

# INDIAN BIRDING TOUR WITH ASIATIC LIONS AND TIGERS

NOVEMBER 4<sup>TH</sup>-22<sup>ND</sup> 2007 with

Sandwich Bird Tours

by John van der Dol

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**Nov.3<sup>rd</sup>- 4<sup>th</sup>**

After 18 months of planning this tour finally got underway as we lifted off from Heathrow with Virgin Atlantic on the evening flight just half an hour late. We were on our way to Mumbai and after a relatively comfortable and direct overnight flight we landed on Indian soil at lunchtime. For some of us it was nice to be back. We were met by Shruti, a lady representative from Asian Adventures, our ground agents for this trip and we were escorted to a couple of vehicles which were eventually to take us to the domestic airport for our connecting flight to Ahmedabad later that afternoon. We stopped at a modern shopping mall where we had coffee and we had a brief visit to a Hindu temple where prayers were about to begin and where we got stuck in the crowd of worshippers for half an hour with nowhere to go. This reminded us of what India is all about, crowded, hot and sweaty and very religious.

Mumbai is a fascinating city where very modern and old traditional lifestyles and architecture live side by side. It seems incredible to arrive at a modern “western” shopping mall in a battered old tuk tuk which somehow has worked its way through the traffic chaos, the meandering cattle in the streets and the traffic policeman who with a big smile on his face deposited the bank notes into his back pocket. I guess it was an old debt!

Eventually we arrived at the domestic airport, said goodbye to our hosts for the afternoon, and checked in with great efficiency and speed. When we got to customs we learnt what “Gujarat is a dry state” really means. Some of our group had purchased some duty free alcohol and while some of it slipped by, other bottles were confiscated. I thought this was a bit much so I tried to get them back. After much good-natured laughter with the officials, some hand shakes with the boss man and looks of innocence on my behalf and me making it clear I would not pay them any money, somehow the bottles were put back in the rucksack. It then was taken away, re-screened with boss man in attendance, sealed and physically taken by hand to the plane to be deposited in the hold. I did wonder if we would ever see the bag again but sure enough on arrival at Ahmedabad there it was with the bottles intact. All for a couple of bottles of wine and a gin. What was so comical about this whole situation was that it took at least six officials, all shouting at each other and running around like “headless chickens” just to get the situation resolved.

A short internal flight and we landed at Ahmedabad to be met by our guide Ganesh and to my great surprise Ratan Singh who was our guide two years ago. Great to see him again. We were escorted to a very comfortable coach which was going to be our home for the next 10 days or so. Lots of space for both us and our luggage. Our first night was in Hotel Royal Highness on the edge of town. We all retired early in anticipation of our first days birding tomorrow.

## Nov 5<sup>th</sup>

Breakfast at 7 was a late start and by 8 we were on the bus to our first “birding” destination of Rann Riders at Dasada. Seven Indian Coursers and many Black-winged Kites, a beautiful close Red-necked Falcon, a superb Short-toed Eagle and a number of Bay-backed Shrikes and Isabelline Wheatears were seen en route. Rann Riders lodge, set in its own beautiful grounds, was to be our base for two nights and from where we could strike out to the Little Rann of Kutch. We arrived at about 11 am, had a very tasty lunch at 1pm after which some of us had a brief walk in the grounds recording such nice things as Orphean Warbler, Eurasian Hobby, Pheasant-tailed Jacana, Pied Bushchat and a few other bits and pieces.

At 3 pm we set off in jeeps to make our first visit to the Little Rann of Kutch which turned out to be a quite spectacular place which huge numbers of good birds. This desert-like environment is home to the beautiful and very rare Asiatic Asses of which 22 were seen. As we passed flocks of Greater Short-toed and Rufous-tailed Larks, a dozen Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse flew over and small groups of Common and two very close Demoiselle Cranes were seen by the side of the track. We were making for a huge soda lake in the middle of the Rann where we watched countless numbers of waterfowl. There were thousands of Greater Flamingos with perhaps about 20 Lesser Flamingos at one end of the flock. Cranes were coming in to roost in their hundreds, mostly of the Common variety but also good numbers of Demoiselles. There were about 40 White Pelicans and many Spoonbills and unidentified duck by their thousands. Marsh, Pallid and Montagu’s Harriers were seen in small numbers. As the sun was setting it was a truly magical sight and reminded us of why we come to India. Warm, dusty, fantastic pinks, yellow and orange light and just loads of birds calling in the evening tranquillity of the desert.

On our return journey our driver used the headlights of the jeep to look for mammals and the first jeep was lucky enough to get views of two Desert Foxes and a Desert Cat. What a bonus at the end of a great afternoon. A superb dinner awaited us at the lodge after which we retired quite early in readiness for another day to come.

## Nov 6<sup>th</sup>

Breakfast at 6 and out by 06.30 again on jeeps to revisit parts of the Little Rann of Kutch. This morning’s target was the MacQueen’s Bustard which can be found in this area. We made a number of stops en route which resulted in 4 Comb Ducks on a small lake while in the Acacia bushes on the side of the road a couple of Syke’s Warblers and the five species of shrike included Long-tailed, Southern Grey, Brown, Bay-backed and Isabelline. Three Jungle Bush Quails gave great views not far from the track as did a solitary Pied Cuckoo. Eleven Sarus and 50 Common Cranes were good value and some of the group had a male Besra.

However, the highlights of the morning were the six MacQueen’s Bustards, which although a little distant, eventually afforded decent views through the telescopes. In this area Brian found our only Desert Warbler of the tour and I was particularly pleased to catch up with this species at last. A party of larks included two or three Bimaculated and half a dozen Crested Larks. Ashy-crowned Sparrow Larks were very common. Two superb Hoopoe Larks was one of our targets and successfully tracked down.

Mammals included about 75 Asses and 6 Nilgai.

We returned back to the lodge for a superb lunch and after a short siesta we again boarded our now familiar jeeps and drove down the road checking some partially flooded fields for Coursers and Lapwings of different species. We found a total of 22 Indian Coursers, two Cream-coloured Coursers and three Yellow-wattled Lapwings. The hoped for Sociable Lapwings had not arrived and we heard later that a party of 19 were found but by this time we were in Kanha. A Saker, two more Sarus Cranes and 10 Pygmy Cotton Geese were added to the list.

Another great afternoon’s birding was followed by another great meal at the lodge after which some of the group went on a night drive. Just 8 Nilgai were seen and a superb Jungle Cat in our spot light

for at least two minutes. A very interesting animal in that it was a very rusty colour but the ringed black and white tail confirmed its identification. A Spotted Owlet was seen just outside the lodge.



### **Nov 7<sup>th</sup>**

After saying our goodbyes we left the lodge at about 8 o'clock. A couple of stops en route resulted in two Marshall's Ioras, a Wryneck, a Yellow-crowned Woodpecker and some Grey Francolins. A packed lunchstop at a service station produced a Rusty-tailed Flycatcher which is a migrant to these parts.

