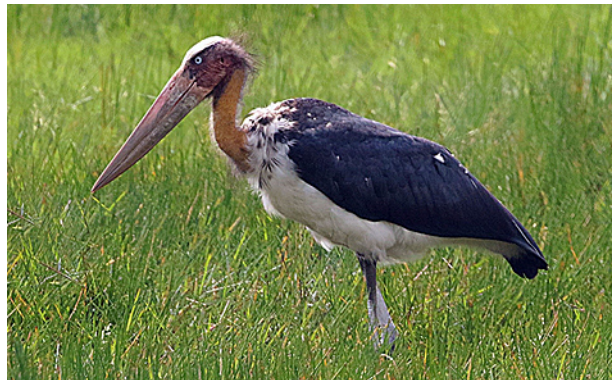
Gharial



The Everest range



Lesser Yellownappe



Lesser Adjutant

Tour report by Lee Nixon (abridged)



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Tour participants: Suchit Basnet (leader) with four Naturetrek clients

Day 1

Saturday 21st March

We flew from London to India, via Doha.

Day 2

Sunday 22nd March

We transferred from India to Nepal by air.

Day 3

Monday 23rd March

The day dawned bright and fair and, after a quick look around the hotel, during which we got Oriental Magpie-Robin, Spotted Dove, Common Myna, Indian House Crow and the first of many Black Kites, we were met by our guide, Suchit, who introduced us to Stephen and Brian, along with our drivers for the day. En route to the mountain, we saw our first monkeys: a troop of Rhesus Macaques traversing a gantry above the road.

Our first stop was at the foot of the mountain, in a cracking area with a few buildings and a temple, surrounded by steep wooded slopes. Here we saw Black, Red-vented and Mountain Bulbuls, Large-billed Crow, White-tailed Nuthatch, Blue-throated, Golden-throated and Great Barbets, Oriental Turtle Dove, Grey-hooded Warbler, Alexandrine Parakeet, Grey Treepie, Red-billed Blue Magpie, Green-backed Tit, Verditer Flycatcher, Blue Whistling Thrush, Asian Barred-Owlet, Black-throated Sunbird, Striated and White-throated Laughingthrushes, Himalayan Black-lored Tit, Greater Yellowthroat, Long-tailed Minivet, Nepal Fulvetta, Fire-breasted Flowerpecker, Bronzed and Lesser Racket-tailed Drongos and Buff-barred Warbler. We also heard Grey-headed Woodpecker and Himalayan Cuckoo. Pretty much everything was a lifer!

Our next stop was at about 1700m: here we got Maroon Oriole, Crested Serpent Eagle, White-throated Fantail, Blyth's Leaf Warbler, Rufous-chinned Laughingthrush and Black-faced Warbler. We also heard Grey-headed Canary-flycatcher and Grey-bellied Tesia. We added another mammal too, with our first sighting of many Orange-bellied Squirrels.

Somewhere around 2300m, we stopped again, and scored with Rufous Sibia, Himalayan Vulture, and Yellow-browed Tit. We also saw the local subspecies of Eurasian Jay, *bispecularis*, which is sometimes referred to as the Himalayan Jay.

When we got to the top, at around 2800m, we were inside a cloud and it was cool and damp, so we dug out our jackets for the first and only time on the whole trip, and set off down the mountain on foot. We soon picked up another Yellow-browed Tit, a beautiful Green-tailed Sunbird and a Hume's Leaf Warbler of the eastern subspecies *mandellii*, which would prove to be the most common warbler of the trip.

At a rather unremarkable-looking spot, we got Streaked and Chestnut-crowned Laughingthrushes, Dark-breasted Rosefinch, Grey Bush Chat and White-browed Fulvetta. Further down the mountain, as we passed beneath a slope of mud and rock, Suchit suddenly got excited. He had spotted something he had not expected: something small, creeping around near the top of the bank. It was hard to pick out in the *chiaroscuro* of sun-dappled mud, but Suchit

patiently got us all onto a bird which most of us agreed was the best of the day: a Maroon-backed Accentor. Such a beauty, and so unexpected.

Shortly after that, we were driven back down, almost to the bottom of the mountain, to where the road ran along the bottom of a wide, rocky ravine. Here, Suchit heard a Grey-bellied Tesia again and set about luring it out. It was tough going. The bird was singing loudly, throwing its voice like a Nightingale, but it was amazingly adept at remaining hidden in even the shortest, sparsest undergrowth, so actual sightings were hard to come by. In the same general area, we saw a Sikkim Treecreeper and heard a Large Niltava, but failed to lure it in. Then it was time to head back to our hotel.

At the hotel in Kathmandu, Gavin and I nailed a Coppersmith Barbet from our room, and I got my first Flying Fox, although I initially misidentified it as a large owl!

Day 4

Tuesday 24th March

Today we flew to Biratnagar, the airport closest to our second location: Koshi Tappu. It was bright and warm, but there was quite a haze in the air. Further east, that haze was dense enough to be affecting visibility and, when we arrived at our gate, the screen declared that Biratnagar was closed. When I pointed this out to Suchit, he just smiled and said, "It is improving." And, sure enough, after only the shortest of delays, Biratnagar opened for business and we started boarding. The usual Black Kites swooped around the runway as we taxied, and I spotted an Eastern Red-rumped Swallow skimming low over the tarmac.

Although the flight path took us south-east, we could nevertheless see the Himalayas rising up above the mist to the north. With Suchit's help, we even managed to get a distant view of Everest, nestled behind the Nuptse ridge, alongside Lhotse. We landed safely in Biratnagar, where we were met by new drivers and a deputy guide, who Suchit referred to as 'MP' (Multi-purpose): he was a man of many talents and, though he was a little less talkative than Suchit, he knew his stuff. For the next few days, we would have an expert in both vehicles. On the way out of the airport, we got the first of very many Black Drongos and Indian Pond Herons. We also heard a Spotted Owlet calling from a tree right outside the arrivals lounge.

We were heading for Birju Lakes, en route to Koshi Camp. On the way there, we spotted Pied Starling, Grey-throated Martin, White-throated Kingfisher, Rufous Treepie, Red-wattled Lapwing and a Shikra in a tree by the roadside. We also added Paddyfield Pipit, Blue-tailed Bee-eater, Red Collared Dove and Booted Eagle.

At the lakes, I didn't know where to look first. There were Lesser Adjutant, Asian Openbill, Medium Egret, Black-headed and Red-naped Ibises, (Grey-headed) Purple Swamphen, and Pheasant-tailed and Bronze-winged Jacanas, along with numerous, more familiar herons and egrets. I say 'familiar', but the Great Egrets and Purple Heron were actually of their respective eastern subspecies: *modesta* and *manilensis*. A Besra flew through, followed by another Booted Eagle and a Black-winged Kite: a nice little trio of raptors. Among the more familiar waterfowl and waders, we saw an Oriental Darter and several Little Cormorants, and further on came across over a hundred Garganeys and a fair few Ferruginous Ducks, a flock of Lesser Whistling Ducks and some Cotton Pygmy Geese, plus Temminck's Stint, Black-winged Stilt, and Red-wattled and Grey-headed Lapwings. Greater Coucal, Asian Green and Blue-tailed Bee-eaters, Hoopoe, Brown Shrike, Common Tailorbird, Tickell's Warbler, Paddyfield Pipit, White-browed Wagtail, Purple Sunbird, Eastern Black Redstart, Pied Kingfisher and Red-breasted Flycatcher all

put in an appearance along the way. We also heard Plain Prinia, Zitting Cisticola, Black-hooded Oriole and Common Hawk-Cuckoo ("Brain Fever, Brain Fever! *Brain Fever!!*"). When we stopped for lunch, Gavin spotted an Osprey perched atop a pylon, eating a fish.

For said lunch, we were each handed our own white cardboard box. It contained a boiled egg, a banana, a samosa-cum-pasty of some kind, some slices of spicy potato, a little packet of biscuits, some dried plantain, a slice of bread that looked like it had been lightly fried and which tasted vaguely of cheese and a small carton of fruit juice. Quite a feast! Coffee and tea were also provided and I never got tired of that.

Eventually we wound our way to Koshi Tappu and our camp and home for the next three nights. Within minutes, we had bagged Black-crowned Night Heron, Black-rumped Flameback, a White-eyed Buzzard flying rather like a harrier, Ashy Drongo, and an Indian Scops Owl in a tree behind the main lodge. On and around the bird table, we got three Jungle Babblers, a Black-hooded Oriole, Red-whiskered Bulbul and more Rufous Treepies. Some members of the group also saw a Black-winged Cuckooshrike fly through. An Asian Koel called distantly.

After a short rest in our glamping pods, we set out for Koshi Jagbi, an area of riverside grassland and woodland. We spent a few enjoyable hours exploring the area, picking up Indian Roller, Small Pratincole, Yellow-wattled Lapwing, several Ashy-crowned Sparrow-Larks, several Sand Larks, a few Citrine Wagtails and five Ruddy Shelducks. We also added Indian Grey Hornbill, Indian Stone-curlew, Hoopoe, White-breasted Waterhen, Siberian Stonechat, Chestnut-tailed Starling, Oriental Skylark, Plum-headed Parakeets, Indian Cuckooshrike and sixteen Night Herons flying to roost. A Jungle Owlet was another good find by Suchit. But the best birds for some of us were the Pallas's Gulls: we saw three adults and an immature bird flying up and down the river, and eventually settling on a distant sandbank.

Back at the camp, a Flying Fox flew over in the fading light, and a Spotted Owlet scolded us in the trees around the feeding station. All we could see was its eyes reflecting our torch. As darkness took over, the Fireflies raged against the dying of the light. After a dinner of traditional cuisine and a few beers, we updated our lists with the last couple of days' sightings, then retired to our pods, harangued by the maniacal Spotted Owlet every step of the way.

Day 5

Wednesday 25th March

We made an early start in the dark today, as we had a long drive ahead. Before leaving the camp, we heard Asian Koel ("For real!" "For real!"), Common Hawk-Cuckoo ("Brain Fever!"), Brown Boobook ("Oo-ock") and the now-familiar alarm calls of the Spotted Owlet. An unidentified frog bubbled away in the reedbed alongside the main lodge, and a gecko squeaked loudly from its hiding place in the rafters.

En route to the Bengal Florican site, we heard several unfamiliar songs, all of which were delivered by Oriental Magpie-Robins. We caught sight of three White-throated Kingfishers, Indian Pied Myna, White-breasted Waterhen and both subspecies of Long-tailed Shrike, along with another Brown Shrike.

After many miles, at the entrance to the florican site itself, we quickly got Greenish Warbler (subspecies *trochiloides*), Purple Sunbird and a domesticated Elephant and her calf under a purpose-built shelter. The calf ran towards us, but we were warned not to engage with it as the mother would doubtless not be happy. Beyond the elephant house,

we headed out onto the huge scrubby grassland area where the floricans were expected to be. We got Wryneck and Yellow-wattled Lapwing, before splitting into small groups to better cover the area. In the couple of hours we spent exploring before meeting up for breakfast, we found Hoopoes, Bengal Bush Larks, over a hundred Pacific Golden Plovers, Bay-backed Shrike, Common Cuckoo (subspecies *bakeri*), Oriental Skylarks, Black Francolin and Richard's Pipit. We also found a tree containing a mix of vultures, including Cinereous, Himalayan and Slender-billed, and Stephen spotted a distant Black Stork.

