

NEPAL HOLIDAY FEB 20th TO MARCH 10th 2005

By June Lloyd
and the bird highlights by John van der Dol



Mount Everest

This is the story of our recent adventure in Nepal. There has been a lot of unrest in Nepal since Christmas with the unpopular King sacking his entire parliament and putting his ministers under house arrest and then forming a new government with himself at the head. This was just what the Maoists did not want and they are doing all they can to ruin the country as far as we can see. Hence Nepal is considered a dangerous country to visit and our tour was on the brink of being cancelled. We hardly saw another tourist while we were travelling and consequently we were welcomed with open arms at the camps we visited. We did not encounter any troubles but there was a definite army presence wherever we went and we felt very sorry for the exceedingly poor Nepalese in the outlying areas as the terrorists had held up all supplies (including fuel) with roadblocks and closed the schools etc.

However in spite of these threats to our safety 18 intrepid bird watchers set off from Sandwich Bay to enjoy an adventure of a lifetime. We travelled 10 hours to Kathmandu but with a break of 4 hours in Doha in the Gulf States arriving at Kathmandu in the late afternoon, the time difference being 5 and a ½ hours ahead of London. We were met by two lovely local guys who were some of the co-owners of the Nature Safari Tours Co. who organised our holiday and who stayed with us for the entire 17 days. We then had a hair-raising coach trip through the city to reach our hotel which was up a narrow street barely the width of the coach! Our first impressions were of a very dirty, overcrowded, bustling city with cyclists, motor bikes, pedestrians, dogs, busses (with the occasional herd of goats on the roof) taxis and the odd cow or two all competing for space. It was a mad house and pollution was bad with Kathmandu being the 3rd most polluted place in the world. The word “servicing” of vehicles is not one used!

After a day up Phulchowki (via the botanical gardens) which is the highest peak surrounding the city for bird watching and a picnic, we were entertained with a traditional Nepalese evening at a local restaurant. We sat at low tables on cushions and had a succession of snacks accompanied by lethal rice wine while watching dancers perform in national costumes. We were then encouraged to join in! Then there was the curry.

Birding highlights in the Kathmandu Valley:

Kalij Pheasant, Great Barbet, Asian Barred Owlet, Wedge-tailed Green Pigeon, Black, Steppe and Bonelli's Eagles, Maroon Oriole, Slaty-blue Flycatcher, Orange-flanked Bush Robins, Golden Bush Robin, Little, Spotted and Slaty-backed Forktails, Grey-bellied Tesia, Chestnut-crowned Warbler, Striated Laughingthrush, Hoary-throated Barwing, Rufous-breasted Accentor

The next day we went back to the airport to catch a small Buddha Airline 20 seater plane to take us on a 50 minute flight to Nepalgunj in the west of Nepal in the Tarai. This is the lowland area between the Himalaya

and India and is the largest area of undisturbed wilderness left. The flight was brilliant as we had fantastic views of the snow-capped mountain range. The army was in full evidence at both airports and we had stringent searches of all our luggage and were personally frisked even though it was only an internal flight. We should then have had a 2 hour coach trip to our lodge in the Bardia National Park, but as there was a strong element of Maoists in the rural areas and there was no fuel for transport, the tour company who had organised the entire holiday had commissioned a helicopter instead! It turned out to be an ancient Russian one with a Russian pilot and was extremely noisy and vibraty. The 20 of us sat in two rows facing each other with the luggage in a line between us and had an interesting 25 minute flight. We then landed in a field (which was an army camp) and the pilot jumped out to ask for directions while the villagers rushed out to their thatched houses to hold down their roofs! After much gesticulating, the pilot climbed back in and up we went again to search for the proper field to land in.

The army must have been expecting us, as they were surrounding the field and pointing their guns at us. Most off putting! But immediately, all the local children appeared from nowhere amazed at the sight of all of us emerging from this large helicopter. The luggage was loaded onto a buffalo cart to be transported to the lodge while we had to route march along a track beside the river for 40 mins to reach the lodge. It was an interesting walk as we passed all the thatched roofed houses and farms and another lady and I saw four men struggling up the track towards us each holding the leg of a large freshly killed wild boar with one hand and brandishing a machete in the other! It was like being transported back to biblical times as farming methods hadn't changed in centuries with hand held ploughs and with working elephants doing log bearing, gathering firewood etc. The children were expected to work as well. Young boys looked after the animals and the girls looked after the younger ones. The schools had all been closed by the Maoists but in any case they only attend till they are 11 as after that they have to pay.

After a belated lunch at our new home at Rhino Lodge we went for a long wander ending up at the river near the camp for sunset. This was our ritual for the next four evenings but what was to happen on our first night was not repeated. Out of the forest appeared a tiger which sauntered to the water's edge had a drink and then proceeded to swim across, out the other side and disappeared into the bush. We were so lucky as we had been told that it was not easy to see a tiger as they see us long before we see them. We went to bed in our comfortable thatched cottage tired but happy.

The next few days were spent investigating our surroundings on foot and on the back of an elephant. To go on most jaunts we had to cross the wide river on foot which meant taking off our boots and socks and wading. Being shorter than everyone else it came up to my thighs so after the first day, one of the local guides gave me a piggy back before going back across for Peter's telescope which he had carried round all day! The local guides were very enthusiastic and relished using the scopes and identifying the birds for us. Local folk were extremely poor but the land is very fertile and they are self sufficient with their own cows, goats, chickens and pigs and they grow their own vegetables and fruit such as oranges and bananas. We ate very well at the camp.

We had sightings of spotted deer, hog deer, wild elephant, one horned rhinos, monkeys, mugger crocodiles and of course many, many birds. One day we wanted to travel further afield to walk in the jungle and so a tractor had been commissioned with a trailer to transport us at 7am. We waited and waited and we were just about to give up and start walking when we heard the chug chug of the most ancient tractor ever. The explanation for its late arrival was that it had not been used for ages and had flat tyres which had taken all night to pump up with a bicycle pump! It was a very bumpy ride squashed in the trailer which ended at the edge of the forest at an army training camp. We had to wait while the new recruits were put through their paces in full combat attire but we were not allowed to take photos of them unfortunately. Eventually we started our walk. Along the way we spotted a tree where there were very visible tiger claw marks showing it had been used as a scratching post! A most enjoyable walk ended at the river where the usual crossing took

place. The following day we went even further in to the jungle where the sal trees grow tall and straight and can live for 200 years and have very hard wood which is termite proof and is used for construction. They only grow in Bardia and 60% of them were cut down after malaria had been eradicated in the 60's but they are now protected. Before that the forests were impenetrable due to the mosquitos. They have very large leaves which are used as disposable plates and the chairs and tables at the lodge were made of sal wood and were extremely heavy. Other trees of note were the silk cotton trees which had magnificent red flowers.

The elephant camp was near Rhino Camp and that is where we started our 2 hour ride into the forest. The highlight was crossing the river and seeing several Indian pythons sleeping. Our elephant was obviously scared of the snakes and we felt him shivering with fear. We didn't actually enjoy this first experience as there was not much room in the howdah meaning we couldn't turn around or get into the rhythm of the elephant's plodding gait and ended up battered and bruised!

Birding highlights of the Bardia area:

Black Francolin, Streak-throated, White-naped and Great Slaty Woodpeckers, Indian Grey and Oriental Pied Hornbills, Blue-bearded Bee-eaters, Large-tailed Nightjar, Orange-breasted and Yellow-footed Green Pigeons, Small Pratincoles, Pallas's Gull, Grey-headed Fish Eagle, Egyptian, Long-billed, Eurasian Black, White-rumped and Red-headed Vultures, Long-legged Buzzard, Booted and Changeable Hawk Eagle, Tickell's Thrush, Dark-throated Thrush, Jungle Prinia.

After four most enjoyable days of very early morning calls, superb food and excellent bird watching we made the return trudge to the helicopter and the flight back to Nepalgunj. We then flew the length of Nepal to the east to Koshi Camp in a small plane which gave us spectacular views of the Himalaya. The airport was a hive of activity but the most amusing thing was the presence of men frantically peddling their cycles pulling their rickshaws with passengers and luggage behind them. Fuel is not short in the east of Nepal so we were met by 4 wheel drive landrovers which took us on an interesting 1 and a half hour drive to the next camp. This was a small tented camp owned by Nature Safari Tours from Kathmandu and was the only place we stayed without our own shower and toilet! The tents were small and the toilets and showers in blocks behind the tents. We thought we were bit old for this sort of thing but we quickly adapted and without electricity even got accustomed to using candle power. Each tent had their own oil lamp outside and all the paths were lined with them and a guard was on duty all night so we felt safe! Water was heated by way of an open fire and an oildrum full of water although at Bardia some solar power was also employed and as the weather was lovely all the holiday we were never without hot water. At this camp there were jungle cats which are nocturnal and were attracted to the lit bathroom block walls where they jumped up to catch small lizards to eat. In the evenings fire flies lit the air and the stars were really bright. We were not bothered by mosquitos for which we were thankful but Peter was got by a tick! He was minding his own business looking through his telescope when he felt a stab in the back of his neck and there was the tick attached. Luckily the camp manager was standing next to him who was used to ticks and he just twisted it a bit and pulled it out. Several others had them as well but no one as yet has had any after effects.