We eventually arrived at our accommodation, the Hotel Vishal International in Jamnagar late afternoon. After checking in we drove to Lakhota Lake in the middle of the city. My initial impression was that this was going to be a waste of time but nothing could be further from the truth. For a site in the middle of a city it was spectacular in its bird life and its human life also. Many hundreds of locals were much bemused by a troop of strangers with long lenses (scopes) and cameras and binoculars looking into the sky and across the lake and getting excited about what they knew not. The local press photographer turned up with a smart Nikon camera and took a group photo which apparently was published in the Jamnagar Times the following morning. Unfortunately we were unable to get a copy but our new celebrity status was now being recognised by the hotel staff. I wonder what the caption said.

Birds at the lake included Caspian, Whiskered, Gull-billed and River Tern, Great Black-headed, Brown and Black-headed Gulls, three Brahminy Kites, hundreds of Little Swifts and a dusk fell we were treated to a display of Rosy Starlings in their thousands flying in wave formations and constantly changing shape just like the winter Eurasian Starling displays recently televised back home. It was quite an incredible experience to watch, accompanied not by a piece of beautiful classical music, but loud car and tuk tuk horns which are so symbolic of this part of the world.

### **Nov 8<sup>th</sup>**

A long drive west to Okha at the estuary of the Gulf of Kutch was the order of the day. This area is full of huge lagoons which harbour many shore birds. En route we were treated to 3 separate Steppe Eagles and a lovely Long-legged Buzzard and thousands of Common and Demoiselle Cranes. The lagoons held most of our familiar waders as well as 5 Broad-billed Sandpipers, Greater and Lesser Sandpipers, hundreds of White and Dalmation Pelicans, a gigantic Black-necked Stork close to the road and about 60 Western Reef Egrets.

Other birds of interest included a Saker, a local race of Peregrine and an abundance of Black-winged Kites. Good views of an Indian Cuckoo provoked some discussion. A great evening meal and still no beer.

All today acquaintances of Ganesh were trying to get a permit for the Marine Park for tomorrow. We appear to have arrived in India during Diwali and that is not a good idea. Not only are all the middle-class Indians on the move but even the Indian bureaucracy grinds to a halt. However somehow they got us some form of a permit for tomorrow, although I am not convinced it was the real thing. We will find out tomorrow. We had come a long way specifically to see Crab Plovers and without this permit the chances were not good. One can book these permits in advance, but not for public holiday periods such these.

### **Nov 9<sup>th</sup>**

An early start to a very long day. We set off to the Marine Park with our packed breakfast which is actually the same as a packed lunch. On arrival after nearly 2 hours we discovered it was low tide and our target species were just visible about a mile away. We did some birding in the general area, returned to some lagoons we had passed on the way where we were able to study waders at close range. Curlew Sandpipers appeared to be the commonest wader. Glossy, Black and Black-headed Ibises were seen again today and egrets and herons were ubiquitous.

After breakfast we returned to the flats where the tide had come in some distance. We still had to walk out a little way to get closer to the water's edge enabling us to get crippling views of Crab Plover of which eventually 600 were counted. About 10 to 15 Terek Sandpipers fed close by and a variety of more familiar waders were added to the list. To see so many and some of the Crab Plovers

so well was quite an exceptional experience and one we will not forget in a hurry. Unfortunately we had to leave as we had a six hour drive in front of us and we had to get back to the hotel first.

Lunch at the hotel, checked out and back on the road. Six hours later we arrived at Gir Birding Lodge and were greeted by Pardep, the manager of the lodge and some of his staff. Just before we arrived at the lodge two female Asiatic Lions crossed the road in front of the bus and particularly the second one was well captured in the headlights. What a start! The first of the three big cats was in the bag! All we need now is a better view in daylight.

We were shown to our chalets in the grounds of the lodge and were told that we were the first visitors to ever use them. That was obvious, the paint was still wet and a few finishing touches would have to wait until our departure, such as water running through an electric point, but it was covered with a plastic bag. So that's OK then! I can just imagine an army of Indian labourers working until a few minutes before our arrival. It reminded me of one of these make-over programs we are constantly being treated to at home.

### **Nov 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup>**

Three night and two full days at Gir Birding Lodge were taken up by four safaris in search of Lions and Leopards. Not as easy as it sounds. It did not help that it was Diwali and far too many trucks with noisy local school children were entering the park. Any self-respecting cat would disappear well into the darkness of the forest. There must have been quite a lot of rain during the last monsoon as the forest was very green and very beautiful. Spotted Deer were in abundance and a majestic bull Nilgai allowed close approach and photography. Plenty of Sambar and Hanuman Langurs. Birds were good too with White-bellied Minivets stealing the show for those who have visited India before, being a lifer for all. White-eyed Buzzards, Crested Serpent Eagles, Shikras and Oriental Honey Buzzards were seen several occasions.

Three safaris over and still no cats by any of our four jeeps. I realise nothing is guaranteed but I felt that our tracker and driver were just going through the motions on our third safari. With the holiday period it is possible for them to get extra trade and therefore income. I told the lodge manager of my dissatisfaction and he obviously pulled some strings as our last safari was nothing short of fantastic. Firstly three of the four jeeps were very fortunate to get great views of a male Leopard as it walked through the open forest only to sit down on a ridge for a few minutes for most to see. While we were having this great experience the fourth jeep which had entered the park through another gate had great views of a male Lion as it walked right past their vehicle.

Towards the end of our safari we came across the Chief of the forest in his Landcruiser. He and his staff had found two male Lions which had not long fed and were lying on their backs in the forest out of sight of the track. We were escorted off the track into the forest and shown the cats as they snoozed after their meal. What a sight and a great photo opportunity. By the skin of our teeth we had bagged both targets. The right strings had been pulled. As I had pointed out, we had come a long way and I did not expect to be treated the way we were in the third safari.

The lesson to be learnt is to be patient and don't go during major public holidays. However the group were happy. A lunchtime walk had produced a Verditer Flycatcher and four Common Rosefinches.

Gir Birding Lodge is a great place to stay and the staff were magnificent and have to be thanked especially those who had queued from 3 in the morning to 2 the following afternoon in the sun without any food in order for us to get permits and the favoured route through the park where Lions were most likely. The same lads looked after our rooms, luggage and provided us with wonderful food. I can't recommend this lodge highly enough.

### **Nov 12<sup>th</sup>**

We reluctantly had to leave Gir this morning and drive to our next stop at the Narayani Heritage Hotel at Bhavnagar. We decided to change the itinerary slightly and visit the Velavadar National Park en route and what a good decision that was.

On arrival we only had about two hours before dusk left and so it was decided that we should do a walk with the local guide to an area where he knew Wolves may be found. Almost immediately Brian found a chat which we eventually identified as a Stoliczka's Bushchat although we never really got great views. We continued past numerous beautiful Blackbuck, many of which were photographed. Harriers were everywhere and this is the site of the world famous Harrier roost numbering sometimes in excess of a thousand birds. Marsh, Hen but mostly Pallid and Montagu's were all identified and hundreds were seen.

About half way along our walk we came across a lake on the far side of which we noticed a couple of Black Storks. While scoping these, a Wolf appeared and sat down on the shore of the lake. Eventually four different Wolves were seen and although quite distant, through scopes the distinctive pale face markings were clearly visible. What a result!

