

# Birding Trip Report

## North Bengal & Sikkim, India; November 2003



### CONTENTS

Introduction .....	2
Itinerary .....	3
Site Details.....	6
Systematic List.....	11
Other Wildlife .....	37
References.....	38
Contacts.....	39

## INTRODUCTION

This is a report on a birding trip to North Bengal and Sikkim. A preliminary week was spent birding in North Bengal by Sujan Chatterjee and Mike Prince before meeting up with Bikram Grewal, Bill Harvey, Alpana Khare and Sumit Sen for a week in Sikkim followed by a few more days in North Bengal.

The first week was mostly an exploratory visit to sites not generally known for birding but still easily accessible. The rest of the trip visited better known sites, although there are relatively few reports available for this time of year.

Logistics regarding sites visited, travel and accommodation were organised largely by Sujan and Sumit in conjunction with Raj from Help Tourism, and we are all grateful to them.

A total of 324 confirmed species were recorded including a number of globally threatened and rare species in India. This was an excellent total of species for the time of year and considering that the habitats visited were quite restricted: we only did one afternoon visit to a wetland.

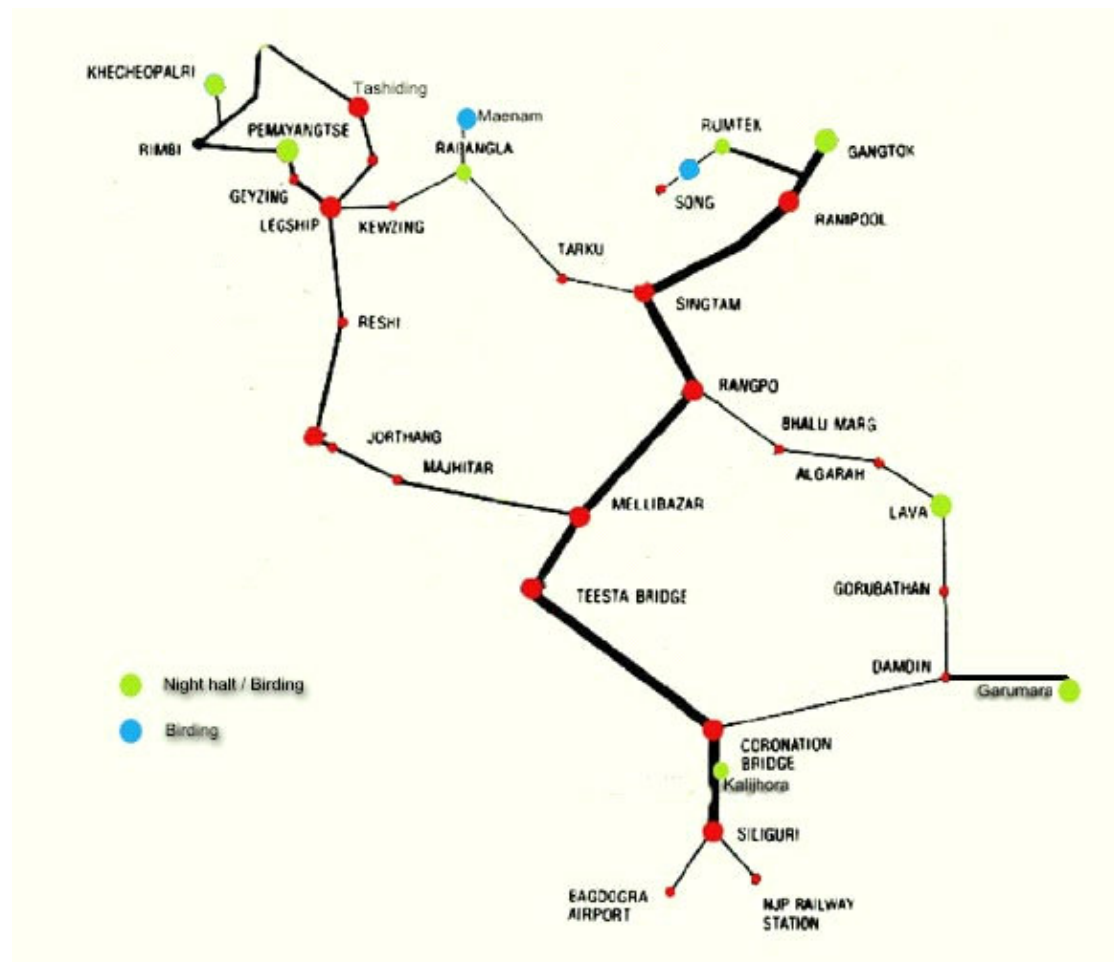
Various photos from the trip are available online – see the Contacts section for links.



