



Birding Nepal

April 2008

With

Sandwich Bird Tours

Nepal April 2008
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A Tour of Phulchowki, Chitwan and Koshi

Participants: John and Pauline Beard, Bob and Margaret Brooks, Gaynor Cross, Vida Madell, Sue Morton, Pauline Mc Kenzie-Lloyd, Ian and Sally Hunter, John van der Dol

Daily Diary by Sally Hunter

Saturday 5th April London

The first seven of us met at Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory and left more or less on time, the driver having replanned the route to Heathrow on hearing that the M2 was closed. On the way along the M20 we experienced the sort of weather that one might have expected of the mountains of Nepal – driving rain and hail with snow forecast for later. We picked up the Meopham 4 at the Holiday Inn and continued to make good time until actually within the airport road system. It was busy.

All checked in we made our way to the loafing area and relaxed until boarding suddenly became last call! 2 of us found the route march that then ensued a little hard going!

Following a flight absolutely to time with the only event of note being the cabin crew trying not to feed Sue and Vida we spent a short while relaxing in Doha before boarding our onward flight to Kathmandu.

Sunday 6th April Doha and Kathmandu

Again we took off on time and had an uneventful journey until descending into the Kathmandu Valley through very heavy clouds. Lightning struck the plane at least 3 times – 2 particularly exciting hits causing a certain amount of noise from some passengers. Once we came through the cloud we caught the breathtaking mountain scenery of the Kathmandu Valley.

We waited a very long time for our luggage. Ian's arrived with no labels but Sue, Pauline and Gaynor's did not arrive at all. More of this anon...

We were all presented with garlands of fresh marigolds, cornflowers and Love-in-a-mist as we boarded our bus for the short journey to the Hotel Marshyangdi in the tourist Thamel district of the city.

Arriving this close to the first election since the King stood down and the first exercise of democracy in a long while was fascinating and the Nepalis we spoke to were obviously excited about the future – helped no doubt by the current fuel shortages and planned daily power cuts.

After a freshen up we had dinner and then made wearily for our beds.

Monday 7th April Godavari and Phulchowki

After a leisurely buffet breakfast we set off in 4 comfortable 4x4s for the Botanic Gardens. Just before the gardens we stopped for a quick scan and picked up, among other things, Red-billed Blue Magpies and Eurasian Cuckoo – a sound we might expect in April but not necessarily in Nepal. Once at the gardens Suchit blagged our way in before the official opening time and we were immediately surrounded by birds. The White-capped Water Redstart was a superb curtain raiser on a day of plenty of colourful birds. Highlights at Godavari included 2 ticks for John (who had been telling us all that he was unlikely to get much in the way of new birds having visited Nepal several times before). These were Ultramarine Flycatcher and Dark-sided Flycatcher. We also had Plumbeous Water Redstart. Then on as far as we could go in the 4x4s up Phulchowki with one short stop to admire the Annapurna range. We continued to bounce on up for a few hundred metres more. As soon as we started down we were into birds and this continued all the way down. It took a while for almost all of us to see the Chestnut-headed Tesia and the Large Hawk Cuckoo teased us for hours until we finally got a glimpse as it flew off. Throughout this we were being met at various places by a couple of German birders on foot – we first drove past them on our way up. We couldn't quite work out how they got up as far as they did as quickly as they did nor how they got past us and then met us further down – it turns out that there are some pretty scary shortcuts between the hairpins which they had utilised.

After a hair-raising journey back through the Kathmandu rush hour traffic, Sue, Pauline and Gaynor were euphorically reunited with their luggage. It seems that it never got on the original flight and was left in London – I'm very glad we didn't leave from terminal 5!

Tuesday 8th April Kathmandu to Chitwan

After a late wake up call and a splendid breakfast we set off on the long journey to Chitwan. Our first stop was Naubise River to look for forketails. It seems this was the local toilet – we had to be very careful where we trod but we were rewarded with Plumbeous Water Redstart Common Tailorbirds and Grey Wagtail together with a stunning orange-headed lizard (Calotis or Garden Lizard) which posed for us on the lantana. At our second stop, Khasti Ghole (Ghole means bridge) we got John's third tick in 2 days – so much for not getting any new birds! Suchit's research had paid off as he played a tape and we got superb views of Nepal's only endemic – Spiny Babbler. Apparently they did have two for several years as Nepal Wren-Babbler was described from Nepal but those (to quote Suchit) "Bloody Indians" found one just south of the border.

We continued onward in very hot and humid conditions until we stopped for the driver and his boy to have their Nepali brunch while we birded from a hill-top restaurant and saw Scarlet Minivet, Common Iora, and Rufous Treepie.

We passed the temple to Manakamana – the Goddess of wishes whose name means "wishes of the heart" and Suchit suggested we make a wish for our next lifer- but of course if we were to get our wish - and there is no doubt at least one of us would get at least one - then we would have to sacrifice a goat – watch this space!

We followed the Trisuli river valley through the Mahabharat Range of mountains before coming out into the remnants of the formerly extensive Sal forest. This smelt wonderful as many of the trees were in flower. Following the eradication of the mosquito in the 1960s via DDT 40% of the ancient Sal forest was removed to allow human development and logged to provide sleepers for the Indian railways. The Sal wood is impervious to termites.

After a further few hours travel we arrived hot and tired at our beautiful home for the next 3 nights – Machan Paradise View.

After a short while we set off for a walk in the immediate area and picked up Brown Crake, Red Collared Dove, Peregrine, Green and Blue-tailed Bee-eaters and another Suchit special – a Black Francolin responded to Suchit's tape.

As we rushed back as it became dark some of our party came upon an exciting though sad discovery- the body of a fishing cat kitten.

Wednesday 9th April Chitwan Machan Paradise View

We set off at 7am for a long, hot, bumpy, exhausting but very fruitful day on the jeeps. We travelled through Sal forest with the ever present perfume from the flowers. We had our packed lunch by the river where some saw Black-backed Forktail and some Long-tailed Broadbills together with Rosy Minivet (one of 2 lifers for John again). We had a good range of BoPs. Other bird highlights included Dollarbird, Chestnut-winged Cuckoo, Slender-billed Babbler, Lesser Necklaced Laughing-thrush and a Pale-footed Bush Warbler. This last one could only be a Cettia with a most distinctive explosive call and very skulky. We saw a Gharial (which apparently means bearer of pot), several Rhino, Hog Deer and Chital (Spotted Deer) and Wild Boar. At the end we went back to our youth to find out how many birders you can fit into one jeep for the last few hundred yards.

Thursday 10th April Chitwan Machan Paradise View contd

Today was Election Day in Nepal. It was rather exciting to be in Nepal at such an important moment in their history – the first truly democratic elections for some decades. The local people including our guides, driver, shopkeepers etc were all very much involved and excited as were the army – more of that later.

An intrepid 7 set off at 6am on elephant back and saw several Wild Boar, Hog Deer and Golden Jackal. The trip was much enlivened by the antics of the two baby elephants accompanying their mothers.

These were apparently the result of unplanned pregnancies following visits from Romeo, a wild elephant – sadly no more but apparently his genes live on in many young elephants around the Chitwan lodges.

After the usual good breakfast we set off for a local walk around the immediate vicinity – mainly farmland. We had excellent views of Richard's Pipit and saw a soaring Indian Spotted Eagle. We had started off with Oriental Scops Owl sitting impassively in a tree just behind our rooms. We also saw Plain and Grey-breasted Prinia.