In the rush to get back to the centre where the Harrier roost is most visible the party got a little spread out. The last three of us were indeed fortunate to see a Vanellus wader fly by us and settle in front of us. We immediately recognised it as a Sociable Lapwing. In our attempt to call the others back the bird flew and eventually out of sight not to be seen again. A rare bird but obviously Gujarat holds a small wintering population of this species.

We returned to the centre and as dusk set in many Harriers could be seen although I feel we got there a little late and had missed the rush. Spectacular nevertheless. We boarded the bus and set off to our next accommodation in Bhavnagar. A very colonial affair where dinner was in the sister hotel which used to be a palace. Although showing the usual aristocratic tired edges, it was a magnificent setting to have our well deserved dinner. Shame about the wine, or lack of.

### **Nov 13<sup>th</sup>**

After breakfast we returned with our packed lunches and luggage to Velavadar and again parked the bus at the centre.

We decided to do a walk on the other side of the road to the one we did last night and although it was a very pleasant walk it was largely unproductive. However it was nice to stretch our legs as we had been sitting in buses and jeeps perhaps a little too long. Three Greater Spotted Eagles were seen well as were two Tawny Eagles. Another Besra was seen as were two Eurasian Sparrowhawks and another White-eyed Buzzard. Two Steppe Eagles and a pale phase Booted Eagle were noted en route.

We had our packed lunch at the centre after which we set off for Ahmedabad where we arrived back at the Royal Highness Hotel in the late afternoon.

We had a nice dinner again after which a few of us set out in tuk tuks to the Big Bazaar to supposedly do some shopping. Well OK for some. A ten minute ride turned out to be half an hour in my case, taking our lives in our hands, while dodging the traffic by missing other vehicles by no more than an inch and making emergency turns and stops. I don't know why I found it so funny, but when he stopped outside our destination which instead of being the Grand Bazaar but turned out to be the Burger Bar in the outskirts of the city, we just fell about laughing. So did the driver, but he did not really know why.

When we did eventually arrive at the Grand Bazaar the shops were closed. We had a coffee in an incredibly noisy coffee shop and returned home in another tuk tuk driven by a guy with a rather battered wooden leg. What a night! It is situations like these that make India such a fantastic country to visit. You never know what is round the corner, if you make the corner that is.

### **Nov 14<sup>th</sup>**

Our morning flight to Nagpur had been changed to a late afternoon flight which meant that not only did we have the morning to fill but we would be arriving at our final destination of Kanha in the middle of the night. Some people chose to do a guided city tour, which went horribly wrong when the guide failed to turn up. However they had a morning out in the city.

The rest of us chose to visit Indroda Nature Park which was about an hours drive from the hotel. A couple of hours here was quite rewarding and certainly added a few species to the list. As we arrived

a couple of Grey-headed Canary Flycatchers were found high above our heads, a species new for some of the group and always great to see. Greenish Warblers were everywhere and a little further up the path a female Black-headed Cuckooshrike was found. This was followed by two Common Woodshrikes and some Indian Golden Orioles which gave stunning views. About three Black-rumped Flamebacks came in very quickly when I started playing a tape of Jungle Owlet and most of the smaller passerines then got quite excited affording great views. The bird of the morning though was Sulphur-bellied Warbler of which three were seen characteristically feeding on the trunks of trees. A new species for all. It had been a cracking couple of hours, but we had to get back for lunch and the next leg of our journey.

We said goodbye to Ratan who became quite emotional as he saw us disappear into the airport. He is a real gentleman and an absolute pleasure to travel with. I am sure we will meet again. We then set off from Ahmedabad airport for the short flight to Nagpur where we were met by four taxis which were to take us to Kanha. We met up with Ganesh who the previous night had caught a train. He had just arrived, having travelled all night, and found enough time to buy the whole group a can of beer each and a packet of crisps. What a welcome!

We got on the road about 8pm and after a bit of quite fast driving we finally arrived at Krishna Lodge, Kanha at 01.30 the next morning. Small Indian Civet was seen on the way. We were welcomed by Sanjev, the manager of the lodge, and some of his staff and after a nice cup of coffee and some biscuits we were escorted to our rooms for some well-earned sleep in anticipation of our first safari the next morning.

### **Nov 15<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup>**

A total of eight safaris over four days were very rewarding if not a little frustrating at times. Again we were suffering from Diwali syndrome and far too many jeeps were sent into the park. But if the income from these jeeps goes towards conservation, then maybe we can live with it. Morning safaris started at 0515 from the lodge in order to get near the front of the queue at the park entrance. As appears standard in reserves one is given a specific loop and one has to stick to it. When completed the driver can do what he likes in the central zone but of course that is where all the other jeeps congregate. As a result of this most Tiger sightings tend to be in this area.

On the first evening drive one of our four jeeps had the first Tiger but unfortunately the light was fading and pictures were impossible. However the cat was in the bag. The next day another jeep had one and to top this they also found a Leopard high up in a tree.

My jeep and fellow passengers had some great drives but had literally seen nothing on the mammal front. Tales of Wild Dogs, Swamp Deer or Barasingha did not help to lift the spirits. Finally on the fifth drive on the third day we were very fortunate in coming across a whole load of vehicles where obviously a big cat had been located. Eventually a male Tiger came out of the forest, crossed the grassland and walked right across the road in front of us. My guide had very cleverly got the jeep drivers to manoeuvre their vehicles to create a large gap in front of our jeep to allow the animal a way through. Photos were possible. Unfortunately this cat had a collar and although obviously wild, it spoilt the experience a little. Three of our jeeps were there to see this magnificent animal.

We all returned to the car park to have our packed breakfast. This is where the "Tiger Show" is coordinated from should the elephant drivers find a Tiger at rest in the forest. After a long wait our number came up and we were sent out into the jungle to board Elephants and be taken to another male Tiger at rest on the forest floor. He turned out to be the brother of the first one. Unfortunately only two of our four jeeps got the chance to take part as the big cat got up and walked off into the depths of the forest but not before some great photos were taken from both the Elephant and subsequently from a following jeep as it wandered off up the sandtrack and eventually into the forest.

It was unfortunate that there was only one show during our four day stay which is very unusual, but then that is nature and one can not control that.

Other mammals in the forest were Dhole or Wild Dog, which are not easy to see although at Kanha they are not too shy, small herds of Gaur, the ancient and largest and very dangerous wild cattle,

Muntjac, Swamp, Spotted, Sambar Deer, and Nilgai. Wild Boar were seen from time to time and Jackal were present in small numbers.

On the last morning we had great views of a Jungle Cat in the grassland which was a very different colour to the one seen in Gujarat, being more the usual grey tones.

There were interesting birds in the park too but all too often we passed them by as our focus was really on big cats. However there were sightings of Indian and White-rumped Vultures, Crested Hawk Eagles and Crested Serpent Eagles, Indian Scops Owl, Jungle and Spotted Owlets. Woodpeckers were represented by Streak-throated, White-naped, Brown-capped Pygmy Woodpecker, Black-rumped and Greater Flameback.

Interesting waders included five Greater Painted Snipe and a couple of Greater Thick-knees. There were two sightings of Sirkeer Malkoha but it looks like I have to do some more trips to catch up with this one. This has now been recorded on four of my tours without me even having a sniff of one!