We jumped into the jeeps and attempted to follow a track through the woodland, to another site that is good for Bengal Floricans. Unfortunately, our Jeep got bogged down in the mud. Extra people got on to add weight. Everyone got out to reduce weight. Logs were rammed under wheels. Nothing worked, so we had to push. And pull. And push. It was at this point that we first noticed only the rear wheels were spinning, and it dawned on us that the Chinese-built jeep-lookalikes we were driving around in were not, in fact, four-wheel drive. A small oversight on the part of the manufacturer of an off-road vehicle. Anyway, the "jeep" was eventually freed by pushing it off the track and into the undergrowth, but the track ahead looked to be no better and probably worse, so we decided to set off walking back the way we had come, leaving the drivers to solve the problem of getting the jeeps turned around and back through the quagmire!



Crested Honey Buzzard



Crested Serpent Eagle

On the walk, we got loads of Olive-backed Pipits, Crested Honey Buzzard, an Indian Grey Hornbill, a few orioles and warblers, and a Jungle Owlet. We also saw and heard several Asian Koels in the area, and saw a distant Terai Sacred Langur. When the Jeeps caught up with us, we jumped in and drove back to the visitor centre. There, we mounted the viewing platform and continued birdwatching while we ate lunch. We saw another Crested Honey Buzzard, an immature Black-winged Kite, a beautiful Coppersmith Barbet, and had a cracking close-up of Indian Pied Myna. Grey-backed Shrike, Common Kestrel and Long-legged Buzzard kept us happy, until Suchit said he could hear Swamp Francolin and promptly began luring it in. It worked better than expected, and two of them showed really well on the paddock area below the tower. Others got Jungle Myna, before it was time to pack up

and move on. The floricans had defeated us, which was a real shame after the long drive, but the other birds we had seen had gone a long way towards making up for it.

Next, we headed for the barrage. On the way, we added Lineated Barbet and saw eight Lesser Adjutants at the side of the road, and another seven at four nests also at the side of the road. Nearby, we added Asian Palm Swifts and got another Shikra, and had superb close-up views of a beautiful Black-winged Kite on a telegraph pole.

As we neared the barrage, we took a track which followed the river on the upstream side and pulled in. There was a flock of ducks on the river itself and some waders on the mud banks opposite. The ducks proved mostly to be species we regard as common in the UK, though there were a few Garganeys and Red-crested Pochards too, along with five Bar-headed Geese on the far shore. The waders included River Lapwings, Temminck's Stints and five Pied Avocets. There were also a few White Wagtails, which included one or two potentially of one of the eastern races, with white throats.

Even now, in the dry season, the barrage was holding back a considerable amount of water, and was releasing it through sluices with a force that was obviously controlled, but nevertheless powerful enough to create a boiling maelstrom below the dam. It was because of this churning water that we were here, or rather because of what the stirred-up water attracted. It was here that we hoped to see the rare and elusive Ganges River Dolphin. Stephen and Brian were already there and I asked them if they had seen anything and they said yes! They'd had two sightings. Like an excited schoolboy, I asked "Where, where, where?" and expected them to point off into the distance. "Here," they said, pointing downwards into the water right in front of us. And sure enough, moments later, we saw a back break surface and quickly dive again! I can't say I saw a whole dolphin: maybe a quarter of one. But I had four sightings, so I think that constitutes a whole one.

We made a couple more stops on the way back to camp. The first was at a site known for its Indian Coursers. There we found around twenty Red-naped Ibises, six Black-headed Ibises, a Marsh Harrier (our only harrier of the trip), another hundred or more Pacific Golden Plovers, and, eventually, no fewer than four Indian Coursers.

Our final stop was at a viewing platform at the boundary between a wood and a huge area of rough grassland. with a distant river and a small wet area near the tower. One of the reasons for stopping there was to see Asian Wild Buffalo and we got onto some straight away. Also from the tower, we got Grey Hornbill, Cinereous Tit, Crested Honey Buzzard, Dark-sided Flycatcher, Lesser Coucal, Greater Coucal, Indian Cuckooshrike and Chestnut-tailed Starling.

Day 6

Thursday 26th March

This was to be our last full day in Koshi Tappu, and the plan was to sample some of the areas we hadn't yet visited. But before setting out from the camp, we got Blue-throated Barbet, Jungle Babbler, Night Heron, Common Tailorbird and photos of the demon owlet. A Coppersmith Barbet and Grey Hornbill called, and a small, unidentified falcon flew through.

Our first destination was the central part of the Koshi Tappu National Park. On the way there, we saw two Red-naped Ibises, Purple Sunbird, White-throated Kingfisher, Little Cormorant, Red-wattled Lapwing, Lesser Whistling Duck, Greater Coucal and Common Hawk-Cuckoo, among others. We spent a good part of the morning

walking along a road between open woodland and thick, riverside scrub. There, we added Yellow-footed Green Pigeon and a Black Francolin, and got a tantalisingly brief view of a Golden Jackal!

Our walk was interrupted when a group of military personnel warned Suchit that a wild Elephant was near to the road up ahead. Given the unpredictable nature of these infrequent guests, we returned to the jeeps and drove for a while, scouring the woodland, keen for a view of the beast: we were without luck, sadly. Once we were well beyond the potential danger area, we climbed out of the jeeps and resumed our walk.

We heard a Dusky Warbler and had good views of two or three Stork-billed Kingfishers flying around and perching in trees. That was one of my most-wanted species ticked off! We also got Indian Golden Oriole, Indian Cuckooshrike, Swamp Francolin, Eastern Black Redstart, Plum-headed Parakeet, Pied Kingfisher, another Crested Honey Buzzard and Shikra. We heard a rubythroat species but failed to lure it into view, and Suchit caught a quick glimpse of a Thick-billed Warbler, but again, we failed to lure it out. A Chiffchaff gave us one of our least exciting trip ticks. Next, we drove to the northern part of Koshi Tappu, where we walked and drove along a road, with forest on one side and a river on the other. We got Black-headed Ibis, Lesser Flameback, Common Tailorbird, Grey Hornbill, Indian and Black-hooded Orioles and Red Collared Dove, along with a distant view of a mongoose on the road, before returning to the camp for lunch and a rest.

At the camp, with a couple of hours to do our own thing, Gavin and I decided to explore the wider camp area, given the possibility of some bittern species which we dearly wanted to see. We found Fulvous-breasted Woodpecker, Greater Coucal, White-throated Kingfisher, Olive-backed Pipit, Lesser Flameback, Bronze-winged Jacana, Crested Honey Buzzard, Spotted Owlet and Blue-throated Barbet. We also heard Taiga Flycatcher, Dusky Warbler, Cinereous Tit and Indian Grey Hornbill. We got no bitterns.

As we gathered around the main lodge in preparation for our afternoon jaunt, Suchit suddenly announced that MP had just seen a Cinnamon Bittern fly into the reedbed right next to the lodge and we set about trying to find it. Suman, one of the lodge staff, was asked to wade into the reedbed in an attempt to flush the bird. He did as asked, and, hey presto, up it popped! We got decent flight views and another tick for our most wanted lists. Thank you, Suman, for going the extra mile for that one!

We headed back to the north of Koshi Tappu, hunting for Brown Boobook. There is usually one roosting at the camp, but it had moved trees and even MP hadn't been able to find it. On the way there we got another Osprey, Eastern Black Redstart, and heard a Greenish Warbler.

Once back on the road between the river and the forest, we quickly found Lesser Yellownape and Taiga Flycatcher. We followed the road further than we had before lunch and descended into the forest where, after some protracted laser-pointing, we got onto a Brown Boobook. Sadly, it had its back to us and refused to turn around. The canopy also refused to allow us a clear view from the other side. Also new was Pin-striped Tit Babbler. On the mammal front, two mongooses trotted across the road in the distance, a Rhesus Macaque showed us its backside and eleven wild Water Buffalo were showing.

Back at the camp, Suchit decided to lead an expedition around the camp pools in search of Black Bittern. We caught sight of the Cinnamon Bittern in flight again, then entered the hide to watch for its black cousin, which MP attempted to flush by walking around the pool in front of us. Thunder rumbled ominously in the distance, and the

air was still and heavy. The bittern needed to get a move on, or we might be in for a soaking on our way back to the lodge.

After a good half hour in the hide, with the light failing, we gave up. Four disappointed birders followed Suchit out of the hide and into the dusk. But wait! *What's that?* Even before all five of us had got outside, a bird flew up into a small sapling in front of us. And there it was! A beautiful Black Bittern, close enough for some half-decent photographs. It made a cracking end to a really productive day.

Day 7

Friday 27th March

We set off from the camp: our drivers for the last few days and MP were joining us. All that stood between us and Chitwan was a mere 380km of road, around 370km of which was roadworks. It would take most of the day and there would be no proper birding breaks.

We made the most of the lunch break, however. We had stopped in a meadow, with a wood alongside and wooded hills on the horizon. I got a half-decent photo of a Long-bailed Blue butterfly. Ten or more Alpine Swifts cruised through on the way to their breeding grounds. Three Plum-headed and an Alexandrine Parakeet, Jungle Myna, Indian Cuckooshrike, Grey Hornbills and a Coppersmith Barbet kept us entertained.

Finally, we arrived at the Chitwan Tigerland Safari Resort. We said goodbye to the drivers who had to do the whole journey back! The resort was our poshest accommodation to date. It clearly catered more for wealthy tourists than sweaty birders, but we did our best to rise to the occasion. There wasn't much daylight left, but we all met up and went to a raised platform for a bit of proper birding. We managed to pick up Ashy Woodswallow, Chestnut-headed Bee-eater, Greater Coucal, Chestnut-capped Babbler, Greater Flameback, Grey-capped Pygmy Woodpecker, Brown Crake, Hair-crested Drongo, and Asian Openbill. We also heard Ruddy-breasted Crake, Red Junglefowl, Fulvous-breasted Woodpecker and Large-tailed Nightjar.

We enjoyed a buffet-style dinner and, given how little birding we had done and how tired we all were after the drive, we decided to postpone updating our list until the following evening. We retired to our lodges with beers in hand, to sleep off a very long day!

Day 8

Saturday 28th March

Today was going to be a better day than yesterday: of that we were certain. It started before first light, as Gavin and I had dragged ourselves out of bed early to climb the platform again and see what we could see as the sun rose. A Spotted Owlet was already calling, as were a Jungle Owlet and Large-tailed and Savannah Nightjars. Indian Peafowl and Red Junglefowl joined in at the first sign of light in the east. But nothing prepared us for one of the highlights of the entire two weeks. While it was still quite dark, Gavin scanned the odd bits of open water that were catching what little light there was in the marsh below the platform. "Quick!" he said. "Look at this!" I ran to the scope. and after a few seconds, when my eyes adjusted to the gloom, I saw what he had seen.

There, in a tiny pool, a dark shadow was standing in the shallows. As we watched, the shadow waded slowly around, then, every now and then, leapt from the water and plunged back in a foot or so ahead of where it had been. It was a Brown Fish Owl. and it was fishing. When we described what we had seen to Suchit a little later, he was

amazed. He admitted that, while he had seen numerous Brown Fish Owls, he had never seen one fishing. We felt immensely privileged. It was the best possible reward for our bleary-eyed, pre-dawn start.