Again, we had early starts (mostly 5.30 am calls!) and equally early to bed as darkness fell at about 6.45 pm. One evening we had Nepalese entertainment. This was something to remember as all the staff joined

in.They all seemed to play an instrument and could sing and dance beautifully. It was a revelation as even the barman who had appeared most staid took to the dance floor for a solo. The coach had arrived from Kathmandu by this time in readiness for the long journey by road to the next venue, so the driver joined in the fun as well. We were encouraged to partake and had to do our bit by singing and performing the Hokey - Cokey which amused them greatly.

We saw many birds around Koshi including brown hawk owls, brown fish owls, owlets and Indian coursers and large colourful butterflies. We also saw mongooses, hog deer, monkeys and wild buffalo. We had a visit to a local village for a tour of their houses and farm and met some delightful children who were greatly interested in seeing themselves on the digital cameras. The farms were neat and tidy but terribly old fashioned. There were far too many children but they all seemed happy and content. We will never moan about our beds again as they slept on bare boards!

Another day we had the vehicles to take us to the barrage which divides Nepal from India. It was built by the Indians 40 years ago to prevent India being flooded by the huge Koshi river. There we saw thousands of wildfowl and Gangetic river dolphins among other things. A another memorable event at Koshi was a day on inflatable rafts (zodiacs).We were paddled along and across the river for four hours stopping on vast sandbanks for a picnic and bird watching seeing many raptors and a herd of 34 wild water buffalo with magnificent horns.

Birding highlights in the Koshi area:

Swamp Francolin, Bar-headed Goose, Spot-billed Duck, Lesser Coucal, Brown Fish and Brown Hawk Owl, Greater Painted Snipe, Great Thick-knee, Indian Courser, Yellow-wattled and Grey-headed Lapwings, River and Black-bellied Terns, White-tailed, Short-toed, Imperial, Greater and Indian Spotted Eagles, White-eyed Buzzard, Collared Falconet, Besra, Lesser Kestrel, Red-necked Falcon, Black-headed and Black Ibis, Black-necked Stork, Scaly and Dusky Thrush, Siberian Rubythroat, Aberrant Bush Warbler, Thick-billed and Smoky Warbler, Yellow-breasted Bunting

Four days passed quickly and then we were off on a very long and arduous coach trip (5am call this time!) to Royal Chitwan National Park. We stopped several times to look for special birds and for a picnic but the roads were terrible. There were also many, many stops for road checks by the army with figures of eight having to be negotiated regularly. Road taxes are paid at booths in all the towns--- quite a different system to ours. Our driver had a young mate who leapt out with the necessary money to hand out for the tax and the paper work for the army. The locals had to get out of their busses and have all their bags checked at every check point. Luckily we didn't have to.

Eventually we reached our destination, which was not the original venue. We later discovered that it had been changed due to threat of terrorism and we were placed in the nearest camp to the airport in case we needed to be evacuated! Chitwan is the largest and most popular of Nepal's National Parks due to it being the closest to Kathmandu but while we were there it was devoid of tourists. Our camp was a large one beautifully designed with thatched roofed chalets set in well attended gardens each with large bedrooms, bathrooms and terrace to sit out on. It was near the wide river which had to be negotiated every time we ventured out! Dug out canoes were the means of transport and as the river was at its lowest (monsoon awaited) we regularly got jammed on sandbanks. It was quite hair-raising getting into these canoes and balancing while clutching haversacks, binoculars and telescopes. Four-wheel drive battered open topped vehicles awaited us on the other side to take us deep into the forested area of the park.. Here we saw more mammals than previously with regular sightings of one horned rhinos which looked quite prehistoric, samba deer, peacocks displaying, spotted deer, wild boar and the lovely langur monkeys as well as the rhesus macaque monkeys.

The highlight of Chitwan for me was the two hour elephant ride. Some of the working elephants had been commandeered by the army to use on patrol so one old beast had to be brought out of retirement for us and could only take two lightweights and Peter and I quickly volunteered! Consequently, we had a brilliant ride with plenty of space to turn around and were able to get into the rhythm of the plodding for easy balance. We travelled through wild jungle crashing through the undergrowth and finally arrived at the rhino's mud pool where we were lucky enough to see Mum, Dad and baby rhino. A sight we will never forget.

Another day we had a canoe trip up the river as the sun was rising. This was quite magical as there was a slight mist in the air and an eerie silence and we were able to get very close to the famous mugger crocodile which prefers marshy conditions. They lie motionless for hours at a time until their prey comes close enough for them to snap it up! We also saw the endangered gharial crocodile with its long slender snout. The largest of the world's crocs it can reach 7 m from nose to tail and is a fish eater. A fearsome beast. We were dropped off on the edge of the forest and had a walk (we had to make a diversion to avoid a sleeping rhino!) to the elephant breeding centre. Few of the working elephants are privately owned as they cost a fortune to keep but most are owned by the government and all expenses funded by them. They are very well looked after but earn their keep by going out daily to fetch their food returning with giant bundles of grasses. To enrich their diet they are also fed a mixture of molasses and supplements wrapped in grasses which they love. The young elephants stay by their mother's side for two years before starting their training.

On our last afternoon on safari we crossed the river again and took the jeeps deep into the forest to search for mammals. We were rewarded for our patience (keeping silent for a time) by seeing various rhinos close to and monkeys playing but best of all was the appearance further up the track of an enormous sloth bear. It had very large claws which are used for unearthing termites nests and a long snout for extracting the insects and is considered a very dangerous beast! Others in our party saw a jackal and a leopard but we were not so lucky. We stayed in the forest till dusk and were punted back across the river in the dark!

I have not mentioned much about all the superb birds we saw, which after all instigated the holiday. The cry of "raptor" rang in the air constantly and eagles, buzzards, hawks, harriers, vultures, kites and owls were in abundance. On the rivers kingfishers, egrets and pratincoles were common place. I just enjoyed seeing the great variety of very different birds with exotic sounding names such as fire-breasted flowerpecker and ashy-crowned sparrow lark! The woodpeckers were fascinating as were the parakeets. The list rose to over 360 different species which we ticked off each evening before dinner.

Birding highlights of the Chitwan area:

Red Junglefowl, Lesser and Greater Yellownapes, Grey-headed Woodpecker, Himalayan Flameback, Green-billed Malkoha, White-rumped Spinetail, Crested Treeswift, Pompadour Green Pigeon, White-tailed Rubythroat, Spot-winged Starling, Spotted Bush Warbler, Striped Tit, Chestnut-capped and Yellow-eyed Babblers

The following day it was back to Kathmandu by coach. This was an arduous journey as there were many army check points and as it is the main route to the city from India where all the supplies come from (and everything comes by road) the highway was congested with lorries. The roads were in a terrible condition having been washed away in parts by the last monsoon and there were visible signs of previous horrific accidents! The dust from the roads and lorries settled on all the poor people living in hovels at the side of the road, along with their goats, chickens, dogs and numerous babies and children. The scenery was spectacular as we drove along side a river for miles, stopping several times on route to look for rare birds. We were lucky to see Wall creeper, Ibisbill, Brown Dipper and Black-backed Forktail before travelling up and up the mountain and finally over the top and down into Kathmandu and back through the crowded streets to our same hotel for our last two days.

The next day, the keen birdwatchers went back up to Phulchowki to add to their ever growing list of birds but Sarah, Carole and I took a taxi and visited three different areas of the city to sight see the temples and ancient buildings. We had a most fascinating day being escorted by the taxi driver and a local guide and learnt a tremendous amount about Nepal's history. First we went to Patan Durbar Square which is famed for its arts and crafts and is full of ancient monuments, temples and shrines. Patan is the cultural centre of the old city and is reached by crossing the Bagmati River. We then visited the Shree Bouddhanath one of the most important Tibetan Stupa (temple). Lastly we crossed the city, passing the palace and the parade ground to the Syayambhunath Stupa (monkey temple) built high on a hilltop with sweeping views of the Kathmandu valley. It is overrun with pilgrims and monkeys (one stole my chocolate bar from my hand!) and even rats were running over Bhudda nibbling the garland of flowers round its neck! Animals are sacred. Peter on the other hand was driven 8,700 ft to walk on the mountain and the altitude got to him and he became very tired! He should have come with us!

Our last evening was one to remember at the oldest restaurant in Kathmandu where we were entertained in true Nepalese style to food, drink and traditional dancing which we were encouraged to join in.