On our final day we went for a walk along the road down to the river where we added just a few more species to the list. Asian Pied Starling, Blue Rock Thrush and Black-naped Monarch and Golden-fronted Leafbird.

Krishna Lodge is a great place to stay when visiting Kanha. Very friendly, great rooms, staff and food and Sanjev the manager was of great help in planning our safaris as was the lodge naturalist Kamal. I can highly recommend this as a place to stay.

We were sad to leave and so after saying our goodbyes we set off in four taxis again, this time, to Jabalpur. After two to three hours we arrived at Krishna Hotel where we had a sumptuous lunch before being taken to the station where we were bundled on to the train into our pre-booked 2<sup>nd</sup> class A/C sleepers. Soon we were off on our 15 hour overnight journey to Delhi which turned out fairly uneventful and despite the noise of screaming kids and slamming doors we all arrived at our destination having had at least some sleep.

## **Nov 20<sup>th</sup>**

We arrived in Delhi at 0745, just half an hour late, and were met on the platform by Igbal, the representative of Asian Adventures. He was the same guy as met us two years ago. He escorted us to our vehicles and off we went to the same hotel as two years ago, Hotel Sunstar somewhere in the middle of Delhi.

On our journey to the hotel it was obvious that there has been a concerted effort to clean the city up over the last two years. People living under the Metro Fly-over have moved on, a great deal of litter has been removed and people were noted sweeping the streets. I don't know how they are going to get rid of the smoke from the cooking fires which fills the air. However those who had been before noticed a distinct improvement.

After breakfast of egg and "smoky" bacon on the roof of the hotel amongst the fug of the city we set off to Okhla Barrage to do some more birding. After much negotiation with the guy at the entrance we finally got underway. An area of Elephant grass produced a few new species for the trip including Striated Babbler, Red Avadavat, Black-breasted Weaver while 50+ Yellow-footed Green Pigeons and an Egyptian Vulture flew over.

Not that we needed lunch but we had been invited by our ground agents to attend in a splendid very up-market hotel where some of us felt a little "under-dressed". Very nice it was too, but we needed to get out and do some more birding on our last day and walk off some of our intake.

We returned to a wetter part of the Barrage where some large lakes were scanned for waterfowl. There were a number of duck including Red-crested Pochard and a couple of Ruddy Shelduck, Spoonbills, 300 Black-tailed Godwits flew over, Black and Brown-headed Gulls and along the river two splendid White-tailed Lapwings. Just as we were about to leave someone spotted a large falcon high up on an electricity pylon. We scoped it for some time before eventually deciding it was a Laggar Falcon which was a new bird for everybody on the trip. What a finish to a tour.

It was now nearly dark as we returned to our bus and the hotel. After a wash and brush-up we were treated to yet another splendid meal by Mohit of Asian Adventures in a smart restaurant. This time we could have a wine and a beer. What a treat!

We said our goodbyes and thank yous to Mohit, and wandered back to the hotel. We retired and did our last bit of packing in readiness for our flight back to London tomorrow. Well so we thought!

### **Nov 21<sup>st</sup>**

The bus picked us up after a late breakfast. Some people even found time to do some shopping. We arrived well in time for our 13.45 flight with Virgin Atlantic flight to London. However after checking in and proceeding to the departure lounge (if you can call it that) and then on to the gate we were eventually told that the flight had been delayed. There was not much to eat and drink in this place as the whole terminal building is undergoing a re-furbishment program which made an extended wait not much fun. Eventually we were informed that the technical problem could not be sorted in time and our flight was to be cancelled.

After much further waiting and wrangling with airport handling staff we were eventually bussed to the Intercontinental Hotel on the outskirts of Delhi for the night. This was a fantastic hotel with a great coffee bar serving a huge variety of lovely food to which we were treated. Whilst it was a whole day's delay, those of us who did not have to go to work on our return enjoyed the luxury and comfort of this hotel.

### **Nov 22<sup>nd</sup>**

A day late, but we were picked up again after breakfast, bussed back to the airport where the chaos seemed to continue. However we eventually got away 27 hours late and after a fairly uneventful flight back we arrived in London late but met by our re-scheduled bus and taken back to our respective destinations. Thank the Lord for mobile phones!



## SYSTEMATIC LIST

The nomenclature and taxonomy and order used in this list follows the new Field Guide by Rasmussen and Anderton, 'Birds of South Asia- The Ripley Guide' published by the Smithsonian Institution in association with Lynx Edicions Washington DC and Barcelona 2005.

The old names as used in the checklist and in Grimmett and Inskipp are in parenthesis where appropriate.

- Black-necked Grebe** (*Podiceps nigricollis*) One on one of the lakes along the Gulf of Kutch coast  
**Little Grebe** (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*)  
**Dalmation Pelican** (*Pelecanus crispus*) Hundreds along the Gulf of Kutch coast and another nine in the Marine Park the next morning  
**Great White Pelican** (*Pelecanus onocrotalus*) Forty in the Little Rann of Kutch and many hundreds along the Gulf of Kutch coast  
**Indian Shag** (Indian Cormorant) (*Phalacrocorax fuscicollis*)  
**Great Cormorant** (*Phalacrocorax carbo*)  
**Little Cormorant** (*Phalacrocorax niger*) A single in Gujarat and one or two in Kanha  
**Oriental Darter** (Anhinga) (*Anhinga melanogaster*) Two singles in Gujarat  
**Western Reef Heron** (Western Reef Egret) (*Egretta gularis*) Maximum of 60 along the Gulf coast  
**Little Egret** (*Egretta garzetta*)  
**Great Egret** (*Egretta alba*)  
**Intermediate Egret** (*Egretta intermedia*)  
**Eastern Cattle Egret** (Cattle Egret B. ibis) (*Bubulcus coromandus*)  
**Grey Heron** (*Ardea cinerea*)  
**Purple Heron** (*Ardea purpurea*) Between one and ten on four dates in Gujarat  
**Indian Pond Heron** (*Ardeola grayii*)  
**Striated Heron** (Little Heron) (*Butorides striata*)  
**Asian Openbill** (*Anastromus oscitans*) A single in the Little Rann of Kutch  
**Woolly-necked Stork** (*Ciconia episcopus*) Up to three on four dates  
**Painted Stork** (*Mycteria leucocephalus*) Common in Gujarat  
**Black Stork** (*Ciconia nigra*) Two at Velvadar and up to four on four dates at Kanha  
**Black-necked Stork** (*Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus*) A single in the Gulf of Kutch  
**Glossy Ibis** (*Plegadis falcinellus*) Seen on three dates with a maximum of 26 in Gujarat  
**Black-headed Ibis** (*Threskiornis melanocephalus*) Common in Gujarat  
**Indian Black Ibis** (*Pseudibis papillosa*) Small numbers throughout  
**Eurasian Spoonbill** (*Platalea leucorodia*) Small numbers in Gujarat with 100 or so at the Little Rann of Kutch being the maximum and four at Okhla barrage  
**Lesser Adjutant** (*Leptoptilos javanicus*) A single on three dates at Kanha  
**Lesser Flamingo** (*Phoeniconaias minor*) About 20 mixed with a huge flock of Greater Flamingos at the Little Rann of Kutch  
**Greater Flamingo** (*Phoenicopterus roseus*) Encountered in small numbers in Gujarat and a flock in the soda lake in the Little Rann of Kutch must have numbered several thousand  
**Greylag Goose** (*Anser anser*)  
**Lesser Whistling Duck** (*Dendrocygna javanica*) Fairly common  
**Ruddy Shelduck** (*Tadoma ferruginea*) Four on a sandbank in the river en route to Ahmedabad from Bhavnagar and another two at Okhla  
**Comb Duck** (*Sarkidiornis melanotos*) Four and a single in Gujarat  
**Common Teal** (*Anas crecca*)  
**Garganey** (*Anas querquedula*)  
**Gadwall** (*Anas strepera*)