We all needed cold drinks when we got back and after a short while most of us drifted off to our rooms. After a splendid lunch which included warm chips and for the non-veggers a passable jungle fowl, we set off again in jeeps for the National Park. 7 of us including Suchit took up the back of the open jeep and the 3 most agile (!?) went into a closed Landover with Vida in the front – little did they know what awaited them – the mattress on the roof should have provided a clue.

When we reached the river and the park entry point we spent a while birding from the Rapti bridge. A few saw a sparkling male Citrine Wagtail. We also had Ruddy Shelduck, Lesser Adjutant Stork and Little Ringed Plover.

We soon discovered how involved the army were with the elections. It transpired that the person who could let us in to the park was away on election business and it took rather a long time for someone to be found who was of high enough rank who could talk to the colonel. In the meantime we continued to bird, get hot, be passed by election observers, drink water, think of suggestions for the suggestions box in the shelter we finally had to take shelter in and continued to get hotter. Eventually someone of the requisite rank spoke to the colonel and he gave us a free pass into the park – this had all taken well over an hour.

We finally entered the park and our patience was rewarded with various nice birds. After a while we stopped and the agile 3 clambered (sorry – leapt) onto the roof of the second vehicle as we were apparently passing into mammal country.

We had 3 shiny wet Rhinos, a couple of large groups of Chital, a Muntjac, a couple of Hog Deer and a Sambar. We also had several Wild Boar and a party of Gaur which Suchit and our barman (who had come along on the roof for the ride) decided to approach. The highlight of this part of the trip was undoubtedly the group of 3 Sloth Bears seen briefly if at all but well and truly heard. We returned to a lovely Barbecue dinner.

Friday 11th April Machan Paradise View to Machan Wildlife Resort

Four of the party set off early for an elephant ride enlivened this time by the recent presence of tiger which spooked the mother elephants. Others went for an early morning walk and saw Painted Snipe and Jungle Owlet. At least one of us had a lie in.

After breakfast we set off in our comfortable bus for the very hot 2 hour drive to the sister lodge at the other end of Royal Chitwan National Park. We then transferred to jeeps for the transfer to the lodge – what an entrance – we crossed rivers in stunning scenery amongst hills. Once at the lodge we had a splendid surprise – a swimming pool, and a not so splendid surprise – 48 Spaniards sponsored by a tyre company. After another, by now expected, good lunch and a short siesta most set off for a walk into the woodland around the lodge. At the start of the walk there was a feeding flock of many smaller birds including Scarlet Minivet, bulbuls, Hume's and Greenish Warblers etc. On the walk 2 Drongo Cuckoos displaying, Large Woodshrike and Red-headed Trogon were seen and various larger ground birds were heard such as Black Francolin, Indian Peafowl and Red Junglefowl.

Whilst drinking our tea some of us had Savannah Nightjar. After a freshen up there was the option of a slide show in Spanish and then dinner.

Saturday 12th April Machan Wildlife Resort

After waiting for our packed breakfast with the inevitable cheese sandwiches made the night before and bizarrely hard boiled eggs obviously done that morning, we set off in 2 landrovers for a journey that Suchit had said would take half an hour – 2 hours later we finally reached the “top”. The terrain was hard going but beautiful – dry stony river bed set in hills clothed in greenery. We had to ford the remnants of the river many times both in the vehicles and later on foot.

In the ravine Harda Khola we had fabulous views of Sultan Tit, Black-backed Forktail, White-browed Scimitar Babbler-new for John and mainly seen by him, and Streaked Spiderhunter. We spent a while

looking for Red-headed Trogon which Suchit tried to lure with his electronic equipment. It eventually came to his own vocal call. Throughout we were accompanied by the sound of Blue-throated Barbet. When we finally got back lunch was ready – leftovers from last night's barbecue plus two types of carbohydrate – oh for some Nepali food.

It was very hot and humid and after a short rest we set off for various sorts of transport – 2 to elephants and the rest to a landrover. We were relieved to see that the one landrover was an open one.

Unfortunately (as we thought at the time) we had to transfer to an enclosed landrover. Ian and Suchit went onto the roof as there was little room inside. The sky got greyer and greyer and thunder started. We continued on regardless through the forest - over bush fires and rough ground, round bigger fires and fallen trees and eventually came out onto the river bed. The sky by now was black and there was regular forked and sheet lightning and rolls of thunder. We counted the storm as being between 4 and 10 miles away. As we came out onto the river bank the wind, which had been quite strong, really picked up and visibility went down to atrocious as a result of a sandstorm which also drove the intrepid roof riders down into the vehicle and we hightailed it for home. About the only bird we saw was what Suchit called a Kalij Pheasant in a rain coat – Red Junglefowl.

One advantage of getting back early was being able to pack in the almost light.

Sunday 13th April Chitwan to Koshi

An early start today for the very long journey across Nepal from Central to East. The day started with excellent views of Purple Sunbird, Small Pratincoles and Golden-fronted Leafbird around the lodge. After recrossing the river in jeeps we transferred to our comfortable bus to set off on the E-W Highway. As it was New Year's Day 2065 we saw Nepal en fete. We passed a couple of weekly markets and a festival – I think the locals were making a killing at the bike parks. We crossed the Churia and Siwalik Ranges of hills down onto the Gangetic plain. The aircon was brought into play for the first and only time as the Nepalese part of our party went to a roadside restaurant for their rice and curry while we provided the amusement for the locals on our toilet trips. We sat in air conditioned splendour and ate our cheese sandwiches and eggs in the coach. We were obviously getting used to long distance travel as after no time we arrived at the camp of which Suchit is so justly proud. The tents are comfortable and the view from one's bedroom is second to none. We went for short walk to look at the camp and had the surprising joy of seeing 3 Black Bitterns – 2 of them posing on the top of trees. As we were waiting for our dinner we were entertained by the noise and antics of more than one Spotted Owllet family which were nesting in several nest boxes around the dining room area. For dinner we had a proper Nepali meal.

Monday 14th April Koshi Camp

After a night enhanced or disturbed (depending on your point of view; by the end of the stay I think the disturbed lobby won hands down as more than one of the party muttered about guns) by Spotted Owllets and Indian Cuckoos, we had an early start but still managed a full several course breakfast. We walked up onto the Eastern Embankment and a cool, breezy, mainly shady walk until 11ish. Highlights were Thick-billed Warbler, Black Bitterns, Yellow-footed Green Pigeon, Grey-headed Lapwing, a feeding flock which included Blue-throated and Red-throated Flycatchers and magnificent views of Siberian Rubythroat. We also had good views of Mongoose. Then back to Koshi on the landrovers for a full lunch of asparagus soup followed by beautiful but slightly tough proper pork from the local domestic wild boar. Then to a much needed rest before setting off again in the landrovers for the rest of the embankment. This was a very hot walk although it clouded over later. Highlights included Swamp Francolin and Coppersmith Barbet, Sirkeer Malkoa, Hoopoe, Bristled Grassbird, Brown Shrike and Water Buffalo. Then proper Nepali dinner.