We had mentioned our plan to the others and a little while later, Stephen arrived. Unfortunately, by then the owl had disappeared. We never saw it go. We kicked ourselves for not thinking to grab a night-mode video of the owl's behaviour. All we had was a shadowy still picture. It was almost time for breakfast but, before we left the platform, we saw two Greater Flamebacks, two Oriental Darters and a Red-naped Ibis flew over. We committed to doing the same thing the next day if time allowed.

After breakfast, we gathered at the site entrance for our first outing, in one of the magnificent safari-style trucks owned by the resort. It was high and open-topped, and big enough for everyone to travel together for the first time. It also had genuine four-wheel drive!

It was slow going at first, as there was a major festival going on, which I think was called *Rama Navami*. The verges were lined with food vendors and the roads were crammed with colourfully dressed people, some covered in what looked like ashes.

We were heading for some riverside grassland and, on the way, we picked up a few nice birds. Indian Oriole, Hair-crested Drongo, Rufous Treepie, Pied Bush Chat, Streak-throated and Grey-capped Pygmy Woodpeckers, Chestnut-tailed Starling, Chestnut-bellied and Velvet-fronted Nuthatches, Himalayan Flameback, Jungle Babbler and Black-hooded Orioles all showed well.

Once at our destination, we got Lineated Barbet, Rufous-winged Bushlark, another immature Pallas's Gull following the nearby river, Chestnut-crowned and Striated Babblers, Grey-breasted Prinia, Ashy, Yellow-bellied and Plain Prinias, White-tailed Stonechat, Ruddy Shelduck, Bengal Bush Lark, Jungle Myna, Lesser Adjutant, Asian Openbill, Woolly-necked Stork, Rosy Pipit and an Indian Grassbird.

Someone spotted three Gharials on a sandbank in the middle of the river. Brian was over the moon, as it was on his most-wanted list. We managed a few distant photos of them and of a couple of turtles a bit further upstream, one of which was huge!

As we walked along the riverbank, we saw evidence of a fire on the shore, and we were told it was the remains of a human cremation. Two River Lapwings flew by, oblivious. It was a sobering moment, but our schedule wouldn't let us dwell on it: it was time to return to the truck and head into the forest.

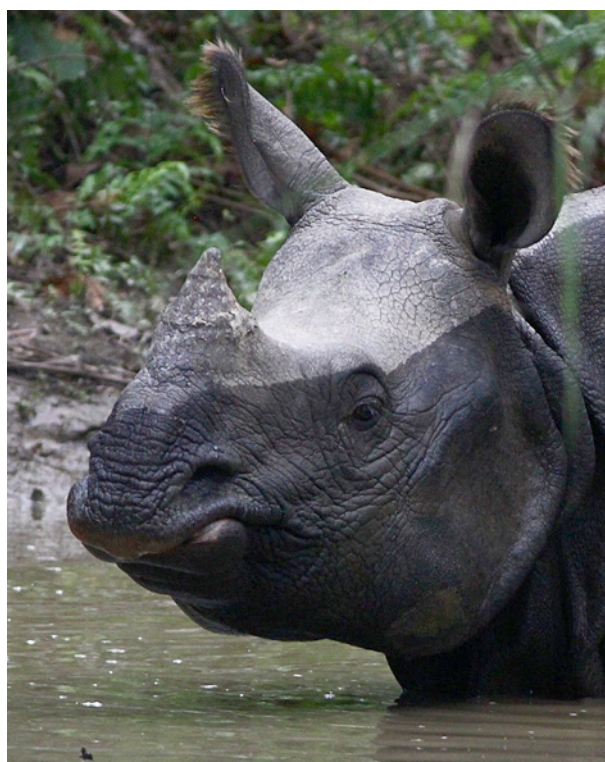
High in the canopy, an Indian Cuckoo called and posed for pictures. Suchit liked to characterize the call as "*An-oth-er-bot-tle*," while we preferred the more memorable "*In-di-an-cuc-keo*." Shortly after, we saw our first Greater One-horned Rhinoceros, with a baby. It would not be our last.

We were taking a boat trip from a small fishing village on the Rapti river, populated by a Nepalese tribe called the Bote people. Before we got to the boat, we got Hill Myna, Grey-backed Shrike, another Grey-breasted Prinia, Scaly-breasted Munia, a couple of Chestnut-capped Babblers and Common Iora. Rural Chitwan seemed a little wealthier than rural Koshi Tappu. Houses were still small, but most were well-built and rather attractive. The village was very smart, with some stone-built homes and a neat, surfaced path leading down to the riverbank.

The boat was essentially a shallow-draft punt with enough seats for all of us. In no time at all we were all safely aboard and out on the river. We soon sighted our second large reptile: a Marsh Mugger crocodile. We all got closer views of at least five Gharials (they can reach six metres in length) and had some magnificent views of a Common Kingfisher, Common and Green Sandpipers, and Greenshank. If it hadn't been for the crocodiles and the temperature in the thirties, we could have been on a river back home. That idea was further dispelled by River Lapwings, Pied and White-throated Kingfishers, Chestnut-headed Bee-eater and large numbers of Ruddy Shelducks. We also got superb views an Oriental Darter, which took to the air in a flurry of spray. Around twenty-five Chital rested on a gravel spit, and another Osprey flew by. The boatman pushed us ashore and the truck was waiting there to take us back to resort for lunch.



River Lapwing



Greater One-horned Rhinoceros

After lunch, we had a little time to kill again so we went to the platform and got Blue-bearded Bee-eater, Black-hooded and Indian Orioles, Common Tailorbird and Chestnut-tailed Starling. And, with a little time productively killed, we headed to the resort entrance for our afternoon safari. We drove across our first river ford, then spent the next few hours in a mix of farmland, forest and grassland.

We found Ashy Woodswallows, Crested Treeswifts, Bank Myna and Indian Roller. Two more female Rhinos passed nearby, each with a young one, which was really good to see. Some got onto an Emerald Dove, but I would have to wait. We saw Hog Deer and Chital, and three more Rhinos and a Common Woodshrike posed for photos by the track, as did a Chestnut-bellied Nuthatch.

We spent a while watching a couple of Rhinos cooling off at a watering hole. Shortly afterwards, the truck pulled up unexpectedly and Suchit pointed down to the track. There, someone had circled the paw print of a Tiger. The sun headed rapidly towards the horizon, but we still had time to nab a White-rumped Shama, two Rosy Pipits, Black Francolin and Hoopoe. Then, in failing light, Suchit managed to lure in a Savannah Nightjar with a

combination of call and the trusty old white handkerchief trick. Views were not great in the gloom, but we saw it flying towards us before it dived into cover quite close by, never to be seen again.

Back at the resort, we took over a room to ourselves in the main lodge and, sustained by beer and snacks, we did our customary checklist before dinner. It had been a long, productive day and arguably the best so far.

Day 9

Sunday 29th March

This was to be our last full day in Chitwan, and the plan was to cover as many habitats as possible. But before that, determined to make the most of the day, Gavin and I were up with the owls again, looking out over the pool and grassland from the raised platform. We were joined by Stephen before it got light. There was no sign of the Fish Owl, but we did get one surprise in the half-light: something was crashing through the undergrowth on the other side of the pool, no more than fifty metres away. Red-wattled Lapwings flew around, giving their alarm calls. Then a Rhino emerged and gave decent views as it meandered slowly off towards the impending sunrise. Six Great Egrets flew over before we descended the steps and made our way up to the resort entrance for today's safari.

En route to the park, we saw Pied Bush Chat, Indian Pied Myna, Eastern Black Redstart, House Crow, and Baya Weaver at their nest. We also saw Indian Roller, Spotted Dove and Oriental Magpie-Robin and, while driving over a river on a bridge, we spotted two Gharial. It was the last bridge we would see for a while, but it was not the last river crossing. Passing through the forest, we noticed that the structures at the side of the road, which we'd previously taken to be the rotted stumps of trees, were actually fluted termite mounds.

We were heading for Sukhivar Military Camp and its adjacent grassland, scrub and forest. On the way there, we saw Hill Myna, Plum-headed Parakeets, Large and Common Woodshrikes, Pale-footed Bush-warbler, lots of White-rumped Needletails, Crested Treeswift, Rosy Minivet, Chestnut-headed Bee-eater, White-bellied Drongo, Red-breasted Parakeet, Yellow-footed Green Pigeon, Grey-headed Fish Eagle, Slender-billed babbler, Oriental Pied Hornbill, Drongo Cuckoo, Puff-throated Babbler, Lineated Barbet and Grey-headed Woodpecker. We also got a tantalisingly brief glimpse of an Indian Paradise Flycatcher. We followed up with tremendous views of a Crested Serpent Eagle, perched just a few metres from the track and seemed totally unconcerned by both our presence and the clicking of our cameras.

We stopped briefly at the military camp, where our guides presented a guard with the necessary paperwork and the rest of us visited the toilet and birded the immediate area. We added Yellow-throated Sparrow, and saw Green-billed Malkoha and Purple Sunbird. As we entered the grassland, we stopped the truck to watch a magnificent peacock displaying on the track ahead, turning slowly through three-hundred-and-sixty degrees, tail fanned and feathers shivering. Junglefowl strutted under the bushes nearby, and several Baya Weavers put in an appearance.

From a lookout tower, we saw a few birds, including Grey-breasted Prinia, then further on, we saw Chestnut-capped Babbler, Jungle Myna, and an immature Grey-headed Fish Eagle perched above a pool, with an Oriental Darter perched just below it. A Crested Honey Buzzard posed beautifully for excellent close-up photography, and a Slender-billed Babbler also showed, but not nearly so obligingly.

A couple of Orange-breasted Green Pigeons sat high up in a bare tree, and another Crested Serpent Eagle gave superb views once again. Around this time, we also saw White-rumped Shama and a troop of Terai Sacred Langurs,

but the biggest surprise of the day was yet to come. We had returned to the forest and met another safari truck heading the other way; there was a brief exchange between Suchit and the guide in the other truck. Two minutes later, we pulled to the side of the track and watched as a big female Sloth Bear passed by no more than twenty metres away, followed quite quickly by her cute little cub, scampering along after her with the typical rolling gait of young bears. The youngster paused to grin at us defiantly, before scampering after its mother. What a treat!

Shortly after that encounter we briefly broke free of the trees and came to a river. It was about fifty metres wide, but fortunately only fifty centimetres deep, so we forded it easily enough in spite of the boulders hidden beneath the surface. Back once again in the forest, we stopped for our packed lunch. We were instructed to stay close to the vehicle, as there was no way of knowing what might be lurking in the thick undergrowth around the little clearing. We dutifully did as we were told, staring into the shadows while we ate our hard-boiled eggs, partly wanting to see something dangerous, but mostly wanting not to. During the next hour or so, we did see Scarlet Minivet, Greenish Warbler and Pale-chinned Flycatcher, and had fleeting views of White-browed Scimitar Babbler. Then we caught sight of a Great Hornbill some way off in the canopy, and suddenly we were trotting off down the road trying to get better views. Eventually we saw four of them, but never clearly enough or long enough for a decent photograph. Around this time, we got poor views of White-bellied Epornis.

Continuing through the forest in the truck, we saw White-bellied Drongo, White-rumped Shama, Black-winged Cuckooshrike, Taiga Flycatcher, Grey-capped Pygmy Woodpecker and a furtive little Rufous Woodpecker, which stayed in view just long enough for a photo. We also heard Streaked Spiderhunter and Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrike.

