

# BHUTAN

9 – 28 APRIL 2008

## TOUR REPORT

Awesome. Having considered various adjectives to describe this year's Birdquest tour to Bhutan, that one stands out as being the most succinctly descriptive! I could also begin with just the final figure, 453 species (a tour record), of which 364 species were within the borders of Bhutan. However, dry figures can never tell the story or do justice to the many fantastic and exciting birds that we saw. One of our many memorable highlights was a record total of eight Satyr Tragopans, including the stunning 'bird-of-the-trip' male that loitered on the road in front of the bus for 27 whole minutes! We also found dozens of gorgeous Blood Pheasants and seven Himalayan Monals, a pair of gorgeous Ward's Trogons, a pair of Beautiful Nuthatches chattering from a nearby tree (located after five minutes of searching!), seven species of Wren Babbler including Long-billed and Bar-winged, with prolonged views of two different Sikkim Wedge-billed Babblers. A showy Ludlow's Fulvetta thrilled us, plus we found Grey-headed Bullfinch and Gold-naped Finches. Add to this Jerdon's Baza (possibly the third for the country), five Black-tailed Crake, Ruddy-breasted Crake, Solitary Snipe, Ibisbill, Ashy Woodpigeon, Pin-tailed Green Pigeon, Violet Cuckoo, the second-ever Northern Long-eared Owl for the country, Dark-rumped Swift, Rufous-necked Hornbill (the finest of the five Hornbill species seen), Yellow-rumped Honeyguide, Sapphire and the poorly-known Large Blue Flycatcher, Blue-fronted Blue Robin, four species of Forktail, thirteen species of Laughingthrush, Crimson-faced Liocichla, Coral-billed and Slender-billed Scimitar Babbler, Golden-breasted and Yellow-throated Fulvettas, six species of Parrotbill, Black-headed Shrike-Babbler, Large and Russet Bush-Warblers, Broad-billed Warbler, Himalayan Treecreeper, Yellow-bellied Flowerpecker, Fire-tailed Sunbird, four species of Rosefinch and the lovely Slender-billed Oriole. Crossing into Assam we added Greater Adjutants and Indian Spotted Eagle, and an enforced overnight in Delhi allowed us to see the scarce Sind Sparrow.

We began our birding in Delhi, however not by intention! Druk Air decided to cancel our flight and send us the following day, providing us with a comfortable hotel and enough time to get to Sultanpur. On a rather warm afternoon we strolled around this remarkably rich 'mini-Bharatpur' watching Comb and Indian Spot-billed Ducks, Garganey, Eurasian Spoonbill, Indian Stone Curlew, Indian Grey Hornbills taking food to a nest, a Spotted Owlet that also had with a nest with young, Yellow-footed Green Pigeons, Brown-headed Barbet, Indian Golden Oriole and Large Grey Babblers. In drier areas we saw Yellow-wattled Lapwing, Indian Black Robin, Bay-backed Shrike Wire-tailed Swallow, Indian Bushlark and Ashy-crowned Sparrow Lark. We watched Sarus Cranes basking in the late afternoon sun, and had a great look at a Black Francolin. Migrants were evident in the form of hordes of Rose-coloured Starlings in swirling flocks, and then the real bonus bird of our flight delay appeared - a pair of Sind Sparrows that sat on a fence and chirped to us.

We were woken in the middle of the night for our onward journey, and at dawn boarded our Druk Air flight to Paro in a rather sleepy condition. We were fully awake (unlike some passengers!) when Mount Everest clearly made its appearance on the port bow, and then we were delivered to Bhutan in a prompt fashion. Relieved to have finally arrived, we set about catching up on our birding. A pair of

Black-tailed Crakes that strutted about in a small marsh was our introduction to the wonderful birds awaiting us here, swiftly followed by Rosy Pipits in their breeding pinks, Cinnamon Sparrows, Little Buntings, Grey-backed Shrikes, Himalayan Wagtails and Plumbeous Water Redstarts. We paused for a welcome lunch, then went out and found our first Ibisbill, a confiding bird that was watched at length. A Ruddy-breasted Crake surprised us, as did more Black-taileds, plus we found migrant Citrine Wagtails, Hen Harrier, Hodgson's Redstart, and a couple of Solitary Snipe among several Pintail Snipes lurking in the marsh. We could now be assured that we had finally arrived in the magic kingdom!

A 4am start didn't seem so bad after the previous day, and we headed steeply uphill to the highest pass of the tour, the Chele La. Birds began to appear in the pre-dawn gloom, with a Grey Nightjar that came off the road, a roding Eurasian Woodcock flickered past, and a plump form in a roadside stream bobbed into view to reveal a fine Solitary Snipe casually wading in the cold water. We pressed on higher, screeching to a halt as the first of 25 Blood Pheasants scattered along the roadsides, and howling with pleasure as the first male Himalayan Monal hove into view. We found five of these psychedelic beasts, their breathtaking hues glistening at us in the thin air. We now could begin our al-fresco breakfast, distracted by numerous passerines emerging in the morning sunshine such as the confiding Spotted and Black-faced Laughingthrushes, Blue-fronted Redstart, Plain Mountain Finches, some very visible Collared Grosbeaks and handsome Himalayan White-browed Rosefinches. Walking back down the road we found Black Eagle, Himalayan Red-flanked Bush Robin, Rufous-vented Yuhina, White-browed Fulvetta, Green Shrike-Babbler, Rufous-vented and Grey-crested Tit, Himalayan Treecreeper, Alpine and Rufous-breasted Accentors, gaudy Mrs Gould's and a single male Fire-tailed Sunbird, Spotted Nutcracker and Yellow-billed Blue Magpies. A migrant Booted Eagle passing over the ridge was a tour first.

Taking advantage of a new road to catch up on lost time, we descended from the high altitudes and whizzed along to Thimphu for lunch, then headed up over the Dochu La. Heavy rain in the afternoon slowed our birding somewhat, however we managed to add White-tailed Nuthatch, Yellow-browed Tit, Crimson-breasted Pied Woodpecker and Barred Cuckoo Dove, before heading to Punakha and our next birding stop.

In the warmer lower altitudes of Punakha we started our birding in the early morning along the Po Chu, looking for river specialities. We found several Ibisbills along the boulder-strewn waterways, River Lapwings, plus a quartet of Himalayan Pied Kingfishers, some migrant Eurasian Wigeon joined by a drake Garganey (a scarce bird here), Brown Dipper, Rusty-cheeked Scimitar Babbler and a male Black Redstart. No sign though of my arch-nemesis, the White-bellied Heron! We moved to the noisy riverine forest along the Mo Chu river, where in warm broad-leaved forest we found Mountain Hawk Eagle, Crested Serpent Eagle, a showy Asian Barred Owlet, Square-tailed Drongo Cuckoo, a furtive male Red-headed Trogon, Great and Golden-throated Barbets, Grey-chinned Minivet, Small Niltava, Striated Laughingthrushes, Yellow-vented Warblers, Hair-crested Drongo and our first gorgeous Maroon Orioles. A migrant Yellow-browed Warbler was unusual, newly arrived Dark-sided Flycatchers zipped out from exposed perches and a demure female Slaty-backed Flycatcher skulked in forest thickets. In more open areas we found Paddyfield Pipit, Striated Prinia, Crested Bunting and Grey-headed Starling, and a pair of Kaleej Pheasants gave us a good view as they scuttled off the roadsides.

Heading ever eastwards, we paused to enjoy a pair of Slender-billed Orioles singing from the taller trees near our hotel, and then headed downstream to Wangdi before ascending towards the Pele La through lush forested hillsides. A Common Goral stood on an open slope close to the road, followed soon after by our first Yellow-rumped Honeyguide perched by roadside bees nests. Other birds kept distracting us though, and within a short time we saw Ferruginous Flycatcher, Green-crowned Warbler, Bhutan and Red-headed Laughingthrushes, a male Red-headed Bullfinch, Red Crossbills and Black-breasted

Sunbird. Our progress was further arrested by Wedge-tailed Green Pigeon, Blue-headed Rock Thrushes, Red-tailed Minla, and then slowed to a very definite halt by a staccato cry from the dark mossy forest. Ward's Trogon! We coaxed it upslope, until a male sat in plain view just below our viewpoint, closely followed by a female. Wow! One of the most desired Bhutanese birds; we were treated to the finest of views. More birds kept coming at us as we headed up towards the Pele La, such as Pygmy Blue Flycatcher, Rufous-bellied Niltava, Short-billed Minivet and Rufous-winged Fulvetta, until we reached the top of the pass where lunching was delayed by a Rusty-flanked Trecreeper and our first Stripe-throated Yuhinas, while high in the sky soared Himalayan Vultures and a single Lammergeier. Heading downhill to Tongsa and our night stop, we paused for a roadside coffee and a Pygmy Wren Babbler, before the rain came in signalling an end to the day.

Following a comfortable stay in Tongsa, where a short foray around the town yielded excellent views of Strong-footed Bush Warbler and Streak-breasted Scimitar Babbler, we headed up onto one of the finest high passes along this road, the Yutong La. True to form, our first thrill came in the shape of a flock of Fire-tailed Myzornis, dazzling us as they zipped around the flowers of a Rhododendron. A soft song from a roadside gully revealed a spotty-headed Bar-winged Wren Babbler, and a group of Fulvous Parrotbills played hide-and-seek with us in a patch of bamboo. A Slender-billed Scimitar Babbler came around for a thorough look at us, even hopping onto the roadside, while more Alpine Accentors shuffled along in the dirt. A commotion in the hemlocks drew our attention to a trio of stunning Fire-tailed Sunbirds and a pair of Hoary-throated Barwings, and in a thick stand of bamboo we found Brown Parrotbills and a roosting Northern Long-eared Owl that proved to be just the second record for the country. We also found Hume's and Grey-sided Bush Warblers, before we crossed into 'Magpie-country' and our night stop in the Bumthang valley.

Continuing over the passes and the high road eastwards, as we crossed the Ura-Sheltang La in the early morning we stumbled upon a pair of Himalayan Monals, the male of which perched up on a stump and whistled, a single Blood Pheasant, Whistler's Warbler, Himalayan Red-flanked Bush Robins, Olive-backed Pipit, Dark-rumped Rosefinch and White-winged Grosbeaks. A short way further on we found a very mobile flock of 80 Snow Pigeons, Himalayan Beautiful Rosefinch, plenty of Red-billed Choughs and Oriental Skylarks singing over the upland fields. Pushing on and over the Thrumsing La, we found our only Great Parrotbills of the trip, plus Bar-throated Minla, Lemon-rumped and Grey-faced Leaf Warblers, and our first contact with a Satyr Tragopan male that lurked mostly unseen on a roadside slope. We reached our new home for the next two nights, a well-appointed camp near the village of Sengor. Further forays along the roads brought another lightning view of a male Satyr Tragopan followed by a more leisurely look at a female, while the forests around our camp were home to more Slender-billed Scimitar Babblers, Chestnut-headed Tesia and Chestnut-bellied Rock Thrush, plus we saw a very showy White-browed Shortwing and had a chance meeting with a vocal Large Bush Warbler (such a dry name for a very entertaining little bird!) We saw our only Broad-billed Warbler of the trip, plus Green Shrike Babbler, Grey-sided Bush Warbler, Hoary-throated Barwing, Red-tailed Minla, Rufous-fronted Tit and Common Rosefinches. Our final explorations at these higher altitudes provided our only Scaly-breasted Wren Babbler, Slaty-blue Flycatcher, a Yellow-bellied Flowerpecker and a pair of Darjeeling Pied Woodpeckers at a nest-hole, however the real excitement was a male Satyr Tragopan that appeared on the roadside as we swung around a corner on the steep mountain road. Almost unable to believe our luck at such a clear view, the bird continued feeding on the roadside for a whole 27 minutes! It was positively docile, totally focussed on eating magic berries or whatever it had found there, and didn't shift even when we had to move the bus for oncoming traffic that sailed by unaware of this roadside apparition! Yet our affair with this amazing bird didn't end there, subsequently we saw another four, including a pair had to be almost booted off the road as we walked down it!

We dropped to the lower altitudes of our next camp at Yongkola via the rich middle altitude forests where we found Little Forktail, Scaly Laughingthrushes, Rufous-throated Wren Babbler, Black-headed Shrike Babbler, a displaying Crested Goshawk, Whistling Hawk Cuckoo, Yellow-rumped Honeyguide at a new site, White-spectacled Warbler, and cute Nepal House Martins building their nests on a roadside cliff. Some real gems such as Golden-breasted Fulvettas and Black-throated Parrotbills appeared for some intimate viewing, plus we found a pair of Sapphire Flycatcher, although a Blue-fronted Blue Robin stayed true to form - pouring out his mournful song yet only offering the quickest of glimpses. Lower still we found Blue-bearded Bee-eater, Crimson-faced Liocichla, Golden Babbler, Yellow-throated Fulvetta and Grey-cheeked Warbler. Our camp for the next three nights had a wonderful view of the forested mountainsides, in a peaceful setting below the saddle of a ridge topped with a chorten and prayer flags.