Tuesday 15th April Koshi Camp

An early start - after tea brought to the tent one member of the group got clear views of a fishing cat while waiting to leave for the landrover transfer to the boats. The two boats were large rubber dinghies – one with a slow puncture. Off we went onto the Koshi River which was very broad even at this time. We saw Green Heron and then onto a sandbank to look for grassland species. We saw Bright-headed

Cisticola, Graceful Warbler (John saw a disgraceful warbler due to his state of dress) Striated Grassbird and Bristled Grassbird. We then crossed to a flat sandy sandbank for our splendid breakfast which did not include cheese sandwiches but did include hot tea. Then back in the boats for another sandbank where we saw, among other grassland species, Rufous vented Prinia. One group continued after quite a trek across the grass bank to get better views of this while others who were slower waited by the boats. Then we had a slow, hot, sunny but very pleasant drift back along the river spotting Black-necked Storks, Black-bellied Tern and Little Tern. One boat got stuck on an unseen sandbank and Badri and the boatman (who doubled as barman) had trouble getting us off so Gaynor and Pauline got out to help – having sandals and shorts. Gaynor nearly regretted her kindness as she nearly got sucked under the boat.

Then back for lunch – grateful for the river breeze but less so when the extent of the effect of the sun was noticed on skin.

After a rest we set off again in the landrovers for an area close to the park HQ. We spent a very happy couple of hours watching Smoky Warbler (a black phylosc!), a pair of Painted Snipe, a Common Snipe, a fabulous male Citrine Wagtail, a Pied Harrier and an intriguing wader eventually ID'd as Temmink's Stint - having been variously described as everything between Ruff and a small sandpiper. We also had amazing views of a Striated Grassbird sitting on top of bamboo.

We then headed back for tea and Tiffin – this time wonderful fenugreek biscuits, much needed showers and dinner. At dinner Vida pulled a firefly – quote “ the most fun she had had since the carwash!?!”.

Wednesday 16th April Koshi Camp (Dahran Forest and Koshi Barrage)

After a light early breakfast we set off for the forest via the sandbanks of the Koshi River. Within a short time of stopping at the sandbanks we had our first target species – Yellow-wattled Lapwing. At our second stop it was again only seconds before we had caught up with Indian Courser. As a bonus we also had tremendous views of Mongooses (Mongese?) and Bengal Fox. It was only 8.30/9am when we arrived at the forest but it was already very hot. Again we saw most of our target species within a very short period of time which was just as well as by lunchtime we were almost overheating and the decision was made to go back to camp. We had all seen Abbott's Babbler (one member of the group after a lot of help from her friends and clambering through undergrowth). After yet another splendid packed lunch we set off back to camp for a rest. Later we visited the barrage, built in the 1960s by the Indian Government to protect the low lying lands in Northern India from flooding, to try for Gangetic Dolphin – apparently rarer than Tiger. Needless to say we had fabulous views of them! We also saw a female Pied Harrier and good views of Brown-headed Gull. We then went up to the birdwatching tower and thanked our lucky stars we were not visiting 20 years ago as that was the accommodation for birders in those days. It is now inhabited by a local family and had definitely seen better days but provided great views of the river and surrounding area.

Back to camp for a fish and chip supper – including cheese and peas, brinjal curry, fish curry and fruit and yoghurt with cardamom.

Thursday 17th April Koshi Camp

Another early start – we set off for the barrage to look for the Dolphins again. We only had 1 sighting of one individual so were very glad we had had such good views the previous evening. There was also a raft of dabchicks and many terns including Caspian. We saw a few more waders, Greater Short-toed Lark, Richard's Pipit, Cotton Pygmy-goose and Pheasant-tailed Jacana.

At the tower again it was cool and comfortable we saw Black-shouldered Kite, Marsh Harrier and finally managed a Wood Sandpiper.

Then lunch after an impromptu competition for the most original sunflower picture -the most interesting bit of which was the line of bemused locals watching a line of Brits being silly in the sunflower field!

After lunch we went off in two directions – one group for a village tour and one group for a walk around the camp ponds and temple.

The village belonged to a local tribe (the Jhanghan) who had a natural resistance to malaria – quite a handy trait to have in this habitat – who it is thought had originally come from Myanmar/Tibet. It gave us an idea of what it must have felt like as the Pied Piper – children followed us and were keen to have their pictures taken and then to look at them. It was interesting to get some understanding of life in a terai village.

The birding group saw Chestnut Bittern and Purple Heron together with a tree full of warblers and got to grips with Brown-capped Pygmy Woodpecker.

Friday 18th April Koshi to Kathmandu

Another early start for our flight to Kathmandu. After a very slight delay while some officials examined the plane for defects we took off in our small plane. Those who managed to secure seats at the back on the left of the plane managed spectacular views of the Himalayas including Everest. All the party however had some views. It was a very short trip and then we were back at the familiar Hotel Marshyangdi. Fortunately we had arrived back on a day of NO POWER CUTS! We went shopping with varying levels of success/enthusiasm and then to the usual dinner.

Saturday 19th April Kathmandu or Phulchowki

Another day of choice – one group to a cultural tour of Patan and the other off to Phulchowki to try for some species not seen at the beginning of the trip.

The birders went off very early and had a good haul of species including Grey-bellied Tesia, Rusty-cheeked Scimitar Babbler, Scaly Thrush, Eurasian Jay, Grey Bushchat, and Blyth's Leaf Warbler. The real novelty of the trip was having a driver who used a seatbelt!! Again they came upon intrepid Europeans using their own power to get up and down – this time a couple of mountain bikers from Scotland. They also discovered that again Suchit's timing was perfect – the next day there was to be a big festival on the hill – not so many birds to see then. They had the joy of the usual packed lunch of dry cheese sandwiches and boiled eggs.

The culture vultures had a short lie in and then set off with a very thoughtful and knowledgeable guide for a hot and exhausting but totally fascinating tour of the city of Patan and the Hindu cremation site. We experienced many Buddhist and Hindu temples. It was fascinating going from the quiet, calm of the Buddhist temple into the noise, colour and mayhem of the Hindu temple. The contrast was huge. We enjoyed the medieval splendour of the city of Patan with its beautiful wooden carved fascias and temples, temples, temples followed by shrine after shrine wherever you looked. Then we went on to the cremation site where we witnessed 3 cremations two of which were free ones for the hoi-polloi and one for someone who could afford to pay to be near the temple and therefore have a more auspicious send-off. We also saw the hospice building which had a door open which apparently meant someone was in residence waiting to die near the cremation site. We then found we had not missed a festival by a day and in fact were slap bang in the middle of it. We had to leave our very comfortable air-conditioned minibus and joined a large crowd of worshippers heading for the largest stupa in the world which we had clearly seen on our descent into Kathmandu the previous day. It was a veritable treat (onslaught) for the senses. The stupa having been recently whitewashed the stunning bright many-coloured saris of the female worshippers stood out in contrast. There was the smell of the incense, the noise of the various musicians – both traditional and more modern. Taste was represented by a splendid lunch which finally included Momos – our first of the trip. Our bird total for the day was Black Kite and House Sparrow.

Then back to Thamel for more shopping and finally to a cultural evening of dance, drink and food.

Sunday 20th April Kathmandu to home.