As we approached a triangular shaped clearing, with tracks bounding each side, we came to a standstill. A Rhino was standing on the track ahead and showed no signs of moving. He was wearing a neck tag and Suchit suggested he might be a bit of a troublesome rogue, and might have been tagged to keep track of him. Anyway, we were in a standoff. The guy who was up front with Suchit, who I had come to think of as our guard (he had an authoritative, military air), reached for a weapon he had stashed at his feet, though what he planned to do with a metre-long length of bamboo was anyone's guess. We edged the truck forward, expecting the Rhino to move aside, but it didn't. A couple of us pointed out that we had just passed a branch in the track which led up the other side of the triangle and which could be seen to join up again with the track we were on, crucially *behind* the Rhino. Could we not reverse and take it? We were told that would not be a good idea, as reversing would be seen by the Rhino as a sign of weakness and it could prompt him to charge. But a few seconds later, sensing a change of mood, the driver slammed the truck into reverse and, sure enough, the Rhino started moving. We quickly backed up to the junction with the other track and turned onto it.

The Rhino carried on towards, then beyond where we had been seconds ago and, as we drew level with it, it swung towards us as if to charge, but it was a feint. After only two steps, it stopped and turned away, no doubt worried by that short bamboo stick, and resumed its slow walk back where it had come from.

Before we left the forest for the grassland again, we saw Large Woodshrike, and I saw my first Emerald Dove which I managed to photograph, albeit partly obscured by branches. What a stunning bird! A little further on, a raptor flashed across the track in front of us. It was clearly a goshawk, but there was some debate as to which species. Being fairly familiar with Eurasian Goshawk back in the UK, and being confident that it wasn't one (it had dusky underparts and lacked a white supercilium), we were left to conclude that it was a Crested Goshawk, the

first and only one of the trip. As we approached the grassland again, we saw another Grey-headed Fish Eagle, and Pied and White-throated Kingfishers.

From the lookout tower we saw Siberian Stonechat, Lesser Adjutant, Asian Openbill and Crested Honey Buzzard. We soon got back to the Military Camp, and it was time to work our way back to base. But the day wasn't over. We saw two Red-breasted Parakeets, another Crested Honey Buzzard and a Blue-bearded Bee-eater, and we heard a Grey-headed Woodpecker. At a river pool, a Marsh Mugger slid into the water while we watched, and near there was a Grey-headed Woodpecker. We saw Grey-crowned Prinia, Yellow-eyed Babblers, Scarlet Minivet, another Crested Serpent Eagle and more Red-breasted Parakeets, and we finished with five Wild Boars. They were tearing up the verge alongside the track. We returned for our own dinner.

By this time, it was fully dark and the dancers were back on the performance area in front of the main lodge. To the sound of music and chanting and the clacking of sticks, another excellent day came to a close. I fell asleep thinking about Tigers. We hadn't seen one, but I like to think that at least one had seen us from its hiding place in the forest.

Day 10

Monday 30th March

It was our last morning at the resort, and we held our usual pre-dawn vigil on the platform. The two nightjar species were calling as usual in the dark. As the sky brightened in the east, we spotted two Spotted Owlets; Jungle Owlet and Brown Boobook called, but stayed out of sight. White-eyed Buzzard, Red-naped Ibis, two Oriental Darters, Little Cormorant and Purple Heron all flew over, and Asian Tit and Velvet-fronted Nuthatch showed in the trees around the platform. Common Hawk-Cuckoo and Indian Cuckoo called nearby, and a White-breasted Waterhen strutted over lily pads on the pool. We met the others for breakfast and took a group selfie before Suchit, Stephen and Brian waved us on our way. Gavin and I were the only ones heading on to the extension in Pokhara.

Our driver for the next few hours was a lovely guy and an excellent, steady driver. He had been given his mission details by Suchit the night before and he did his absolute best to deliver. We stopped in a layby to look for Egyptian Vulture (in vain), but we did get nice views of Crimson and Purple Sunbirds, and an Indian White-eye. Further on, we stopped again and crossed the busy road to where a stream ran over a series of rocky steps, before disappearing under the road. Our target was any one of the forktails, but again there was no sign.

Next, we stopped at a major construction site, looking for Egyptian Vulture again. Our driver pointed down into the wide valley bottom and said that Ibisbills have been seen there, but it was a bit late in the year, and anyway the valley was little more than a huge sandy quarry, echoing to the sounds of heavy construction equipment. We drove on for an hour or so, picking up the usual suspects along the way. Next, we pulled in at a well-equipped services overlooking a river, ostensibly for a toilet break, but mainly to nab a few minutes of birding. A Pied Bush Chat perched on a washing line. and House Swifts and Eastern Red-rumped Swallows cruised around above the river valley. We also saw Large-billed Crow and two Velvet-fronted Nuthatches. Shortly afterwards, we got our Egyptian Vulture at last, as we drove over a bridge.

We were not used to journeys by car being shorter than anticipated, so when our driver turned off the main road and headed through a village we thought at first it was a diversion to another birding spot, but it turned out this

was the way to our destination and, moments later, we pulled into the driveway of Tiger Mountain Pokhara Lodge, just in time to see a Green-billed Malkoha disappearing into a bush right next to the car.

Our luggage was unloaded, and we thanked our driver and waved him off. We took in our surroundings: it looked pretty good! The main lodge was a lovely, stone-built affair, nicely appointed, with a large stone-flagged veranda equipped with seats and tables. We were immediately ushered to one of these and asked what we would like to drink: we surprised ourselves by asking for tea. The elephant in the room was the lack of mountains. We should have been gazing up at the Fishtail, flanked by the Annapurna peaks. They were there, we were assured, but for now they were hidden by a layer of cloud and mist.

Our host chatted to us about mealtimes and introduced us to our guide for our stay. His name was Hari Pariya. He was a lovely chap, and he knew his birds and proved great at picking out calls among the foliage. We arranged to meet him later in the afternoon and, in the meantime, we were taken to our lodge, which was beautifully situated in a wooded area a hundred metres or so from reception. Of course, we only spent about thirty seconds settling in, before heading out on our own for a recce. We started off with a pair of Blue-throated Blue Flycatchers in the garden of our lodge, and soon added White-crested Laughingthrush and Blue Whistling Thrush. Gav spotted a Grey-headed Canary-flycatcher too.

Soon after, we joined Hari and he suggested we should spend this first session walking the trails immediately around the lodge. We asked what we might see, and he mentioned a lot of things we had already seen, but there was also the possibility of thrushes, which had so far eluded us, and Common Green Magpie, which was one of our most wanted, so we were up for it.

In the next couple of hours, we saw Grey-hooded, Hume's and Whistler's Warblers, Ashy and Himalayan Bulbuls, Great Barbet, Red-billed Blue Magpie, Red-headed and White-rumped Vultures, Crimson Sunbird, Booted and Eastern Imperial Eagles, Black-winged Cuckooshrike, Plum-headed Parakeet, a beautiful Ultramarine Flycatcher high up in a tree, Verditer Flycatcher, Maroon Oriole, Grey Treepie, Common Hawk-Cuckoo and Puff-throated Babbler. We heard a Green Magpie in the distance, but failed to lure it in and, as the light faded, we heard a tesia but couldn't see it or identify to species. When we got back to the main lodge, it was almost dark, but Hari still managed to spot a group of Grey-winged Blackbirds on the track nearby.

It had been a decent day, with a few ticks added. It was quieter than the previous locations, but we had expected new ticks to become harder to find. We discussed the following day's itinerary, which would involve a fairly early start, as we were heading further afield in search of Nepal's only endemic, which was fine by us. But for now, it was time for dinner.

Day 11

Tuesday 31st March

Hari met us before breakfast for a quick look around the lodge grounds and adjacent roads and paths. We saw Blue Whistling Thrush, Grey-hooded, Buff-barred and Hume's Warblers, Great Barbet (one of its calls sounds rather like a Herring Gull), Black Kite, Large-billed Crow, Ashy Woodpigeon, Large Hawk-Cuckoo, Scarlet Minivet and Cinereous Tit. Hari and Gavin saw Kalij Pheasant, but I missed it. We heard Blue-throated Barbet, White-crested Laughingthrush, Asian Barred Owlet, Maroon Oriole and Red Junglefowl. We returned to the lodge for

breakfast, eating outside so we could look across the valley at the majestic clouds. We still hadn't seen a single bit of the Annapurna range. With the end of the trip looming, we wondered if we ever would.

We walked down to the car park and met with our driver for the next two days. He was standing next to his chariot: not a big, open safari truck like the ones in Chitwan, but a lovely old, hard-top, short wheelbase Land Rover, built sometime in the seventies by the look of it. It was a fairly short drive to our initial destination, a viewpoint further along the same ridge as our base, called Thula Kot Hill and, after a handful of miles, we were dropped off on the top of the misty ridge. The viewpoint was a small area of short grass and rocks. One of Hari's claims to fame was his discovery of Spiny Babblers at this site, and we wasted no time getting started on what we expected would be hours of searching for this much sought-after, endemic species. Thirty seconds later, we were watching a Spiny Babbler singing its head off in full view about thirty feet away! We were off to a great start and, in the same area, we saw two Long-tailed Minivets, two Long-tailed Shrikes, Oriental Turtle Dove, Common Hawk-Cuckoo, Black Bulbul and a Himalayan Bulbul, with its Elvis quiff. We also heard a Rusty-cheeked Scimitar Babbler, but it didn't show.

Our plan was to walk down off the ridge, birding as we went. Thunder rumbled in the distance and threatened to make things interesting. We saw Black Bulbul, Common Cuckoo and Rock Bunting, and heard another elusive Rusty-cheeked Scimitar Babbler. We sheltered from a brief rain shower next to a small shrine, then moved on and came to a wooded knoll, where we spotted a flock of hirundines and swifts moving up the valley. We picked out at least two Eastern Red-rumped Swallows, three or four Alpine Swifts, around five White-rumped Spinetails, and some House Swifts. Then Gavin saw something bulky zoom through the flock, making the rest look pedestrian. "White-throated Needletail!" he shouted. I got on it, just as it blurred its way behind the wooded knoll. We waited a moment hoping it would return, then I hurried down the track, which curved to the right of the knoll, in the direction the needletail had gone. Gavin and Hari stayed where they were. I immediately picked up the bird again and, in spite of it moving like a fighter jet, I got good enough views to see all the key features. With its white throat and the horseshoe of white around the undertail coverts, it really did look like a tiny Orca with wings, as some ID guides suggest. It was heading back to the left where we had first seen it and I shouted to Gavin and Hari, "Coming your way!" only to hear what sounded like a very swift (pun intended) echo telling me it was coming my way. And this is how we discovered we were dealing with two birds. And all too soon both birds, as if by magic, disappeared, never to be seen by us again.

This was special for me, because I had recently chased the UK needletail up and down the Yorkshire coast without success, and for Gavin because it was on his most wanted list, not just for this trip, but for his life. For him this was up there with Harpy Eagle and Steller's Sea Eagle, and to see two here, in the Himalayas, in their natural habitat, was a significant moment: so much better than seeing one wandering lost and confused in Yorkshire.