Our time in this area experienced those inexplicable peaks and troughs of bird activity, with one day very unlike the next. Fortunately we had sufficient time to explore all of the corners of this fantastic birding area, and we saw Mountain and Rufous-bellied Hawk Eagles and a surprise Bonelli's Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, Asian Emerald Cuckoo, Bay Woodpecker, Orange-bellied Leafbird, Scarlet Finch, Spot-winged Grosbeak, Maroon Oriole and Common Green Magpie. Our first Rufous-necked Hornbills treated us to a display of a fruit-exchange followed by copulation, plus we saw Grey-chinned Minivets, Striated Bulbul, a lively flock of Cutia, a lone Coral-billed Scimitar Babbler, Rusty-fronted Barwings, White-naped Yuhina, Black-faced Warblers busy with nest material, Black-throated Prinia, furtive Slaty-bellied Tesias, Black-spotted Yellow Tit, Brown-throated Treecreeper, Himalayan Greenfinch, a mobile flock of Tibetan Siskins, vocal Brown Bullfinches and Lesser Racket-tailed Drongos. Flycatchers featured strongly with Little Pied, Ultramarine and Pale Blue all showing well, while Laughingthrushes kept us busy with stunning views of jaywalking Rufous-chinned, and Blue-winged Laughingthrushes defied convention and emerged on a number of occasions for viewing. Grey-sided Laughingthrushes sang sweetly and peeked out of the bushes, while White-crested Laughingthrushes lurked noisily near our camp. Long-billed Wren Babblers were again very tape-shy this year, with just a single unsociable bird shooting in to study us. Very different however was the Sikkim Wedge-billed Babbler, which sang to us enthusiastically from an exposed perch. Both Greater Rufous-headed and Grey-headed Parrotbills were found feeding up in the trees, to make a total of six species seen on this trip! Exploring warmer forest at lower levels before we departed this sylvan wonderland, we found Emerald Dove, Pied Flycatcher Shrike, Ashy and Mountain Bulbuls, Blue-throated Blue Flycatcher and Yellow-vented Warblers carrying nest material. A female Barred Buttonquail surprised us by walking down the middle of the road in the afternoon sun, and a lively flock of Rufous-necked Laughingthrushes perched up in fields of Hemp.

We eventually passed the eponymous village of the Lingmethang Road and climbed to Mongar for a welcome night in a hotel, to ready us for our continuation eastwards. An early departure for the nearby Kori La was delayed almost immediately, by a Spotted Wren Babbler singing with gusto from a scrubby slope - our seventh Wren Babbler of the trip! Progress was further arrested as we peered from the bus at a singing Russet Bush Warbler, and the slopes of the pass were extremely productive with Collared Owllet, gorgeous Rufous-bellied Woodpeckers, abundant Grey-winged Blackbirds, Ultramarine Flycatcher, two pairs of Spotted Forktail, Bhutan Laughingthrush, yet more Slender-billed Scimitar Babblers, Red-billed Leiothrix, another Yellow-bellied Flowerpecker and some gorgeous Gold-naped Finches feeding on strawberry petals on the roadsides. A couple of Ashy Woodpigeons were unusual, as was a migrant Hume's Leaf Warbler. Further explorations along forested tracks flushed Kaleej Pheasants, Brown Bullfinches were in good number and we finally managed to lure in a Yellow-browed Tesia. A drive to our next stop in the town of Tashigang was through pine forest and dry scrub, the only place we found Himalayan Bulbuls plus our second Common Goral of the trip.

Onto the final and yet another exciting leg of our Bhutanese journey, we headed south towards the Indian border finding Wedge-tailed Green Pigeon and Small Cuckoo at the roadsides, White-throated Needletails, Grey-faced Woodpecker, Red-rumped Swallow, Indian Blue Robins singing loudly from the scrub, White-tailed Blue Robin, a final Spotted Laughingthrush, Spot-winged Grosbeaks and a thrilling find of two female Grey-headed Bullfinches consorting with two male Red-headed. Hunting for Ludlow's Fulvetta, we quickly found an obligingly vocal and showy bird, here at the edge of its range. It wasn't over yet however, as we dropped into warmer forests to make an early start in our search for that fabled sprite of the epiphytes, His Holiness the Beautiful Nuthatch. Expecting a long and difficult quest, it was breathtaking to find a pair within minutes of stopping in the core habitat. Two birds put on a stunning display as they flew in to check us and scold from close range, as we stood drinking in their pulchritude. You lucky lucky people! In addition to this, our excellent camp crew had managed to find the best of local camp sites, so we could sit back, relax, and enjoy the wonderful views all around, reflecting on our great fortune with the birds here.

Another day in the rich forests of this South-eastern corner was productive, with Whistling Hawk Cuckoo, Rufous-necked Hornbills, Lesser and Greater Yellownapes, Large Niltava, a pair of Rusty-cheeked Scimitar Babbler, numerous gaudy Silver-eared Mesias, noisy Long-tailed Sibilias, Greater Rufous-headed Parrotbills, Sultan Tits, Streaked Spiderhunter, Himalayan Greenfinch, another flock of Tibetan Siskins, and we found Blue-winged Laughingthrushes to be positively common along the scrappy roadsides. The highlight of the day however was undoubtedly a lengthy viewing of our second Sikkim Wedge-billed Babbler. Making a pilgrimage to the place where I discovered this exotic fellow on our 2000 tour, we quickly found a lively songster in a roadside thicket that put on an outstanding show!

Having been blessed with fine weather up to this point, we had a night of heavy rain that became so loud at one point it became impossible to continue our evening bird-list! In drizzle the following morning we found another Brown-throated Treecreeper, Long-tailed Broadbill and a bedraggled Hobby, but no sign of the Blue-naped Pitta heard calling so cheerily the previous evening. As the damp mists cleared, the Swifts moved in and we saw scores of Himalayan Swiftlets along with Pacific Swifts and White-throated Needletails, yet despite much searching we only saw Beautiful Nuthatch once more. He didn't want to perform an encore for us.

Dropping in altitude yet further, into the foothill forest and the final section of our Bhutanese birding, we found a perched Jerdon's Baza – possibly just the third record for the country. We also saw Oriental Pied, Great Pied and Wreathed Hornbills, a pair of Greater Flamebacks, Large Woodshrikes building a nest, Golden-fronted Leafbird, Black-crested Bulbuls, Red-throated Flycatchers, Rufescent Prinias, Plain Flowerpecker, Common Hill Myna and Bronzed Drongo. Before we descended to our final Hotel in the border town of Samdrup Jongkhar, we found the rare and little known Dark-rumped Swift hawking over the valleys.

Our last day in Bhutan was an eventful one, starting with Black-backed and Slaty-backed Forktails, and we went on to find Oriental Honey Buzzard, Green-billed Malkoha, Peregrine, a fruiting tree with Thick-billed Pin-tailed and Wedge-tailed Green Pigeons, Asian Emerald Cuckoo, Plaintive Cuckoo, Asian Barred Owlet, Asian Palm Swift, Dollarbird, Blue-throated Barbet, Speckled Piculet, Grey-capped Pygmy Woodpecker, Rufous Woodpecker, Scarlet Minivet, Black-naped Blue Monarch, White-throated Bulbul, Common Iora, Striped Tit Babbler, Sultan Tit, Chestnut-bellied Nuthatch, gorgeous Crimson Sunbirds, Asian Fairy Bluebird, White-rumped Munia, Greater Racket-tailed Drongo and a fly-over Violet Cuckoo. Our last al-fresco lunch was interrupted by a low flying Himalayan Vulture, and a migrant Thick-billed Warbler being chased away by a lurid Common Green Magpie. A strange song in the forest drew our attention to a Large Blue Flycatcher, a little known bird that was the leader's only

lifer! Our thirteenth and final Laughingthrush – the Lesser Necklaced, appeared high in the trees before night fell for the last time on our Himalayan birding.

Waiting to cross the border the following morning we added Yellow-footed Green Pigeon to our Bhutan lists, then entered the chaos of the Indian road system. The immigration post at Darranga provided Red Collared Dove and Baya Weaver, then roadside stops as we approached the Brahmaputra River produced the scarce Indian Spotted Eagle, White-rumped Vulture, Oriental Darter, Asian Openbill, Bronze-winged Jacana, Lesser Pied Kingfisher, Purple Heron, Blue-tailed Bee-eater, Bengal Bushlark, Striated Grassbird, Chestnut Munia and Striated Swallow. The main prize held out for a while, until a distant flock of large soaring birds revealed first Lesser, and then the goliath Greater Adjutants, an obliging group that decided to come and glide low over our heads! This was a fitting finale to the fantastic birding we had experienced, and we eventually arrived at Guwahati airport and flew to Delhi, where we paused for a few hours before jetting back to London.

This tour (the eleventh Birdquest to the country) just keeps producing more and more great birds, and continues to provide what is surely the very best in Himalayan birding, combined as it is with the magic of this very special little country. Each year it seems that the ‘unbeatable’ tour of the previous year is exceeded and eclipsed. If that momentum continues, then I cannot wait to return!

## SYSTEMATIC LIST

Species which were heard but not seen are indicated by the symbol (H)

Species which were not personally recorded by the leader are indicated by the symbol (NL)

Species which were recorded only in Delhi are indicated by the symbol (I)

### PHALACROCORACIDAE

Little Cormorant *Phalacrocorax niger* (I): Ten were seen at Sultanpur and another 15 as we crossed Assam.

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*: Just two seen on the rivers around Punakha.

### ANHINGIDAE

Oriental Darter *Anhinga melanogaster* (I): One soaring with Vultures as we crossed Assam.

### ARDEIDAE

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* (I): A single was seen en-route to Guwahati.

Great Egret *Egretta alba* (I): Seen at Sultanpur plus a couple en-route to Guwahati.

Intermediate Egret *Egretta intermedia* (I): At least one at Sultanpur.

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* (I): Ten or so seen at Sultanpur.

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea* (I): A couple were seen close to Guwahati.

Eastern Cattle Egret *Bubulcus coromandus*: Quite a few seen in fields en-route to Sultanpur, some on the way to Guwahati, plus three were seen from our Samdrup Jongkhar hotel (a Bhutan tick dipped by the leader!)

Indian Pond Heron *Ardeola grayii* (I): A few at Sultanpur plus many more en-route to Guwahati.

### CICONIIDAE

Asian Openbill *Anastomus oscitans* (I): Some ten or so were seen in the fields en-route to Guwahati.

Lesser Adjutant *Leptoptilos javanicus* (I): Several encountered in fields en-route to Guwahati, and also a few soaring with the flock of the following.

Greater Adjutant *Leptoptilos dubius* (I): A much-wanted bird and our final prize on this magnificent tour. In the end our cross-Assam travels went to plan, and near Guwahati we found an obliging flock of 15 taking to the air at great range. Luckily for us they then decided to cruise over to the exact point where we were stood on the roadside, passing low over our heads! Awesome!

### THRESKIORNITHIDAE

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* (I): Three seen at Sultanpur.

Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia* (I): A flock of fifteen were seen dozing at Sultanpur.

### DENDROCYGNIDAE

Lesser Whistling Duck *Dendrocygna javanica* (I): About eight were seen en-route to Guwahati.

### ANATIDAE

Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea* (I): Two at Sultanpur were surprisingly the only ones of the tour.

Comb Duck *Sarkidiornis melanotus* (I): A good 20 or so of these at Sultanpur.

Gadwall *Anas strepera*: One seen at Sultanpur, plus a pair of birds on the ponds at Thimphu sewage works.

Eurasian Wigeon *Anas penelope*: A single bird at Sultanpur, two drakes with the above species at Thimphu, and a quartet on the river at Punakha.

- Indian Spot-billed Duck *Anas poecilorhyncha* (I): A good number at Sultanpur with about 15 seen, this is split from the Chinese Spot-billed Duck *A. zonorhyncha*.
- Northern Shoveler *Anas chrypeata* (I): Some 100 birds at Sultanpur.
- Garganey *Anas querquedula*: Thirty or so seen at Sultanpur, then most excitingly we found a drake with a group of Eurasian Wigeon on the river at Punakha. A scarce migrant in Bhutan.
- Common Teal *Anas crecca* (I): Half-a-dozen at Sultanpur.