SYSTEMATIC LIST

April 6th-20th 2008

By John van der Dol

The systematic list follows the nomenclature of Birds of South Asia, The Ripley Guide by Rasmussen and Anderton - Lynx Edicions 2005

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

Recorded from Koshi only on three dates with up to 10 counted on the fishponds near the camp and at the Barrage

Great-crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*

Two singles and a four on the Koshi River trip and the Barrage

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*

Seen on most days when suitable habitat was visited

Little Cormorant *Phalacrocorax niger*

Small numbers in all suitable habitats

Oriental Darter *Anhinga melanogaster*

Up to two on five dates at Chitwan and Koshi

Chestnut Bittern *Ixobrychus cinnamomeus* (*Cinnamon bittern*)

A single was seen on several times at the Koshi Camp

Black Bittern *Dupetor flavicollis*

Up to three birds at Koshi Camp were the only records

Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*

Two were seen at Koshi Camp and 14 there the next day

Striated Heron *Butorides striata* (*Little or Green-backed Heron*)

Our singles in the Koshi area

Indian Pond Heron *Ardeola grayii*

As usual present in most areas and not really counted but it was nice to see one in summer plumage at Koshi

Eastern Cattle Egret *Bubulcus coromandus*

As with the previous species, never really counted, but again many were in full summer dress

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

Seen on most days

Intermediate Egret *Egretta intermedia*

Small numbers in suitable habitat

Great Egret *Egretta alba*

Seen on most days mostly in single figures

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*

Three singles at Koshi

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*

Three on two dates at Koshi

Asian Openbill *Anastomus oscitans*
Up to 20 on seven dates at Chitwan and Koshi

Woolly-necked Stork *Ciconia episcopus*
Six and two at Chitwan and one at Koshi

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. One adult and its two young were seen on our raft trip

Lesser Adjutant Stork *Leptoptilos javanicus*
Seen both at Chitwan and Koshi in small numbers. Counts of between a one and 5 were noted on ten dates

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

Indian Black Ibis *Threskiornis melanocephalus* (*Red-naped Ibis*)
Nine at Chitwan on two dates and further counts of between one and seven on four dates

Black-headed Ibis *Threskiornis melanocephalus*
Two at Koshi was the sole record

Lesser Whistling Duck *Dendrocygna javanica*
Small flocks at Chitwan and Koshi

Bar-headed Goose *Anser indicus*
Four on the Koshi River

Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea*
Most had left for their breeding grounds further north but still 11 were present at Chitwan and two and six at Koshi

Cotton Teal *Nettapus coromandelianus* (*Cotton Pygmy Goose*)
A single male at Koshi near the Barrage

Eurasian Wigeon *Anas Penelope*
Up to 20 at Koshi on three dates

Gadwall *Anas strepera*
Up to 40 on three dates also at Koshi

Common Teal *Anas crecca*
A single near the Barrage at Koshi

Northern Pintail *Anas acuta*
Eight and four at Koshi

Garganey *Anas querquedula*
Up to 30 on four dates in the Koshi area

Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina*
A single male at the Barrage

Common Pochard *Aythya farina*
Three and six at the Barrage

Oriental Honey Buzzard *Pernis ptilorhynchus*
Up to five on many dates and 10 on a single date at Chitwan

Black-shouldered Kite *Elanus caeruleus*
Between one and eight on seven dates in all areas

Black Baza *Aviceda leuphotes*
A superb display flight by a juvenile was witnessed in the Dahran Forest just north of Koshi

Black Kite *Mivus migrans*
Not that common apart from within Kathmandu where the biggest numbers were seen. Just a few on four or five dates

Grey-headed Fish Eagle *Ichthyophaga ichthyaetus*
A single at Chitwan gave good close views

White-rumped Vulture *Gyps bengalensis*
Seven at Chitwan and two at Koshi were the only records

Eurasian Griffon Vulture *Gyps fulvus*
Just two between Kathmandu and Chitwan

Himalayan Griffon Vulture *Gyps himalayensis*
The commonest vulture of the trip with counts 8,1,4,20 and 2 in all areas

Red-headed Vulture *Sarcogyps calvus*
Two en route from Kathmandu and Chitwan was the only record

Crested Serpent Eagle *Spilornis cheela*
Probably the commonest eagle of the area. Between one and five seen on five dates

Western Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*
One at Koshi

Pied Harrier *Circus melanoleucus*
Two males at Koshi Camp and a single ringtail was identified from the Pink Tower at Koshi

Besra Sparrowhawk *Accipiter virgatus*
A single along the Eastern Embankment at Koshi

Crested Goshawk *Accipiter trivigatus*
A single at Chitwan

Shikra *Accipiter badius*
Between two and six on most days in all areas except Kathmandu

White-eyed Buzzard *Butastur teesa*
A single at Chitwan was followed by another single on the banks of the Koshi River

Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo japonicus* or *Buteo burmanicus*
There appears some difference of opinion over the taxonomic status of Common Buzzards in Nepal. Rasmussen suggests that the Buzzards in the lowlands are Himalayan Buzzards *Buteo burmanicus* (2005) while Rishad Naoroji in Birds of Prey of the Indian Subcontinent (2006) calls them Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo japonicus*. However all are considered conspecific with Common/Eurasian Buzzard

Black Eagle *Ictinaetus malayensis*
A single bird at Phulchowki

Indian Spotted Eagle *Aquila hastata*

Four singles in both Chitwan and Koshi

Bonelli's Eagle *Hieraaetus fasciatus*

A pair of adults were seen at Phulchowki probably on both visits

Changeable Hawk Eagle *Spizaetus cirrhatus*

Three at Chitwan on one day

Mountain Hawk Eagle *Spizaetus nipalensis*

One between Kathmandu and Chitwan and another at the latter location

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

One at Chitwan and three at Koshi on the river raft day

Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

One or two on five dates

Peregrine *Falco peregrinus*

One at Chitwan was the sole record

Black Francolin *Francolinus francolinus*

A beautiful male was seen at Chitwan and three others were heard both at Chitwan and Koshi

Swamp Francolin *Francolinus gularis*

Three were seen along the embankment by Koshi camp, another heard the next day and then another single seen plus two heard in the same location

Red Junglefowl *Gallus gallus*

Up to 11 seen at Chitwan on four dates

Kalij Pheasant *Lophura leucomelana*

Two at Phulchowki were only seen by people in the first jeep, then 5 at Chitwan and another one there a few days later

Indian Peafowl *Pavo cristatus*

Common in Chitwan National Park

Brown Crake *Amauromis akool*

Up to three at Chitwan on three dates and a single at Koshi

White-breasted Waterhen *Amauromis phoenicurus*

Commonly seen in all suitable habitat on eight dates

Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*

Commonly encountered in all suitable areas

Purple Swamphen *Porphyrio porphyrio*

Three and eight along the Eastern Embankment and an uncounted but much larger number near the barrage

Pheasant-tailed Jacana *Hydrophasianus chirurgus*

Eight, some in amazing summer plumage, at the pools by the barrage were the only birds seen

Bronze-winged Jacana *Metopidius indicus*

Much more commonly encountered than the previous species and seen on seven dates in all suitable habitat

Painted Snipe *Rostratula benghalensis*

Two at Chitwan were followed by two males and a female near the Park HQ along the Koshi embankment

Great Thick-knee *Esacus recurvirostris*

Fantastic views were had of two on a Koshi River sandbank. 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

Indian Stone-curlew *Burhinus indicus*

Six at Chitwan was the only record

Small Pratincole *Glareola lactea*

A summer visitor to Nepal. Small numbers were seen in all suitable areas in Chitwan and Koshi.