*Sujan, Raj, Bill, Alpana, Bikram, Sumit and Mike at Gorumara Jungle Camp.*

## ITINERARY

The map below shows our planned itinerary and key birding sites. The main sites birded each day are highlighted in **bold** in the detailed daily itinerary.



- 6 November 2003 (Thursday): Mike flew from Delhi to Bagdogra and met Sujan who had taken the overnight train from Kolkata. Drove to **Suntalekhola** with time for about two hours birding there in the late afternoon. Stayed at Suntalay Khola Wilderness Camp.
- 7 November: Morning birding at **Suntalekhola**, on the fringe of the East Nar Range of the Neora Valley National Park. From late morning onwards rain set in and so little was accomplished during the rest of the day. Stayed at Suntalay Khola Wilderness Camp.
- 8 November: Morning birding from **Suntalekhola** to **Samsing**. Drive to Bindu. Afternoon birding forest area between **Bindu** and Today. Stayed at Shivaji Tourist Inn, Bindu.
- 9 November: Morning birding forest edge at **Today**. Afternoon birding at **Bindu**, including a walk over the barrage into Bhutan. Stayed at

- Shivaji Tourist Inn, Bindu.
- 10 November: Early morning left Bindu for the drive to Karmi Farm near Kolbong, via Bijonbari. Stopped en-route briefly at **Chapramari Wildlife Sanctuary** and near **Kalijhora**. Afternoon birding around **Karmi Farm**. Stayed at Karmi Farm.
- 11 November: Whole day birding around **Karmi Farm**. Stayed at Karmi Farm.
- 12 November: Early morning birding at **Karmi Farm** before driving to Tiger Hill, Darjeeling. Afternoon birding at **Tiger Hill**. Stayed at Mayfair Hotel, Darjeeling.
- 13 November: Early morning birding at **Tiger Hill**, followed by “full English breakfast” at Keventer’s in Darjeeling! Late morning drove to Kalijhora. Sumit flew to Bagdogra from Kolkata, Alpana, Bikram and Bill from Delhi, and they drove to **Kalijhora**. Whole group met there for some birding in the late afternoon. Stayed at Kalijhora Forest Rest House and PWD bungalow.
- 14 November: Early morning birding at **Kalijhora**, then drove into Sikkim, stopping to have lunch in Legship. Continued on to **Pemayangtse** for some late afternoon birding there. Stayed at Mount Pandim hotel, Pemayangtse.
- 15 November: Early morning birding from **Pelling to Sangachoeling** monastery, followed by late morning at **Pemayangtse**. Afternoon some of us birded at nearby **Rabdentse**. Stayed at Mount Pandim hotel.
- 16 November: Some of us went back to **Sangachoeling** for the early morning, whilst others stayed at **Pemayangtse**. Left late morning for the drive to **Khecheperi Lake** where we birded for a couple of hours in the afternoon. Stayed at the Trekkers Hut.
- 17 November: Morning birding in forest around **Khechepuri Lake**, followed by drive to Mount Narsing, Rabangla. Poor weather (low cloud, strong wind) meant that birding was restricted to an hour or so in the afternoon at **Mount Narsing**. Stayed at Mount Narsing, Rabangla.
- 18 November: Morning birding in **Maenam Wildlife Sanctuary** followed by drive to Gangtok, arriving just after dark. Stayed at ? by the Tashi view point, just outside Gangtok.
- 19 November: Morning birding just outside, and briefly inside, **Fambong Lho Wildlife Sanctuary**. Drove to **Rumtek** and birded the road towards Song in the afternoon. Stayed at Shambhala Resort, Rumtek.
- 20 November: Some of us again birded the road towards Song from **Rumtek**, having first tried a difficult track up into the forest above the road. Others spent the early morning in the botanical garden near the Shambhala Resort. Then drove back to North Bengal in time for a couple of hours late afternoon birding along the