The flock moved on, so we did the same. Thunder still rumbled, getting louder and more frequent. Gavin and Harry got good views of Red-headed Vulture, and we all saw White-rumped and Himalayan Vultures, and Orange-bellied Leafbird. A little further on, Gavin and I saw a Green-backed Tit.

Further on still we saw Indian White-eye, Whiskered Yuhinas, Black-capped Sibia and around thirty Eastern Red-rumped Swallows. We also saw another Spiny Babbler at a new site, and a lovely collection of butterflies, including Lemon and Brown Pansies, Purple Sapphire, Spotless Grass Yellow, Bush Brown, Common Four-ring, Red Lacewing and Dark Clouded Yellow. We also saw a Greater Yellownap.

The weather seemed to be turning, so Hari called the driver and asked him to pick us up a little further down the mountain, and take us back for an early lunch. It was a wise decision. Back at Tiger Mountain Lodge, the thunder boomed ominously. Shortly, all hell broke loose. An incredible hailstorm lashed the lodge. The thunder bounced around between the mountains that we hadn't yet seen, and the lodge gardens turned white with huge hail stones, while water gushed from the gutters and staff dashed around, retrieving the cushions from all the garden furniture. Our table was moved undercover as the storm intensified. I couldn't resist dodging out and retrieving a big hailstone, and popping it in my mouth. The head host said to me that he used to do that when he was a child!

But eventually the storm subsided. The wind dropped, the hail stopped and the sun came out. Steam rose from the grass and a rather soggy Besra perched in a nearby tree, wings half open, drying off. A small flock of Red-billed Blue Magpies passed through. We remained in the lodge grounds, as the thunder was still booming around, threatening a return. A Red-headed Vulture flew over, along with several Cinereous and Himalayan Vultures, and around six Steppe Eagles. In the gathering gloom, Hari spotted and put us onto no fewer than four Kalij Pheasants (two males and two females) passing through a woodland clearing.

Before dinner, we wandered up past the swimming pool and found several Himalayan Vultures in a tree near the pool, clearly downed by the storm and still too soggy to return to their usual roost. They looked a sorry sight. Dinner was lovely, the highlight being a nice onion soup with a side of perfect cheese on toast.

Day 12

Wednesday 1st April

This would be our last full day at Pokhara, and just in time the mountains were beginning to show. They are real after all! Machapuchare (otherwise known as Holy Mountain or The Fishtail) was already showing well, towering over the valley, although the classic fishtail profile can't be seen from Tiger Mountain. Interestingly, the top of the mountain has never officially been reached: the government won't allow it. An expedition in 1956 was given special dispensation to climb, but not to summit and, apparently, that expedition dutifully stopped fifty metres from the summit. It is rumoured, however, that a naughty New Zealander successfully climbed it, illegally, in the 1980s: about as pointless as stealing a famous work of art that you can never display.

Gavin and I had an early walk out past the swimming pool to see if the vultures were still drying out in the same tree. They were. We didn't get too close as we didn't want to risk disturbing them before they were ready to fly, but it was interesting to see a House Crow next to them, complaining loudly and looking like David among a tree full of Goliaths.

Back at the main lodge, we were asked what we wanted for breakfast and I cheekily asked if we could have cheese on toast like we'd had the previous night, and they seemed happy to oblige. It was superb! While we waited for the packed lunch to be prepared, we saw Asian Common Woodpigeon (the *casiotis* subspecies with no white on the neck), lots of House Swifts, three Himalayan Vultures, two Black-eared Kites and a Hume's Leaf Warbler.

I knew we were heading down to the Binyapur river in Pokhara this morning, but it was only when I saw Hari packing our sandwiches into his backpack that I realised we were getting there on foot. It was a good plan, because we started picking up decent birds straight away. We started with a female Rufous-bellied Niltava, then saw Blue Whistling Thrush, Grey-winged Blackbird, Wedge-tailed Green Pigeon, Green Magpie, Ashy Bulbul, and Long-

tailed and Grey-backed Shrikes. As we dropped further down, the habitat changed from farmland to open woods, then thicker forest.

Our next decent bird was Himalayan Rubythroat. A little further on we saw a Himalayan Prinia, singing from scrub next to a ruined building across the valley. It was hard to see, but Hari was the man for the job, and we eventually got some decent, if distant views, and even a photo. A beautiful male Ultramarine Flycatcher was next, showing really well in trees near the road, while Steppe Eagles, and Cinereous and Himalayan Vultures passed over (and under) us. We saw several Ashy Drongos, a few Red-billed Blue Magpies and Grey Treepies, and got good views of a male Scarlet Minivet.

By now, the sun was beating down, and that meant it was getting rather warm. It also meant that almost the whole Annapurna range was now showing in all its glory. What we could see was Annapurna South (7219m), Machapuchare (6993m), Annapurna 3 (7555m), Annapurna 4 (7525m), Annapurna 2 (7937m) and Lamjung Kailash (6983m). It really was spectacular.

We left the main track as it entered a more heavily forested area, turning onto a narrower path that descended alongside what should have been a stream. Hari had planned this route in the hope of getting us one of our missing ticks: forktails. Unfortunately, like so many of the smaller waterways, this one was almost bone-dry and the forktails eluded us yet again.

It was still a nice place to be, and there were other birds around, and loads of nice butterflies too, including a cracking female Common Mormon (*P. p. romulus*). We saw a couple of Greater Coucals, a couple of Green-billed Malkohas and a couple of Grey-hooded Warblers. Birds appeared to be pairing up! House Swifts flew over, as did twenty or more Ashy Woodpigeons. We saw three species of bulbuls (Black, Himalayan and Red-vented). The path bottomed out in a small, irrigated area which looked really promising, but which only offered up a lone Red-wattled Lapwing.

We had three targets on the river: Plumbeous Water Redstart, White-capped Redstart and Brown Dipper, and, in spite of the river being as crowded with people as Blackpool South Beach in a heatwave, we quickly ticked the first of them. We saw the next target bird, White-capped Redstart, from our lunch stop, sitting above the river on a circular stone plinth, out of which sprouted a huge tree. It provided welcome shade from the baking sun but also housed a colony of bees in a crack at its base and quite a few large, big-headed, fierce-looking ants. As a result, we didn't stay there long, Brown Dippers were conspicuous by their absence. So, we moved on. Little Egrets and Indian Pond Herons waded in the shallows. White-browed Wagtails pecked around the riverside rocks, and an Egyptian Vulture gave excellent views as it cruised along the valley, not far above us, its underside nicely illuminated by the sunlit white rocks below. We ended up with about ten Plumbeous Water Redstarts and a couple of White-capped. A lot of Black-eared Kites flapped lazily around, and a cracking Booted Eagle gave excellent low-level views.

Things grew more peaceful as we got further from the town, following a narrow irrigation channel running parallel to the river. It was really hot now, and there was little or no shade. Gavin and I were flagging. I paused to check out some movement in a crop alongside the path. There were two small birds I couldn't identify, so I called to Gavin and Hari to come back and join me. They turned out to be White-rumped Munias, the first and only ones of our trip.

As we approached a bend in the main river, Gavin and I called a timeout. We asked Hari what his plan was. It was to follow the river for another hour. We asked him if he thought we stood a chance of Brown Dipper and he admitted that, given the disturbance, we probably didn't, so we agreed on a compromise. We would walk to the bend, then call our driver to pick us up and take us back to the lodge, where it would be cooler and there would be beer. It was a good compromise: from the bend we watched a large group of Himalayan Vultures taking it in turns to feed on a pig carcass in the river.

We added a Green Sandpiper and two Crimson Sunbirds, before retracing our steps a short way and climbing up the wooded hillside to a place from which the driver could pick us up.

Back at the lodge, with beers in hand, we saw quite a few Steppe Eagles, a Besra, a few Cinereous Vultures, more House Swifts, a Lesser Yellownap and a beautiful Indian Fritillary which fluttered over the lawn. The little beauty even paused long enough for a photo.

We spent the rest of the day in the area and managed to get Wedge-tailed Green Pigeon, Red billed Magpies, Grey Treepies, Green-billed Malkoha, a couple of Cinereous Tits, Ashy Drongo, Indian White-eye, Crested Laughingthrush, Grey-winged Blackbirds, three Grey-backed Shrikes, a male Blue-throated Blue flycatcher, Hume's Warblers and a Large Niltava.

We were told about the plan for the following day: it involved us leaving in the morning for our last birding location then, later in the day, being picked up and driven directly to the airport for our flight back to Kathmandu. This meant two things. Firstly, we would have to pack after dinner, so our luggage could be picked up by the driver taking us to the airport. Secondly, the birding part of the trip was almost over!

Day 13

Thursday 2nd April

Today's list started early. Answering a call of nature in the early hours, I heard and recorded a Collared Scops Owl. When we both got up a few hours later, we checked that our baggage was ready for collection later, and set out to repeat a walk that we had done with Hari the previous day. We saw Blue-throated Barbet, Spotted Doves, Hume's Leaf Warbler, Grey-Headed Woodpecker (one of the dark-naped subspecies) and Lesser Yellownap. We heard Asian Koel and Common Hawk-Cuckoo. We also heard Crested Laughingthrushes: I want to give a belated shout-out for these brilliant birds. Whenever we heard them, they made me smile. When there is a group of them, their "laughing" sounds like the happy chuckles of a gang of mischievous goblins! And they look amazing too!

The mountains were showing again and, over breakfast, we chatted to the head honcho about the mysteriously absent Annapurna 1. "But it's there," he said, pointing across at the ridge to the right of Annapurna South. We squinted. The ridge looked exactly as it had the day before. We frowned. Seeing our puzzlement, he set about explaining, with much pointing and gesturing, that one of the small bumps on that ridge was not a part of the ridge. Rather, it was the summit of Annapurna 1 peeking over the ridge. Even through binoculars it was hard to see that bump as anything other than part of the ridge. I suspected that, if a few metres of snow melted off the summit, it wouldn't be visible at all.

It was time to say our goodbyes to the staff who had looked after us so well, with beer, cheese on toast, good humour and professional courtesy. As we walked down the steps at the front of the lodge we turned and looked

in through the front door and out through the back door and, beyond that, to Machapuchare, perfectly framed by the two, which was doubtless the deliberate intent of the architectural genius who designed it.

By way of contrast, a short time later we were dropped off at the end of a bridge over a grubby, littered river. We checked it out of course and, in spite of its unprepossessing look, we saw a White-capped Redstart and a Plumbeous Water Redstart feeding its young! From the other end of the bridge, we saw a couple of Rose-ringed Parakeets, before we turned up a path into a big park called Rani Ban Forest. This is where we would spend the morning. It was a fine place, with gardens, open woodland and denser forest.

We quickly saw a few Crimson Sunbirds, a Grey-hooded Warbler, Common Tailorbird and several Grey Treepies, and we heard at least one Green Magpie, which we spent a while trying to lure into view. We also saw several Blue Whistling Thrushes in the same area. During the morning we saw four Asian Barred Owlets, which mostly showed pretty well, and from a viewpoint over the nearby lake, we saw Great Barbet, Hair-crested Drongos and Himalayan and White-rumped Vultures. A Rhesus Macaque strode confidently towards us down the path we were climbing, then climbed a tree and sat on a branch directly overhead.