#### ACCIPITRIDAE

- Jerdon's Baza *Aviceda jerdoni*: An initially perplexing (until the penny dropped!) perched bird at Deothang was scoped at length, probably the third record for the country. We decided it was a female owing to the pallid plumage.
- Oriental Honey-Buzzard *Pernis ptilorhynchus*: A single was seen at Sultanpur, and then a couple more seen near Samdrup Jongkhar that included a very dark individual.
- Black-winged Kite *Elanus caeruleus* (I): Two seen at Sultanpur.
- Black Kite *Milvus migrans* (I): Some were seen around Delhi, and then a few more in Assam, all these birds should refer to the race *govinda*.
- Lammergeier *Gypaetus barbatus*: A single bird whooshed over the ridge on the Pele La, just the second time this has been seen on the tour.
- White-rumped Vulture *Gyps bengalensis* (I): At least ten if not more seen en-route to Guwahati.
- Himalayan Vulture (H Griffon) *Gyps himalayensis*: A good number seen in the Pele La area, then a single on the Yutong La that buzzed low overhead, and a rather low-altitude immature bird was seen cruising below the low cloud and fog at Deothang.
- Crested Serpent Eagle *Spilornis cheela*: We had repeatedly good views of both perched and flying birds throughout Bhutan, with as many as 13 individuals seen.
- Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*: A female flew low over the fields at Paro, the first I have seen in Bhutan in six years.
- Crested Goshawk *Accipiter trivirgatus*: Seen twice along the Lingmethang Road, one of which was displaying nicely with slow deep wingbeats and fluffed out undertail feathers.
- Shikra *Accipiter badius* (I): Four seen at Sultanpur, then another couple along the road to Guwahati.
- Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*: Regularly seen, particularly at higher altitudes where the race *melaschistos* is a breeding bird.
- Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis* (NL): A distant displaying bird was seen at the Pele La.
- Himalayan Buzzard *Buteo burmanicus*: Nice examples seen regularly at higher altitudes such as at Paro, on the Chele La, Pele La, Yutong La and Thrumsing La area. I have never yet seen the Upland Buzzard in Bhutan, these *burmanicus* birds are similar in plumage yet so much smaller.
- Black Eagle *Ictinaetus malayensis*: Frequently seen hunting over the forests or just soaring about, from 3800+m down to the foothill forests with eleven sightings in all.
- Indian Spotted Eagle *Aquila hastata* (I): A surprise to find this rare bird at our first roadside stop en-route to Guwahati, soaring over marshy paddies on bowed wings. Another more distant bird may also have been this species. This Indian subcontinent resident was formerly lumped with Lesser Spotted Eagle *A. pomarina*.
- Bonelli's Eagle *Hieraaetus fasciatus*: A huge pale-breasted adult came swooping by as we walked the lower reaches of the Lingmethang Road. A rare bird in Bhutan and a 'write-in' for the tour.
- Booted Eagle *Hieraaetus pennatus*: A dark phase bird came gliding over while we were on the Chele La. Another 'write-in', and a scarce migrant in Bhutan.
- Rufous-bellied Eagle *Hieraaetus kienerii*: A fine adult came soaring over our campsite at Yongkola, then another or the same was seen lower down.

Mountain Hawk-Eagle *Spizaetus nipalensis*: A typical sight over the middle-altitude forests of the Lingmethang Road, we also enjoyed views of perched birds there too. Also seen at Punakha and in the South-east.

#### PANDIONIDAE

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* (I)(NL): One seen en-route to Guwahati.

#### FALCONIDAE

Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*: A few seen in open country, particularly in the west of Bhutan.

Eurasian Hobby *Falco subbuteo*: One was seen high up over the Pele La, another at Jakar, and a very wet-looking bird perched by our camp above Deothang.

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*: A very good haul of four seen on this years tour, with a great look at one that circled over our Yongkola campsite. All appeared to be of the darker resident *peregrinator* race.

#### PHASIANIDAE

Black Francolin *Francolinus francolinus* (I): A great look at one of two birds seen at Sultanpur, perched up calling in the evening sunshine.

Grey Francolin *Francolinus pondicerianus* (I): Some ten or more seen at Sultanpur, with one pair having eight tiny chicks with them.

Common Hill-Partridge *Arborophila torqueola* (H): These Partridges seem to get harder to get close to these days, let alone see them! We heard quite a few in high forests along our way, though always distant!

Rufous-throated Hill-Partridge *Arborophila rufogularis* (H): Heard at mid-altitudes around Yongkola and above Deothang, seemingly close at times but never even glimpsed.

Chestnut-breasted Hill-Partridge *Arborophila mandelli* (H): Heard around Yongkola and at least once in the south-east, although like the above were always distant and/or inaccessible.

Blood Pheasant *Ithaginis cruentus*: Fantastic encounters on our first morning in Bhutan on the Chele La, where we saw some 25 birds! One more male appeared later in the tour, on the Ura-Sheltang La.

Satyr Tragopan *Tragopan satyra*: Without a doubt, our 'bird-of-the-trip' in every way. Our first was a furtive male lurking off the road that was invisible to most, our second male shot down a slope next to the road, our third was a female that posed at close range on the roadside, and with our fourth we really hit pay-dirt. A male on the roadside, totally focussed on eating those magic berries or whatever it is that they like so much, posing in full view for us for a full 27 minutes! The psychedelic plumage is still burned into brain (well, the photos help that along too!). Tragopan 5 & 6 were both roadside females, and 7 & 8 were a pair that we casually booted off the road as we walked. A record total of sightings of this much-prized enigma.

Himalayan Monal *Lophophorus impejanus*: A marvellous start to our Bhutanese odyssey, with three psychedelic males and two females seen on the Chele La, then quite surprisingly we saw another two males and a female along the road near Ura. Such a large and brilliantly hued bird, it really has to be seen to be believed!

Red Junglefowl *Gallus gallus* (H): Heard calling from dense thickets near Samdrup Jongkhar.

Kaleej Pheasant *Lophura leucomelanos*: Three birds of the dark-backed, white-breasted *melanota* race were seen en-route to Punakha. Another two of the dark-breasted, pale-rumped *lathamii* race were flushed on the Kori La, with a further single seen near Tashigang.

Indian Peafowl *Pavo cristatus* (I): Numerous birds seen at Sultanpur.

## TURNICIDAE

Barred Buttonquail *Turnix suscitator*: A bizarre encounter with a black-throated female that was ambling down the centre of the road in front of us in the mid-afternoon sunshine near Yongkola. Great views naturally, just the second time this has ever been seen on this tour

## GRUIDAE

Sarus Crane *Grus antigone* (I): A good fifteen of these majestic birds at Sultanpur, giving some great looks in the late afternoon sun.

Common Crane *Grus grus* (I): A single rather moth-eaten bird present at Sultanpur.

## RALLIDAE

White-breasted Waterhen *Amaurornis phoenicurus* (I): Two at Sultanpur.

Black-tailed Crake *Porzana bicolor*: An insignificant swamp near Paro started us off with a pair of these, one of which marched about proudly very close to our bus, then we stumbled upon another two further up the road. Another was also seen quite by chance near Lingmethang, and a further calling bird remained hidden in a small marsh near Tashigang.

Ruddy-breasted Crake *Porzana fusca*: A surprise find near Paro with a single bird running about in a swamp, a scarce bird in Bhutan and a write-in for this tour.

Grey-headed Swampphen *Porphyrio poliocephalus* (I): Fifteen were seen at Sultanpur.

Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* (I): A few seen at Sultanpur.

Eurasian Coot *Fulica atra* (I): A group of ten seen at Sultanpur.

## JACANIDAE

Bronze-winged Jacana *Metopodius indicus* (I): A single bird spotted in a swamp en-route to Guwahati.

## CHARADRIIDAE

Yellow-wattled Lapwing *Vanellus malabaricus* (I): Two were seen on the dry fields at Sultanpur.

River Lapwing *Vanellus duvaucelii*: A single was seen on the river at Paro, a further three at Thimphu sewage works, and then many more on the rivers around Punakha.

Red-wattled Lapwing *Vanellus indicus* (I): Seen in good numbers at Sultanpur, and also en-route to Guwahati.

## SCOLOPACIDAE

Eurasian Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola*: A roding bird zipped past us on the Chele La. Also heard roding at Sengor.

Solitary Snipe *Gallinago solitaria*: At least two were flushed from swamps near Paro, but the best views were of a bird the following morning along the road up to the Chele La. Initially disturbed from the roadside, it walked into a stream and then bobbed its way up along the mid-stream boulders, feeding as it went. A stunning view of this furtive species.

Pintail Snipe *Gallinago stenura*: At least five were seen in the swamps near Paro, with at least two posing for us on the ground.

'Eastern' Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa [limosa] melanoides* (I): One of these at Sultanpur. Rasmussen tentatively splits this from the European *limosa*.

Spotted Redshank *Tringa erythropus* (I): Two seen at Sultanpur.

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*: One was seen at Sultanpur, then two at Paro and a single near Punakha.

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola* (I): 30 or more seen at Sultanpur.

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*: One seen at Paro and another at Punakha.

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax* (I): At least 50 at Sultanpur, with many small flocks buzzing about.

## RECURVIROSTRIDAE

Ibisbill *Ibidorhyncha struthersii*: Our first was at Paro where we had a fantastic encounter, with a bird feeding along the riverside seemingly oblivious to our presence and performing at length just a few metres away. A further five were seen while on an early morning foray along the Po Chu at Punakha.

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* (I): Numerous at Sultanpur and also en-route to there, with 100 seen.

## STERNIDAE

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida* (I): A couple of handsome examples feeding over a swamp near Guwahati.

## COLUMBIDAE

Snow Pigeon *Columba leuconota*: A wonderful encounter with a flock of 80 at Ura, feeding in the fields and then wheeling around in the air in a tight flock.

Rock Pigeon *Columba livia*: Commonly available, particularly in Samdrup Jongkhar!

Ashy Woodpigeon *Columba pulchricollis*: Two birds flew around in circles over the Kori La, rather distant but scope views revealed very pale heads contrasting with the dark breast and unmarked upperparts. Another write-in for this tour.

Oriental Turtle-Dove *Streptopelia orientalis*: Seen commonly and almost daily throughout Bhutan.

Laughing Dove *Streptopelia senegalensis* (I): A few were seen at Sultanpur.

Spotted Dove *Streptopelia chinensis*: Regularly seen at lower altitudes around cultivation.

Red Collared-Dove *Streptopelia tranquebarica* (I): A single male was present in the 'Immigration Cottage' garden at Darranga.

Eurasian Collared-Dove *Streptopelia decaocto* (I): Plenty were seen at Sultanpur and in the Delhi environs.

Barred Cuckoo-Dove *Macropygia unchall*: Our first was posing in a roadside bush en-route to Punakha, then more were heard and a handful seen around Deothang.

Emerald Dove *Chalcophaps indica*: One was seen at 1300m near Yongkola, one of two calling there.

Yellow-footed Green Pigeon *Treron phoenicopterus*: Four were seen at Sultanpur, then a dozen were seen perched up in the early morning near our Samdrup Jongkhar hotel, the first time I have seen this species in Bhutan.

Thick-billed Green Pigeon *Treron curvirostra*: Numerous and frisky in a busy fruiting tree near Samdrup Jongkhar, we counted at least 15.

Pin-tailed Green Pigeon *Treron apicauda*: Quite common and visible around Samdrup Jongkhar, we found many together with the above in a fruiting fig tree.

Wedge-tailed Green Pigeon *Treron sphenurus*: A great roadside view of our first near Wangdi, then another three near Tashigang and three or more seen with the above species in the aforementioned tree near Samdrup Jongkhar.

Mountain Imperial Pigeon *Ducula badia*: Some great looks at these around Samdrup Jongkhar and above Deothang.

## PSITTACIDAE

Rose-ringed Parakeet *Psittacula krameri* (I): Quite a few seen around Delhi, plus one near Guwahati.

## CUCULIDAE

Greater Coucal *Centropus sinensis* (I): Seen well at Sultanpur, walking about in the open.

Lesser Coucal *Centropus bengalensis*: Heard near Wangdi, seen briefly in flight near Deothang, and another was seen en-route to Guwahati.

Green-billed Malkoha *Phaenicophaeus tristis*: A brief view of one near Samdrup Jongkhar.