- Lava to Algarah** road. Stayed at Lava Forest Rest House.
- 21 November: Whole day birding in the **Neora Valley National Park**. Morning spent in the upper Neora Valley, afternoon lower at Raset. Stayed at Lava Forest Rest House.
- 22 November: Early morning birding along the **Lava to Algarah** road, plus the track into the forest from near the Forest Rest House. Then drove to **Gorumara National Park** and spent the afternoon birding from the Khunia watchtower. Sujan briefly went to Samsing for a meeting with the Forest Department there. Stayed at Gorumara Jungle Camp.
- 23 November: Early morning birding in **Gorumara National Park** from the main watchtower at the Rhino Observation Point, followed by the watchtower at Jatraprasad and the road between. Some of us took an elephant ride into the grassland and along the river. Needed to reach our planned overnight halt at Mahananda Wildlife Sanctuary before dark so set off late morning, but en-route we heard that we had lost our booking at the Forest Rest House there since some Forest Department officials were visiting. A hasty change of plan made us visit the **Teesta Barrage at Gazoldoba** for the afternoon before returning to Gorumara Jungle Camp for a second night.
- 24 November: Early morning birded the Mahakal Trail at **Gorumara** before briefly visiting the Rhino Observation Point and Jatraprasad watchtower inside the National Park. Then drove to Bagdogra airport for early afternoon flights to Kolkata (Sumit) and Delhi (Alpana, Bikram, Bill, Mike). Sujan took the overnight train to Kolkata.

## SITE DETAILS

Site information is generally well described in Kazmierczak & Singh [7]. This does not include all sites visited; in particular the excellent lowland reserves of Gorumara National Park and Chapramari Wildlife Sanctuary, plus the Teesta Barrage at Gazoldoba are not covered. In addition the first week was spent mostly exploring little known sites. The following sections provide information for all sites visited; where the site is included in Kazmierczak & Singh [7] only brief notes are given here.

### **Suntalekhola, West Bengal**

Suntalekhola is situated in West Bengal at an altitude of 750 metres. It is 75 kilometres from Bagdogra Airport. We did our birding on the south-eastern fringe of the Neora Valley National Park. A trail leads to the left from the first bend of the tar road approached from the bungalows and ends at Lava after a three-day trek (which needs permission from the Wildlife Department). The trail leads steeply through thick broadleaved tropical and semi-tropical forests via Mouchouki, Rechila Top (4500m), Alubari and Pankhasari Ridge. Four double room cottages with non-attached toilets are available at Suntalay Khola Wilderness Camp.

Selected sightings: Grey Nightjar, Orange-bellied Leafbird, Maroon Oriole, Grey-chinned and Short-billed Minivets, Greater Racket-tailed Drongo, Slaty-backed Forktail, Sultan Tit, Ashy Bulbul, Yellow-vented, Golden-spectacled and Chestnut-crowned Warblers, Greater Necklaced Laughingthrush, Long-tailed Sibia, White-naped and Black-chinned Yuhinas.

### **Samsing, West Bengal**

Samsing is the Range Office of the Neora Valley National Park, 3kms before Suntalekhola. Some mature broadleaved trees and some scrub surround the Range Office and the Forest Rest House. It is generally good for bee-eaters and orioles amongst other species.

Selected sightings: Chestnut-headed Bee-eater, Green-billed Malkoha, Thick-billed Warbler.

### **Bindu, West Bengal**

At 600m, Bindu is a small village on the border with Bhutan. It is 80kms from Siliguri and has developed based on a hydroelectric (hydel) power project. The River Jaldhaka, forming the India – Bhutan border, provides some good birds and can be viewed well from the barrage.