After a stiff climb, on a flat promontory near the top of the ridge, we saw several Himalayan Black-lored Tits, Cinereous Tit, Grey-headed Canary-flycatcher, and another Green Magpie. The path levelled out, still in fairly dense woodland, and, as we began to descend, we saw Velvet-fronted and Chestnut-bellied Nuthatches, a Lesser Yellownap and Himalayan Flameback. Soon the trees began to thin out and we emerged into blazing sunshine, and returned across the bridge to the edge of town, looking for somewhere to kill time while we waited for our lift to the airport. We had got no new ticks, but it had been an enjoyable morning.

We found a little café and sat on a roof terrace, drinking beer and reflecting on what had been an amazing birding experience over the last eleven days. As we did so, Black Kites cruised past at eye-level, and Barn Swallows swooped around the terrace. All too soon, our lift arrived and we checked our luggage was safely on board before saying goodbye to Hari. In no time at all, we were stepping into baggage reclaim in Kathmandu. We were met there by none other than Suchit, and after exchanging *namastes*, we wasted no time telling him about the White-throated Needletails. At first, he seemed a little dubious and wanted to make sure we hadn't seen Silver-backed Needletail, so we showed him the picture we had taken of the back of Hari's camera and the debate was settled. We took his initial doubts to indicate that the sighting was even more special than we already thought it was.

Suchit accompanied us back to the Hotel Royal Singi, where he introduced us to the guy who was organising tomorrow's helicopter flight to Hotel Everest View, where we hoped Everest would be more forthcoming than the Annapurna range had been. We also hoped to be able to spot some high-altitude birds in the hotel grounds while we were there! There was always some doubt about whether the flight would take place, as it was dependent upon there being enough passengers to make it cost effective. But it looked like it was going ahead. Arrangements were made to pick us up in the morning: we said our last goodbye to Suchit, and retired to our room for a siesta.

Later in the afternoon, we made our way down to the open terrace and bar and sat drinking beer until it was time for dinner. A Tree Sparrow flew about nearby, and dozens of Cattle Egrets flew over on their way to roost. Hundreds of Black Kites circled above in a number of kettles, and House Swifts scooted through.

Lying in bed, about to go to sleep, I decided to have a quick look at my emails and it's a good job I did. The helicopter flight had been cancelled. Some of the other passengers had dropped out at the last minute due to travel issues, so we had been moved onto an Everest plane flight instead. We always knew this was a possibility, but finding out so late in the day was disappointing to say the least. We had been looking forward to seeing Everest without anything getting in the way, like a thick plastic airplane window. We wanted to breathe the thin air and experience being right among the highest mountains in the world, not to mention the potential for a few extra, high-altitude ticks. But it was not to be.

Day 14

Friday 3rd April

We were picked up early and taken to the airport, not really knowing exactly what to expect. How big would the plane be? How close would we get to the mountains? Would it be possible to take decent pictures through the window? It turned out that the flights use a standard internal flight-sized aircraft, with around seventy seats. But there are all similarities with a normal internal flight. For starters, only window seats are available. The idea is that the plane flies east along the foothills of the Himalayas and everyone seated in a window seat on the left of the plane gets a view of the mountains. It then turns around and flies west (somehow avoiding the second plane that is following on behind) and those seated on the right-hand side get their turn. That's the theory. In practice, despite being warned of the need to keep the load balanced, lots of people on the right (me included) moved across to the left on the outward leg, and vice versa on the return leg.

Anyway, we took off and initially could see nothing for the mist and cloud, but eventually we climbed above all that, and suddenly there they were. It was never going to match up to the cancelled helicopter flight, but we had to admit that it was a really impressive alternative.

Everyone had been issued with a rather cartoony illustration of the skyline with key peaks named, but it is difficult to reconcile reality with the map, especially as the angles change with the progress of the plane. But the cabin crew were good, moving up and down the "live" side and pointing out the major peaks, which made it a little easier to keep track. We managed good views of, among others, Gaurishankar (7134m), Melungtse (7181m), Chukyima Go (6258m), Pigferago (6620m), Numbur (6957m), Cho-oyu (8201m), Pumori (7261m), Nuptse (7855m), Everest (8849m), Lhotse (8516m), Chamlang (7319m) and Makalu (8463m). I even caught a brief glimpse of Kanchanjunga (8586m) as the plane turned. It's not often you'll see five 8000m peaks in under an hour!

We had the rest of the day and another night in Kathmandu before flying home, so in the afternoon we did touristy things like shopping for souvenirs and eating a burger in a nice cafe with a rooftop terrace. We saw a single Flying Fox fly past the hotel as it went dark and we finished off at The Hard Rock Cafe, where I had my second burger of the day.

Day 15

Saturday 4th April

In the morning, I had a close encounter with an inquisitive House Crow on the fire escape next to our room, the last notable birding encounter of the trip.

We spent a long layover in Delhi airport before catching our flight back to Birmingham. It had been a fantastic trip and the opportunity of a lifetime for me. I got 224 lifers and several new subspecies, not to mention the new animals and butterflies. Even Gavin, who has birded all over the world managed to get 142 new birds!

Thank you to Naturetrek for finding a way to get us there, and for designing a tour that delivered so many highlights. Thanks to all the accommodation staff and drivers who looked after us along the way. Thanks to MP and Su-per-man for their help and especial thanks to our main guides, Suchit and Hari, whose knowledge, skills, patience and enthusiasm were critical to our enjoyment.

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Species lists

Birds (H=heard only)

Common name	Scientific name	March - April 2026											
		23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	1	2	3
Lesser Whistling Duck	<i>Dendrocygna javanica</i>		100+		25								
Cotton Pygmy Goose	<i>Nettapus coromandelianus</i>		18+										
Bar-headed Goose	<i>Anser indicus</i>			5									
Ruddy Shelduck	<i>Tadorna ferruginea</i>		✓				150+	4					
Red-crested Pochard	<i>Netta rufina</i>			4									
Ferruginous Duck	<i>Aythya nyroca</i>		✓										
Common Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>		✓										
Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>		1	✓									
Garganey	<i>Spatula querquedula</i>		100+	✓									
Northern Shoveler	<i>Spatula clypeata</i>		6	6									
Gadwall	<i>Mareca strepera</i>		30	60									
Eurasian Wigeon	<i>Mareca penelope</i>			✓									
Northern Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>		3	10									
Green-winged Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>		5	9									
Kalij Pheasant	<i>Lophura leucomelanos</i>									4			
Indian Peafowl	<i>Pavo cristatus</i>					H	3+	✓	H				
Red Junglefowl	<i>Gallus gallus</i>		H	H		H	4+	6+	H	2	3	3	
Swamp Francolin	<i>Ortygornis gularis</i>			3	3								
Black Francolin	<i>Francolinus francolinus asiae</i>			1	1		1						
Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis albescens</i>		1+	1+	H								
Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>		2										
Greater Coucal	<i>Centropus sinensis</i>		3	1+	✓	1	H	H	H	H	4		
Lesser Coucal	<i>Centropus bengalensis</i>			2		H	H	H	1				
Green-billed Malkoha	<i>Phaenicophaeus tristis</i>							1	1		3		
Asian Koel	<i>Eudynamis scolopaceus</i>		H	4	✓	1	H	H	1	1	1	H	
Fork-tailed Drongo-Cuckoo	<i>Surniculus dicruroides</i>							1					
Large Hawk-Cuckoo	<i>Hierococcyx sparveroides</i>		H							1			
Common Hawk-Cuckoo	<i>Hierococcyx varius</i>		2	H	✓	H	H	H	1	H	H		
Indian Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus micropterus</i>						1	1	H				

		March - April 2026											
Common name	Scientific name	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	1	2	3
Himalayan Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus saturatus</i>	H											
Common Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus bakeri</i>			1	1			1	H	✓	H		
Spotted Dove	<i>Spilopelia chinensis</i>	1	1+	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Red Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia tranquebarica</i>		✓		2			1					
Oriental Turtle Dove	<i>Streptopelia orientalis</i>	✓							1	2	4		
Ashy Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba pulchricollis</i>										20		
Common Woodpigeon	<i>Columba columbus casiotis</i>									20	50	16	
Common Emerald Dove	<i>Chalcophaps indica</i>							4					
Orange-breasted Green Pigeon	<i>Treron bicinctus</i>							3					
Ashy-headed Green Pigeon	<i>Treron phayrei</i>							2					
Yellow-footed Green Pigeon	<i>Treron phoenicopterus</i>				2			1					
Wedge-tailed Green Pigeon	<i>Treron sphenurus</i>										3		
Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>		1	✓	✓								
Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>		1										
Purple Swampphen	<i>Porphyrio porphyrio poliocephalus</i>		✓	✓	✓								
White-breasted Waterhen	<i>Amauornis phoenicurus</i>		1	2	✓								
Ruddy-breasted Crake	<i>Zapornia fusca</i>					H							
Brown Crake	<i>Zapornia akool</i>						1	3					
Indian Stone-curlew	<i>Burhinus indicus</i>			3									
Pied Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>			5									
Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>		5										
Pacific Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis fulva</i>			200									
Little Ringed Plover	<i>Thinornis dubius</i>		4	✓			✓						
River Lapwing	<i>Vanellus duvaucelii</i>			2			✓						
Yellow-wattled Lapwing	<i>Vanellus malabaricus</i>		2	15+									
Grey-headed Lapwing	<i>Vanellus cinereus</i>		15										
Red-wattled Lapwing	<i>Vanellus indicus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		
Pheasant-tailed Jacana	<i>Hydrophasianus chirurgus</i>		2										
Bronze-winged Jacana	<i>Metopidius indicus</i>		✓	2	✓								
Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>		1	1	1		2						
Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>		2	1			1				1		
Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>		4+										

Common name	Scientific name	March - April 2026											
		23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	1	2	3
Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>		✓				2						
Temminck's Stint	<i>Calidris temminckii</i>		3	8									
Indian Courser	<i>Cursorius coromandelicus</i>			4									
Small Pratincole	<i>Glareola lactea</i>		50+				✓						
Pallas's Gull	<i>Ichthyaeetus ichthyaeetus</i>		4				1						
Asian Openbill	<i>Anastomus oscitans</i>		2	6	1	1		2					
Lesser Adjutant	<i>Leptoptilos javanicus</i>		3	18	2	1	1	3					
Black Stork	<i>Ciconia nigra</i>			1									
Asian Woolly-necked Stork	<i>Ciconia episcopus</i>						3						
Oriental Darter	<i>Anhinga melanogaster</i>		✓				3	✓	✓				
Little Cormorant	<i>Microcarbo niger</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>		4	3									
Red-naped Ibis	<i>Pseudibis papillosa</i>		1	20	8	2	✓	✓	✓				
Black-headed Ibis	<i>Threskiornis melanocephalus</i>		18	5	6								
Black Bittern	<i>Botaurus flavicollis</i>				1								
Cinnamon Bittern	<i>Botaurus cinnamomeus</i>				1+								
Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	1	
Black-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>		16+	✓				✓					
Little Heron	<i>Butorides atricapilla</i>			1									
Indian Pond Heron	<i>Ardeola grayii</i>		✓	6	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba modesta</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
Medium Egret	<i>Ardea intermedia</i>		8	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					
Eastern Cattle Egret	<i>Ardea coromanda</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea manilensis</i>		✓	2	2								
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>		3	1									
Large-tailed Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus macrurus</i>					H	H	H	H				
Savanna Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus affinis</i>						1	H	H				
Crested Treeswift	<i>Hemiprocne coronata</i>						2	3					
White-throated Needletail	<i>Hirundapus caudacutus</i>									2			
White-rumped Spinetail	<i>Zoonavena sylvatica</i>							7					
Asian Palm Swift	<i>Cypsiurus balasiensis</i>			✓		2	2			5			
Alpine Swift	<i>Tachymarpis melba nubifugus</i>					10+				✓			