- Asian Koel *Eudynamys scolopacea*: Both heard and seen in Bhutan, just in Samdrup Jongkhar town. Also seen in Delhi.
- Asian Emerald Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx maculatus*: A good showing by these this year, from Yongkola to Samdrup Jongkhar. We saw as many as eleven different birds of both sexes, males making their territorial flights or chasing the ginger-headed females.
- Violet Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx xanthorhynchus*: A single calling bird was seen flying high near Samdrup Jongkhar, but never presented itself properly.
- Plaintive Cuckoo *Cacomantis merulinus*: Several heard from Yongkola eastwards, then one was finally seen near Deothang.
- Grey-bellied Cuckoo *Cacomantis passerinus* (H): A distant songster was heard below Yongkola. This is the far north-east of their range, and it overlaps here with the above species.
- Square-tailed Drongo-Cuckoo *Surniculus lugubris*: Frequently heard at lower altitudes, our first was along the Mo Chu, then another was seen near Lingmethang, and again near Samdrup Jongkhar.
- Large Hawk-Cuckoo *Hierococcyx sparverioides*: Common and noisy, more often heard although four or more were actually seen along the Lingmethang Road.
- Whistling Hawk-Cuckoo (Hodgson's H-C) *Hierococcyx nicolor*: Several heard along our route in warm broadleaved forest with three sightings along the Lingmethang Road, then another near camp above Deothang.
- Indian Cuckoo *Cuculus micropterus* (H): Heard regularly at lower to middle altitudes, always distant.
- Eurasian Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*: Not so many heard, and just a single songster seen (impossible to identify otherwise!) from our hotel at Tongsa.
- Himalayan Cuckoo *Cuculus saturatus*: Several examples seen along our route, plus many more heard. 'Oriental' Cuckoo *C. saturatus* has recently been split three ways, into this one (which retains the specific name *saturatus*), Horsfield's Cuckoo *C. optatus* and Sunda Cuckoo *C. lepidus*.
- Small Cuckoo (Lesser C) *Cuculus poliocephalus*: One was seen briefly near the Pele La, then a perched hepatic female was studied near the Karung La, showing markedly different proportions to its larger cousins.

#### STRIGIDAE

- Mountain Scops-Owl *Otus spilocephalus* (H): This elusive devil was only ever heard distantly, at Yongkola and from our camp above Deothang.
- Himalayan Wood Owl *Strix nivicola* (H): A distant bird called from somewhere down in the valley near our Sengor camp.
- Collared Owlet *Glaucidium brodiei*: Several were heard in forests along our route, and then we found a vocal bird on the Kori La in the late morning, perched on a naked snag in bright sunshine. Only the third time that we have seen this species on this tour!
- Asian Barred Owlet *Glaucidium cuculoides*: Heard fairly frequently with two birds seen well in the daytime, one along the Mo Chu at Punakha and one near Deothang, both of which were ruthlessly digiscoped!
- Spotted Owlet *Athene brama* (I): One found at Sultanpur, close to its nest hole in a nearby tree that had some white balls of fluff just visible in the bottom of the deep cavity.
- Northern Long-eared Owl *Asio otus*: A roosting bird located in bamboo near Jakar was watched at length, and appears to be just the second record for the country, the first being in November 1967! This was a paler individual than European birds, almost as pale as one I saw last year in Northern Kazakhstan and perhaps from a Russian population.

#### CAPRIMULGIDAE

- Grey Nightjar *Caprimulgus jotaka*: Heard occasionally, usually distantly from our various night stops, with one seen coming off the road as we headed up to the Chele La.

## APODIDAE

Himalayan Swiftlet *Aerodramus brevirostris*: Seen regularly over middle altitude forests.

White-throated Needletail *Hirundapus caudacutus*: Small parties encountered from Tashigang south to the border, usually appearing after the rain had cleared.

Asian Palm Swift *Cypsiurus balasiensis*: Several seen near Samdrup Jongkhar around palm trees. Also seen en-route to Guwahati.

Pacific Swift (Fork-tailed S) *Apus pacificus*: Regularly seen, from the Lingmethang Road down through the South-east.

Dark-rumped Swift *Apus acuticauda*: Some reasonable views of small parties feeding in the late afternoon over the Samdrup Jongkhar valleys. A restricted-range species and subcontinent breeding endemic, the only real sites for it are here and at Cherrapunjee in Meghalaya.

House Swift *Apus nipalensis*: Seen in Delhi, Tashigang, and at Samdrup Jongkhar. Also seen as we crossed Assam.

## TROGONIDAE

Red-headed Trogon *Harpactes erythrocephalus*: A rather furtive male tried to stay hidden along the Mo Chu near Punakha. Our only sighting of the trip.

Ward's Trogon *Harpactes wardi*: Along with the Tragopan, perhaps one of the most wanted of all birds on this trip, and one that gets harder to find each year. However, this year we were fortunate enough to hear the call from the road near the Pele La, and managed to lure in a gorgeous pair to within a few feet of us, where they posed for photos and general adulation. Awesome! Also heard on the Lingmethang Road and on the Kori La, but always remaining invisible.

## ALCEDINIDAE

Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*: One seen along the river at Punakha, then a couple more near Samdrup Jongkhar.

White-throated Kingfisher *Halcyon smyrnensis*: Seen fairly commonly around Delhi and in Assam, plus we found numerous birds around Punakha and Samdrup Jongkhar and also whenever we dipped into lower altitude valleys.

Himalayan Pied Kingfisher (Crested K) *Ceryle lugubris*: Our first were four birds seen along Po and Mo Chu rivers at Punakha, then another two or three individuals were seen close to Samdrup Jongkhar.

Lesser Pied Kingfisher *Ceryle rudis* (I): Two were seen over roadside swamps in Assam.

## MEROPIDAE

Blue-bearded Bee-eater *Nyctyornis atbertoni*: Some excellent sightings this year, with three birds all obligingly perched up along the road around Yongkola, plus then another bird seen well near Samdrup Jongkhar.

Little Green Bee-eater *Merops orientalis* (I): Numerous at Sultanpur and surrounding districts.

Blue-tailed Bee-eater *Merops philippinus* (I): A score of these were enjoyed as they made themselves busy around sandy banks near Guwahati airport.

## CORACIIDAE

Dollarbird *Eurystomus orientalis*: One or more seen perched up on treetops near Samdrup Jongkhar.

## UPUPIDAE

Common Hoopoe *Upupa epops*: A handful were seen at Sultanpur, then seen at regular intervals in open country along our route in Bhutan.

## BUCEROTIDAE

Indian Grey Hornbill *Ocyrceros birostris* (I): A pair at Sultanpur appeared to be feeding young, in an open-fronted box branded with the words 'delhibird'!

Oriental Pied Hornbill *Anthracoceros albirostris*: Singles were seen on two days near Samdrup Jongkhar.

Great Pied Hornbill *Buceros bicornis*: Seen well near Samdrup Jongkhar, with one seen on our first day there and four on the following day.

Rufous-necked Hornbill *Aceros nipalensis*: Our first views on the Lingmethang Road were exciting, as the male presented a small fruit to the female before climbing on to ensure the continuation of the species! At least three pairs were present in that area, one of which we observed engaged in pre-nesting displays. We then went on to see several more birds between Narphang and Deothang, exhibiting a variety of casque stripe patterns.

Wreathed Hornbill *Aceros undulatus*: Our fourth Hornbill of the trip, we saw as many as five birds near Samdrup Jongkhar.

## CAPITONIDAE

Great Barbet *Megalaima virens*: Heard often and seen frequently in the lower altitude warm broadleaved forests, particularly visible in the south-east where they provided a continual backdrop of sound.

Brown-headed Barbet *Megalaima zeylanica* (I): At least three were seen at Sultanpur.

Lineated Barbet *Megalaima lineata* (H) (I): A heard-only along the Assamese roadside.

Golden-throated Barbet *Megalaima franklinii*: Numerous sightings along our route at lower-middle altitudes, such as along the Mo Chu, the Lingmethang Road, and in the South-east.

Blue-throated Barbet *Megalaima asiatica*: Plenty of these colourful fellows uttering their hypnotic beats at lower altitudes around Samdrup Jongkhar.

Coppersmith Barbet *Megalaima haemacephala* (H): Heard only at Sultanpur and at Samdrup Jongkhar.

## INDICATORIDAE

Yellow-rumped Honeyguide *Indicator xanthonotus*: Single birds were enjoyed at length at two roadside sites where Giant Rock Bees had their hives on the rock faces of road cuttings. A third appeared briefly in the forest along the Lingmethang Road.

## PICIDAE

Speckled Piculet *Picumnus innominatus*: After hearing them without seeing them near Punakha, Yongkola and the Kori La, we had extended views of a pair near Samdrup Jongkhar. Such a cutie!

Grey-capped Pygmy Woodpecker *Dendrocopos canicapillus*: Several sightings of two families near Deothang, one with a red-capped youngster already out of the nest, the other with two vocal juveniles just about ready to leave the nest hole.

Crimson-breasted Pied Woodpecker *Dendrocopos cathpharius*: A good first view of one below the Dochu La, then other singles were seen en-route to the Pele La and above Deothang.

Darjeeling Pied Woodpecker *Dendrocopos darjellensis*: Often a tricky bird to find, we had great views of a pair at a nest hole near Sengor.

Rufous-bellied Woodpecker *Hypopicus hyperythrus*: Good looks at two males on the Kori La. Also heard on the Pele La.

Rufous Woodpecker *Micropternus brachyurus*: A vocal bird near Samdrup Jongkhar gave us a brief look.

Lesser Yellownappe *Picus chlorolophus*: Two individuals were seen along the road above Deothang, almost alongside the following species.

Greater Yellownappe *Picus flavinucha*: Two were seen in the warm broad-leaved forests above Deothang. Also heard in other localities along our route.

Grey-faced Woodpecker (Grey-headed W) *Picus canus*: Two showed well in the warm broad-leaved forests above Deothang, then we saw another two in drier forest close to Samdrup Jongkhar.

Black-rumped Flameback *Dinopium benghalense* (I): One seen at Sultanpur.

Greater Flameback *Chrysocolaptes lucidus*: A noisy pair flew by us in the forest below Deothang.

Bay Woodpecker *Blythipicus pyrrhotis*: Often a real sneak only located by its maniacal cry, we saw one on the Lingmethang Road and then another popped up on the roadside near Tashigang.

#### EURYLAMIDAE

Long-tailed Broadbill *Psarisomus dalhousiae*: A single bird was found near Deothang, staying high in the big trees.

#### PITTIDAE

Blue-naped Pitta *Pitta nipalensis* (H): A bird was clearly heard calling in the evening above Deothang, which lured us down-slope the following morning to try and see it. However, overnight rain had scuppered the primary 'method-of-location', of hearing it hopping about in the dry leaf litter. Unresponsive to tape-luring, it unfortunately got away from us. However, a mention must be made of the leader's brief and rather accidental sighting of it, when he went through the stinging nettles to suss out a path to it for the following morning!

#### ALAUDIDAE

Indian Bushlark *Mirafra erythroptera* (I): A nice bonus of our trip to Sultanpur, we had a good view of one feeding in short grass.

Bengal Bushlark *Mirafra assamica* (I): A brief view of one in flight en-route to Guwahati.

Ashy-crowned Finch-Lark *Eremopterix griseus* (I): At least six on the dry fields at Sultanpur.

Crested Lark *Galerida cristata* (I): Fairly numerous at Sultanpur.

Oriental Skylark *Alauda gulgula* (H): Almost seen, with two singing over the fields at Ura while we were watching Snow Pigeons.

#### HIRUNDINIDAE

Grey-throated Sand Martin *Riparia chinensis* (I): Some 50 seen at Sultanpur. This is split from the Brown-throated Sand Martin *R. paludicola* of Africa in the 'Birds of South Asia – The Ripley Guide'.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*: Two were seen near Thimphu, several around our hotel in Mongar, and a couple more near Tashigang.

Wire-tailed Swallow *Hirundo smithi* (I): A single bird was enjoyed at Sultanpur.

Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica*: Six seen on roadside wires near Tashigang were the only ones of the trip.

Striated Swallow *Hirundo striolata* (I): Some ten of these streaky fellows seen at our 'Adjutant-stop' near Guwahati.

Nepal House-Martin *Delichon nipalense*: Only seen along the Lingmethang Road where we enjoyed these cute fellows swarming around their nest-cliff.

Asian House-Martin *Delichon dasypus*: A group of ten were seen near Punakha, then a handful more near the Yutong La.

#### MOTACILLIDAE

Himalayan Wagtail *Motacilla [alba] alboides*: The default 'White' Wagtail along the big rivers in the west, also seen at Jakar and Ura.

Amur Wagtail *Motacilla [alba] leucopsis* (NL)(I): One was seen at Sultanpur.

- Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola*: Two brightly-coloured males were seen on wet areas near Paro. A scarce passage migrant in Bhutan.
- Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*: One was seen at Paro, then several were seen in the South-east, usually bouncing down the roads ahead of the bus. These Himalayan birds have a green-tinged back.
- Paddyfield Pipit *Anthus rufulus*: Two were seen at Sultanpur, another two in fields along the Po Chu at Punakha, and finally a couple song-fighting over fields en-route to Guwahati.
- Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni*: Regularly encountered, with some birds singing on territory at the highest altitudes, while others dallied as low as 400m.
- Rosy Pipit *Anthus roseatus*: Plenty of these in breeding pinks along the river at Paro, plus a few along the river at Punakha and a single at Ura. Also seen near Guwahati.

#### CAMPEPHAGIDAE

- Black-winged Cuckooshrike *Coracina melaschistos*: Not uncommon in the warm broadleaved forests, often seen and commonly heard along our route.
- Grey-chinned Minivet *Pericrocotus solaris*: Regularly encountered in mid-altitude forests, with a nest under construction seen near Deothang.
- Long-tailed Minivet *Pericrocotus ethologus*: Favouring higher altitudes and poorer habitats than the others, we saw a few along the way.
- Short-billed Minivet *Pericrocotus brevirostris*: Frequently seen in the mid-altitude warm broad-leaved forests.
- Scarlet Minivet *Pericrocotus speciosus*: The Minivet of the sub-tropical forests, we found them numerous around Samdrup Jongkhar and Deothang, with others scattered along our route.
- Pied Flycatcher Shrike *Hemipus picatus*: A single at Yongkola, another at Kanglung and a third near Deothang.
- Large Woodshrike *Tephrodornis gularis*: A pair were watched nest-building below Deothang, with a flock of 10 seen there the following day.

#### MONARCHIDAE

- Black-naped Blue Monarch *Hypothymis azurea*: Three were seen near Samdrup Jongkhar in the foothills forest.

#### RHIPIDURIDAE

- White-throated Fantail *Rhipidura albicollis*: Often seen in broad-leaved forest, and quite eye-catching as it waves its tail!
- Yellow-bellied Fantail *Rhipidura hypoxantha*: Just four seen, typically in higher altitude forest.

#### PYCNONOTIDAE

- Striated Bulbul *Pycnonotus striatus*: Seen on most days on the Lingmethang Road in middle altitude forests, and also in the south-east around Deothang.
- Black-crested Bulbul *Pycnonotus flaviventris*: Fairly numerous in the forest near Samdrup Jongkhar.
- Red-whiskered Bulbul *Pycnonotus jocosus*: A handful were seen in the Samdrup Jongkhar area.
- Himalayan Bulbul *Pycnonotus leucogenys*: Only seen on the dry hillsides around Tashigang, its favoured habitat.
- Red-vented Bulbul *Pycnonotus cafer*: Commonly available around cultivation and scrappy habitat at lower altitudes.
- White-throated Bulbul *Alophoixus flaveolus*: Great views of a pair that came in close to inspect us near Samdrup Jongkhar, with others there heard uttering their nasal calls.

Ashy Bulbul *Hemixos flavala*: Just a small number were seen, below Yongkola and around Samdrup Jongkhar.

Mountain Bulbul *Hypsipetes mccllellandii*: Odd ones were seen around Yongkola, then just one more near Deothang.

Himalayan Black Bulbul *Hypsipetes leucocephalus*: Seen in the lower and middle altitude forests, usually vocal and showy!

#### AEGITHINIDAE

Common Iora *Aegithina tibia*: At least three seen at lower altitudes around Samdrup Jongkhar.

#### CHLOROPSEIDAE

Gold-fronted Leafbird *Chloropsis aurifrons*: Two or three seen in the lowlands around Samdrup Jongkhar.

Orange-bellied Leafbird *Chloropsis hardwickii*: Seen fairly commonly in lower-middle altitude forests such as in the South-east.

#### LANIIDAE

Brown Shrike *Lanius cristatus* (I): A few seen en-route to Guwahati.

Bay-backed Shrike *Lanius vittatus* (I): Two seen at Sultanpur.

Long-tailed Shrike *Lanius schach*: Several of the black-headed *tricolor* form were noted around cultivated areas at lower altitudes.

Grey-backed Shrike *Lanius tephronotus*: Frequently encountered in fairly open country, at a variety of altitudes although they breed higher up.

#### CINCLIDAE

Brown Dipper *Cinclus pallasii*: Several seen on the larger rivers and particularly around Punakha, plus another near Samdrup Jongkhar.

#### TROGLODYTIDAE

Winter Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes* (NL): One seen from the bus in high country near the Thrumsing La.

#### PRUNELLIDAE

Alpine Accentor *Prunella collaris*: A good haul of these this year, with two seen on the Chele La, a flock of seven on the Yutong La, and another three on the Ura-Sheltang La.

Rufous-breasted Accentor *Prunella strophiatea*: Regularly encountered around the high passes and particularly around upland cultivation and scrub.

#### TURDIDAE

Long-billed Ground Thrush *Zoothera monticola* (H): Heard singing by our Sengor camp in the early morning, but an attempt to lure it was hampered by terrain!

White-collared Blackbird *Turdus albocinctus*: Fairly visible in open areas and forest edge at high altitudes.

Grey-winged Blackbird *Turdus boulboul*: Only seen around the Kori La where they were numerous, with 15 or more seen. It seems rather localised in Bhutan, and we didn't see them elsewhere on our route.

Blue Whistling Thrush *Myophonus caeruleus*: Very common along the roads, and seen on every day in Bhutan.

#### MUSCICAPIDAE

Dark-sided Flycatcher *Muscicapa sibirica*: Rather commonly encountered, favouring mid elevation broad-leaved forest edges.

- Ferruginous Flycatcher *Muscicapa ferruginea*: A single bird was seen well along the road near Nobding. A summer visitor, usually arriving in the last third of April.
- Slaty-backed Flycatcher *Ficedula hodgsonii*: A female was the only one seen, along the Mo Chu near Punakha.
- Orange-gorgeted Flycatcher *Ficedula strophbiata*: Fairly numerous at higher altitudes such as in the Sengor area and the Yutong La, with odd birds seen elsewhere.
- Red-breasted Flycatcher *Ficedula parva* (I): Two seen at Sultanpur.
- Red-throated Flycatcher *Ficedula albicilla*: Four or five seen below Deothang including a male complete with red throat.
- White-gorgeted Flycatcher *Ficedula monileger* (H): Well, every trip needs a bogey bird! Although not uncommon, in spite of repeated attempts to see this furtive devil we failed to get even a glimpse!
- Little Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula westermanni*: Rather commonly encountered around Yongkola and in the Deothang area, with males vocal and visible in warm broad-leaved forest.
- Ultramarine Flycatcher *Ficedula superciliaris*: Our first was near Yongkola, and then we found many on the Kori La where a peripatetic male challenged the quickest of photographers!
- Slaty-blue Flycatcher *Ficedula tricolor*: One was seen on the Ura-Sheltang La, then a couple more near our Sengor camp that showed rather better. They breed at these higher altitudes.
- Sapphire Flycatcher *Ficedula sapphira*: A pair on the Lingmethang Road gave us the run around for an hour, calling infrequently and staying high in the treetops.
- Verditer Flycatcher *Eumyias thalassinus*: Common and visible in many of the forests.
- Large Niltava *Niltava grandis*: Males were seen briefly on the Kori La, and seen well near Deothang.
- Small Niltava *Niltava macgrigoriae*: A couple of males were seen along the Mo Chu, then we found more near Yongkola and above Deothang that included a nest-building female.
- Rufous-bellied Niltava *Niltava sundara*: Regularly encountered in the mid-altitude, cool broad-leaved forests.
- Pale Blue Flycatcher *Cyornis unicolor*: A good look at a vocal male near our Yongkola camp. Others were heard around there and also in the South-east.
- Blue-throated Flycatcher *Cyornis rubeculoides*: Our first was a rather furtive male at the roadside near Wangdi, then better examples were seen at Kanglung and below Yongkola.
- Large Blue Flycatcher *Cyornis magnirostris*: At least one male holding territory near Samdrup Jongkhar. This is a recent split from Hill Blue Flycatcher *C. banyumas*, and seems rather little known. In fact, the identification is a bit of a punt into the unknown, however the bird clearly showed an orange wedge up the throat to the chin, a feature absent in any of the populations of Blue-throated Flycatcher *C. rubeculoides*. It did have a much larger bill when compared with a photo of *C. rubeculoides* that I photographed at Kanglung, and the song was a simple short ditty. Another species to consider is Chinese Blue Flycatcher *C. glaucicomans*, however their song is much sweeter, more complex and in long phrases. So I have awarded myself a lifer, the only one of the trip!
- Pygmy Blue Flycatcher *Muscicapella hodgsoni*: Our only contact was with a pair below the Pele La, brought in with the 'tactical-Owlet'!
- Grey-headed Canary-Flycatcher *Culicicapa ceylonensis*: Frequently encountered along our route, particularly in the lower and middle altitudes of the South-east where we watched a bird building a semicircular cup shaped nest of moss adhered to the trunk of thick tree.
- Chestnut-bellied Rock-Thrush *Monticola rufiventris*: Frequently seen, making the most of the road-cuttings such as around Sengor where they were very visible.
- Blue-headed Rock-Thrush *Monticola cinclorhynchus*: Frequently seen along the roadsides, but at warmer lower altitudes than the above, and particularly noticeable around Yongkola. This is a summer visitor that winters to Southern India.

- Blue Rock-Thrush *Monticola solitarius*: Singles were seen at Paro, Yongkola, near Tashigang and in Samdrup Jongkhar.
- Lesser Shortwing *Brachypteryx leucophrys*: A very sneaky bird, we heard them singing from impenetrable thickets near Punakha, and then eventually got a view of one above Deothang. Noticeably absent this year from large parts of the Lingmethang Road.
- White-browed Shortwing *Brachypteryx montana*: Several were heard singing on the higher section of the Lingmethang Road, and an attempt to lure one out to the roadside resulted in the bird jumping out on the tops of bushes in full view, flaring his white brow at us! Remarkable views!
- Indian Blue Robin *Luscinia brunnea*: Four males singing their loud Nightingale-like song were seen well between Tashigang and Wamrong.
- Himalayan Red-flanked Bush-Robin *Tarsiger rufilatus*: Several were seen on the Chele La, and then we had better views of up to five birds on the Ura-Sheltang La.
- Golden Bush-Robin *Tarsiger chrysaenus*: A single bird was glimpsed on the Yutong La, our only contact of the whole trip.
- White-browed Bush-Robin *Tarsiger indicus*: A single furtive bird stayed hidden to most of us on the Thrumsing La.
- Oriental Magpie-Robin *Copsychus saularis*: Regularly seen, at lower altitudes, around cultivation, and commonly in the Samdrup Jongkhar area.
- White-rumped Shama *Copsychus malabaricus*: A couple of birds near Samdrup Jongkhar were heard singing sweetly, and an effort to lure one in caused the bird to pop up right in front of us, albeit for about 1.3 seconds!
- Indian Black Robin *Saxicoloides fulicatus* (I): Several rather visible birds at Sultanpur.
- Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochrurus*: We saw a male at Sultanpur, then another male near Punakha – yet another example of a bird I haven't seen in Bhutan for several years!
- Hodgson's Redstart *Phoenicurus hodgsoni*: A few of these winter visitors were seen at Paro, with another two birds seen near Thimphu and Punakha.
- Blue-fronted Redstart *Phoenicurus frontalis*: Several showed well on the Chele La, then odd singles were noted around the high passes along our route, at Jakar and at 2500m on the Lingmethang Road.
- White-capped River-Chat *Chaimarrornis leucocephalus*: A few seen along watercourses along our route, though never very common.
- Plumbeous Water-Redstart *Rhyacornis fuliginosus*: Commonly encountered along rivers and streams, mostly all in the west of the country.
- White-tailed Blue Robin *Myiomela leucura*: Several were heard singing from the Lingmethang Road eastwards, and a male obliged us with a view on the Karung La.
- Blue-fronted Blue Robin *Cinclidium frontale*: A single songster on the Lingmethang Road sang beautifully, yet only offered the briefest of glimpses for a couple of us.
- Little Forktail *Enicurus scouleri*: Just three seen; a single bird on a Lingmethang road-side torrent, then a pair at a regular cliff site.
- Black-backed Forktail *Enicurus immaculatus*: Three examples of this were seen near Samdrup Jongkhar, but always behaving very shyly and not offering prolonged looks.
- Slaty-backed Forktail *Enicurus schistaceus*: A pair showed well on a stream close to Samdrup Jongkhar.
- Spotted Forktail *Enicurus maculatus*: Surely the finest of the genus and a real favourite all round, we found two pairs around the Kori La and another pair on a steep torrent near Deothang.
- Siberian Stonechat *Saxicola maura*: Odd ones seen around cultivation near Paro and Punakha, and also seen at Sultanpur.
- Pied Bushchat *Saxicola caprata* (I): Several seen at Sultanpur.
- Grey Bushchat *Saxicola ferreus*: Available in marginal habitats, and increasingly common along the scrubby and cleared road edges in the south-east. A pair had a nest in the middle of our

Yongkola camp, with one egg and two or more freshly-hatched young visible in a deep cup set into a bank. They seemed to adapt to our presence!