On our final day we all had time in the morning to visit the famous Kathmandu Durbar Square and have a conducted tour of the world heritage site much of which had to be rebuilt after the earthquake in 1934. There we saw the old palace and the ancient Kumari Chowk the home of the living goddess. There a beautiful girl is selected at the age of three to live in isolation until 13 or so when she is pensioned off and a new goddess selected. What a life? When called she appears at the balcony window fleetingly, smiling and waving accompanied by her minders. She is worshipped as a living incarnation of goddess Taleju. There are dozens of temples, shrines and statues in the square making it a must for all tourists. However we were just about the only tourists there, everyone having been advised not to travel to Nepal. The Maoists certainly have a lot to answer for.

We finally set off for the airport stopping off at Pashupatnath Temple. This is Nepal's holiest pilgrimage site. We could not visit it the day before as it been the Hindu festival of Mahashivaratri one of the most important, and pilgrims had travelled far and wide to visit and was attended by the King. It is thought to be the day on which Lord Shiva was born and one of the greatest festivals in the holy scriptures. It is believed to instil faith in those destined to live in trouble and bonfires are lit in public squares, houses, temples and shrines to warm Lord Shiva in the belief that the Lord feels cold on this day. The temples straddle the Bagmati River and all Hindus aim to be cremated here and we were to witness the very public cremation ceremony. Various rituals were performed by the close relatives (male only) before the eldest son lit the funeral pyre. This ceremony was going on all along the river.

Birding highlights from Phulchowki:

Collared Owlet, Mountain Hawk Eagle, Golden Bush Robin, Ashy-throated Warbler, Whistler's and Black-faced Warblers, Black-throated Sunbird, Yellow-breasted Greenfinch

A rather sombre group then proceeded to the airport to say our final farewells to our fantastic guides Suchit and Badri who had smoothed our paths and taught us so much about Nepal and its fantastic wildlife. The tour was so nearly cancelled but we were all grateful that we took the risk and 18 very tired intrepid travellers returned to the U.K. 24 hours later with quite a tale to tell.

Itinerary

Day 1 (Feb 20 2005)

Left London 1715 hours en route to Kathmandu via Doha with Qatar Airways

Day 2

Arrived Kathmandu 1600 hours and were transferred to Greenwich Village Hotel

Day 3

Godavari Gardens (am) and Phulchowki (pm) Welcome dinner

Day 4

Flew from Kathmandu to Nepalgunj where we chartered a helicopter to Bardia

Day 5

Am and pm walks in the Bardia area

Day 6

Tractor and trailer ride to National Park followed by am walk. Afternoon Elephant ride the other side of the river from the village

Day 7

Tractor and trailer ride to the Sal forest for am walk, pm walk by the river

Day 8

Helicopter flight to Nepalgunj followed by charter flight for most of the group to Biratnagar and for two of us scheduled flight via Kathmandu. Transfer by landrovers to Koshi Camp

Day 9

Am walk along embankment and a pm drive in the opposite direction also along embankment

Day 10

Am Koshi embankment followed by Barrage and Pink Tower in the afternoon

Day 11

Sapta Koshi Raft trip followed by afternoon riverside pools for some while others did the village tour

Day 12

Drove from Koshi camp to Chitwan. Arrived at Royal Park Hotel, Sauhara about 17.30

Day 13

Morning walk across the river at Chitwan followed by Elephant Drive in the afternoon

Day 14

All day Jeep Drive at Chitwan

Day 15

Canoe ride followed by walk and short talk on Elephants at the breeding centre. Game safari in the afternoon

Day 16

Left Chitwan at 0700 and drove to Kathmandu arriving at Greenwich Village Hotel at about 1600. Stopped for Ibisbill, Wallcreeper and Brown Dipper on the way

Day 17

Full day on Phulchowki followed by farewell dinner in the Nepalese Kitchen

Day 18

Free day for shopping before flying back to London on the evening flight arriving next morning at 0630

SYSTEMATIC LIST

February 20th to March 10th 2005

By John van der Dol

The systematic list follows the nomenclature of Grimmett, Inskipp and Inskipp: Birds of Nepal (Helm 2000)

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Recorded from Koshi only on three dates with up to 10 counted on the fishponds near the camp, while there were 40 at the barrage

Great-crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*

Sixty-eight at the barrage and eight on the Koshi River trip were the only birds seen

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*

Seen on most days when suitable habitat was visited. Highest counts of 100 at the barrage, 25 en route to Chitwan from Koshi and 75 at Chitwan itself

Little Cormorant *Phalacrocorax niger*

Single figures at Bardia, 30 along the Koshi embankment and 70 at the barrage

Oriental Darter *Anhinga melanogaster*

Two at the barrage were followed with small numbers of between one and eight at Koshi and Chitwan

Cinnamon Bittern *Ixobrychus cinnamomeus*

Singles were seen on three occasions all at the Koshi Camp

Black Bittern *Dupetor flavicollis*

Two single sightings at Koshi Camp were the only records

Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*

About 145 were counted at Lami Tal roosting in the marginal grasslands of the lake, while there were singles at Bardia and Chitwan and two along the embankment at Koshi

Little (Green-backed) Heron *Butorides striatus*

A single was seen at Bardia followed by between one and three at both Koshi and Chitwan on five dates

Indian Pond Heron *Ardeola grayii*

As usual present in most areas and not really counted although 50 were estimated on the day we visited the barrage

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*

As with the previous species, never really counted, but 100 were logged on the barrage visit

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

Seen on most days with a maximum count of 50 on the barrage day

Intermediate Egret *Egretta intermedia*

An estimate of 200 on our visit to the barrage and very small numbers thereafter at Koshi and Chitwan

Great Egret *Egretta alba*

Between one and forty on ten dates

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*

Between one and seven on seven dates in all areas

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*

One or two on five dates at both Koshi and Chitwan

Asian Openbill Stork *Anastomus oscitans*

Not recorded at Bardia but up to 30 at Koshi along the embankment and round the camp, while smaller numbers were recorded at Chitwan

Black Stork *Ciconia nigra*

Between one and five were seen of this winter visitor on five dates in all areas

Woolly-necked Stork *Ciconia episcopus*

One or two on seven dates in all areas

Black-necked Stork *Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus*

A local but rare breeder. Although it has a large world distribution right down to Australia it is thinly distributed throughout the Indian Subcontinent. A single adult was seen at enormous range from the Koshi embankment whilst the following day on our raft trip we saw both adults with their four young

Lesser Adjutant Stork *Leptoptilos javanicus*

Seen both at Chitwan and Koshi in small numbers. Counts of between a single and 14 were noted on seven dates and a number of nests were seen with scruffy youngsters on them

Black (Red-naped) Ibis *Pseudibis papillosa*

A single at Bardia was followed by eleven along the Koshi embankment, 58 on the raft trip at Koshi and between one and four on four dates thereafter at Koshi and Chitwan

Black-headed Ibis *Threskiornis melanocephalus*

Four at Koshi embankment were followed by flocks totalling 150 on the raft trip along the Koshi River

Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*

Just two roosting with Egrets and Cormorants along the Koshi embankment represents a poor show this year

Lesser Whistling Duck *Dendrocygna javanica*

A flock of 120 frequented the fishing ponds at Koshi Camp but by far the biggest count were the 3000 at the barrage. Smaller flocks could also be found in the riverside ponds along the Koshi embankment

Bar-headed Goose *Anser indicus*

Better numbers than our previous two trips. Four were seen at the barrage, 36 on the raft trip, and three on two dates at Chitwan

Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea*

Seen on 12 dates in small numbers but there were high counts of 120 on the barrage day and 282 at Chitwan on both the Rapti and Dungere Rivers

Cotton Pygmy Goose *Nettapus coromandelianus*

Just nine birds were counted on the pools near the Koshi Barrage

Eurasian Wigeon *Anas Penelope*

A count of 110 at the Koshi Barrage was the only record

Gadwall *Anas strepera*

An estimated 1000 at the barrage were followed by 25 the next day on the raft trip and four on the river at Chitwan

Common Teal *Anas crecca*

A count of 300 at the barrage was followed by another 100 on the Koshi raft trip

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*

Up to nine on four dates

Spot-billed Duck *Anas poecilorhyncha*

Recorded for the first time in Nepal by our group. There were eleven seen on one of the sandbanks in the middle of the Koshi River on our raft trip

Northern Pintail *Anas acuta*

Up to 30 at Bardia and Koshi whilst there were 860 counted at the barrage

Garganey *Anas querquedula*

Thirty-eight amongst the duck flock at the barrage was the sole record

Northern Shoveler *Anas clypeata*

A count of 57 at the barrage and a single the next day from the rafts

Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina*

Counts of 28, 33 and 55 at Bardia and another 45 at the barrage

Common Pochard *Aythya farina*

A single at the Koshi Camp fishponds and seven at the barrage were the only records

Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca*

Counts of 56 and 37 at Koshi Camp and vicinity, 40 at the barrage and 50 the following day in the riverside pools along the embankment

Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*

Twenty at the barrage were the only birds seen

Goosander (Common Merganser) *Mergus merganser*

Between one and four on seven dates in all areas plus 13 on the drive from Koshi to Chitwan

Oriental Honey Buzzard *Pernis ptilorhynchus*

Three at Bardia followed by a single there the next day, a single between Koshi and Chitwan and then two threes and a two at Chitwan itself. All appeared to be dark phase birds