		March - April 2026											
Common name	Scientific name	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	1	2	3
House Swift	<i>Apus nipalensis</i>	6+				✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	
Brown Boobook	<i>Ninox scutulata</i>			H	1		H	H	H				
Spotted Owlet	<i>Athene brama</i>		H	1	3	H	1	2	2				
Asian Barred Owlet	<i>Glaucidium cuculoides</i>	1								H		4	
Jungle Owlet	<i>Glaucidium radiatum</i>		1	3			H	1	H				
Indian Scops Owl	<i>Otus bakkamoena</i>		2										
Collared Scops Owl	<i>Otus lettia</i>											H	
Brown Fish Owl	<i>Ketupa zeylonensis</i>						1						
Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>		1	3	5		2						
Black-winged Kite	<i>Elanus caeruleus</i>		1	3		1							
Egyptian Vulture	<i>Neophron percnopterus</i>								1		1		
Crested Honey Buzzard	<i>Pernis ptilorhynchus</i>			3	3			5					
Red-headed Vulture	<i>Sarcogyps calvus</i>								1	3			
Cinereous Vulture	<i>Aegypius monachus</i>			✓					2	3	4		
White-rumped Vulture	<i>Gyps bengalensis</i>			2					3	✓	✓	2	
Himalayan Vulture	<i>Gyps himalayensis</i>	1		50					✓	✓	✓	✓	
Slender-billed Vulture	<i>Gyps tenuirostris</i>			1									
Crested Serpent Eagle	<i>Spilornis cheela</i>	1						3					
Booted Eagle	<i>Hieraaetus pennatus</i>		2	1					✓		2		
Steppe Eagle	<i>Aquila nipalensis</i>									6	10		
Eastern Imperial Eagle	<i>Aquila heliaca</i>								4				
Crested Goshawk	<i>Lophospiza trivirgata</i>							1					
Besra	<i>Tachyspiza virgata</i>		1							1	1		
Shikra	<i>Tachyspiza badia</i>		2	1	1	1		1					
Western Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>			1									
Black Kite	<i>Milvus migrans</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Grey-headed Fish Eagle	<i>Ichthyophaga ichthyaetus</i>							2					
White-eyed Buzzard	<i>Butastur teesa</i>		1	2		1			1				
Long-legged Buzzard	<i>Buteo rufinus</i>			1									
Common Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops longirostris</i>		9	✓	2	1	1	1					
Great Hornbill	<i>Buceros bicornis</i>							4					
Indian Grey Hornbill	<i>Ocyrceros birostris</i>		1	1	10	4							

Common name	Scientific name	March - April 2026											
		23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	1	2	3
Oriental Pied Hornbill	<i>Anthracoceros albirostris</i>							1					
Indian Roller	<i>Coracias benghalensis</i>		1	3		2	1	1					
Oriental Dollarbird	<i>Eurystomus orientalis</i>							1					
Blue-bearded Bee-eater	<i>Nyctyornis athertoni</i>						1	1	2				
Chestnut-headed Bee-eater	<i>Merops leschenaulti</i>					2		✓	2		2		
Asian Green Bee-eater	<i>Merops orientalis</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					
Blue-tailed Bee-eater	<i>Merops philippinus</i>		✓	✓									
Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>		H				1	1	1				
Pied Kingfisher	<i>Ceryle rudis</i>		3	2	1	1	1	1					
Stork-billed Kingfisher	<i>Pelargopsis capensis</i>				3								
White-throated Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon smyrnensis</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	5	✓	
Coppersmith Barbet	<i>Psilopogon haemacephalus</i>	1		1	1	1	1	H	H				
Great Barbet	<i>Psilopogon virens</i>	1							2	3	✓		
Lineated Barbet	<i>Psilopogon lineatus</i>			2		H	1	1					
Golden-throated Barbet	<i>Psilopogon franklinii</i>	1											
Blue-throated Barbet	<i>Psilopogon asiaticus</i>	1	1	H	2	H			3	6	✓	1	
Eurasian Wryneck	<i>Jynx torquilla</i>			1									
Rufous Woodpecker	<i>Micropternus brachyurus</i>							2					
Himalayan Flameback	<i>Dinopium shorii</i>						1					1	
Black-rumped Flameback	<i>Dinopium benghalense</i>		2	2	2								
Lesser Yellownape	<i>Picus chlorolophus</i>				1		1		1	1	1	2	
Streak-throated Woodpecker	<i>Picus xanthopygaeus</i>						1						
Grey-headed Woodpecker	<i>Picus canus</i>	H					H	2			H	1	
Greater Yellownape	<i>Chrysophlegma flavinucha</i>	1								1			
Greater Flameback	<i>Chrysocolaptes guttacristatus</i>					1	2						
Grey-capped Pygmy Woodpecker	<i>Yungipicus canicapillus</i>					1	1	1					
Fulvous-breasted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos macei</i>				3	H	✓	1					
Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>			✓									
Alexandrine Parakeet	<i>Psittacula eupatria</i>	3		1		1	1	2					
Rose-ringed Parakeet	<i>Psittacula krameri</i>	1	1		1	✓	1	1	✓			✓	
Plum-headed Parakeet	<i>Psittacula cyanocephala</i>		6		1	3	1	✓	2	1	H		
Red-breasted Parakeet	<i>Psittacula alexandri</i>							6					

Common name	Scientific name	March - April 2026											
		23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	1	2	3
Long-tailed Minivet	<i>Pericrocotus ethologus</i>	1								2			
Scarlet Minivet	<i>Pericrocotus flammeus</i>							4	2	✓	✓		
Rosy Minivet	<i>Pericrocotus roseus</i>							✓					
Indian Cuckooshrike	<i>Coracina macei</i>		1	3	✓	✓	2	2					
Black-winged Cuckooshrike	<i>Lalage melaschistos</i>		1					2	1		1		
Ashy Woodswallow	<i>Artamus fuscus</i>					1	2						
Common Iora	<i>Aegithina tiphia</i>			H			2	✓					
Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrike	<i>Hemipus picatus</i>							1					
Large Woodshrike	<i>Tephrodornis virgatus</i>							6					
Common Woodshrike	<i>Tephrodornis pondicerianus</i>						1	✓					
White-bellied Erpornis	<i>Erpornis zantholeuca</i>							2					
Maroon Oriole	<i>Oriolus traillii</i>	1							3	✓	H		
Black-hooded Oriole	<i>Oriolus xanthornus</i>		1	✓	✓	✓	1	1					
Indian Golden Oriole	<i>Oriolus kundoo</i>				3		1	2					
White-throated Fantail	<i>Rhipidura albicollis</i>	1			1								
Bronzed Drongo	<i>Dicrurus aeneus</i>	1					2	✓					
Lesser Racket-tailed Drongo	<i>Dicrurus remifer</i>	1											
Greater Racket-tailed Drongo	<i>Dicrurus paradiseus</i>			1			1	✓					
Hair-crested Drongo	<i>Dicrurus hottentottus</i>					1	2	2	3		3	✓	
White-bellied Drongo	<i>Dicrurus caerulescens</i>							2					
Ashy Drongo	<i>Dicrurus leucophaeus</i>	1	1				1		1	✓	✓		
Black Drongo	<i>Dicrurus macrocercus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
Indian Paradise Flycatcher	<i>Terpsiphone paradisi</i>							1					
Bay-backed Shrike	<i>Lanius vittatus</i>			3									
Long-tailed Shrike	<i>Lanius schach</i>			2	2	✓	1		✓	✓			
Brown Shrike	<i>Lanius cristatus</i>		1	1									
Grey-backed Shrike	<i>Lanius tephronotus</i>			2			1						
Rufous Treepie	<i>Dendrocitta vagabunda</i>		1	1	✓	1	1	✓	H				
Grey Treepie	<i>Dendrocitta formosae</i>								H	✓		✓	
Common Green Magpie	<i>Cissa chinensis</i>								H		1	2	
Red-billed Blue Magpie	<i>Urocissa erythroryncha</i>	4							1	✓	✓	✓	
Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>	2											

		March - April 2026											
Common name	Scientific name	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	1	2	3
House Crow	<i>Corvus splendens</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Large-billed Crow	<i>Corvus macrorhynchos</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Grey-headed Canary-flycatcher	<i>Culicicapa ceylonensis</i>	H							2			1	
Yellow-browed Tit	<i>Sylviparus modestus</i>	4											
Green-backed Tit	<i>Parus monticolus</i>	4								1			
Cinereous Tit	<i>Parus cinereus</i>			2	H		1	1	1		2	1	
Himalayan Black-lored Tit	<i>Machlolophus xanthogenys</i>	3							2			✓	
Ashy-crowned Sparrow-Lark	<i>Eremopterix griseus</i>		8										
Bengal Bush Lark	<i>Plocealauda assamica</i>			✓			1						
Oriental Skylark	<i>Alauda gulgula</i>		✓	✓									
Sand Lark	<i>Alaudala raytal</i>		3										
Common Tailorbird	<i>Orthotomus sutorius</i>		2	✓	✓		✓		H	✓	✓	✓	
Himalayan Prinia	<i>Prinia crinigera</i>										1		
Grey-crowned Prinia	<i>Prinia cinereocapilla</i>							1					
Grey-breasted Prinia	<i>Prinia hodgsonii</i>						4	2					
Yellow-bellied Prinia	<i>Prinia flaviventris</i>						2	1					
Ashy Prinia	<i>Prinia socialis</i>						2	H					
Plain Prinia	<i>Prinia inornata</i>		H				1	H					
Zitting Cisticola	<i>Cisticola juncidis cursitans</i>		1	1	H	1	4						
Thick-billed Warbler	<i>Arundinax aedon</i>				1								
Grey-throated Martin	<i>Riparia chinensis</i>			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>		✓	✓					✓	✓	✓	✓	
Eastern Red-rumped Swallow	<i>Cecropis daurica</i>		5	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	
Black-throated Bushtit	<i>Aegithalos concinnus</i>	2											
Pale-footed Bush Warbler	<i>Hemitesia pallidipes</i>							1					
Grey-bellied Tesia	<i>Tesia cyaniventer</i>	1											
Black-faced Warbler	<i>Abroscopus schisticeps</i>	4											
Buff-barred Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus pulcher</i>	1							1	1			
Ashy-throated Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus maculipennis</i>	4											
Hume's Leaf Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus humei</i>	✓		✓	H		✓		✓	✓		✓	
Lemon-rumped Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus chloronotus</i>	1											
Tickell's Leaf Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus affinis</i>		2	1	1								