#### TIMALIIDAE

- White-throated Laughingthrush *Garrulax albogularis*: Frequently encountered at middle to higher altitudes, with our first group en-route to Punakha making a nice introduction.
- White-crested Laughingthrush *Garrulax leucolophus*: The first birds seen were actually from within our Yongkola camp, then later we saw some feeding nearby. Also seen well near Tashigang, perched up at the roadside. Others were heard cackling away remorselessly, as they do!
- Lesser Necklaced Laughingthrush *Garrulax monileger*: Almost the last bird we added in Bhutan, we had a distant view of two that emerged high in some trees near Deothang.
- Striated Laughingthrush *Grammatoptila striata*: Noisy and visible in the forest at middle altitudes, especially as got further east, and always with the floppy crest!
- Rufous-necked Laughingthrush *Dryonastes ruficollis*: Our first two were scoped at some range feeding on field margins below Yongkola, then we hit a large group of 15+ bathing in a marijuana field and drying off in the surrounding artemesia stands. Lovely!
- Grey-sided Laughingthrush *Dryonastes caerulatus*: At least seven sightings on the Lingmethang Road, although often remaining hidden as they uttered their piping calls. We did however manage some reasonable views eventually.
- Rufous-chinned Laughingthrush *Ianthocincla rufogularis*: Terribly skulking and hard to see, at least that is when one tries to tape-lure them! We never had to do that, with our first sighting of two that were hopping about in the middle of the road. At least five others were seen, though less well.
- Spotted Laughingthrush *Ianthocincla ocellata*: Always a joy to behold, with a loud sweet song to match. Our first two were on the Chele La at 3800m, showing well as they hopped about just metres away from our al-fresco breakfast. Our only other sighting was at 2600m near Tashigang. Also heard on the Yutong La.
- Bhutan Laughingthrush *Trochalopteron imbricatum*: Our first were four below Nobding, then we found them commonly on the Kori La and along the cut-over roadsides between Tashigang and Deothang. This taxon ranges from Bhutan *just* into adjacent west Arunachal and *just* into south-east Tibet, so is *almost* endemic to the country.
- Blue-winged Laughingthrush *Trochalopteron squamatum*: Surely the hardest of the group to see, or maybe just when trying to tape-lure them! We had multiple sightings of rather furtive birds along the Lingmethang Road, then in the South-east they were remarkably common, posing on the roadsides or buzzing through the bushes.
- Scaly Laughingthrush *Trochalopteron subunicolor*: Great views of two that popped out right on cue at a regular site on the Lingmethang Road, then we saw another pair that hopped up onto the road while we were chasing Wren Babblers, or something.. Another gorgeous one.
- Black-faced Laughingthrush *Trochalopteron affine*: Generally the highest altitude Laughingthrush, we saw several around the Chele La, Pele La and at Sengor.
- Red-headed Laughingthrush *Trochalopteron erythrocephalum*: Occasional sightings at higher to middle altitudes, from Nobding and Tongsa through to the Kori La and Kanglung in the east. The 'Chestnut-crowned Laughingthrush' complex has been split up. Rasmussen started it, and Collar finished it off – it's all explained in his paper 'A partial revision of the Asian Babblers (Timaliidae) published in the OBC's journal 'Forktail' No.22.
- Crimson-faced Liocichla *Liocichla phoenicea*: A good look at one near Yongkola preceded numerous contacts with these sweet songsters hidden in scrub, occasionally just popping a head out! Notably numerous by voice in the South-east, taking advantage of the thick roadside scrub. They don't respond to the song of birds from northern Thailand and eastern Burma, and not surprisingly the 'old' Red-faced Liocichla has recently been split into two, this one

retaining the name *L. phoenicea*, and the one in northern Thailand etc is now called Scarlet-faced Liocichla *L. ripponi*.

Cutia *Cutia nipalensis*: We had some great encounters with these little tigers, with a large noisy flock on a busy morning on the Lingmethang Road, then a handful more were seen in the forests above Deothang.

Puff-throated Babbler *Pellorneum ruficeps* (H): Heard singing from the forest near Samdrup Jongkhar.

Rusty-cheeked Scimitar Babbler *Pomatorhinus erythrogeus*: Singles were seen near Punakha, by our camp at Yongkola, and then we enjoyed a fine show by showy pair in the forest above Deothang.

Streak-breasted Scimitar Babbler *Pomatorhinus ruficollis*: Our first two at Tongsa showed superbly well in the open, just behind the town amid the refuse that collected there. Another two were seen further east but only fleetingly.

Coral-billed Scimitar Babbler *Pomatorhinus ferruginosus*: Just one seen, it showed well to us in the roadside forest near Yongkola. These stunning birds are of the distinctively black-crowned nominate race.

Slender-billed Scimitar Babbler *Xiphirhynchus superciliaris*: An initially elusive and uncooperative bird on the bamboo-clad Yutong La eventually came up to the roadside, giving spectacular views as it pondered whether or not to cross. Amazingly, we stumbled upon another pair near Sengor, and then another pair on the Kori La!

Long-billed Wren-Babbler *Rimator malocoptilus*: Only six years since this little bird was discovered in a small area of the Lingmethang Road, and already the birds are tape-shy. After much searching and trawling, we heard one call and headed down a small trail into the forest. Eventually the bird came in to investigate, but all that *most* of us saw was a brown blur before it flew back into cover on a steep slope.

Scaly-breasted Wren-Babbler *Pnoepyga albiventer*: This little fellow never made its appearance until the eleventh hour, when we finally managed to get views of one near Sengor.

Pygmy Wren-Babbler *Pnoepyga pusilla*: At least four seen, although we didn't get much of a view of any of them! Commonly heard, but always requiring some effort to see them.

Rufous-throated Wren-Babbler *Spelaornis caudatus*: Rather numerous this year compared to last, and of many singing birds we saw three, all of whom offered prolonged close views. Another was seen by chance at Kanglung. This ranges from east Nepal to Arunachal.

Bar-winged Wren Babbler *Spelaornis troglodytoides*: Traditionally a bit of a bogey for the leader, this year we found one singing at the roadside on the Yutong La. He obliged us with a nice view of white-spotted head and chestnut belly, before he scuttled back into his thicket.

Spotted Wren-Babbler *Spelaornis formosus*: After drawing a blank along the Mo Chu near Punakha where an unresponsive bird was heard, we found one on the outskirts of Mongar that finally agreed to show himself to us on a scrubby slope. Several others were heard near Yongkola and in the South-east, though none of these showed.

Sikkim Wedge-billed Babbler *Sphenocichla humei*: A dawn sortie to find this fellow on the Lingmethang Road was truly successful, with a singing bird teased in to close range for many minutes of viewing for all. Later on in the trip, I decided to pay a little 'homage' to the bird I found in 2000 below Narphung, and played the tape speculatively in the same area. Sure enough, one sang in response from the adjacent thicket, and went on to provide us with superb views and even some video footage as he sat in a hole in the tangle, singing loudly, until we decided 45 minutes of viewing were quite enough and went for coffee!

Rufous-capped Babbler *Stachyris ruficeps*: A few were seen along the way, in middle altitude forest though never commonly.

Golden Babbler *Stachyris chrysaea*: A handful seen, along the Lingmethang Road and Deothang area (complete with black-streaked crowns!)

Grey-throated Babbler *Stachyris nigriceps* (H): Only heard despite attempts to draw them out of the undergrowth near Samdrup Jongkhar.

- Striped Tit-Babbler *Macronous gularis*: Several heard chuntering away near Samdrup Jongkhar, with three finally emerging for some good views.
- Large Grey Babbler *Turdoides malcolmi* (I): Some eight birds were seen at Sultanpur.
- Jungle Babbler *Turdoides striata* (I): Just three seen at Sultanpur, including one on a nest up in a tree.
- Silver-eared Mesia *Leiothrix argentauris*: Once we reached their favoured habitat near Deothang, they proved to be rather common, noisy and showy.
- Red-billed Leiothrix *Leiothrix lutea*: Always a skulker, we found a furtive group of five along the Mo Chu then had progressively better views on the Kori La and south of Tashigang.
- Rusty-fronted Barwing *Actinodura egertoni*: Our first ones appeared briefly along the Mo Chu, then on the Lingmethang and Deothang Roads they were fairly common, with multiple sightings enjoyed.
- Hoary-throated Barwing *Actinodura nipalensis*: Two were seen on the Yutong La, part of a mini bird-storm there, then another two popped up for us at the roadside near Sengor.
- Blue-winged Minla *Minla cyanouroptera*: Seen rather commonly along the Lingmethang Road and eastwards to Deothang, often in mixed flocks.
- Bar-throated Minla (Chestnut-tailed M) *Minla strigula*: Seen fairly often at higher altitudes and on some of the high passes, with our highest counts in the Sengor area.
- Red-tailed Minla *Minla ignotincta*: Our first were atypically in a cultivated area near Punakha, then we found them regularly in mixed flocks on the Lingmethang Road, and again along the road south of Tashigang.
- Golden-breasted Fulvetta *Alcippe chrysotis*: Always a personal favourite, we found these in good number on the Lingmethang Road on two dates, with some very close views indeed!
- Yellow-throated Fulvetta *Alcippe cinerea*: Not uncommon along the roadsides of Lingmethang Road between 2100m and 1800m, often very vocal and confiding. We also saw it at similar altitudes above Deothang.
- Rufous-winged Fulvetta *Alcippe castaneiceps*: Encountered rather numerous at times along the Lingmethang Road, typically in mid to higher altitudes. Also seen near the Pele La and on the Yonphu La.
- White-browed Fulvetta *Alcippe vinipectus*: The default small babbler at high altitudes, we saw plenty on the high passes, waving goodbye to these tit-like little cuties as we dropped below 2800m.
- Ludlow's Fulvetta (Brown-throated F) *Alcippe ludlowi*: A thrilling encounter with this one, our search for it soon resulting in superb views of one perched out and singing to us. Here at the extreme western edge of its range that extends across Arunachal Pradesh and South-east Tibet, this is just the third time this has been seen on this tour.
- Nepal Fulvetta *Alcippe nipalensis*: A few seen at lower altitudes on the Lingmethang Road, plus a handful seen nearer Deothang. Always rather furtive!
- Rufous Sibia *Heterophasia capistrata*: A common sight and sound in the Bhutanese forests.
- Long-tailed Sibia *Heterophasia picaoides*: An excited flock of four showed well to us in the forests above Deothang, with another quartet seen in flight nearby.
- White-naped Yuhina *Yuhina bakeri*: Seen often in small busy parties once we reached the right altitudes above Yongkola. A portly and dapper little fellow.
- Whiskered Yuhina *Yuhina flavicollis*: Common throughout the middle altitude forests, particularly along the Lingmethang Road.
- Stripe-throated Yuhina *Yuhina gularis*: Fairly common at higher altitudes, on the Pele La, Yutong La, and between Ura to the Sengor area. We also saw one quite low down near Yongkola.
- Rufous-vented Yuhina *Yuhina occipitalis*: Fairly prominent and noisy at higher altitudes and on the high passes, with our first making an appearance on the Chele La.
- Fire-tailed Myzornis *Myzornis pyrrhoura*: A gorgeous forest sprite that can often be difficult to find, we bumped into a lively flock of six that performed for us at close range, in among some Rhododendron flowers on the Yutong La.