**Eurasian Wigeon** (*Anas penelope*)  
**Northern Shoveler** (*Anas clypeata*)  
**Northern Pintail** (*Anas acuta*)  
**Indian Spot-billed Duck** (*Anas poecilorhyncha*)  
**Tufted Duck** (*Aythya fulgula*)  
**Red-crested Pochard** (*Netta rufina*) A single male at Okhla  
**Cotton Teal** (Cotton Pygmy goose) (*Nettapus coromandelianus*) Ten in Gujarat and two or three at Kanha  
**Black-winged Kite** (Black-shouldered Kite) (*Elanus caeruleus*) Particularly common in Gujarat but also seen in Kanha in small numbers  
**Brahminy Kite** (*Haliastur Indus*) Three at Lakhota Lake in Jamnagar  
**Black Kite** (*Milvus migrans*)  
**Besra Sparrowhawk** (Besra) (*Accipiter virgatus*) Two singles in Gujarat  
**Shikra** (*Accipiter badius*)  
**Eurasian Sparrowhawk** (*Accipiter nisus nisosimilis*) Two at Velavadar  
**Steppe Buzzard** (Common Buzzard) (*Buteo buteo vulpinus*) One in Gujarat  
**Long-legged Buzzard** (*Buteo rufinus*) One in Gujarat  
**Oriental Honey Buzzard** (*Pernis ptilorhynchus*)  
**White-eyed Buzzard** (*Butastur teesa*) Seven individuals in Gujarat  
**Crested Serpent Eagle** (*Spilornis cheela*) Three in Gujarat and two to three daily in Kanha  
**Short-toed Eagle** (*Circaetus gallicus*) Two singles in Gujarat  
**Booted Eagle** (*Hieraetus pennatus*) One pale phase bird in Gujarat  
**Crested Hawk Eagle** (Changeable Hawk Eagle) (*Spizaetus cirrhatus*) A single in Gujarat and two or three daily in Kanha  
**Greater Spotted Eagle** (*Aquila clanga*) Three at Velavadar  
**Steppe Eagle** (*Aquila nipalensis*) Three en route in Gujarat and another two near Velavadar  
**Tawny Eagle** (*Aquila rapax*) Two together at Velavadar  
**Osprey** (*Pandion halliatus*) Just one single along the Gulf coast  
**White-rumped Vulture** (*Gyps bengalensis*) Between one and five on four dates at Kanha  
**Indian Vulture** (Long-billed Vulture) (*Gyps indicus*) Two singles at Kanha  
**Egyptian Vulture** (*Neophron percnopterus*) Four in the Little Rann of Kutch and a single at Okhla  
**Montagu's Harrier** (*Circus pygargus*) Eight in the Little Rann of Kutch and hundreds at Velavadar, most not separable from the next species  
**Pallid Harrier** (*Circus macrourus*) Small numbers throughout Gujarat and hundreds in Velavadar but mixed in with the previous species  
**Hen Harrier** (*Circus cyaneus*) A single ringtail on our first visit to Velavadar and two or three there the next morning  
**Western Marsh Harrier** (*Circus aeruginosus*) Common in Gujarat and one at Okhla  
**Lesser Kestrel** (*Falco naumanni*) Two in the Little Rann of Kutch  
**Common Kestrel** (*Falco tinnunculus*)  
**Eurasian Hobby** (*Falco subbuteo*) One at Rann Riders  
**Red-headed Falcon** (Red-necked Falcon) (*Falco chicquera*) One en route to Rann Riders  
**Peregrine Falcon** (*Falco peregrinus calidus*) A single along the Gulf coast  
**Laggar Falcon** (*Falco jugger*) A single juvenile at Okhla  
**Saker Falcon** (*Falco cherrug cherrug*) Two singles in Gujarat  
**Grey Francolin** (*Francolinus pondicerianus*)  
**Common Quail** (*Coturnix coturnix*) Two in Gujarat  
**Jungle Bush Quail** (*Perdica asiatica*) Three in the Little Rann of Kutch and six in Kanha  
**Red Junglefowl** (*Gallus gallus*) Up to six a day in Kanha  
**Indian Peafowl** (*Pavo cristatus*)  
**Common Crane** (*Grus grus*) Thousands in Gujarat

**Demoiselle Crane** (*Grus virgo*) Fifty in the Little Rann of Kutch and thousands further north towards Jamnagar

**Sarus Crane** (*Grus antigone*) Eleven in the Little Rann of Kutch area



**Houbara/Mac Queen's Bustard** (*Chlamydotis undulata/macqueenii*)

Split by some into two full species but Rasmussen quotes the following:

“Regional form macqueenii recently considered a distinct species from *C. undulata* on basis of differing plumage (especially display plumes), display features and vocalisations. However, further study is required (and is in progress) especially at the presumed contact zone.”Rasmussen 2005

A winter visitor to the Little Rann of Kutch where six were seen although perhaps a little distant. However reasonable views were possible with the aid of telescopes.

**White-breasted Waterhen** (*Amaurornis phoenicurus*)

**Purple Swampphen** (*Porphyrio poliocephalus*) Three near Dasada and 6 at Okhla

**Common Moorhen** (*Gallinula chloro[pu]*)

**Eurasian Coot** (*Fulica atra*)

*Shorebirds:* most were seen on the Gulf of Kutch coast where huge pools exist at the end of the Gulf. The Marine Park near Jamnagar was also stuffed with waders and that is where the 600 or so Crab Plovers were seen.