Selected sightings: Eurasian Wryneck, Crested Kingfisher, Brown Dipper, Hodgson's Redstart, Slaty-backed Forktail, Little Forktail, Rufous-necked Laughingthrush (actually over the border in Bhutan).

### **Todey, West Bengal**

Todey is a village one hours drive from Bindu and is situated at an altitude of 1300 – 1500m. It comprises of secondary forest cover and extensive cardamom cultivation.

Selected sightings: Large Hawk Cuckoo, Green Magpie, Large Niltava, Scaly-breasted Wren Babbler, Black-throated Sunbird.

### **Chapramari Wildlife Sanctuary, West Bengal**

Chapramari is a small wildlife sanctuary opposite the Gorumara National Park and consists mostly of teak and other timber species. It is situated 62kms from Siliguri.

Selected sightings: Long-tailed Broadbill, Greater Racket-tailed Drongo, Chestnut-headed and Grey-bellied Tesias.

### **Karmi Farm, West Bengal**

Karmi Farm is a small private property owned by a British expatriate (see [www.karmifarm.com](http://www.karmifarm.com)). The farm is located about 2½ hours drive from Darjeeling via Bijonbari. It is at an altitude of 1500m and has moderate broadleaved tree cover and cardamom plantations. It hosts some good birds such as Grey-throated Babbler and Speckled Piculet and is a very pleasant, relaxing place to stay. Particularly recommended is the homemade tongba, an alcoholic drink made from millet and drunk from a bamboo tankard!

Selected sightings: Speckled Piculet, Northern Goshawk, Black Eagle, Rufous-gorgeted Flycatcher, Velvet-fronted Nuthatch, Yellow-browed Tit, Black-eared Shrike Babbler, Blue-winged, Chestnut-tailed and Red-tailed Minlas, Nepal House Martin, Fire-tailed Sunbird.

### **Tiger Hill, West Bengal**

Tiger Hill is the famed sunrise point 11kms from Darjeeling. It reaches a height of 2485m and on a clear morning one can get spectacular views of the Kanchenjunga range. The habitat here is mainly ringal bamboo and oak. It is a good place to see Brown Parrotbill and we were also delighted to see Gould's Shortwing. A site with great birding potential.

Selected sightings: Yellow-billed Blue Magpie, White-collared Blackbird, Gould's Shortwing, Yellowish-bellied Bush Warbler, Broad-billed Warbler, Spotted and Blue-winged Laughingthrushes, Golden-breasted Fulvetta, Brown Parrotbill.

### **Kalijhora, West Bengal**

Kalijhora is a small area of forest on the northern edge of the Mahananda Wildlife Sanctuary, at an altitude of 300m. It is one hours drive from Bagdogra. A small Forest Rest House and a PWD bungalow are the only places to stay nearby. A good place to see several lowland forest species.

Selected sightings: Oriental Pied Hornbill, White-rumped Vulture, Greater Spotted Eagle, Steppe Eagle, Black Stork, Grey-backed Shrike, Maroon Oriole, Short-billed

Minivet, Brown Dipper, Orange-flanked Bush Robin, White-rumped Shama, Hill Myna, Yellow-vented Warbler, Striped Tit Babbler, Crimson Sunbird, Streaked Spiderhunter.

### **Pemayangtse, Sikkim**

Pemayangtse is just 1km from Pelling. A trail opposite the Mount Pandim Hotel encircles the Pemayangtse Gompa (monastery). The trail is dark and wet and provides a good chance of seeing some of the laughingthrushes and other skulking forest birds.

Selected sightings: Mountain Hawk Eagle, Ultramarine Flycatcher, Golden Bush Robin, Rusty-fronted and Hoary-throated Barwings, Pygmy Wren Babbler, Fire-tailed Myzornis, Rufous-breasted and Maroon Accentors.

### **Pelling, Sikkim**

Pelling is a small but fast-growing tourist destination. It is situated at 2060m and is 10kms from the district headquarters of West Sikkim, Geyzing.