- Great Parrotbill *Conostoma oemodum*: A pair in the bamboo understorey of the Thrumsing La came in for a brief look at us, but didn't want to hang around for long. A beefy bird that I once watched grab and kill a Grey-faced Leaf Warbler!
- Brown Parrotbill *Paradoxornis unicolor*: A dense patch of bamboo on our way to Jakar eventually yielded three of these handsome but demure birds. Also heard on the Pele La.
- Grey-headed Parrotbill *Paradoxornis gularis*: Several birds heard calling at Yongkola were eventually converted into great views of six birds, feeding in a large tree over our heads. Just the fourth time in eleven tours that we have seen this one, and also our sixth Parrotbill of the trip. Hurrah!
- Fulvous Parrotbill *Paradoxornis fulvifrons*: We found a flock of five of these little bumblebee-like birds zipping about in the tops of a bamboo thicket on the Yutong La, though they never really showed themselves to full effect.
- Black-throated Parrotbill *Paradoxornis nipalensis*: A party of six with a mixed flock was our first contact in the bamboo on the Lingmethang Road, then the following day we had superior views of a group of ten that showed their true glory. What a gorgeous little bird! The Black-throated Parrotbill complex is being split up, so standby for some armchair ticks if you have ever seen the species elsewhere!
- Greater Rufous-headed Parrotbill *Paradoxornis ruficeps*: Great views of a party of six near Yongkola, feeding in bushes and also up in the taller trees. We revisited possibly the same birds on the following day, then had more views of this handsome fellow at two localities in the forests above Deothang. Often travels together with Rusty-fronted Barwings.
- Black-headed Shrike-Babbler *Pteruthius rufiventer*: A splendid male sang loudly from a Lingmethang Road-side tree, staying high in his moss-cloaked tree but allowing us a good look. Two others were singing in the same place, plus we had a great look at a female the following day.
- White-browed Shrike-Babbler *Pteruthius flaviscapis*: Our first two were a pair below the Pele La, then we had regular sightings of these smart fellows right through to the South-east of the country.
- Green Shrike-Babbler *Pteruthius xanthochlorus*: Favouring the higher altitudes, our first was an obliging songster on the Chele La, then we saw two more on the higher stretches of the Lingmethang Road. DNA studies have shown that these Shrike-Babblers are most closely related to Vireos!
- Black-eared Shrike-Babbler *Pteruthius melanotis*: Often heard monotonously singing, we saw three examples in mid-elevation forests along the Lingmethang Road, then another on the Kori La and two near our camp above Deothang.

#### CISTICOLIDAE

- Zitting Cisticola *Cisticola juncidis* (I): Just one seen, singing over marshes close to Guwahati.
- Striated Prinia *Prinia crinigera*: One of the drabest birds of the tour, we saw our first near Punakha, and then regularly found them around cultivation and in scrappy habitat through the rest of the country.
- Black-throated Prinia *Prinia atrogularis*: Our first appeared at the roadside near Yongkola, then in the South-east we saw a further three birds.
- Rufescent Prinia *Prinia rufescens*: Only found near Samdrup Jongkhar where they were quite noisy in the grassy areas, with four or more seen.
- Plain Prinia *Prinia inornata* (I): A couple seen at Sultanpur, also heard near Guwahati.
- Mountain Tailorbird *Orthotomus cuculatus* (H): A single bird was heard along the Lingmethang Road.
- Common Tailorbird *Orthotomus sutorius*: Present next to our Yongkola camp, then more commonly seen in the Deothang area.

## SYLVIIDAE

- Chestnut-headed Tesia *Tesia castaneocoronata*: Of the dozens singing in the Sengor area, we eventually managed to see one of these delightful little birds.
- Slaty-bellied Tesia *Tesia olivia*: A very vocal yet elusive fellow, the first time we tried to see one along the Mo Chu most of us could only see leaves moving, then on the Lingmethang Road we managed to see a couple of birds, although never very easy!
- Yellow-browed Tesia (Grey-bellied T) *Tesia cyaniventer*: This one taunted us as he sang loudly near Tongsa and showed only as he flew from thicket to thicket. We did manage a better view with a more compliant bird on the Kori La. Many others were heard in the mid-altitude forests, singing their throaty song.
- Large Bush-Warbler (Chestnut-crowned B-W) *Cettia major*: Another rarely seen fellow, this time was just the second sighting on this tour. Found by the leader while on an 'bush-origami' break, he perched up and sang for us all at close range along the Lingmethang Road.
- Grey-sided Bush-Warbler *Cettia brunnifrons*: Some great close views of a couple of birds, on the Yutong La and near Sengor, with others resident along the margins of our Sengor camp. A higher altitude breeder.
- Strong-footed Bush-Warbler (Brownish-flanked B-W) *Cettia fortipes*: Not uncommon and heard often around scrappy habitat, our first one almost came to our feet on the edge of Tongsa town. Several more were seen in the South-east.
- Hume's Bush-Warbler (Yellowish-bellied B-W) *Cettia brunnescens*: A couple were seen very well, singing their eccentric songs, on the Yutong La and Thrumsing La.
- Russet Bush-Warbler *Bradypterus mandelli*: One heard singing near our Tongsa hotel went quiet on our approach, however near Tashigang we found one at the roadside. Luring it in from the comfort of our bus, we were able to watch this skulker peeking out of a weedy patch. Just the fourth time this has actually been seen on this tour, although one can appreciate why!
- Thick-billed Warbler *Acrocephalus aedon*: A scarce migrant in Bhutan and just the second recorded on the tour, we saw one quite well near Deothang, until it got disturbed by a lurid Green Magpie! Possibly the sixth record for the country.
- Siberian Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus tristis* (I): Two seen at Sultanpur.
- Tickell's Leaf-Warbler *Phylloscopus affinis*: Our only sighting was a rather poor cross-river one at Paro.
- Orange-barred Leaf-Warbler (Buff-barred W) *Phylloscopus pulcher*: Not uncommon at the higher elevations, typically in mixed flocks.
- Grey-faced Leaf-Warbler (Ashy-throated W) *Phylloscopus maculipennis*: Also favouring the higher forests, we saw quite a few along our route. Perhaps the best looking of the genus!
- Lemon-rumped Leaf-Warbler *Phylloscopus chloronotus*: Quite common on the high passes, with others still yet to ascend for the summer seen at slightly lower elevations.
- Yellow-browed Leaf-Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus*: A single migrant was seen high in a tree along the Mo Chu.
- Hume's Leaf-Warbler *Phylloscopus humei*: A bird studied at length on the Kori La showed the dark legs and bill of this species, yet another 'three-star' bird rarely recorded on the tour.
- Large-billed Leaf-Warbler *Phylloscopus magnirostris* (H): Unusual to miss this, we heard it only near Tongsa. A summer visitor that winters in Sri Lanka and South India.
- Blyth's Leaf-Warbler *Phylloscopus reguloides*: Frequently seen at middle and higher altitudes.
- Yellow-vented Warbler *Phylloscopus cantator*: Very noticeable when in full voice, we found several of these along the Mo Chu, and then others near Yongkola including a pair watched nest-building by the road. Also heard near Samdrup Jongkhar.
- Grey-hooded Warbler *Phylloscopus xanthoschistos*: A commonly encountered bird in the lower altitude forests. Note that Rasmussen has shifted this from *Seicercus* to *Phylloscopus*.
- Green-crowned Warbler (Golden-spectacled W) *Seicercus burkii*: A couple singing well were seen near Nobding, two more close to Tongsa, and then they were regularly encountered in cool

mid-elevation forests. Typically encountered around 1800-2400m, it sings with a sweeter and more complex song than the following closely related species. (The original 'Golden-spectacled' Warbler has now been split six ways; Plain-tailed *S. soror*, Grey-crowned *S. tephrocephalus*, Omei *S. omeiensis*, Bianchi's *S. valentini*, Whistler's *S. whistleri* and Green-crowned Warbler *S. burkii*.)

Whistler's Warbler *Seicercus whistleri*: Seen several times around the high passes and in the higher forests (typically breeding above 2800m), and unsurprisingly none in the South-east.

White-spectacled Warbler *Seicercus affinis*: A couple of calling birds taunted us along the Lingmethang Road, in a typical bamboo-rich habitat. Most of us saw one in a flock of Black-throated Parrotbills, another nearer Yongkola was just glimpsed.

Grey-cheeked Warbler *Seicercus poliogenys*: These were fairly evident once we dropped lower on the Lingmethang Road, with our first one enjoyed at close range near Yongkola. Another was seen near Deothang.

Chestnut-crowned Warbler *Seicercus castaniceps*: A regular component of mixed bird-flocks in the cool mid-elevation forests, with many seen along the Lingmethang Road.

Broad-billed Warbler *Tickellia hodgsoni*: A single bird with a bird-flock below Sengor was our only view of the bamboo-loving skulker.

Black-faced Warbler *Abroscopus schisticeps*: This little beauty was first seen near Nobding, then fairly regularly in the forests around Yongkola and on the Kori La. At least three pairs were seen excitedly carrying nest material.

Yellow-bellied Warbler *Abroscopus superciliosus* (H): Heard singing in the bamboo near Samdrup Jongkhar.

Striated Grassbird *Megalurus palustris* (I): A vocal bird was doing noisy song flights near Guwahati airport.

#### REGULIDAE

Goldcrest *Regulus regulus*: Five were seen on the Chele La.

#### AEGITHALIDAE

Red-headed Tit (Black-throated T) *Aegithalos concinnus*: Regularly encountered in mid-elevation forest along our route, with most sightings coming from the Lingmethang Road. I fully endorse the return to the old name!

Rufous-fronted Tit *Aegithalos iouschistos*: A single of this delightful high-altitude Tit was seen briefly on the Chele La, another was seen on the Yutong La, then we all had prolonged close views near Sengor.

#### PARIDAE

Rufous-vented Tit *Parus rubidiventris*: Few seen, we found it on the Pele La first, then others were seen on the Yutong La and in the high forests between Jakar and Sengor.

Coal Tit *Parus ater*: Commonly seen in higher altitude hemlock and fir forests, and positively abundant in the high forests between Jakar and Sengor.

Grey-crested Tit *Parus dichrous*: Our first were on the Chele La, then we met them again on each high pass that we crossed..

Green-backed Tit *Parus monticolus*: Seen at all altitudes and on every day except for the last, on the Kori La they were abundant.

Black-spotted Yellow Tit (Yellow-cheeked T) *Parus spilonotus*: Regularly encountered along the Lingmethang Road, we also found them in the forests above Deothang. I can't say I favour the new name!

Sultan Tit *Melanochlora sultanea*: Some great encounters with this most stunning of Tits from above Deothang down to Samdrup Jongkhar. One prominent individual was giving its rarely heard song.

Yellow-browed Tit *Sylviparus modestus*: Rather common at higher altitude and a regular attendant of 'owlet-flocks'. We also saw one at lower altitude along the Mo Chu.

#### SITTIDAE

Chestnut-bellied Nuthatch *Sitta cinnamoventris*: A male seen in the forests above Deothang preceded several excellent examples of these near Samdrup Jongkhar. Note that the 'old' Chestnut-bellied Nuthatch has been split three ways, this one the Himalayas and foothills retaining the same English and scientific names.

White-tailed Nuthatch *Sitta himalayensis*: Regularly seen in cool mid-elevation forest, our first encounter being near the Dochu La when three birds joined a busy flock mobbing our 'tactical-owlet'. One was seen briefly at ca.1500m near Deothang, making it a 'three-Nuthatch-day'. Bonus!

Beautiful Nuthatch *Sitta formosa*: A truly memorable afternoon, especially when the collective desire to see this bird was so strong! We pulled up in the target area, and suddenly there it was! Never has it been found so fast! Without hearing any call, Gudrun's sharp eyes picked one out in a lush tree. The pair were tempted to come closer, which they did by flying into a bare tree right by the road and scold us from close range! Wow! Having seen it so quickly, we had time to casually search for more, yet all we managed was a brief view of another rather furtive bird two days later. They are hard to find, and we had been incredibly fortunate. Spin that prayer wheel!

#### CERTHIIDAE

Himalayan Treecreeper (Hodgson's Treecreeper) *Certhia hodgsoni*: Three were seen high up on the Chele La, plus we saw another below the Thrumsing La. This has recently been split from the Eurasian Treecreeper *C. familiaris*, however, *C. hodgsoni* includes the western race *hodgsoni* and the eastern *mandelli*, which could be separate species themselves. On this trip we saw *mandelli*.

Rusty-flanked Treecreeper *Certhia nipalensis*: A good look at a singing bird on the Pele La was our only sighting of the trip.

Brown-throated Treecreeper *Certhia discolor*: A couple of these showed well near Yongkola, then we saw another pair on a rainy morning near our Deothang camp. There is another split here: Brown-throated Treecreeper *C. discolor* that occurs in the Himalayas is split from the races found in South-east Asia and South-western China which are now called Manipur Treecreeper *C. manipurensis*.

#### DICAEIDAE

Yellow-bellied Flowerpecker *Dicaeum melanoxanthum*: Another good bird that has been seen on less half our tours, we had a great look at one near Sengor, then another popped up on a dead snag on the Kori La.

Plain Flowerpecker *Dicaeum minullum*: Three of these demure fellows seen at low altitudes near Samdrup Jongkhar.