Black-shouldered Kite *Elanus caeruleus*

Between one and five on ten dates in all areas

Black Kite *Mivus migrans*

Not that common apart from within Kathmandu where the biggest numbers were seen. Other counts never exceeded six but they were seen virtually daily

White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*

A single immature was seen while on our raft trip down the Koshi River

Grey-headed Fish Eagle *Ichthyophaga ichthyaetus*

A single adult was seen both perched and in flight at the riverside at Bardia whilst there were two seen on a small lake in the jungle at Chitwan on our jeep drive

Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus*

An adult and an immature were seen at Nepalgunj airport, two adults over the lodge at Bardia and another adult there the next day

White-rumped Vulture *Gyps bengalensis*

Five in a mixed Vulture flock along the Koshi embankment followed by three singles also at Koshi and another one en route to Kathmandu

Long-billed Vulture *Gyps indicus*

A very poor and worrying showing of this species. Just a single at Bardia

Eurasian Griffon Vulture *Gyps fulvus*

Smaller numbers than in previous years with just between one and eight on six dates in all areas

Eurasian Black Vulture *Aegypius monachus*

Three at Nepalgunj airport, two at Bardia and two singles at Koshi represents a good series of records

Red-headed Vulture *Sarcogyps calvus*

A single at Bardia in a purple patch for raptors was the only record of this scarce species

Short-toed Eagle *Circaetus gallicus*

Four on the raft trip at Koshi were the sole record

Crested Serpent Eagle *Spilornis cheela*

Probably the commonest eagle of the area. Between one and five seen on ten dates

Eurasian Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

Two at Koshi were followed by another single there and represents a poor showing

Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus*

A single ringtail was identified on the Koshi raft trip

Pied Harrier *Circus melanoleucus*

A single male was seen from the Koshi embankment near the camp on our first evening there. Disappointingly this was the only record

Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentiles*

A single at Phulchowki was followed by a female at Koshi

Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*

A single was seen on our morning walk at Chitwan

Crested Goshawk *Accipiter trivigatus*

Singles at Bardia and Koshi on three occasions

Shikra *Accipiter badius*

Between two and four on most days in all areas except Kathmandu

Besra *Accipiter virgatus*

Just one single shot through over the ponds near the barrage and was seen by one or two people

White-eyed Buzzard *Butastur teesa*

A single on the banks of the Koshi River was followed by two birds on the day we visited the barrage and then there was another single at Chitwan

Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*

One or two on seven dates in all areas

Long-legged Buzzard *Buteo rufinous*

A single at Nepalgunj airport, another along the Koshi embankment and two on the barrage day

Black Eagle *Ictinaetus malayensis*

A single bird at Phulchowki and two there on our penultimate day

Indian Spotted Eagle *Aquila hastata*

One on the raft trip represents a recent split from Lesser Spotted Eagle (*Aquila pomarina*)

Greater Spotted Eagle *Aquila clanga*

Two at Nepalgunj airport were followed by two singles at Bardia, a further single and a two at Koshi

Steppe Eagle *Aquila nipalensis*

Six individuals spread across all areas represents quite a low number compared with previous years but excellent views were obtained of some of them

Imperial Eagle *Aquila heliaca*

A distant single bird along the embankment at Koshi was followed by two on the raft trip. The single was an old bird with distinct white braces and a very pale nape, possibly the same individual as was seen in the same area two years ago

Booted Eagle *Hieraaetus pennatus*

Single dark phase birds were seen at Nepalgunj, Koshi and two on the day of the raft trip

Bonelli's Eagle *Hieraaetus fasciatus*

A pair of adults were seen at Phulchowki on our first visit there

Changeable Hawk Eagle *Spizaetus cirrhatus*

Two singles at Bardia followed by another on the drive between Koshi and Chitwan and two from the jeeps at Chitwan

Mountain Hawk Eagle *Spizaetus nipalensis*

Two at Phulchowki on our penultimate day, one of which was perched at some distance but with modern scopes we were able to scrutinise all the details

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

Between one and five on six dates in all suitable areas

Collared Falconet *Microhierax caerulescens*

Just a single this year was seen perched on the crown of a tree along the Koshi eastern embankment

Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

Between one and five on most dates

Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni*

Just one single along the embankment at Koshi

Red-necked Falcon *Falco chicquera*

A brief view of one from the Pink Tower was seen by just a few people whereas the next day excellent views were obtained of one from our rafts along the banks of the River Koshi

Eurasian Hobby *Falco subbuteo*

Just one sighting of a bird at Chitwan

Peregrine *Falco peregrinus*

One or two on six dates in all areas

Black Francolin *Francolinus francolinus*

One heard at Bardia was followed by a beautiful male calling from the top of a log. At Chitwan another was heard followed by one heard and one seen the next day

Swamp Francolin *Francolinus gularis*

Four were seen along the embankment by Koshi camp, seven from the Pink Tower, and another six along the embankment

Red Junglefowl *Gallus gallus*

One was seen from the elephant ride at Bardia, seven from the elephants at Chitwan, ten from the jeep safari at Chitwan and another 25 from the jeeps during our game drive the next day

Kalij Pheasant *Lophura leucomelana*

An amazing six males and three females seen crossing the road on Phulchowki were followed by six on there on our subsequent visit

Indian Peafowl *Pavo cristatus*

Up to three at Bardia but far more common in Chitwan National Park with up to 50 seen on four dates

Ruddy-breasted Crake *Porzana fusca*

A single at Koshi was the sole record

Brown Crake *Amauromis akool*

Just one bird at Lami Tal, Chitwan

White-breasted Waterhen *Amauromis phoenicurus*

Commonly seen in all suitable habitat with counts of up to five recorded on eight dates

Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*

Commonly encountered in all suitable areas

Purple Swamphen *Porphyrio porphyrio*

A single bird in the Koshi Camp fishponds was seen on four dates and 25 were noted in the riverside pools along the Koshi embankment

Eurasian Coot *Fulica atra*

Five at Koshi Camp pools was the only record

Pheasant-tailed Jacana *Hydrophasianus chirurgus*

Six at the pools by the barrage were the only birds seen

Bronze-winged Jacana *Metopidius indicus*

Much more commonly encountered than the previous species with counts of up to 20 on four dates in the Koshi area and there was a single at Chitwan

Painted Snipe *Rostratula benghalensis*

Just one single female in the riverside pools along the Koshi embankment

Ibisbill *Ibidorhyncha struthersii*

This is the bird people come to Nepal for as it is very difficult to see anywhere else. It breeds high up in the mountains of Nepal and China and winters in small numbers in the fast running boulder-strewn rivers of the lowlands of Nepal. Two birds were seen in the same area as two years ago between Kathmandu and Chitwan and with quality telescopes good views were possible. We were lucky as it was getting a little late for this species

Great Thick-knee *Esacus recurvirostris*

Fantastic views were had of a single on the Koshi riverbank while we were drifting along in our rubber rafts. These are rare birds in this area and we were indeed lucky to see one of an estimated total Koshi River population of about six or seven birds

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*

Commonly seen with counts up to eight birds on eleven dates

Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*

Counts of up to seven on five dates

Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva*

A flock of 30 were seen from the rafts along the Koshi River

Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*

A flock of 56 were counted along the Koshi embankment constituting our first record of the species in Nepal

River Plover *Vanellus duvaucelli*

Up to six on four dates at Bardia, two at the Ibisbill site and another one or two at Chitwan

Grey-headed Lapwing *Vanellus cinereus*

An uncommon to rare winter visitor but we found five near the barrage

Yellow-wattled Lapwing *Vanellus malarbaricus*

Another unusual winter visitor to these parts. Two were seen along the eastern embankment

Red-wattled Lapwing *Vanellus indicus*

Found in all wetland areas with up to 10 or so noted per day but there were 20 in the barrage area



Indian Courser *Cursorius coromandelicus*

A group of seven were watched at some length along the eastern embankment of the Koshi River. This is a rare bird in this area although it does occasionally breed in small numbers but we were delighted to connect with the species

Small Pratincole *Glareola lactea*

A summer visitor to Nepal and not seen on previous trips. Spectacular aerial displays were witnessed at Bardia in the evenings along the river where flocks estimated at over 1000 were wheeling around like starlings or knot. Small numbers were seen in all suitable areas while on a sandbank in the middle of the Koshi River we encountered birds which had recently arrived to breed. About 500 were estimated at the latter site. Up to four were seen at Chitwan

Little Stint *Calidris minuta*

Five along the riverbank at the courser site

Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii*

Commonly seen on nine dates with a maximum count of 13 at Chitwan from the canoes

Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*

Six along the Koshi embankment one afternoon were the only birds recorded

Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

Seen in small numbers throughout with counts up to a 15 a day and a maximum count of 80 on the raft trip day

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*

Between one and four on eleven days

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*

Between one and three on four dates but there was a count of ten on the riverside pools at Koshi