Common name	Scientific name	March - April 2026											
		23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	1	2	3
Dusky Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus fuscatus</i>				H	H							
Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>				2		2						
Whistler's Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus whistleri</i>								1				
Greenish Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochiloides</i>			1	1		H	1	1				
Blyth's Leaf Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus reguloides</i>	1											
Grey-hooded Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus xanthoschistos</i>	6							✓	✓	✓	✓	
Black-crested Bulbul	<i>Rubigula flaviventris</i>							1					
Red-whiskered Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus jocosus</i>		✓	2	✓	3	1	✓	✓				
Red-vented Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus cafer</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Himalayan Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus leucogenys</i>								✓	✓	✓	1	
Ashy Bulbul	<i>Hemixos flava</i>								1		2		
Mountain Bulbul	<i>Ixos mcclellandii</i>	1											
Black Bulbul	<i>Hypsipetes leucocephalus</i>	1								✓	1		
Yellow-eyed Babbler	<i>Chrysomma sinense</i>							7					
White-browed Fulvetta	<i>Fulvetta vinipectus</i>	1											
Whiskered Yuhina	<i>Yuhina flavicollis</i>									4			
Indian White-eye	<i>Zosterops palpebrosus</i>			1					2	4			
Chestnut-capped Babbler	<i>Timalia pileata</i>					1	2	1					
Pin-striped Tit-Babbler	<i>Mixornis gularis</i>				1		H	H					
White-browed Scimitar Babbler	<i>Pomatorhinus schisticeps</i>							2	H				
Rusty-cheeked Scimitar Babbler	<i>Erythrogenys erythrogenys</i>	H								H			
Indian Grassbird	<i>Graminicola bengalensis</i>						1						
Puff-throated Babbler	<i>Pellorneum ruficeps</i>							✓	1				
Nepal Fulvetta	<i>Alcippe nipalensis</i>	4											
Striated Laughingthrush	<i>Grammatoptila striata</i>	1											
Chestnut-crowned Laughingthrush	<i>Trochalopteron erythrocephalum</i>	1											
Streaked Laughingthrush	<i>Trochalopteron lineatum</i>	2											
Rufous Sibia	<i>Heterophasia capistrata</i>		7										
Bar-throated Minla	<i>Actinodura strigula</i>	H											
Slender-billed Babbler	<i>Argya longirostris</i>							2					
Jungle Babbler	<i>Argya striata</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					
Striated Babbler	<i>Argya earlei</i>						7	✓					

		March - April 2026											
Common name	Scientific name	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	1	2	3
Spiny Babbler	<i>Turdoides nipalensis</i>									2			
White-crested Laughingthrush	<i>Garrulax leucolophus</i>								✓	H	✓		
Rufous-chinned Laughingthrush	<i>Ianthocincla rufogularis</i>	2											
White-throated Laughingthrush	<i>Pterorhinus albogularis</i>	25											
Velvet-fronted Nuthatch	<i>Sitta frontalis</i>						4		3			1	
White-tailed Nuthatch	<i>Sitta himalayensis</i>	7											
Chestnut-bellied Nuthatch	<i>Sitta cinnamoventris</i>						✓	✓			1	✓	
Sikkim Treecreeper	<i>Certhia discolor</i>	1											
Common Hill Myna	<i>Gracula religiosa</i>					H	1	✓					
Indian Pied Myna	<i>Gracupica contra</i>		✓	✓	1	1	✓	1	✓				
Chestnut-tailed Starling	<i>Sturnia malabarica</i>		2	3			✓	✓		4			
Bank Myna	<i>Acridotheres ginginianus</i>						5						
Common Myna	<i>Acridotheres tristis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Jungle Myna	<i>Acridotheres fuscus</i>			2			2	✓	✓	✓		2	
Oriental Magpie-Robin	<i>Copsychus saularis</i>	2		7		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	1	
White-rumped Shama	<i>Copsychus malabaricus</i>						2	✓					
Dark-sided Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa sibirica</i>			1									
Rufous-bellied Niltava	<i>Niltava sundara</i>										2		
Large Niltava	<i>Niltava grandis</i>	H									1		
Verditer Flycatcher	<i>Eumyias thalassinus</i>	2					1		1	4	✓		
Pale-chinned Flycatcher	<i>Cyornis poliogenys</i>							4					
Blue-throated Blue Flycatcher	<i>Cyornis rubeculoides</i>								2		1	2	
Himalayan Rubythroat	<i>Calliope pectoralis</i>										2		
Blue Whistling Thrush	<i>Myophonus caeruleus</i>	1							1	4	✓		
Ultramarine Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula superciliaris</i>								2		1		
Red-breasted Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula parva</i>		1										
Taiga Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula albicilla</i>			H	2		H	H					
Himalayan Bluetail	<i>Tarsiger rufilatus</i>	1											
White-capped Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus leucocephalus</i>										2	1	
Plumbeous Water Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus fuliginosus</i>										10	2	
Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros rufiventris</i>		✓	✓	✓	1	1	✓	1				
Grey Bush Chat	<i>Saxicola ferreus</i>	1											

		March - April 2026											
Common name	Scientific name	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	1	2	3
Pied Bush Chat	<i>Saxicola caprata</i>					1	6	2	1				
White-tailed Stonechat	<i>Saxicola leucurus</i>						✓	1					
Siberian Stonechat	<i>Saxicola maurus</i>		5	✓	1	1	✓	✓		3	✓		
Fire-breasted Flowerpecker	<i>Dicaeum ignipectus</i>	4											
Streaked Spiderhunter	<i>Arachnothera magna</i>							H					
Black-throated Sunbird	<i>Aethopyga saturata</i>	1											
Green-tailed Sunbird	<i>Aethopyga nipalensis</i>	4											
Crimson Sunbird	<i>Aethopyga siparaja</i>								3	4	✓	✓	
Purple Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris asiaticus</i>		3	2	✓				1				
Orange-bellied Leafbird	<i>Chloropsis hardwickii</i>									1			
Baya Weaver	<i>Ploceus philippinus</i>						✓	30					
Scaly-breasted Munia	<i>Lonchura punctulata</i>						3						
White-rumped Munia	<i>Lonchura striata</i>										2		
Maroon-backed Accentor	<i>Prunella immaculata</i>	1											
Yellow-throated Sparrow	<i>Gymnoris xanthocollis</i>							1					
Eurasian Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus malaccensis</i>	✓										1	
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus indicus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Citrine Wagtail	<i>Motacilla citreola</i>		✓	✓			✓						
White-browed Wagtail	<i>Motacilla maderaspatensis</i>		✓				✓	✓			✓		
White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>			10			1						
Richard's Pipit	<i>Anthus richardi</i>			✓									
Paddyfield Pipit	<i>Anthus rufulus</i>		✓	✓			1	✓					
Olive-backed Pipit	<i>Anthus hodgsoni</i>			20	✓		11				✓		
Rosy Pipit	<i>Anthus roseatus</i>						4						
Dark-breasted Rosefinch	<i>Procarduelis nipalensis</i>	1											
Rock Bunting	<i>Emberiza cia hemingorum</i>									1			

Mammals

H=heard		March - April 2026											
Common name	Scientific name	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	1	2	3
Rhesus Macaque	<i>Macaca mulatta</i>	8			2	✓	2	✓			2	1	
Terai Sacred Langur	<i>Semnopithecus hector</i>			1				20					
Orange-bellied Himalayan Squirrel	<i>Dremomys lokriah</i>	✓							✓		✓	✓	
Indian Flying Fox	<i>Pteropus medius</i>	6	1										1
Sloth Bear	<i>Melursus ursinus</i>							2					
Golden Jackal	<i>Canis aureus</i>				1								
Indian Grey Mongoose	<i>Urva edwardsii</i>				5							2	
Greater One-horned Rhinoceros	<i>Rhinoceros unicornis</i>						8	12+					
Ganges River Dolphin	<i>Platanista gangetica</i>			4									
Nilgai	<i>Boselaphus tragocamelus</i>			3	1								
Asian Wild Buffalo	<i>Bubalus arnee</i>			✓	11								
Chital	<i>Axis axis</i>						300	✓					
Hog Deer	<i>Axis porcinus</i>				1		15	✓					
Sambar	<i>Rusa unicolor</i>							H					
Eurasian Wild Pig	<i>Sus scrofa</i>							5					

Reptiles

		March - April 2026											
Common name	Scientific name	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	1	2	3
Gharial	<i>Gavialis gangeticus</i>							7	4				
Marsh Mugger	<i>Crocodylus palustris</i>							2	2				
House Gecko	<i>Hemidactylus frenatus</i>		H	H	H								

Butterflies

Common name	Scientific name	March - April 2026											
		23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	1	2	3
Tailed Jay	<i>Graphium agamemnon</i>					✓							
Common Windmill	<i>Atrophaneura polyeuctes</i>			✓									
Paris Peacock	<i>Papilio paris</i>					✓							
Common Mormon	<i>Papilio polytes</i>					✓							
Redbase Jezebel	<i>Delias pasithoe</i>				✓								
Spotless Grass Yellow	<i>Eurema laeta</i>					✓							
Dark Clouded Yellow	<i>Colias fieldii</i>					✓							
a brimstone	<i>Gonepteryx</i> sp.			✓									
Tailed Judy	<i>Archigenes neophron</i>					✓							
Purple Sapphire	<i>Heliophorus epicles</i>					✓							
Common Pierrot	<i>Castalius rosimon</i>			✓									
Long-tailed Blue	<i>Lampides boeticus</i>				✓								
Dark Grass Blue	<i>Zizeeria karsandra</i>			✓									
Glassy Tiger	<i>Parantica aglea</i>				✓								
Blue Tiger	<i>Tirumala limniace</i>			✓									
Plain Tiger	<i>Danaus chrysippus</i>			✓									
Common Tiger	<i>Danaus genutia</i>			✓									
Common Crow	<i>Euploea core</i>				✓								
Red Lacewing	<i>Cethosia biblis</i>					✓							
Indian Fritillary	<i>Argynnis hyperbius</i>					✓							
Common Mapwing	<i>Cyrestis thyodamas</i>					✓							
Common Sailor	<i>Neptis hylas</i>					✓							
Orange Oakleaf	<i>Kallima inachus</i>					✓							
Grey Pansy	<i>Junonia atlites</i>			✓									
Lemon Pansy	<i>Junonia lemonias</i>					✓							
Chocolate Pansy	<i>Junonia iphita</i>					✓							
Indian Red Admiral	<i>Vanessa indica</i>					✓							
Large Tortoiseshell	<i>Nymphalis xanthomelas</i>		✓										
Dark Grass Brown	<i>Orsotriaena medus</i>					✓							
Common Four Ring	<i>Ypthima huebneri</i>					✓							

		March - April 2026											
Common name	Scientific name	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	1	2	3
a bush brown	<i>Mycalesis</i> sp.					✓							

Moths

		March - April 2026											
Common name	Scientific name	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	1	2	3
Vapourer (larva)	<i>Orgyia antiqua</i>				✓								
a geometrid	<i>Idaea</i> sp.					✓							
Passenger	<i>Disgonia algira</i>					✓							

Damselflies & dragonflies

		March - April 2026											
Common name	Scientific name	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	1	2	3
Coromandel Marsh Dart	<i>Ceriagrion coromandelianum</i>			✓									
Asian Amberwing	<i>Brachythemis contaminata</i>		✓										
Broad Scarlet	<i>Crocothemis erythraea</i>			✓									
Variegated Flutterer	<i>Rhyothemis variegata</i>			✓									

Other invertebrates

		March - April 2026											
Common name	Scientific name	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	1	2	3
Red Cotton Bug	<i>Dysdercus cingulatus</i>				✓								
an ant	<i>Pheidole</i> sp. (<i>P. nodus</i> ?)			✓		✓							
a firefly	<i>Lampyridae</i> sp.			✓									
a mosquito	<i>Culicidae</i> sp.			✓	✓								