**Greater Painted Snipe** (*Rostratula benghalensis*) Five at Kanha

**Common Snipe** (*Gallinago gallinago*)

**Crab Plover** (*Dromas ardeola*)

**Pied Avocet** (*Recurvirostra avocetta*)

**Black-winged Stilt** (*Himantopus himantopus*)

**Eurasian Oystercatcher** (*Haematopus ostralegus*)

**Pheasant-tailed Jacana** (*Hydrophasianus chirugus*)

**Cream-coloured Courser** (*Cursorius cursor*) Two in with Indian Coursers at Dasada

**Indian Courser** (*Cursorius coromandelicus*) Flocks of 7, 22, 2 and 16 all in Gujarat

**Great Thick-knee** (*Esacus recurvirostris*) Two in Kanha

**Indian Stone-Curlew** (Indian Thick-knee) (*Burhinus indicus*) Up to six in Gujarat and a single in Kanha on a night drive

**Red-wattled Lapwing** (*Vanellus indicus*)

**Yellow-wattled Lapwing** (*Vanellus malabaricus*) Three and two in Gujarat

**Sociable Plover** (*Vanellus gregarius*) A single at Velavadar

**White-tailed Lapwing** (*Vanellus leucurus*) Two at Okhla

**Grey Plover** (*Pluvialis squatarola*)

**Pacific Golden Plover** (*Pluvialis fulva*)

**Greater Sand Plover** (*Charadrius leschenaultii*)

**Lesser Sand Plover** (*Charadrius mongolus*)

**Little Ringed Plover** (*Charadrius dubius*)

**Kentish Plover** (*Charadrius alexandrinus*)

**Eurasian Curlew** (*Numenius arquata*)

**Whimbrel** (*Numenius phaeopus*)

**‘Western’ Black-tailed Godwit** (*Limosa limosa*) Common in Gujarat and a flock of 300 flew over at Okhla

**Bar-tailed Godwit** (*Limosa lapponica*)

**Terek Sandpiper** (*Xenus cinereus*) About ten at Jamnagar

**Common Greenshank** (*Tringa nebularia*)

**Wood Sandpiper** (*Tringa glareola*)

**Green Sandpiper** (*Tringa ochropus*)

**Common Sandpiper** (*Tringa hypoleucos*)

**Marsh Sandpiper** (*Tringa stagnatillis*)

**Common Redshank** (*Tringa tetanus*)

**Spotted Redshank** (*Tringa erythropus*)

**Ruddy Turnstone** (*Arenaria interpres*)

**Broad-billed Sandpiper** (*Limicola falcinellus*) Five at Jamnagar

**Ruff** (*Philomachus pugnax*) Probably the commonest wader away from the coast in Gujarat

**Curlew Sandpiper** (*Calidris ferruginea*)

**Dunlin** (*Calidris alpina*)

**Temminck’s Stint** (*Calidris temminckii*)

**Little Stint** (*Calidris minuta*)

**Sanderling** (*Calidris alba*)

**‘Steppe’ Gull** (*Larus heuglini barabensis*) The large gulls assigned to Yellow-legged Gulls at Jamnagar were likely to have been the above but the taxonomy of this group of gulls is still very much in the ‘melting pot’

**Great Black-headed Gull** (Pallas’ Gull) (*Larus ichthyaetus*) A single adult at Lakhota Lake in Jamnagar

**Slender-billed Gull** (*Larus genei*)

**Brown-headed Gull** (*Larus brunnicephalus*)

**Common Black-headed Gull** (*Larus ridibudus*)

**Little/Saunders’s Tern** (*Sterna albifrons/saundersi*) All birds at Jamnagar were in first winter plumage and were therefore inseparable

**Common Tern** (*Sterna hirundo*) Just two in Gujarat

**Gull-billed Tern** (*Gelochelidon nilotica*)

**River Tern** (*Sterna aurantia*)

**Lesser Crested Tern** (*Thalasseus bengalensis*) A flock of 26 in the Marine Park

**Caspian Tern** (*Hydroprogne caspia*) Up to 30 along the Gulf Coast

**Whiskered Tern** (*Chlidonias hybrida*)

**Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse** (*Pterocles exustus*) 12, 8 and 4 in Gujarat

**Rock Pigeon** (*Columba livia*)  
**Oriental Turtle Dove** (*Streptopelia orientalis*)  
**Laughing Dove** (*Streptopelia senegalensis*)  
**Red Collared Dove** (*Streptopelia tranquebarica*)  
**Spotted Dove** (*Streptopelia chinensis*)  
**Eurasian Collared Dove** (*Streptopelia decaocto*)  
**Yellow-footed Green Pigeon** (*Treron phoenicopterus chlorigaster*)  
**Plum-headed Parakeet** (*Psittacula cyanocephala*)  
**Rose-ringed Parakeet** (*Psittacula krameri*)  
**Alexandrine Parakeet** (*Psittacula eupatria*)  
**Jacobin Cuckoo** (Pied Cuckoo) (*Clamator jacobinus*) Excellent views of one on the side of the road in the Little Rann of Kutch  
**Asian Koel** (*Eudynamys scolopaceus*)  
**Indian Cuckoo** (*Cuculus micropterus*) A single in Gujarat where it is a summer migrant but still out of range  
**Sirkeer Malkoha** (*Taccocua leschenaultia*) Two singles at Kanha  
**'Southern' Coucal** (*Centropus (sinensis) parroti*). A potential split from Greater Coucal (*Centropus sinensis*)  
**Indian Scops Owl** (*Otus bakkamoena*) A single and two in one hole at Kanha  
**Spotted Owlet** (*Athene brama*) Common throughout  
**Jungle Owlet** (*Glaucidium radiatum*) Very common at Kanha  
**Savannah Nightjar** (*Caprimulgus affinis*) One seen in Gujarat and another heard at Kanha  
**Crested Treeswift** (*Hemiprogne coronata*)  
**Indian White-rumped Spinetail** (White-rumped Needletail) (*Zoonavena sylvatica*)  
A flock of about 30 at Kanha  
**Little Swift** (*Apus affinis*)  
**Indian Roller** (*Coracias benghalensis*)  
**Common Hoopoe** (*Upupa epops*)  
**White-throated Kingfisher** (*Halcyon smyrnensis*)  
**Lesser Pied Kingfisher** (*Ceryle rudis*)  
**Common Kingfisher** (*Alcedo atthis*)  
**Chestnut-headed Bee-eater** (*Merops leschenaultia*) Two in the Little Rann of Kutch  
**Blue-tailed Bee-eater** (*Merops philippinus*) Three in the Little Rann of Kutch  
**Little Green Bee-eater** (*Merops orientalis*)  
**Indian Grey Hornbill** (*Ocyeros birostris*)  
**Coppersmith Barbet** (*Megalaima haemacephala*)  
**Brown-headed Barbet** (*Megalaima zeylandica*)  
**Eurasian Wryneck** (*Jynx torquilla*) A single in Gujarat  
**Indian Pygmy (Brown-capped Pygmy) Woodpecker** (*Dendrocopos nanus*) Up to 10 in Kanha  
**Yellow-fronted Pied Woodpecker** (Yellow-crowned) (*Dendrocopos mahrattensis*) One or two in Gujarat  
**Streak-throated Woodpecker** (*Picus viridanus*) Two or three in Kanha  
**Black-rumped Flameback** (*Dinopium benghalense*)  
**White-naped Flameback** (*Chrysocolaptes festivus*) One in Kanha  
**Greater Flameback** (*Chrysocolaptes lucidus*) Between two and six in Kanha  
**Crested Lark** (*Galerida cristata*) Six and a single in Gujarat  
**Ashy-crowned Finch-lark** (Sparrow-lark) (*Eremopterix griseus*) Very common in Gujarat  
**Bimaculated Lark** (*Melanocorypha bimaculata*) Three in the Little Rann of Kutch  
**Greater Hoopoe Lark** (*Alaemon alaudipes*) Two in the Little Rann of Kutch gave stunning views  
**Rufous-tailed Lark** (*Ammomanes phoenicura*) Very common in the Little Rann of Kutch  
**Greater Short-toed Lark** (*Calandrella brachydactyla longipennis*) Also very common in the Little Rann of Kutch and seen in large flocks throughout the desert areas