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*

Seen most days with a maximum of 20 from the canoes at Chitwan

Pallas's Gull *Larus ichthyaetus*

An adult in breeding plumage at Bardia on three dates probably referred to the same individual

Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus*

This is an occasional winter visitor. A single first adult in breeding plumage was seen at Chitwan

Yellow-legged Gull *Larus cachinnans*

An immature bird was seen from the Pink Tower

River Tern *Sterna aurantia*

A single from the Koshi camp on two days was followed by five birds on the day we visited the barrage and another two from the raft trip

Black-bellied Tern *Sterna acuticauda*

Four in full summer plumage were seen on the raft trip and were truly stunning birds

Little Tern *Sterna albifrons*

Ten and 25 on consecutive days in the Koshi River

Rock Dove *Columba livia*

About ten birds in the mountains between Kathmandu and Chitwan were one of the highlights of the trip. Interestingly Nepalese Rock Doves do not show white rumps making them difficult to separate from Street Pigeons in Kathmandu

Eurasian Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*

The commonest dove seen virtually daily

Red Turtle Dove *Streptopelia tranquebarica*

Seen far more frequently than on previous trips with up to 15 on seven dates at Koshi and Chitwan

Oriental Turtle Dove *Streptopelia orientalis*

Seen on six dates in numbers up to a dozen but 30 were noted on the day of the raft trip

Spotted Dove *Streptopelia chinensis*

Commonly found in most areas and not really counted

Emerald Dove *Chacophaps indica*

A single from the elephants at Bardia, eight on the elephant drive at Chitwan and two and three over the next two days also at Chitwan

Orange-breasted Green Pigeon *Treron bicincta*

A single male was seen at Bardia

Pompadour Green Pigeon *Treron pompadora*

One male and two females were seen on our morning walk at Chitwan

Yellow-footed Green Pigeon *Treron phoenicoptera*

Seen only at Bardia on three dates with a maximum of 60 birds and at Chitwan where the biggest count was 23

Wedge-tailed Green Pigeon *Treron sphenura*

Uncommon in Kathmandu Valley but good views were had of a male in the Godavari Gardens

Alexandrine Parakeet *Psittacula eupatria*

Good numbers were seen at Bardia with counts of up to 25 and smaller numbers at Chitwan. As usual many records involve fly-overs

Ring-necked Parakeet *Psittacula krameri*

Seen almost daily and often not even counted

Plum-headed Parakeet *Psittacula cyanocephala*

Smaller numbers than the previous species but still seen regularly although less often at Koshi

Red-breasted Parakeet *Psittacula Alexandri*

Five at Chitwan was followed by 20 there the next day

Green-billed Malkoha *Phaenicophaeus tristis*

Two of these were seen on the jeep drive at Chitwan

Common Hawk Cuckoo *Hierococcyx varius*

Recorded on six dates with up to seven birds a day, but mostly heard and only occasionally seen, and then mostly in flight. Not recorded at all in Bardia

(Large Hawk Cuckoo *Hierococcyx sparveroides*)

A single heard only at Phulchowki on our second visit there

Greater Coucal *Centropus sinensis*

Commonly seen throughout with counts of up to 20 birds in a day

Lesser Coucal *Centropus bengalensis*

A single at the Pink Tower was followed by two further singles at Chitwan

Brown Fish Owl *Ketupa zeylonensis*

Two from the elephants at Chitwan and another two at their nest site along the Koshi River embankment

Collared Owlet *Glaucidium brodiei*

A single was called in by tape at Phulchowki. This is a beautiful little owl and excellent views and photographs were obtained. For some this was the bird of the trip

Jungle Owlet *Glaucidium radiatum*

Up to four on five dates out in the open during daylight hours

Asian Barred Owlet *Glaucidium cuculoides*

Two seen in the Godavari gardens

Brown Hawk Owl *Ninox scutulata*

One heard at Bardia, a pair seen along the Koshi embankment and another heard at Chitwan

Spotted Owlet *Athene brama*

Up to six seen on six dates. They breed in Koshi camp

Large-tailed Nightjar *Caprimulgus macrurus*

Heard on five different nights while one or two were seen at Bardia on a couple of evenings but only briefly or in silhouette

House Swift *Apus nipalensis*

A single at Bardia was followed by 50 between Chitwan and Kathmandu, another two in Kathmandu and several hundred on our last day in Nepal

Asian Palm Swift *Cypsiurus balasienis*

Two at Koshi was the only record of this uncommon resident

Crested Tree Swift *Hemiprocne coronata*

A dozen at Chitwan on the jeep drive included perched birds and was our only encounter this year

White-rumped Spinetail *Zoonavena sylvatica*

Two on two consecutive days at Chitwan were the only records

White-breasted Kingfisher *Halycon smyrnensis*

The commonest kingfisher and seen virtually on a daily basis in good numbers with a maximum count of 18 on the road from Koshi to Chitwan. Someone was not asleep!

Stork-billed Kingfisher *Pelargopsis capensis*

One to three on eleven dates

Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*

One to five on most dates

Pied Kingfisher *Ceryle rudis*

This beautiful bird is plentiful in this area and up to eight were seen on ten dates but there was a count of 15 on the Day of the Koshi River trip

Blue-bearded Bee-eater *Nyctyornis athertoni*

Fantastic views were had of a single in the open forest near Bardia and another there the next day while at Chitwan there were two days when two further birds were seen

Green Bee-eater *Merops orientalis*
Counts of up to 20 seen on most days

Chestnut-headed Bee-eater *Merops leschenaulti*
Seen on four dates all at Chitwan with counts of between 15 and 30

Indian Roller *Coracias benghalensis*
Counts of between one and six on most dates

Hoopoe *Upupa epops*
Between two and four on most date

Oriental Pied Hornbill *Anthracoceros coronatus*
Two at Bardia were hard to get good views of but between three and five on three dates at Chitwan gave us spectacular views

Indian Grey Hornbill *Ocyrceros birostris*
Between five and seven on three days at Bardia constitutes a new species for our groups

Great Barbet *Megalaima virens*
Four on our first visit to Phulchowki was our only record

Lineated Barbet *Megalaima lineata*
Two on two days at Chitwan were the only sightings

Brown-headed Barbet *Megalaima zeylanica*
Only occurs in the west where they are fairly common. Between five and 20 on three dates at Bardia

Blue-throated Barbet *Megalaima asiatica*
Between one and six on six dates were recorded

Coppersmith Barbet *Megalaima haemacephala*
Recorded on seven dates with a maximum of three seen, although often heard rather than seen

Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*
Two along the eastern embankment at Koshi were followed by another single there and a further one at Chitwan

Lesser Yellow-nape *Picus chlorolophus*
Three at Chitwan on the jeep drive and another two there the next day

Greater Yellow-nape *Picus flavinucha*
Two singles at Chitwan were the sole record

Grey-headed Woodpecker *Picus canus*
A male in the Godavari gardens was followed by three and four on consecutive days at Chitwan

Streak-throated Woodpecker *Picus xanthopygaeus*

A single in the Sal forest at Bardia was the only record. The first year we came to Nepal we saw none, last trip there were nine and this year only one

Himalayan Flameback *Dinopium shorii*

Two days of four birds and a single all at Chitwan

Black-rumped Flameback *Dinopium benghalense*

Between one and eight on seven dates all at Bardia or Koshi

White-naped Woodpecker *Chrysocolaptes festivus*

An uncommon species of the far west. One was seen on one of our walks at Bardia and this represents a new species in Nepal for our group

Great Slaty Woodpecker *Mulleripicus pulverulentus*

A gang of seven noisy birds were encountered in the Sal Forest of Bardia where fantastic prolonged scope views were possible of this, the biggest woodpecker in the world

Fulvous-breasted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos macei*

One of the commonest woodpeckers encountered with up to seven on seven dates in all areas

Brown-fronted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos auriceps*

Just one was unfortunately only seen by the writer of this report at Phulchowki on the last visit there

Grey-capped Pygmy Woodpecker *Dendrocopos canicapillus*

One or two on three consecutive days all at Chitwan

Brown-capped Pygmy Woodpecker *Dendrocopos nanus*

Only really seen in the west where we had between one and five on four dates

Rufous-bellied Woodpecker *Dendrocopos hyperythrus*

One Phulchowki on our penultimate day gave stunning views. This must be one of the prettiest woodpeckers of the region

Darjeeling Woodpecker *Dendrocopos darjellensis*

A lovely name for a lovely bird. Two were seen on Phulchowki on our second visit there

Rufous-winged Bush Lark *Mirafra assamica*

Only seen in the eastern lowlands with two in arable fields on the way to the courser site and another single the next day

Ashy-crowned Sparrow Lark *Eremopterix grisea*

Only seen at Bardia and Koshi with up to five on five dates

Sand Lark *Calandrella raytal*

Up to six on seven dates in all suitable areas

Oriental Skylark *Alauda gulgula*

One or two on five dates in all areas but a dozen were noted on the barrage day

Plain Martin *Riparia paludicola*

Commonly seen throughout

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

Also commonly seen throughout with the highest count being 150 at Chitwan

Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica*

Ten at Bardia, 20 on the drive between Chitwan and Kathmandu and three on the road up to Phulchowki on our penultimate day