### **Sangachoeling, Sikkim**

The Sangachoeling Gompa is about 2kms trek from Pelling helipad. The uneven trail is quite open at the beginning and then goes through dark and moist forest for the last ½ km. It is a splendid trail for birds and can also be taken well beyond the monastery itself.

Selected sightings: Slaty-headed and Blossom-headed Parakeets, Wedge-tailed Green Pigeon, Mountain Hawk Eagle, Oriental Honey Buzzard, Steppe Eagle, Orange-bellied Leafbird, Long-tailed Minivet, Ultramarine Flycatcher, Large Niltava, Brownish-flanked Bush Warbler, Blyth's Leaf, Whistler's, Grey-cheeked and Chestnut-crowned Warblers, Grey-sided and Black-faced Laughingthrushes, Streak-breasted and Slender-billed Scimitar Babblers, Pygmy Wren Babbler, Rufous-capped Babbler, White-browed Shrike Babbler, Fire-tailed Myzornis, Rufous-breasted Accentor, Dark-breasted Rosefinch, Little Bunting.

### **Rabdentse, Sikkim**

Rabdentse, near Sikkim, is now an archaeological site and was the second capital of the Kingdom of Sikkim. The footpath leading up to the ruins passes through good forest and scrub. The scrub at the rear of the throne proved a good spot to see hunting parties in action and the high viewpoint was a good place to observe migrating Steppe Eagles.

Selected sightings: Steppe Eagle, Striated Bulbul, Chestnut-crowned Warbler, Scaly-breasted Wren Babbler, Rufous-capped Babbler, Black-eared Shrike Babbler, Dark-breasted Rosefinch.



### **Khecheopari Lake, Sikkim**

Khecheopari Lake is a sacred lake 29kms from Pelling and at an altitude of 1800m. Undisturbed forests and reeds surround the lake. The path leading to the lake was good for tesias and wren-babblers, although both were heard more often than seen.

Selected sightings: Mallard, Goosander, Bay Woodpecker, Golden-fronted Leafbird, Slaty-backed Flycatcher, Hodgson's Redstart, Chestnut-headed Tesia, Little Bunting.

### **Mount Narsing, Sikkim**

Mount Narsing is a couple of kilometres west of Rabangla. It is situated amidst an unused Tea Garden and some scrub. Apparently it has spectacular views of the Himalayas, although we didn't see much (scenery or birds) due to poor weather conditions.

Selected sightings: Barred Cuckoo Dove.

### **Maenam Wildlife Sanctuary, Sikkim**

Maenam is approximately 65kms from Gangtok. The Sanctuary starts from 2575m and climbs up to 3120m. The forest is thick with oak and rhododendron. It is a home of Himalayan Black Bear and Red Panda, and has a good population of Satyr Tragopan.

Selected sightings: Kalij Pheasant, Ashy Wood Pigeon, Broad-billed Warbler, Pygmy Wren Babbler, Hoary-throated Barwing, Fire-tailed Myzornis, Rufous-breasted and Maroon-backed Accentors, Dark-breasted and Pink-browed Rosefinches.

### **Fambong Lho Wildlife Sanctuary, Sikkim**

Fambong Lho is 25kms from Gangtok and covers an area of 51.76 square kilometres. The main vegetation here is oak, rhododendron and thick bamboo and ferns. It proved a great place to see several species of laughingthrush including Red-faced Liocichla. We actually spent most of our birding time outside the sanctuary from close to the approach road.

Selected sightings: Golden Bush Robin, Striated and Mountain Bulbuls, Brownish-flanked and Grey-sided Bush Warblers, Yellow-browed Warbler, several Laughingthrushes including Blue-winged, Black-faced and Red-faced Liocichla.

### **Rumtek, Sikkim**

Rumtek, situated 24kms from Gangtok at a height of 1700m, is well known for its monastery. It is actually situated outside the south-eastern edge of Fambong Lho. The dirt road to Song mentioned in Kazmierczak and Singh [7] has now been tarred and had relatively heavy traffic. Birding was a bit disappointing here.