**Grey-throated Sand-martin** (*Riparia chinensis*) (Plain Martin *R. paludicola*)  
 Just four in Gujarat and many at Okhla

**Dusky Crag Martin** (*Ptyonoprogne rupestris*) Small numbers in Gujarat

**Barn Swallow** (*Hirundo rustica*)

**House Martin** (*Delichon urbicum*) One with large flock of mixed hirundines at Kanha was most likely of this species

**Red-rumped Swallow** (*Hirundo daurica*) Only seen in Gujarat

**Wire-tailed Swallow** (*Hirundo smithii*) Small numbers throughout

**Yellow Wagtail** (*Motacilla flava thunbergi/beema*) Twenty and three on two dates in Gujarat were mostly thunbergi (grey-headed) but some were indeterminate races.

**Grey Wagtail** (*Motacilla cinerea*)

**Citrine Wagtail** (*Motacilla citreola*) Three singles and ten in Gujarat

**White Wagtail** (*Motacilla alba*)

**White-browed Wagtail** (*Motacilla maderaspetensis*) Two in both Gujarat and Kanha were the only records

**Paddyfield Pipit** (*Anthus rufulus*) Just two singles in Gujarat

**Tawny Pipit** (*Anthus campestris*) A few in Gujarat

**Long-billed Pipit** (*Anthus similis*) Three at Velavadar

**Common Woodshrike** (*Tephrodornis pondicerianus*) Up to three on four dates

**Black-headed Cuckooshrike** (*Coracina melanoptera*) A single female in Indroda Nature Park near Ahmedabad

**Large Cuckooshrike** (*Coracina macei*) Up to three on four dates in Kanha

**Scarlet Minivet** (*Pericrocotus speciosus*) (was *P. flammeus*)

**White-bellied Minivet** (*Pericrocotus erythropygus*) Six and four on consecutive days in the Gir Forest

**Small Minivet** (*Pericrocotus cinnamomeus*) One or two on four days

**Red-vented Bulbul** (*Pycnonotus cafer*)

**Red-whiskered Bulbul** (*Pycnonotus jocosus*) Four in Kanha and two at Okhla

**White-eared Bulbul** (*Pycnonotus leucogenys*) Up to a dozen on five dates in Gujarat

**Common Iora** (*Aegithina tiphia*) up to five on five dates

**Marshall's Iora** (*Aegithina nigrolutea*) Four on two dates in Gujarat gave great views

**Gold-fronted Leafbird** (*Chloropsis aurifrons*) Two and four near the river at Kanha

**'Rufous-backed' Long-tailed Shrike** (*Lanius schach erythronotus*)

**Southern Grey Shrike** (*Lanius meridionalis*) Three in the Little Rann of Kutch

**Brown Shrike** (*Lanius cristatus*) Small numbers throughout

**Isabelline Shrike** (*Lanius isabellinus*) Two singles and a three in Gujarat

**Bay-backed Shrike** (*Lanius vittatus*) Small numbers seen daily in Gujarat

**Black-naped Blue Monarch** (*Hypothymis azurea*) One and two by the river at Kanha

**Asian Paradise Flycatcher** (*Terpsiphone paradise*) Up to three on four dates

**White-browed Fantail** (*Rhipidura aureola*) Up to four in Gujarat

**Blue Rock-thrush** (*Monticola solitarius*) A single by the river at Kanha

**Orange-headed Thrush** (*Zoothera citrina*) Four on just one drive at Kanha

**Bluethroat** (*Luscinia svecica*) Six at the Little Rann of Kutch and a single elsewhere in Gujarat

**White-rumped Shama** (*Copsychus malabaricus*) One or two in Kanha

**Oriental Magpie Robin** (*Copsychus saularis*)

**Indian Black Robin** (*Saxicoloides fulicatus*)

**Brown Rock-chat** (*Cercomela fusca*) A pair one on rooftops on the last day in Delhi whilst having breakfast on the roof of our hotel was our only sighting

**Black Redstart** (*Phoenicurus ochruros*)

**Isabelline Wheatear** (*Oenanthe isabellina*) One or two on five days in Gujarat

**Desert Wheatear** (*Oenanthe deserti deserti*) Six and two in Gujarat

**Variable Wheatear** (*Oenanthe picata picata*) One or two on three dates in Gujarat

**Pied Bushchat** (*Saxicola caprata*)

**Common Stonechat** (*Saxicola torquatus indicus/maurus*)

**White-browed Bushchat** (Stoliczka's Bushchat) (*Saxicola macrorhyncha*) One at Velavadar gave only brief views

**Rusty-tailed Flycatcher** (*Muscicapa ruficauda*) One at a lunch stop in Gujarat gave excellent and prolonged views

**Red-throated Flycatcher** (*Ficedula albicilla*) One or two in Gujarat but up to five daily in Kanha

**Tickell's Blue Flycatcher** (*Cyornis tickelliae*) One or two on two dates both in Gujarat and Kanha

**Grey-headed Canary Flycatcher** (*Culicicapa ceylonensis*) Two in Gujarat and two singles in Kanha

**Verditer Flycatcher** (*Eumyias thalassinus*) Just one bird in Gujarat

**Tawny-bellied Babbler** (*Dumetia hyperythra*) A group of four in Gir Forest

**Common Babbler** (*Turdoides caudata*) Common in Gujarat

**Striated Babbler** (*Turdoides earlei*) Five at Okhla are well out of range and appears to be an isolated population

**Large Grey Babbler** (*Turdoides malcolmi*) Common in Gujarat

**Jungle Babbler** (*Turdoides striata*) Common throughout

**Indian Scimitar Babbler** (*Pomatorhinus horsfieldii*) One plus two heard in Kanha

**Brown-cheeked Fulvetta** (*Alcippe poioicephala*) Up to 20 on four dates in Kanha

**Zitting Cisticola** (*Cisticola juncidis*) Up to ten throughout

**Ashy Prinia** (*Prinia socialis*) Two singles in Gujarat and four at Okhla

**Grey-breasted Prinia** (*Prinia hodgsonii*) Three and four in Gujarat and a single in Kanha

**Plain Prinia** (*Prinia inornata*) Common throughout

**Indian Reed Warbler** (Clamorous Reed Warbler) (*Acrocephalus (stentopreus) brunnescens*) Up to two on three dates in Gujarat

**Blyth's Reed Warbler** (*Acrocephalus dumetorum*) Common in Gujarat

**Paddyfield Warbler** (*Acrocephalus agricola*) A single in the little Rann of Kutch

**Sykes's Warbler** (Split from Booted Warbler) (*Hippolais rama*) Two and a single in Gujarat

**Common Tailorbird** (*Orthotormus sutorius*)

**Siberian Chiffchaff** (*Phylloscopus (collybita) tristis*) A split/race from Common Chiffchaff of which up to three on three dates were seen in Gujarat