Fire-breasted Flowerpecker *Dicaeum ignipectus*: Often seen zipping about, with several perched birds offering proper looks. Not uncommon in mid-elevation forests.

#### NECTARINIIDAE

Purple Sunbird *Cinnyris asiaticus* (I): Several seen at Sultanpur.

- Mrs Gould's Sunbird *Aethopyga gouldiae*: Actually quite common in Bhutan, it just looks like it should rarer! Often seen in the mid to higher elevation forests, with the busiest concentration being around Sengor. Stunning!
- Green-tailed Sunbird *Aethopyga nipalensis*: Probably the commonest small bird at higher altitudes, and always number-1 visitor to the 'tactical-owlet'.
- Black-breasted Sunbird *Aethopyga saturata*: Only really appearing at lower altitudes, we first encountered them along the Mo Chu, then again near Nobding, Yongkola, and Deothang.
- Crimson Sunbird *Aethopyga siparaja*: Several gorgeous males of were seen around Samdrup Jongkhar, including one that did a full shiver of displaying delight in the top of a bare tree, even raising his yellow rump tuft!
- Fire-tailed Sunbird *Aethopyga ignicauda*: So often hard to find, we kicked things off early with a male high up on the Chele La, then enjoyed the glory of three males together on the Yutong La. An eye-ball searing pulse of colour!
- Little Spiderhunter *Arachnothera longirostra* (H): Heard near Samdrup Jongkhar.
- Streaked Spiderhunter *Arachnothera magna*: Common around Deothang and Samdrup Jongkhar where they showed well and often. Also seen at Yongkola.

#### ZOSTEROPIDAE

- Oriental White-eye *Zosterops palpebrosus*: Regularly seen at lower altitudes, most obviously in the Samdrup Jongkhar area.

#### EMBERIZIDAE

- Crested Bunting *Melophus lathami*: First seen near Punakha, we saw a handful more around cultivation near Lingmethang and Tashigang.
- Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla*: Two migrants along the Paro river seen on our first afternoon in Bhutan were the only ones of the tour.

#### FRINGILLIDAE

- Himalayan Greenfinch (Yellow-breasted G) *Carduelis spinoides*: A couple of flocks feeding high in big trees were seen near Yongkola, then more flocks were seen near Deothang, including a big one with 58 birds in it!
- Tibetan Siskin *Carduelis thibetana*: Only the third time this has been seen on the tour; a flock of 15 was found on the Lingmethang Road but didn't hang around for long, then we found a second flock near Deothang that allowed some scope views as they sat in the top of a tall tree.
- Plain Mountain-Finch *Leucosticte nemoricola*: A phenomenon of this years visit was the absurd number of this species almost everywhere we went. Obviously facing a food shortage or just unhappy about the weather higher up, we saw over a 1000 birds in nine different localities. These same massing events were also observed this April at 'Eagle Nest', just to the east of Bhutan.
- Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*: A pair were perched next to our Sengor camp, and they were also by our Yongkola camp. Others were seen on the Kori La and Yonphu La. This *roseatus* race can be quite arresting if you are more familiar with the European race!
- Himalayan Beautiful Rosefinch *Carpodacus pulcherrimus*: Three were seen at Ura, although the male didn't perch for us.
- Dark-rumped Rosefinch *Carpodacus edwardsii*: Two females showed in bamboo near Jakar, then we found males the following day on the Thrumsing La.
- Himalayan White-browed Rosefinch *Carpodacus thura*: At least ten of both sexes were enjoyed on the Chele La, then we saw four females on the Ura-Sheltang La.

- Scarlet Finch *Haematospiza sipahi*: Quite showy this year, with several seen near Yongkola, the male standing out in the dark forest with a pulse of deep red. We also found them on the Kori La, and the forests above Deothang.
- Red Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra*: Our first party of these were found feeding in Alders at 2100m, then we saw a couple of parties near Sengor.
- Brown Bullfinch *Pyrrhula nipalensis*: A vocal group of twelve were seen on the Lingmethang Road, and on the Kori La we found at least three flocks totalling a minimum of 33 birds!
- Red-headed Bullfinch *Pyrrhula erythrocephala*: A good year for these, with our first male showing well with Crossbills near Nobding, a female seen twice on the Lingmethang Road, then superb looks at two males feeding in roadside bushes on the Karung La, alongside the following species.
- Grey-headed Bullfinch *Pyrrhula erythaca*: Yet another 'I haven't seen this for ten years' bird, we had had a great look at two females on the Karung La, curiously associating with the gaudy males of the above species!
- Gold-naped Finch *Pyrrhoplectes epaulaetta*: Often a difficult bird to catch up with, we found a male and three females at the roadside on the Kori La, nibbling on the petals of strawberry flowers. Gorgeous!
- Collared Grosbeak *Mycerobas affinis*: Positively common on the Chele La, where various flocks posed in the bare bushes with at least 35 seen. Another two were seen near Sengor.
- Spot-winged Grosbeak *Mycerobas melanozanthos*: A single female on a busy morning on the Lingmethang Road was our first, then we found four feeding in trees near Kanglung, and finally saw a mobile flock of 30 near Deothang.
- White-winged Grosbeak *Mycerobas carnipes*: Four on the Chele La were our first, then we had proper views of three on the Yutong La, and a further five on the Ura-Sheltang La.

#### ESTRILDIDAE

- White-rumped Munia *Lonchura striata*: Three of these did a little fly-past near Samdrup Jongkhar.
- Scaly-breasted Munia *Lonchura punctulata*: A flock of 30 graced the roadside near Punakha.
- Chestnut Munia *Lonchura atricapilla* (I): At least five birds were seen buzzing over a small marsh near Guwahati airport.

#### PASSERIDAE

- House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*: A couple were seen in Samdrup Jongkhar, and of course many were seen in India.
- Sind Sparrow *Passer pyrrhonotus* (I): A bonus of our enforced stay in Delhi, we found a handsome pair of these localised birds at Sultanpur, posing on fences.
- Cinnamon Sparrow (Russet S) *Passer rutilans*: Numerous in open country and around cultivation at higher altitudes, we saw big flocks around the dump at Paro, and also chirping away by our Yongkola campsite.
- Eurasian Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*: Seen frequently along the way around habitation, though generally at lower altitudes.

#### PLOCEIDAE

- Baya Weaver *Ploceus philippinus* (I): Three were seen in the garden of the Indian Immigration post at Darranga, building nests in palm trees. These refer to the *burmanicus* race, or 'Eastern' Baya Weaver.

#### STURNIDAE

- Grey-headed Starling (Chestnut-tailed S) *Sturnia malabarica*: Two birds at Punakha were our first, then more were encountered around Samdrup Jongkhar.

- Rosy Starling *Sturnus roseus* (I): Hordes of these migrants flying in swirling flocks were a feature of our visit to Sultanpur, with 1000 or more seen.
- Asian Pied Starling *Gracupica contra* (I): Quite a few were seen at Sultanpur, and then quite commonly in Assam..
- Common Myna *Acridotheres tristis*: Seen around villages at lower altitudes.
- Bank Myna *Acridotheres ginginianus* (I): A handful en-route to Sultanpur and also at the site itself.
- Jungle Myna *Acridotheres fuscus* (I): A few seen along the road to Guwahati.
- Common Hill-Myna *Gracula religiosa*: Fairly numerous around Samdrup Jongkhar, we enjoyed some good views of these handsome birds

#### ORIOLIDAE

- Indian Golden Oriole *Oriolus kundoo* (I): A male was seen at Sultanpur. Note this is split from Eurasian; Indian has much more yellow in the wing and tail and a strong black patch behind the eye. It ranges as far as Uzbekistan.
- Slender-billed Oriole *Oriolus tenuirostris*: A great look at a vocal and active pair in the early morning near our Punakha hotel.
- Maroon Oriole *Oriolus traillii*: Often heard singing his sweet song, we found birds regularly in mid-elevation forest such as near Yongkola and also along the Mo Chu.

#### IRENIDAE

- Asian Fairy Bluebird *Irena puella*: Quite common around Samdrup Jongkhar, a rather beautiful if noisy fellow.

#### DICRURIDAE

- Black Drongo *Dicrurus macrocercus* (I): A few seen at or near Sultanpur, and also en-route to Guwahati.
- Ashy Drongo *Dicrurus leucophaeus*: Regularly encountered, in a wide altitudinal range and a variety of habitats.
- Bronzed Drongo *Dicrurus aeneus*: These became rather visible at lower, warmer altitudes in the South-eastern foothills.
- Lesser Racket-tailed Drongo *Dicrurus remifer*: Several fine specimens were seen along the Lingmethang Road, and also found near Deothang.
- Hair-crested Drongo (Spangled D) *Dicrurus hottentottus*: A single was seen along the Mo Chu, a couple more at the bottom of the Lingmethang Road, and then in poorer habitats en-route to Tashigang.
- Greater Racket-tailed Drongo *Dicrurus paradiseus*: Just a single seen, perched up and 'singing' near Samdrup Jongkhar.

#### ARTAMIDAE

- Ashy Woodswallow *Artamus fuscus* (I) (NL): Two were seen at the border post of Darranga.

#### CORVIDAE

- Eurasian Jay *Garrulus glandarius*: Just two were seen, between Mongar and the Kori la. These birds are of the *interstinctus* race.
- Yellow-billed Blue Magpie *Urocissa flavirostris*: Quite showy around the high passes and at higher altitudes.
- Common Green Magpie *Cissa chinensis*: Some good looks at very vocal birds were had near Yongkola and another couple were seen near Deothang, one of which showed very well in bushes some way away from the forest. The birds here show a lot of turquoise in their plumage.
- Rufous Treepie *Dendrocitta vagabunda* (I): Five were seen at Sultanpur, then several others en-route to Guwahati.

- Grey Treepie *Dendrocitta formosae*: Common and noisy in the lower altitude forests, and often in more open habitats of scrub near cultivation.
- Eurasian Magpie *Pica pica*: Only seen around Ura and the Bumthang valleys where they were numerous. The birds in Bhutan (*bottanensis* race) are the only population within the subcontinent this side of Pakistan, although they range across Tibet and China.
- Spotted Nutcracker *Nucifraga caryocatactes*: A familiar sight around the higher altitude forests, although we did also see them down to 2100m near Mongar and 2500m near Tashigang. These birds are of the *macella* race that lacks spots on the belly and scapulars.
- Red-billed Chough *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*: Most numerous around Ura, and often seen around high cultivated valleys such as at Paro.
- House Crow *Corvus splendens* (I): Common in India.
- Large-billed Crow *Corvus japonensis*: The commonest corvid in Bhutan, most frequent at higher altitudes where they always turned up for our picnics! We saw it on every day bar the last three in the Deothang area, where there is a significant gap between this and the following species.
- Eastern Jungle Crow *Corvus leuillanti*: Just a single seen, in Samdrup Jongkhar town on our last morning. Rasmussen splits this and the next species from Large-billed Crow *C. macrorhynchus* in 'Birds of South Asia – The Ripley Guide'. There is certainly a gap in distribution between this one on the plains (200m) and the montane *C. japonensis* (c1000m).
- Indian Jungle Crow *Corvus culminatus* (I): Just three seen at Sultanpur.

## MAMMALS

- Moupin Pika *Ochotona thibetana*: A few sightings at the higher elevations.
- Black Giant Squirrel *Ratufa bicolor*: A superb look at one of these impressive beasts on the Kori La, then one more stood briefly on the roadside near Deothang.
- Orange-bellied Himalayan Squirrel *Dremomys lokriah*: Seen regularly, particularly on the Lingmethang Road.
- Irrawaddy Squirrel *Callosciurus pygerythrus*: A few sightings in the foothills below Deothang.
- Himalayan Striped Squirrel *Tamiops maclellandii*: These tiny squirrels were seen often in the warm broad-leaved forests.
- Northern Palm Squirrel *Funambulus pennantii* (I): Not uncommon at Sultanpur.
- Capped Leaf Monkey (C Langur) *Trachypitecus pileatus*: Positively common this year, with multiple sightings of troops of these splendid animals along the Lingmethang Road and then daily through to Samdrup Jongkhar. They are the 'lucky monkeys' after all!
- Assam Macaque *Macaca assamensis*: Also frequently encountered, although less attractive than the above species!
- Indian Muntjac (Barking Deer) *Muntiacus muntjak*: Apparently good luck to see his white tail as he goes away, it must of worked on a number of occasions, with a total of three seen and many more heard along our route.
- Common Goral *Nemorhaedus goral*: We had absolutely stunning views of one close to the road near Wangdi, then another stumbled onto the road in front of the bus near Tashigang.
- Nilgai *Boselaphus tragocamelus* (I): Twenty or more were seen at Sultanpur.