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*

One or two on four dates

Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*

Three in the river at Chitwan

River Plover *Vanellus duvaucelli*

Two singles and a count of 10 at Chitwan

Grey-headed Lapwing *Vanellus cinereus*

An uncommon to rare winter visitor but we found four near Koshi Camp and another six near the Barrage

Yellow-wattled Lapwing *Vanellus malarbaricus*

Another unusual winter visitor to these parts. Quite a few at Chitwan and five near the Barrage at Koshi

Red-wattled Lapwing *Vanellus indicus*

Found in all wetland areas with up to 10 or so noted per day

Indian Courser *Cursorius coromandelicus*

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

Little Stint *Calidris minuta*

Three along the riverbank at the courser site

Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii*

Two singles and a count of 18 at Koshi

Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*

One along the Koshi embankment one afternoon was the only bird recorded

Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

Ones and twos on five dates and 18 along the Koshi river from the Pink tower

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*

Between one and eight on five days

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*

Two at Koshi

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*
Six singles

Brown-headed Gull *Larus brunnicephalus*
Nine at the Barrage

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*
A group of five at the Barrage

Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia*
A flock of seven birds at the Barrage was an unusual find

Black-bellied Tern *Sterna acuticauda*
Three in full summer plumage were seen on the raft trip and were truly stunning birds

Little Tern *Sterna albifrons*
A few on the raft trip were followed by one or two on two dates in the same general area

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybridus*
Seven on the pools near the Barrage

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 at Koshi and Chitwan

Oriental Turtle Dove *Streptopelia orientalis*
Seen on seven dates in numbers up to a dozen

Spotted Dove *Streptopelia chinensis*
Commonly found in most areas and not really counted

Emerald Dove *Chacophaps indica*
Two or three on three days at Chitwan

Yellow-footed Green Pigeon *Treron phoenicoptera*
Two along the Koshi embankment was the only record of this winter visitor

Alexandrine Parakeet *Psittacula eupatria*
Good numbers were seen at Chitwan

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 at Chitwan only

Red-breasted Parakeet *Psittacula Alexandri*
Very common at Chitwan

‘Square-tailed’ Drongo Cuckoo *Sumiculus lugubris*
Two at Chitwan was the only record and the first time we have seen it in Nepal

Chestnut-winged Cuckoo *Clamator coromandus*
Dreadful views of a single at Chitwan was wholly unsatisfactory

Asian Koel *Eudynamys scolopaceus*
Common throughout

Indian Cuckoo *Cuculus micropterus*
More commonly heard than seen and a very good reason for visiting Nepal in winter when they are elsewhere. They sang all night at Koshi. 20x “One more bottle” per minute for maybe six hours = 7200 song phrases virtually without a break. There were at least three birds singing in competition. Pretty bird though.

Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canonus*
Three on the outskirts of Kathmandu was the only record

Oriental Cuckoo *Cuculus saturatus*
One seen and another heard at Phulchowki and another heard at Chitwan

Large Hawk Cuckoo *Hierococcyx sparverioides*
Six heard only at Phulchowki but just one seen and another single heard on our second visit there

Common Hawk Cuckoo *Hierococcyx varius*
Recorded on six dates with up to three birds a day, but mostly heard and only occasionally seen, and then mostly in flight

Green-billed Malkoha *Phaenicophaeus tristis*
A single at Chitwan gave good but brief views

Sirkeer Malkoha *Phaenicophaeus leschenaultia*
Two seen in flight and briefly perched at some distance at Koshi

Greater Coucal *Centropus sinensis*
Seen in small numbers throughout

Lesser Coucal *Centropus bengalensis*
Up to two a day on four dates

Brown Fish Owl *Ketupa zeylonensis*
Two in the forest at Chitwan, one of which gave stunning views

Collared Scops Owl *Otus lettia*
One was seen in the grounds of the lodge at Chitwan and another heard two days later elsewhere at Chitwan

Jungle Owlet *Glaucidium radiatum*
One or two on three dates out in the open during daylight hours

Asian Barred Owlet *Glaucidium cuculoides*
Four seen in the Godavari gardens and Phulchowki

(Collared Owlet *Glaucidium brodiei*)
One heard at Chitwan

Brown Hawk Owl *Ninox scutulata*
One seen in the lodge grounds at Chitwan, another in the forest, and another two seen along the Koshi embankment

Spotted Owlet *Athene brama*

One heard at Chitwan and several did their best to keep us awake at Koshi Camp where six pairs breed in the camp

Savanna Nightjar *Caprimulgus affinis*

One or two seen at both Chitwan sites on three dates

Crested Tree Swift *Hemiprocne coronata*

Up to six on three dates at Chitwan and a single at Koshi

Asian Palm Swift *Cypsiurus balasiensis*

Up to four on four dates

Himalayan Swiftlet *Aerodramus brevirostris*

A small flock over Kathmandu was the only record

Little Swift *Apus affinis*

Small numbers seen on four dates

Silver-backed Needletail *Hirundapus cochinchinensis*

Six at Chitwan was an unusual record

Red-headed Trogon *Harpactes erythrocephalus*

Two different pairs on consecutive days at Chitwan constitutes an excellent set of records

Indian Roller *Coracias benghalensis*

Common throughout

Dollarbird *Eurystomus orientalis*

Up to ten on four dates mostly in Chitwan. First time we have encountered this summer visitor in Nepal

Common Hoopoe *Upupa epops*

One at Chitwan and up to nine at Koshi on two dates

White-breasted Kingfisher *Halycon smyrnensis*

The commonest kingfisher and seen virtually on a daily basis in good numbers

Stork-billed Kingfisher *Pelargopsis capensis*

One or three on six dates

Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*

One or two on seven dates

Pied Kingfisher *Ceryle rudis*

This beautiful bird is plentiful in this area and up to six were seen on eight dates

Blue-bearded Bee-eater *Nyctyornis athertoni*

Fantastic views were had of a single in the Dahran forest while another was nearby

Green Bee-eater *Merops orientalis*

Counts of up to 10 seen on most days

Blue-tailed Bee-eater *Merops phillippinus*

Common throughout the lowland areas with a count of 300+ one day at Chitwan

Chestnut-headed Bee-eater *Merops leschenaulti*

Seen on six dates all at Chitwan with counts of about ten a day

Oriental Pied Hornbill *Anthracoceros coronatus*

Two singles at Chitwan was followed by another in the Dahran Forest

Great Hornbill *Buceros bicornis*

A single on the road from Chitwan to Koshi gave reasonable views both perched and in flight

Great Barbet *Megalaima virens*

Three on our first visit to Phulchowki was our only record

Lineated Barbet *Megalaima lineata*

One seen and three heard at Chitwan

Blue-throated Barbet *Megalaima asiatica*

More often heard than seen but one or two on eight dates at Chitwan and Koshi

Golden-throated Barbet *Megalaima franklinii*

Two on the lower slopes of Phulchowki unfortunately only gave brief flight views

Coppersmith Barbet *Megalaima haemacephala*

One or two on four dates at Koshi

Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*

Two along the eastern embankment at Koshi were followed by another on two dates in the camp

Lesser Yellow-nape *Picus chlorolophus*

One and three at Chitwan gave good views

Greater Yellow-nape *Picus flavinucha*

A single at Chitwan were the sole record

Grey-headed Woodpecker *Picus canus*

A single in the Godavari gardens was followed by up to seven on three days at Chitwan

Rufous Woodpecker *Micropternus brachyurus*

A new species for Nepal for our group. One was seen at Harda Kola, Chitwan

Streak-throated Woodpecker *Picus xanthopygaeus*

A single male at Chitwan was the only record

Himalayan Flameback *Dinopium shorii*

Two singles at Chitwan

Black-rumped Flameback *Dinopium benghalense*

Three singles and three all at Koshi

Greater Flameback *Chrysocolaptes lucidus*

Between one and five on three dates all at Chitwan

Fulvous-breasted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos macei*

Between one and four on four dates all at Chitwan

Grey-capped Pygmy Woodpecker *Dendrocopos canicapillus*

Four and two at Chitwan and another two in the Dahran forest

Indian Pygmy Woodpecker *Dendrocopos nanus* *Brown-capped Pygmy Woodpecker*

A fairly scarce species in Nepal but one was heard along the eastern embankment at Koshi and one was seen there a few days later