**Sulphur-bellied Warbler** (*Phylloscopus griseolus*) Three in the Indroda Nature Park near Ahmedabad were new for all on the trip

**Greenish Warbler** (*Phylloscopus trochiloides viridanus*) Fairly common throughout

**Hume's Leaf-warbler** (*Phylloscopus humei*) Three in the Indroda Nature Park

**Eastern Orphean Warbler** (*Sylvia crassirostris*) Up to six on three dates in Gujarat and a single at Kanha

**Asian Desert Warbler** (*Sylvia nana*) Good views of a single of this lovely species in the Little Rann of Kutch

**Lesser Whitethroat** (*Sylvia curruca halimodendri*) Up to ten in Gujarat on five dates

**Great Tit** (*Parus major*)

**Velvet-fronted Nuthatch** (*Sitta frontalis*) Two in Kanha

**Thick-billed Flowerpecker** (*Dicaeum agile*) Up to three in Gir Forest on two dates

**Purple Sunbird** (*Cinnyris asiaticus*) was (*Nectarinis asiatica*) Fairly common throughout

**Black-headed Bunting** (*Emberiza melanocephala*) A male in the little Rann of Kutch

**Grey-necked Bunting** (*Emberiza buchanani*) A single female in Gujarat

**Common Rosefinch** (*Carpodactus erythrinus roseatus*) Four behind the Gir Birding Lodge was the only record

**Red Avadavat** (*Amandava amandava*) Small numbers in Kanha and Okhla

**Tricoloured Munia** (Black-headed) (*Lonchura Malacca*) Two males at Okhla

**Indian Silverbill** (*Eurodice malabarica*) Small numbers throughout

**White-rumped Munia** (*Lonchura striata striata*) Six at Kanha

**Scaly-breasted Munia** (*Lonchura punctulata*) Up to a dozen in Gujarat and small numbers in Kanha and there was a flock of 50 at Okhla

**House Sparrow** (*Passer domesticus*)

**Yellow-throated Sparrow** (Chestnut-shouldered Petronia) (*Petronia xanthocolis*) Up to six on many days in Gujarat

**'Indian' Baya Weaver** (*Ploceus philippinus philippinus*) Huge numbers one day in the Little Rann of Kutch

**Black-breasted Weaver** (*Ploceus benghalensis*) A flock of 20 in the Little Rann of Kutch and a single male at Okhla

**Indian Golden Oriole** (*Oriolus kundoo*) Split from European Golden Oriole. Up to four in Gujarat on two dates and up to six on three dates in Kanha and a single at Okhla

**Black-hooded Oriole** (*Oriolus xanthornus*) Up to six daily in Kanha

**Black Drongo** (*Dicrurus macrocercus*)

**Ashy Drongo** (*Dicrurus leucophaeus*) Up to six on three dates in Gujarat

**White-bellied Drongo** (*Dicrurus caerulescens*) Common in Kanha

**Greater Racket-tailed Drongo** (*Dicrurus paradiseus*) Common in Kanha

**Hair-crested Drongo** (Spangled Drongo) (*Dicrurus hottentottus*) A single in Kanha

**Brahminy Starling** (*Temenuchus pagodarum*) Fairly common in Gujarat

**Rosy Starling** (*Sturnus roseus*) Very common in Gujarat. We were treated to a huge "wave/dance" display at dusk at Lakhota Lake in Jamnagar involving many thousands of birds

**Asian Pied Starling** (*Gracupica contra*) Four at Kanha and another four at Okhla were the only sightings

**Bank Myna** (*Acridotheres ginginianus*) Up to 15 in Gujarat on five dates

**Common Myna** (*Acridotheres tristis*)

**Jungle Myna** (*Acridotheres fuscus*) Two on consecutive dates in Kanha

**House Crow** (*Corvus splendens*)

**Indian Jungle Crow** (Large-billed Crow) (*Corvus (macrorhynchos) culminates*)

**Rufous Treepie** (*Dendrocitta vagabunda*)

## MAMMALS

The nomenclature and order of mammals are as those used in the Field Guide to Indian Mammals by Vivek Menon published by Dorling Kindersley (India) Pvt Ltd 2003.

**Hanuman Langur** (*Semnopithecus entellus*)

**Sambar** (*Cervus unicolor*)

**Swamp Deer** (*Cervus duvaucelii*) Up to 12 on three dates at Kanha of this very rare deer

**Indian Muntjac** (*Munticanus muntjak*) Two singles at Kanha

**Spotted Deer** (*Axis axis*)

**Nilgai** (*Boselaphus tragocamelus*) Common in Gujarat

**Blackbuck** (*Antelope cervicapra*) Ten near the Little Rann of Kutch and 60 and 30 at Velavadar

**Gaur** (*Bos gaurus*) Up to 30 at Kanha on a daily basis

**Wild Pig** (*Sus scrofa*)

**Asiatic Wild Ass** (*Equus onager*) 22 and 75 in the Little Rann of Kutch

**Jackal** (*Canis aureus*)

**Wolf** (*Canis lupus*) Four at Velavadar in the late afternoon was a great surprise

**Wild Dog** (*Cuon alpinus*) Packs of 7, 9 and 5 at Kanha

**Desert Fox** (*Vulpes vulpes pusilla*) Two in the headlights at the Little Rann of Kutch

**Tiger** (*Panthera tigris*) Four sightings over three days at Kanha were all males

**Asiatic Lion** (*Panthera leo*) Two females crossed the road as we arrived at Gir and two males were seen on our last safari

**Common Leopard** (*Panthera pardus*) Singles in Gir and Kanha, the first of which gave stunning views

**Desert Cat** (*Felis sylvestris*) A single in the headlights at the Little Rann of Kutch  
**Jungle Cat** (*Felis chaus*) One lamped Rann Riders and another on our last drive in Kanha  
**Small Indian Civet** (*Viverricula indica*) One in the headlights en route to Kanha from Nagpur  
**Grey Mongoose** (*Herpestes edwardsii*)  
**Small Indian Mongoose** (*Herpestes javanicus*)  
**Indian Hare** (*Lepus nigricollis*)  
**Five-striped Palm Squirrel** (*Funambulus pennantii*)  
**Indian Flying Fox** (*Pteropus giganteus*)

## POSTSCRIPT

This was our tenth trip to the Indian Subcontinent and as usual was very enjoyable, not least due to the expert organisation by Mohit and his staff at Asian Adventures. I suppose you have to have been brought up in India to make sense of the organised chaos. My thanks to him and his company for making it such a great experience for all on the tour. Thanks are also due to owners and managers of the lodges, Muzahid Malik at Rann Riders, Pardeep and his staff at Gir Birding Lodge and Neelesh and Sanjev at Krishna Lodge at Kanha. They all looked after us very well indeed.

A total of 295 species of birds were seen by the group which considering the main focus was on mammals and much time was spent in vehicles, this is an excellent total. My personal total of 8 lifers and 7 new mammals was a great and very pleasant surprise.

Finally let me thank all the participants of the tour for their great company. As usual without them there is no trip and it was fun to travel with such an enthusiastic and fun loving group. I hope to see you all again on one of our tours in the future.

John