Richard's Pipit *Anthus noveseelandiae*

The only definite Richard's was one bird at Bardia

Paddyfield Pipit *Anthus rufulus*

Seen in all areas with a maximum of ten on the barrage day at Koshi

Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris*

Two at Bardia on two days

Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni*

This and the next species were the commonest pipits of the region with up to 20 seen in a day

Rosy Pipit *Anthus roseatus*

Up to a dozen seen on many days and a maximum of over 70 seen on the raft trip at Koshi

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*

One or two most days at Bardia and another single between Koshi and Chitwan

Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreolla*

Quite common this year with counts of up to 20 on many dates in all suitable areas

Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*

One or two on three dates at Bardia

White Wagtail *Motacilla alba*

Commonly seen throughout

White-browed Wagtail *Motacilla maderaspatensis*

Between one and eight on most days with a high count of 18 at Bardia

Common Woodshrike *Tephrodomis pondicerianus*

Four in the Sal forest at Bardia was the only record

Large Woodshrike *Tephrodomis gularis*

Two at Chitwan on the jeep drive was the only record

Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrike *Hemipus picatus*

Two at Chitwan

Black-winged Cuckooshrike *Coracina melaschistos*

Two singles along the eastern embankment at Koshi on consecutive days

Large Cuckooshrike *Coracina macei*

Three at Bardia, five along the Koshi embankment, another three at Chitwan which were followed by another five the next day

Scarlet Minivet *Pericrocotus flammeus*

Six at Chitwan were the only birds seen

Long-tailed Minivet *Pericrocotus ethologus*

Ten at Godavari, another ten in the Sal forest at Bardia and six on Phulchowki on our second visit there

Small Minivet *Pericrocotus cinnamomeus*

Between two and four on three days at Bardia and another two at Chitwan

Red-whiskered Bulbul *Pycnonotus jocosus*

Whilst normally ignored after the first one, these are actually not that numerous here. Small numbers were seen on most days

Himalayan Bulbul *Pycnonotus leucogenys*

Seen only in the Kathmandu Valley with ten in the Botanical Gardens and another two on Phulchowki on our last visit

Red-vented Bulbul *Pycnonotus cafer*

Commonly seen throughout

Black Bulbul *Hypsipetes madagascariensis*

Ten in the Botanical Gardens, up to 15 at Bardia on three dates and about 30 on Phulchowki

Black-crested Bulbul *Pycnonotus melanicterus*

Two at Bardia were seen by only one or two observers

Common Iora *Aegithina tiphia*

Between one and five on six dates in all the lowland areas

Golden-fronted Leafbird *Chloropsis aurifrons*

Four at Bardia were followed by two the next day in the Sal forest represents a rather poor showing

Brown Dipper *Cinclus pallasii*

Three consisting of one juvenile and two adult birds were seen well along the Rapti River between Kathmandu and Chitwan

Siberian Rubythroat *Luscinia calliope*

Two males were seen extremely well along the Koshi embankment and another was heard in the same area causing much excitement

White-tailed (Himalayan) Rubythroat *Luscinia pectoralis*

Two males gave stunning and prolonged views deep in the elephant grass at Chitwan. It was even possible to scope them as they faced us showing off their iridescent ruby throats

Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica*

Between one and three on four dates in the Koshi and Chitwan areas

Orange-flanked Bush Robin *Tarsiger hyperythrus*

Two in the Godavari Gardens and three on Phulchowki were the only sightings of this little gem

Golden Bush Robin *Tarsiger chrysaeus*

A female in the Godavari gardens was seen badly by just a couple of people but this was followed by a stunning male on Phulchowki on our penultimate visit there

Oriental Magpie Robin *Copsychus saularis*

Up to ten seen virtually daily

White-rumped Shama *Copsychus malabaricus*

Just two birds at Chiwan from the elephant drive was a poor showing

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*

Between one and two on eight dates of this attractive eastern race *P.o.rufiventris*

Hodgson's Redstart *Phoenicurus hodgsoni*

Two in the Botanical Gardens were the only record of this beautiful bird

Blue-fronted Redstart *Phoenicurus frontalis*

Two males and a female in the Botanical gardens were followed by a single male on Phulchowki on our penultimate day

Plumbeous Water Redstart *Rhyacornis fuliginosus*

A male and two females in the Godavari Gardens and another three birds on the drive between Chitwan and Kathmandu

Siberian Stonechat *Saxicola maura subsp.indica*

As yet not considered a separate species from the European Stonechat *Saxicola rubicola* but a good candidate nevertheless. Seen daily in small numbers up to eight mostly outside the Kathmandu Valley

White-tailed Stonechat *Saxicola leucura*

Up to five on six dates in all lowland areas represents a good number compared with previous trips

Pied Bushchat *Saxicola caprata*

Seen only at Bardia and Chitwan with up to ten a day

Grey Bushchat *Saxicola ferrea*

Single males in the Botanical Gardens and on Phulchowki while there were three on one day at Bardia

White-capped Water Redstart *Chaimarrornis leucocephalus*

Two at Godavari, a single between Koshi and Chitwan and three on the river between Chitwan and Kathmandu

Blue Rock Thrush *Monticola solitarius*

A male on the day of the barrage visit and three males along the road between Chitwan and Kathmandu

Chestnut-bellied Rock Thrush *Monticola rufiventris*

A male in the Godavari Gardens and two males and a female on Phulchowki mostly gave excellent views

Blue Whistling Thrush *Myiophoneus caeruleus*

Seven on our morning at the Godavari gardens and singles at Bardia, between Chitwan and Kathmandu and another on Phulchowki

Dark-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis atrogularis*

Just four at Bardia was the only record of this winter visitor

Dusky Thrush *Turdus naumanni*

A single bird along the Koshi embankment was unfortunately only seen by one lucky observer

Grey-winged Blackbird *Turdus boulboul*

A dozen in the Godavari Gardens was more than we have seen before, another four along the Koshi embankment and another single on Phulchowki

Tickell's Thrush *Turdus unicolor*

Finally caught up with this species after seven visits to the Indian Subcontinent. A female was seen at Bardia, followed by three and another single over the next two days

Scaly Thrush *Zoothera dauma*

Excellent views were enjoyed of a single at Koshi Camp

Black-backed Forktail *Enicurus immaculatus*

In past years this species has proved to be the hardest of the forktails to find. This year however there were remarkably three single records, at a little waterfall opposite the Long-billed Plover site between Koshi and Chitwan, the traditional forktail stream between Chitwan and Kathmandu and another Phulchowki

Slaty-backed Forktail *Enicurus schistaceus*

A single in the Godavari Gardens was the surprisingly the only record

Spotted Forktail *Enicurus maculates*

Two in the Botanical gardens were the only record

Little Forktail *Enicurus scouleri*

One in the same stream as the previous two species was a big surprise and apparently shows that the water has become cleaner that it can now support three species of forktail. Washing of clothes in the stream has been stopped

Grey-bellied Tesia *Tesia cyaniventer*

A single in the Botanic gardens eventually gave excellent views to most people

Aberrant Bush Warbler *Cettia flavolivacea*

Singles along the Koshi embankment and on the raft trip were unfortunately seen by just a few people. A difficult skulking species behaving typically of a Cettia

Spotted Bush Warbler *Bradypterus thoracicus*

Another skulking species was seen well at Chitwan by just a few people

Zitting Cisticola *Cisticola juncidis*

One or two on six dates and counts of 12 on our jungle walk at Chitwan and another ten on the day of the game safari

(Bright-capped Cisticola *Cisticola exilis*)

A single bird was heard but refused to give views on one of the sandbanks in the River Koshi

Plain Prinia *Prinia inornata*

A couple of singles at Bardia, six at Koshi and counts of six and ten a in suitable grassland habitat at Chitwan

Ashy Prinia *Prinia socialis*

Just twos on three dates at Bardia and Chitwan

Grey-breasted Prinia *Prinia hodgsonii*

Four at Bardia and two at Chitwan were the only records

Yellow-bellied Prinia *Prinia flaviventris*

Two on the barrage day were followed by superb views of three on our jungle walk at Chitwan and another there the next day

Jungle Prinia *Prinia sylvatica*

Our first record of this species in Nepal with four seen at Bardia

Common Tailorbird *Orthotomus sutorius*

Up to six recorded virtually daily and more often heard than seen

Oriental White-eye *Zosterops palpebrosus*

One or two seen on seven dates in all areas

Striated Grassbird *Megalurus palustris*

Three seen along the embankment near the barrage gave excellent views and there was another single on one of the sandbanks in the middle of the Koshi River

Paddyfield Warbler *Acrocephalus agricola*

One at Bardia in the camp was seen by only one person, then eight were recorded along the embankment by Koshi Camp, another three also at Koshi and a single on our drive between Koshi and Chitwan on one of our stops

Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum*

Only seen at Koshi where there were up to three on four dates, mostly in the camp