Rufous-bellied Woodpecker *Dendrocopos hyperythrus*

One Phulchowki on our first day gave stunning views. This must be one of the prettiest woodpeckers of the region. Another was heard

Long-tailed Broadbill *Psarisomus dalhousiae*

Seven were seen well at Chitwan, and then another two at Harda Kola. An amazing set of records of a resident species we have not seen here before

Bengal Bush Lark *Mirafra assamica* *Rufous-winged Bushlark*

Between one and three on four dates at both Chitwan and Koshi

Ashy-crowned Finch-lark *Eremopterix grisea* *Ashy-crowned Sparrow-lark*

Three on the eastern embankment at Koshi were surprisingly the only birds seen

Sand Lark *Calandrella raytal*

One or two on three dates at Chitwan and Koshi

Oriental Skylark *Alauda gulgula*

One or two on three dates at Chitwan and Koshi

Greater Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla dukhunensis*

One of the eastern race of the species was seen along the embankment at Koshi Barrage

Grey-throated Sand Martin *Riparia chinensis* formerly **Plain Martin** *Riparia paludicola*

Commonly seen throughout

Common Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*

Two and a single at Koshi

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

Commonly seen throughout

Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica*

Breeding in Godavari village and small numbers seen elsewhere

Richard's Pipit *Anthus noveseelandiae*

Seen on five dates with a maximum of four at Koshi

Paddyfield Pipit *Anthus rufulus*

Common throughout in all suitable habitats

Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni*

One or two on three dates

Rosy Pipit *Anthus roseatus*

A single and two at Chitwan were the only records of this winter visitor

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*

Three singles only

Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola*

A single at Chitwan and a total of five birds at Koshi

Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*

Just six birds in total

White Wagtail *Motacilla alba*

Just two records of this winter visitor

White-browed Wagtail *Motacilla maderaspatensis*

Up to five on six dates of this attractive wagtail

Common Woodshrike *Tephrodomis pondicerianus*

Two seen on two occasions at Koshi

Large Woodshrike *Tephrodomis gularis*

Up to four on three dates at both Chitwan and Koshi

Pied Flycatcher-shrike *Hemipus picatus* *Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrike*

A single and two at Chitwan and another single in the Dahran Forest

Black-winged Cuckooshrike *Coracina melaschistos*

Three singles at Chitwan and along the eastern embankment at Koshi

Black-headed Cuckooshrike *Coracina melanoptera*

A pair along the Koshi embankment was a good record

Large Cuckooshrike *Coracina macei*

Three singles at Chitwan and Koshi

Scarlet Minivet *Pericrocotus flammeus*

Common at Chitwan and four in the Dahran Forest

Long-tailed Minivet *Pericrocotus ethologus*

Four in the Godavari gardens and another two pairs at Phulchowki on our second visit there

Rosy Minivet *Pericrocotus roseus*

The first time we have encountered this summer visitor and two pairs were seen at Chitwan and in the Dahran Forest

Red-vented Bulbul *Pycnonotus cafer*

Commonly seen throughout

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*

Only seen on the lunchstop between Kathmandu and Chitwan

Himalayan Black Bulbul *Hypsipetes leucocephalus* formerly *H. madagascariensis*

Eight or more at Harda Kola, Chitwan were the only sightings

Ashy Bulbul *Hemixos flavala*

Seven birds seen at Harda kola, Chitwan

Black-crested Bulbul *Pycnonotus flaviventris* split from *P. melanicterus* now Black-capped Bulbul of Sri Lanka

Two at Chitwan and another three in the Dahran Forest

Common Iora *Aegithina tiphia*

One or two on seven dates in all the lowland areas

Golden-fronted Leafbird *Chloropsis aurifrons*

One at Chitwan was a rather poor show

Siberian Rubythroat *Luscinia calliope*

A single stunning male behaved very well by coming out on to the path near a puddle on the Koshi embankment. Fantastic views, showing off its iridescent ruby throat, of a usually very shy species

Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica*

A single in flight only on the sandbank in the middle of the Koshi River

Oriental Magpie Robin *Copsychus saularis*

Up to ten seen virtually daily

White-rumped Shama *Copsychus malabaricus*

Three and two at Chitwan and another two in the Dahran forest

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*

Between one and four on ten dates of this attractive eastern race P.o.rufiventris

Plumbeous Water Redstart *Rhyacornis fuliginosus*

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

Common Stonechat *Saxicola torquata indicus/maurus*

Seen daily in small numbers up to ten mostly outside the Kathmandu Valley

White-tailed Stonechat *Saxicola leucura*

A pair and a single at Chitwan and another male at Koshi

Pied Bushchat *Saxicola caprata*

Seen only at Chitwan with up to five a day

Grey Bushchat *Saxicola ferrea*

Two males on the lower slopes of Phulchowki

White-capped Water Redstart *Chaimarrornis leucocephalus*

One at Godavari, a single between Koshi and Chitwan and another on the river at Chitwan

Blue Rock Thrush *Monticola solitarius*

A male along the road between Chitwan and Kathmandu

Chestnut-bellied Rock Thrush *Monticola rufiventris*

Four on Phulchowki mostly gave excellent views

Blue Whistling Thrush *Myiophoneus caeruleus*

Ten on our morning at the Godavari gardens and a further two singles between Kathmandu and Chitwan and Chitwan itself

Dark-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis atrogularis*

Three birds at the lodge at Chitwan were only briefly seen

Scaly Thrush *Zoothera dauma*

Brief views were enjoyed of a two on Phulchowki

Orange-headed Thrush *Zoothera citrina*

Up to six on four dates all at Chitwan

Black-backed Forktail *Enicurus immaculatus*

A single at Chitwan was followed by two more at Harda Kola, Chitwan

Chestnut-headed Tesia *Tesia castaneocoronata*

Four seen and another six heard at Phulchowki and a further two seen there on our next visit is a remarkable set of records of this mostly difficult skulker

Grey-bellied Tesia *Tesia cyaniventer*

A single on the lower slopes of Phulchowki eventually gave excellent views to all

Pale-footed Bush Warbler *Cettia pallidipes*

Three seen and four more heard over three days at Chitwan

Grey-sided Bush Warbler *Cettia brunnifrons*

Brief but clear views of two birds on Phulchowki

Bright-capped Cisticola *Cisticola exilis*

A single bird was heard at Chitwan but refused to give views while on one of the sandbanks in the River Koshi we had good views of about six birds

Zitting Cisticola *Cisticola juncidis*

Found commonly in all suitable areas

Graceful Prinia *Prinia gracilllis*

A couple of birds on the sandbank in the Koshi River

Plain Prinia *Prinia inornata*

Small numbers at Chitwan and Koshi

Grey-breasted Prinia *Prinia hodgsonii*

Small numbers throughout in suitable habitat

Striated Prinia *Prinia criniger*

A single at Chitwan

Yellow-bellied Prinia *Prinia flaviventris*

A couple heard and two seen at Chitwan

Rufous-vented Prinia *Prinia burnesii*

A recently discovered species for Nepal which may well become a species in its own right. Three were heard singing on the sandbank in the Koshi River but only a very brief and unsatisfactory flight view was obtained. Very frustrating!