Clamorous Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus stentoreus*

Just one single along the Koshi embankment

Thick-billed Warbler *Acrocephalus aedon*

Two along the Koshi embankment and another one there a few days later

Whistler's Warbler *Seicercus whistleri*

Three at Phulchowki on our second visit was the sole record

Grey-hooded Warbler *Seicercus xanthoschistos*

Six at the Godavari gardens were followed by at least 20 associated with mixed feeding parties on our penultimate day on Phulchowki

Chestnut-crowned Warbler *Seicercus castaniceps*

One the Botanical gardens and two on Phulchowki

Black-faced Warbler *Abroscopus schisticeps*

Five on our second visit to Phulchowki represents a good record

Blyth's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus reguloides*

Two at the Botanical gardens, six in the Sal Forest at Bardia and another two on Phulchowki

Western Crowned Warbler *Phylloscopus occipitalis*

A single in the Sal forest at Bardia, and two in the jungle at Chitwan were the only records

Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides*

Between one and five on ten dates in all areas and a count of ten birds along the Koshi embankment

Buff-barred Warbler *Phylloscopus pulcher*

Only seen on Phulchowki with estimates of 12 and 20 on our two visits there

Ashy-throated Warbler *Phylloscopus maculipennis*

Six on Phulchowki towards the end of the trip gave good views

Lemon-rumped Warbler *Phylloscopus chloronotus*

Eight in the Godavari/Phulchowki area on our first day

Hume's Warbler *Phylloscopus humei*

Just one single along the Koshi embankment

Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus*

Only seen along the Koshi river with records on one on our walk along the embankment and ten also there on our rafting day

Smoky Warbler *Phylloscopus fulgiventor*

Two singles along the Koshi embankment and two at Chitwan

Tickell's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus affinis*

Singles on two dates at Bardia and Koshi and a count of six along the embankment walk on our first day at Koshi

Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*

A single at Bardia and two counts of three at Koshi

Small Niltava *Niltava macgrigoriae*

A singles of this species at Godavari gave stunning views and sat on the same log as two years ago

Rufous-bellied Niltava *Niltava sundara*

A female in the Botanical gardens was the only record

Verditer Flycatcher *Muscicapa thalassina*

Up to three on ten dates in all areas

Rufous-gorgeted Flycatcher *Ficedula strophiatea*

Four in the Godavari gardens on our first day were followed by three on Phulchowki on our penultimate day

Red-throated Flycatcher *Ficedula parva* (**Taiga Flycatcher** *Ficedula albicilla*)

The most common flycatcher of the trip. Up to half a dozen were seen on most days

Slaty-blue Flycatcher *Ficedula tricolor*

A female was seen in the Godavari Gardens

Grey-headed Canary Flycatcher *Culicicapa ceylonensis*

Eight in the Botanical gardens were the only record

Yellow-bellied Fantail *Rhipidura hypoxantha*

Six on Phulchowki on our second visit there

White-throated Fantail *Rhipidura albicollis*

Three on two dates at Koshi, a single at Chitwan and two on Phulchowki

(Puff-throated Babbler *Pellorneum ruficeps*)

One heard in the jungle at Chitwan refused to show itself

(Streak-breasted Scimitar Babbler *Pomatorhinus erythrogeus*)

A single was heard in the distance on our second visit to Phulchowki

Black-chinned Babbler *Stachyris pyrrhops*

Six in the Godavari Gardens and two on Phulchowki at the end of the trip were the only records

Striped Tit Babbler *Macronous gularis*

A small party of five were seen in the jungle at Chitwan whereafter two more were heard only

Chestnut-capped Babbler *Timalia pileata*

Fantastic views of six birds in the Chitwan grasslands were followed by another eight in the same habitat the next day

Yellow-eyed Babbler *Chrysomma sinense*

Two birds also gave stunning views in the grasslands at Chitwan and were even photographed at the top of the grasses

Striated Babbler *Turdoides earlei*

Between six and ten on four dates at Koshi and Chitwan

Jungle Babbler *Turdoides striatus*

Up to 25 on seven dates at Koshi and Chitwan

Slender-billed Babbler *Turdoides longirostris*

Three in the grasslands at Chitwan gave just brief views to a few people

White-throated Laughingthrush *Garrulax albogularis*

Six on Phulchowki on one of first visit and about 50 there on our penultimate day

Striated Laughingthrush *Garrulax striatus*

A new species for the group. Excellent views of two out of the four birds that were seen on Phulchowki as they sat on top of a bush

(Grey-sided Laughingthrush *Garrulax caerulatus*)

One or two birds heard deep in the thickets, although very close to the road, refused to give themselves up

Streaked Laughingthrush *Garrulax lineatus*

Four seen feeding on the road at Phulchowki gave excellent views

Chestnut-crowned Laughingthrush *Garrulax erythrocephalus*

Ten on our first visit to Phulchowki was followed by 12 there on a subsequent visit

Red-billed Leiothrix *Leiothrix lutea*

Considering how bright this species is, it is still difficult to see. Eight were seen at the Godavari gardens

Hoary-throated Barwing *Actinodura nipalensis*

Good views were had of two birds on Phulchowki on our first visit

White-browed Fulvetta *Alcippe vinipectus*

Fantastic views were had of about eight birds at Phulchowki on our second visit there

Rufous-winged Fulvetta *Alcippe castaneiceps*

About a dozen on Phulchowki on our second visit to the higher parts of the mountain

Rufous Sibia *Heterophasia capistrata*

Only seen on Phulchowki where it is common. On our two visits to the higher parts of the mountain there were estimates of 50 but only about ten on our second trip there

(Whiskered Yuhina *Yuhina flavicollis*)

Heard only on Phulchowki

Stripe-throated Yuhina *Yuhina gularis*

Two on Phulchowki on our second visit there

Great Tit *Parus major*

Seen in all areas except Koshi with counts of up to eight on a daily basis

Black-throated Tit *Aegithalos concinnus*

This beautiful little creature was only seen in the Kathmandu Valley at both the Botanical gardens and on Phulchowki with counts of just five and two

Yellow-browed Tit *Sylviparus modestus*

Compared with the last species this must go down as one of the dullest of the forest species. However two and four were recorded in the Botanical Gardens and Phulchowki

Green-backed Tit *Parus monticolus*

This species looks far more like our Great Tit than does the eastern Great Tit. However it is a much scarcer bird and two in the Botanical gardens and three on Phulchowki were the only sightings

Black-lored Tit *Parus xanthogenys*

Eight in the Godavari gardens were followed by two on Phulchowki

Velvet-fronted Nuthatch *Sitta frontalis*

Surprisingly small numbers. Just two singles and a two all at Chitwan

White-tailed Nuthatch *Sitta himalayensis*

Only seen on Phulchowki with three on our first visit and eight on the second

Chestnut-bellied Nuthatch *Sitta castanea*

Seen far more commonly than the other two of the family with counts of up to eight on eight dates in all areas but Koshi

Wallcreeper *Tichodroma muraria*

This much sought-after species gave an excellent display on the rockface on the other side of the fast flowing river between Kathmandu and Chitwan. This was likely to be one of the birds of the trip for some people

Winter Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*

Just one bird seen by just one observer for the second year running came as a great surprise

Purple Sunbird *Nectarinia asiatica*

Up to eight on a daily basis at Bardia and Koshi

Green-tailed Sunbird *Aethopyga nipalensis*

Four were seen on Phulchowki on our first visit while on our subsequent visit there were another six. The males are truly stunning and there can't be many birds with long bright green tails

Crimson Sunbird *Aethopyga siparaja*

This is another beauty when in full plumage. A male was seen at the entrance to the Bardia National Park but was unfortunately not seen by the whole group

Fire-tailed Sunbird *Aethopyga ignicauda*

Twenty at Phulchowki on our first visit represents a much bigger number than on any of our previous visits

Black-throated Sunbird *Aethopyga ignicauda*

A single on Phulchowki on our second visit gave just brief views

Fire-breasted Flowerpecker *Dicaeum ignipectus*

Four in the Godavari Gardens were followed by a pair on Phulchowki towards the end of our trip

Thick-billed Flowerpecker *Dicaeum agile*

A single in the Sal Forest at Bardia was the only record

Maroon Oriole *Oriolus trailli*

A single female was seen on Phulchowki on our first visit there

Black-hooded Oriole *Oriolus xanthornus*

Up to five on nine dates in all areas except the Kathmandu Valley

Brown Shrike *Lanius cristatus*

Although uncommon in the far west, one was seen at Bardia by the elephant stables, followed by five dates of between two and eight, all at Koshi

Long-tailed Shrike *Lanius schach*

The commonest shrike of the area and up to ten were seen on a daily basis

Grey-backed Shrike *Lanius tephronotus*

Up to three on six dates at Koshi and Chitwan

Black Drongo *Dicrurus macrocercus*

A bird of the agricultural areas and seen daily in uncounted numbers outside of the mountains