Common Tailorbird *Orthotomus sutorius*

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

Striated Grassbird *Megalurus palustris*

Three seen along the embankment near the Park HQ excellent views

Bristled Grassbird *Chaetornis striata*

Three along the embankment were followed by fantastic views the next day of several birds on the sandbank in the Koshi River

Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum*

Small numbers at Chitwan and Koshi on mostly a daily basis

Indian Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus (stentoreus) brunnescens*

Just one single in the camp at Koshi

Thick-billed Warbler *Acrocephalus aedon*

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

Green-crowned Warbler *Seicercus burkii* (*Golden-spectacled Warbler*)

A single along the embankment at Koshi

Whistler's Warbler *Seicercus whistleri*

Singles at Phulchowki on both visits

Grey-hooded Warbler *Phylloscopus xanthoschistos* formerly *Seicercus*

Six at the Godavari gardens and Phulchowki were followed by another four on our second visit there

Chestnut-crowned Warbler *Seicercus castaniceps*

One in the Botanical gardens

Black-faced Warbler *Abroscopus schisticeps*

Two on our second visit to Phulchowki represents a good record

Blyth's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus reguloides*

Two on Phulchowki on our last day

Western Crowned Warbler *Phylloscopus occipitalis*

Between one and six on four dates in all areas

Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides trochiloides*

Up to a dozen in all areas

Orange-barred Leaf-warbler *Phylloscopus pulcher* (*Buff-barred Warbler*)

Only seen on Phulchowki where reasonably common

Grey-faced Leaf-warbler *Phylloscopus maculipennis* (*Ashy-throated Warbler*)

Small numbers on Phulchowki only

Lemon-rumped Leaf-warbler *Phylloscopus chloronotus*

Eight in the Godavari/Phulchowki area on our first day

Hume's Leaf-warbler *Phylloscopus humei*

Small numbers throughout

Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus fuscatus*

Only seen along the Koshi river with records of two on two dates and a single heard

Smoky Leaf-warbler *Phylloscopus fulgiventor*

A single by the Park HQ at Koshi gave fantastic views as it fed on the mud amongst the reeds. A beautiful bird!

Tickell's Leaf-warbler *Phylloscopus affinis*

Six and three all in the Koshi area

Rufous-bellied Niltava *Niltava sundara*

A male at the top of Phulchowki gave fantastic views as it just sat there singing.

Pale-chinned Flycatcher *Cyornis poliogenys*

Three singles in Chitwan and Koshi

Blue-throated Flycatcher *Cyornis rubeculoides*

A beautiful male was seen along the Koshi Embankment

Verditer Flycatcher *Muscicapa thalassina*

Five at Phulchowki were followed by four there on the next visit

Dark-sided Flycatcher *Muscicapa sibirica*

A single in the Botanical Gardens and two on Phulchowki were new for the group

Ultramarine Flycatcher *Ficedula superciliaris*

One in the Botanic Gardens was followed by two on Phulchowki and another one there the next visit

Rufous-gorgeted Flycatcher *Ficedula strophliata*

Two on Phulchowki on both visits

Red-throated Flycatcher *Ficedula parva*

The most common flycatcher of the trip. Singles on five dates and six on one day along the Koshi embankment

Grey-headed Canary Flycatcher *Culicicapa ceylonensis*

Three singles

Yellow-bellied Fantail *Rhipidura hypoxantha*

Ten on Phulchowki and two on our second visit there

White-throated Fantail *Rhipidura albicollis*

One or two on five dates

Asian Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone paradisi*

A summer visitor to Nepal.

Seen in good numbers throughout with the male white morph predominating. A female was watched visiting a nest in the garden of the lodge at Chitwan.

Black-naped Monarch *Hypothemis azurea*

Two at Chitwan and another two at Koshi

Abbott's Babbler *Malacochincla abbotti*

Four in the Dahran Forest eventually gave good views

(Puff-throated Babbler *Pellorneum ruficeps*)

One heard in the jungle at Chitwan refused to show itself

Rusty-cheeked Scimitar Babbler *Pomatorhinus erythrogastrus*

One was seen by just a few at Phulchowki on the last day

White-browed Scimitar Babbler *Pomatorhinus schisticeps*

Four were seen at Harda Kola, Chitwan

Striped Tit Babbler *Macronous gularis*

Between one and four on four dates

Chestnut-capped Babbler *Timalia pileata*

Fantastic views of one and two birds in the Chitwan grasslands

Yellow-eyed Babbler *Chrysomma sinense*

Four and two birds also gave stunning views in the grasslands at Chitwan

Spiny Babbler *Turdoides nipalensis*

This species deserves its latin name being the only Nepalese endemic. Fantastic views were had of a single singing from the top of a bush along the roadside between Kathmandu and Chitwan and was new for all in the group. Our guide's next visit to this site about three weeks later failed to relocate the bird

Striated Babbler *Turdoides earlei*
Six and ten on two dates at Koshi

Jungle Babbler *Turdoides striatus*
Up to 25 on ten dates at Koshi and Chitwan

(Scaly-breasted Wren Babbler *Pnoepyga albiventer*)
One was briefly heard on Phulchowki

White-throated Laughingthrush *Garrulax albogularis*
Six on Phulchowki on our second visit

Lesser Necklaced Laughingthrush *Garrulax monileger*
Four at Chitwan was the first time we have seen this species in Nepal

Greater Necklaced Laughingthrush *Garrulax pectoralis*
Six at Chitwan were followed by another six at Harda Kola, Chitwan and this also constitutes a new species for us in Nepal

White-crested Laughingthrush *Garrulax leucolophus*
Eight seen at Chitwan and some more heard on Phulchowki. This is one of the most beautiful birds of the region and great fun to watch

(Chestnut-crowned Laughingthrush *Garrulax erythrocephalus*)
Heard on Phulchowki only

White-browed Shrike-Babbler *Pteruthius flaviscapis*
One seen and another heard at the top of Phulchowki

Hoary-throated Barwing *Actinodura nipalensis*
Good views were had of one bird on Phulchowki on our first visit

Chestnut-tailed Minla *Minla strigula*
Six on our first visit to Phulchowki and a single on the last day

Blue-winged Minla *Minla cyanouroptera*
Four on our second visit to Phulchowki were part of a feeding flock

White-browed Fulvetta *Alcippe vinipectus*
Fantastic views were had of six and four birds at Phulchowki

Nepal Fulvetta *Alcippe nipalensis*
Six at Chitwan and four on Phulchowki

Rufous-winged Fulvetta *Alcippe castaneiceps*
Four on both visits to Phulchowki

Rufous Sibia *Heterophasia capistrata*
Only seen on Phulchowki where it is common although much smaller numbers as seen in winter

Stripe-throated Yuhina *Yuhina gularis*
Four on Phulchowki on our first visit there

Rufous-vented Yuhina *Yuhina occipitalis*
A single on Phulchowki

White-bellied Yuhina *Yuhina zantholeuca*
One and two at Chitwan

Great Tit *Parus major*

Seen in all areas with counts of up to four 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 up to six on two dates

Yellow-browed Tit *Sylviparus modestus*

Compared with the last species this must go down as one of the dullest of the forest species. However singles were recorded on both visits to 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 one in the Botanical gardens was the only sighting

Black-lored Tit *Parus xanthogenys*

Six in the Godavari gardens

Sultan Tit *Melanochlora sultanea*

Two were seen at Chitwan and this is the first time we have recorded this species in Nepal