Ashy Drongo *Dicrurus leucophaeus*

One or two seen on three days at Bardia and another single at Chitwan

White-bellied Drongo *Dicrurus caerulescens*

Between three and six on three dates at Bardia, four at Koshi and a single at Chitwan

Spangled Drongo *Dicrurus hottentottus*

Seen in all areas, except in the Kathmandu Valley, with numbers ranging from two to 20, often in the flowering cotton trees

Greater Racket-tailed Drongo *Dicrurus paradiseus*

Two or three at Bardia on three dates and another three at Chitwan

Ashy Woodswallow *Artamus fuscus*

Two on one day at Chitwan was the sole record

Eurasian Jay *Garrulus glandarius*

A single heard and another seen at Phulchowki

Red-billed Blue Magpie *Urocissa erythrorhyncha*

Six in the Godavari Gardens and a single at Chitwan

Rufous Treepie *Dendrocitta vagabunda*

Seen virtually daily with counts in single figures but ten and 15 were counted on two days at Chitwan

House Crow *Corvus splendens*

Ubiquitous and noisy and never counted

Large-billed Crow *Corvus macrohynchos*

Not as common as the previous species but still common enough not to deserve serious counts

Spot-winged Starling *Saraglossa spiloptera*

An uncommon winter visitor to Chitwan where five were seen in two different locations but all in flowering trees

Chestnut-tailed Starling *Sturnus malabaricus*

Seen virtually daily in with counts of up to 60 a day but some days perhaps even more, mostly in flowering trees

Brahminy Starling *Sturnus malabaricus*

Six at Bardia were followed by five there two days later

Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*

Our first encounter of the species in Nepal with between two and 14 on four days in Bardia

Asian Pied Starling *Sturnus contra*

Commonly encountered in lowland areas

Common Myna *Acridotheres tristis*

Again commonly found usually near human habitation

Jungle Myna *Acridotheres fuscus*

Again commonly encountered

Hill Myna *Gracula religiosa*

By far the most interesting member of the family and 18 were seen at Chitwan and four there the next day. This is the Myna that speaks well and is kept in cages in the west

Chestnut-shouldered Petronia *Petronia xanthocollis*

Up to 40 in the Bardia area on five dates

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*

Present in small numbers in areas of human habitation

Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*

Small numbers in the Kathmandu Valley only. They are far more urban in the orient than in the west and far less brightly coloured

Rufous-breasted Accentor *Prunella strophiatea*

A single on Phulchowki on our first visit

Baya Weaver *Ploceus philippinus*

Seen in Bardia and Koshi only with maximum estimates of over 40 birds

Indian Silverbill *Lonchura malabarica*

Seen only at Koshi Camp where they breed with counts of up to 11 on four dates

White-rumped Munia *Lonchura striata*

Two at the lunchstop en route to Kathmandu from Chitwan were the only birds seen

Scaly-breasted Munia *Lonchura punctulata*

Only seen at Bardia with counts of three to 60

Yellow-breasted Greenfinch *Carduelis spinoides*

Excellent views of ten birds were obtained on the way to the Botanical gardens towards the end of the trip in exactly the same spot as two years ago. This is the only place where we have encountered Alder trees in which they were feeding

Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinnus*

Up to eight on seven dates at Bardia and Koshi but there was a count of 30 at the Camp at Bardia on one of our days there

Yellow-breasted Bunting *Emberiza aureola*

How two years and just a few weeks later can make so much difference. Last time we had estimates of 3000 birds at Koshi whereas this year there were counts of three and 30 at Koshi and a single female at Chitwan

Crested Bunting *Melophus lathami*

Better numbers than before with counts of one to eight on nine dates in all lowland areas

MAMMALS

Indian Flying Fox *Pteropus giganteus*

Two were seen in the suburbs of the City of Kathmandu on the last day

Rhesus Macaque *Macaca mulatta*

Seen commonly at Bardia and Chitwan and in Kathmandu itself with counts of up to 45 at Bardia

Common Langur *Presbytis entellus*

Less common than the previous species but nevertheless seen on most days at Bardia and Chitwan with a maximum count of 20

Asiatic Golden Jackal *Canis lupus*

Excellent and prolonged views of singles on the Koshi embankment and at the Pink Tower

Sloth Bear *Melursus ursinus*

One of the highlights of the whole tour. A total of five different bears were seen on the sand tracks in the Chitwan jungle in the late afternoon. Good views were obtained. This is our first encounter of this species by any of our groups to the Indian Subcontinent

Small Indian Civet *Viverricula indica*

Fantastic views were had of this species in good light on two evenings at Koshi Camp. This was a new mammal species for the Camp and the groups second only encounter, a brief view was had of one at dusk in Sri Lanka but only by just a few people

Indian Grey Mongoose *Herpestes edwardsi*

Commonly seen in the Koshi and Chitwan areas with a maximum of eight in one day

Jungle Cat *Felis chaus*

This beautiful cat breeds in the Koshi camp and two were seen one day while there were two further singles

Leopard *Panthera pardus*

The guides were alerted to the presence of a large cat by the alarm call of monkeys which when followed up were rewarded by excellent views of a Leopard which came out of the jungle, walked along the track, and returned to the depths of the forest once again. Unfortunately, as is so often the case, only two out of the four jeeps were lucky to experience this. Some of us must wait to another trip to see this elusive creature

Royal Bengal Tiger *Panthera tigris*

The group were luckier with this one in that everybody saw him. The main reason for organising this extended trip to include Bardia was for Tiger. We were indeed fortunate that within two hours of arriving we had seen our target and I have never seen a group quite so excited as on this occasion. Whisky flowed freely that evening!

A male was seen coming out of the forest on to a pebbly peninsula, had a sniff round, went back into the jungle after the noise made by us shouting "Tiger", came out again, returned once more after which it came out for the last time and proceeded to swim across the river. It then immediately disappeared into the jungle. This was obviously a popular crossing point as over the next two evenings we saw Rhino, deer and monkeys doing the same thing but there were no more big cats

Ganges River Dolphin *Platanista gangetica*

Probably four different dolphins were seen on numerous occasions at the Koshi Barrage although it is difficult to get good views as they are so quick and they have almost disappeared as soon as they surface

Asian Elephant *Elephas maximus*

A Tusker and two females were seen by the river at Bardia, and although a little distant we were able to get good views with our scopes. They were out in an area we had walked just two hours earlier

Indian One-horned Rhinoceros *Rhinoceros unicornis*

A female and a juvenile crossed the river at Bardia while at Chitwan we had an excellent series of records of nine, five and five on consecutive days. A group of six seen from the elephants included a baby

Wild Boar *Sus scrofa*

Two twos were seen on our game drive at Chitwan

(Barking Deer *Muntiacus muntjak*)

A single was heard at Chitwan

Chital (Spotted Deer) *Cervus axis*

Seen on seven dates in all areas with maximum counts of 25

Hog Deer *Cervus porcinus*

Two twos and a three at Bardia and Koshi

Sambar *Cervus unicolor*

Three at Chitwan was the only record

Wild Water Buffalo *Bubalus bubalus*

Two from the Pink Tower were followed by 45 the next day on our raft trip

Gaur *Bos frontalis*

A herd of 17 were found in the forest at Chitwan and although we were really close it was difficult to get good views as they were hidden by the elephant grass, but one could hear them munching away

Five-striped Palm Squirrel *Funambulus pennanti*

A single at Chitwan

Orange-bellied Squirrel *Dremomys lokriah*

Singles on Phulchowki on both visits

Indian Porcupine *Hystrix indica*

Brief views of one as it crossed the track in front of the jeep at Chitwan was seen by just one or two people

Grey Musk Shrew *Suncus murinus*

One seen walking along the path at Koshi camp

REPTILES

Indian Python

Three were seen from the elephants at Bardia

Common Kraite

One seen in the gardens of the lodge at Chitwan

Marsh Mugger

A juvenile at Bardia, another from the rafts at Koshi and six one day at Chitwan

Gharial

Singles on three consecutive days at Chitwan

BUTTERFLIES

Compiled by Steve Blaskett

Swallowtails (*papionidae*)

Common Windmill

Common Crow

Common Morman

Yellow Swallowtail

Fourbar Swordtail

Whites and Yellows (*Pieridae*)

Large Cabbage White

Common Imagrant

Common Wanderer

Small Grass Yellow

Onespot Grass Yellow

Chocolate Grass Yellow

Spotted Sawtooth

Dark Clouded Yellow

Large Orange Tip

Blues (*Lycaenidae*)

Common Hedge Blue
Lime Blue
Silver-streaked Acacia Blue
Common Cerulean Blue
Forest Pierot

Browns (*Nymphalidae*)

Common Tiger
Plain Tiger
Glassy Tiger
Common Jezabel
Striped Blue Crow
Blue Peacock
Grey Pansy
Peacock Pansy
Indian Painted Lady
Indian Red Admiral
Mountain Tortoiseshell
Eastern Courter
Great eggfly
The Map
The Tabby
Colour Sergeant
Common Sergeant
Common Sailor
The Baronet
The Leopard
Common Evening Brown