Velvet-fronted Nuthatch *Sitta frontalis*

Surprisingly small numbers. Just four and two singles

White-tailed Nuthatch *Sitta himalayensis*

Only seen on Phulchowki with one on our first visit and two on the second

Chestnut-bellied Nuthatch *Sitta castanea*

Seen far more commonly than the other two of the family with counts of up to five on five dates

Oriental White-eye *Zosterops palpebrosus*

Up to four seen on six dates in all areas except Koshi

Purple Sunbird *Nectarinia asiatica*

Up to three on five dates at Chitwan and Koshi

Green-tailed Sunbird *Aethopyga nipalensis*

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

Fire-breasted Flowerpecker *Dicaeum ignipectus*

Two males on Phulchowki at the beginning of our trip

Streaked Spiderhunter *Arachnothera longirostra*

Seven or more of this amazing bird were seen at Chitwan

Indian Oriole *Oriolus kondoo*

Up to half a dozen a day in all areas except the Kathmandu Valley

Black-hooded Oriole *Oriolus xanthornus*

Several on nine dates in all areas except the Kathmandu Valley

Brown Shrike *Lanius cristatus*

One or two on four dates

Long-tailed Shrike *Lanius schach*

Up to three on four dates

Grey-backed Shrike *Lanius tephronotus*

Four singles

Black Drongo *Dicrurus macrocerus*

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

Ashy Drongo *Dicrurus leucophaeus*

Three at Chitwan on two dates

Bronzed Drongo *Dicrurus aeneus*

Small numbers on four dates

Spangled Drongo *Dicrurus hottentottus*

Small numbers on three dates

Greater Racket-tailed Drongo *Dicrurus paradiseus*

One or two on three dates

Eurasian Jay *Garrulus glandarius*

Seen on the last day on Phulchowki

Ashy Woodswallow *Artamus fuscus*

Three on two dates at Chitwan

Red-billed Blue Magpie *Urocissa erythrorhyncha*

Three on the way to the Godavari Gardens and a single heard at Chitwan and another two on Phulchowki

Common Green Magpie *Cissa chinensis*

Four at Chitwan on one day were the only records

Rufous Treepie *Dendrocitta vagabunda*

Seen virtually daily with counts in single figures up to ten

Grey Treepie *Dendrocitta formosae*

A single 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

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*

Two singles at Koshi

Asian Pied Starling *Sturnus contra*

Commonly encountered in lowland areas

Common Myna *Acridotheres tristis*

Again commonly found usually near human habitation

Bank Myna *Acridotheres ginginianus*
Sixty or more at Chitwan on just one date

Jungle Myna *Acridotheres fuscus*
Again commonly encountered

Hill Myna *Gracula religiosa*
By far the most interesting member of the family and up to 12 were seen at Chitwan on three days. One was heard in the Dahran Forest. This is the Myna that speaks well and is kept in cages in the west

Chestnut-shouldered Petronia *Petronia xanthocollis*
One at Chitwan and two at Koshi

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

Baya Weaver *Ploceus philippinus*
Up to two on four dates at Chitwan and Koshi where one was building a nest in the camp

Scaly-breasted Munia *Lonchura punctulata*
Small groups at Chitwan on three dates

Black-headed Munia *Lonchura Malacca*
A male in with the previous species at Chitwan

Crested Bunting *Melophus lathami*
Two males en route to Chitwan from Kathmandu

MAMMALS

Rhesus Macaque *Macaca mulatta*
Ten in Kathmandu itself and small numbers in Chitwan and Koshi

Hanuman Langur *Presbytis entellus*
Small numbers in Chitwan and Koshi

Sloth Bear *Melursus ursinus*
Three bears were disturbed in the undergrowth as we arrived in our jeeps at Chitwan. Just very brief views before they disappeared back into the jungle

Asiatic Golden Jackal *Canis lupus*
One at Chitwan and two at Koshi

Indian Fox *Vulpes bengalensis*
Two along the Koshi embankment gave great views

Indian Grey Mongoose *Herpestes edwardsi*
Commonly seen in the Koshi and Chitwan areas with a maximum of six in one day

Crab-eating Mongoose *Herpestes urva*
Single at Chitwan was a new record for the group

Yellow-throated Marten *Martes flavigula*
A single on Phulchowki

Indian Hare *Lepus nigricollis*
A single at Chitwan

Jungle Cat *Felis chaus*
This beautiful cat breeds in the Koshi camp where there were three sightings

Fishing Cat *Prionailueus viverrinus*
One lucky observer had a brief but close view of this rare cat at Koshi Camp where it has been seen in recent times. A very young kitten of perhaps one or two days old was found dead at Chitwan. It already displayed the characteristic markings round the head and rear legs.

Ganges River Dolphin *Platanista gangetica*
Probably eight different dolphins were seen on numerous occasions at the Koshi Barrage giving close and much better views than on previous occasions. One was seen the following day

Indian One-horned Rhinoceros *Rhinoceros unicornis*
Seven at Chitwan were followed by three and a small calf the next day

Wild Boar *Sus scrofa*
Ten, 20 and a single were seen at Chitwan

Barking Deer *Muntiacus muntjak*
Three pairs at Chitwan

Chital (Spotted Deer) *Cervus axis*
Common at Chitwan and seen on three dates

Hog Deer *Cervus porcinus*
Between one and three on three dates at Chitwan

Sambar *Cervus unicolor*
One and two at Chitwan were the only records

Wild Water Buffalo *Bubalus bubalus*
A dozen or more and 25 at Koshi on two dates

Gaur *Bos frontalis*
A group of eight were found in the forest at Chitwan

Five-striped Palm Squirrel *Funambulus pennanti*
Singles at Chitwan and Koshi

Malayan Giant Squirrel *Ratufa bicolor*
A single in the Dahran Forest gave amazing views

Indian Flying Fox *Pteropus giganteus*
Seen in the suburbs of the City of Kathmandu

Short-nosed Fruit Bat *Cynopterus sphinx*
Ten and six on consecutive days at Chitwan

Pipistrelle sp
A few seen in most places

REPTILES

Marsh Mugger

A single at Chitwan

Gharial

A single at Chitwan

Indian Tent Turtle

Two at Chitwan

Soft Shell Turtle

A single at Chitwan

Calotis Lizard

Three at Chitwan

Gecko

A few at Chitwan

Postscript

It was no great surprise that this, our fourth tour of Nepal, was a huge success. It is a wonderful country with breath taking scenery, a tremendous list of birds and mammals set in superb habitats. The organisation was as usual of a very high standard and entirely due to the staff and guides of Nature Safari Tours. I would like in particular to thank Suchit and Badri for their never ending enthusiasm and patience in the field and the staff of Koshi Camp for looking after us so well.

Badri in the office ensured vehicles were where they are supposed to be and accommodation was booked according to our requirements.

Regarding the birds, these were a little different from previous trips in that some winter visitors had departed but then summer visitors had arrived. This meant that the bird mix was a little different to previous years. I was very pleasantly surprised to achieve ten new birds which was more than I had expected. There were also over 30 species recorded for the first time in Nepal by the group.

The total number of species seen was 326 and 4 were heard only.

A big thank you too to Sally for writing the daily diary. It reads so much better when one of the participants writes it and also thanks to Sue for producing the front cover which I think you will agree gives a fine flavour of Nepal.

Finally I would like to thank all our participants with whom it was a real pleasure to travel. Without them there would be no trip and I hope we will see them again in the near future.

John

May 2008