Selected sightings: Whistler's Warbler, Oriental Honey Buzzard, Himalayan Griffon, Common Buzzard, Sapphire Flycatcher, Buff-barred and White-spectacled Warblers, Greater Necklaced Laughingthrush, Striped Tit Babbler.

### **Lava, West Bengal**

The Lava area is, of course, a very well known birding site and forms part of most itineraries in this region. We birded on the Lava to Algarah Road (where a Eurasian Woodcock was a good sighting) and also trekked up the trail leading from behind the Forest Rest House to Tiffindara, where we saw several Maroon-backed Accentors.

Selected sightings: Eurasian Woodcock, White-browed Bush Robin, Winter Wren, Goldcrest, Maroon-backed Accentor.

### **Neora Valley National Park, West Bengal**

The National Park at Neora Valley covers an area of 88 km<sup>2</sup> and has an altitudinal range from 200m to 3200m. We birded along the fringes at Rashet and at the 14<sup>th</sup> mile checkpoint near Pankhasari Ridge areas. Both the areas are accessible from Lava by jeep. The jeep track is the best place to bird.

Selected sightings: Orange-flanked Bush Robin, Plain-backed Thrush, White-collared Blackbird, Rufous-vented Tit, Goldcrest, Yellowish-bellied Bush Warbler, Grey-cheeked Warbler, Grey-sided Laughingthrush, Slender-billed Scimitar Babbler, Golden Babbler, Golden-breasted Fulvetta, Fire-tailed Myzornis, Black-throated Parrotbill, Mrs Gould's Sunbird, Maroon-backed Accentor, Spot-winged Rosefinch.

### **Gorumara National Park, West Bengal**

Gorumara is 62kms from Siliguri and is primarily a grassland habitat. This small National Park is the host for large herds of Gaur and currently 16 Rhinos. It is a good place to watch various pigeons and doves from the Rhino Observation Point watch tower in front of the Forest Rest House. In 2002 we recorded the little-known and endangered Slender-billed Babbler at Gorumara.

Selected sightings: Red Junglefowl, Oriental Pied Hornbill, Lesser Coucal, Green-billed Malkoha, Stork-billed Kingfisher, Vernal Hanging Parrot, Red-breasted Parakeet, Himalayan Swiftlet, Pin-tailed Green Pigeon, Green Imperial Pigeon, River Lapwing, Greater Painted Snipe, Lesser Fish Eagle, Common Buzzard, Peregrine, Asian Fairy Bluebird, Long-tailed Broadbill, Ashy Woodswallow, Large and Black-winged Cuckooshrike, Lesser and Greater Racket-tailed Drongos, Large Woodshrike, Grey-bellied Tesia, Thick-billed Warbler, Yellow-vented Warbler, Pygmy Wren Babbler, Scarlet-backed Flowerpecker.

### **Gazoldoba (Teesta Barrage), West Bengal**

Gazoldoba is an hours drive from Siliguri and is a large barrage on the River Teesta. It has an excellent wintering population of ducks, including all regular plus a few unusual species, and a few waders. It was a good place to see migrating and wintering raptors, plus grebes.

Selected sightings: Common Shelduck, Falcated Duck, Garganey, Red-crested Pochard, Ferruginous Pochard, Lesser Sand Plover, Northern Lapwing, Osprey, Western and Eastern Marsh Harriers, Hen Harrier, Peregrine, Great Crested and Black-necked Grebes.

## SYSTEMATIC LIST

The taxonomy, sequence and nomenclature in this report follow Grimmett, Inskipp & Inskipp [1].

Note that where estimates of numbers of birds seen are given, these are largely based on personal observations. Hence the actual numbers seen on the trip by the group is likely to be greater in many instances. In addition, where a species was only seen by one member of the group (which, typically for forest birding, happened on a number of times) this is usually indicated in the text below.

1. **Hill Partridge *Arborophila torqueola***  
One calling bird heard from the Lava to Algarah road was the only record.
2. **Rufous-throated Partridge *Arborophila rufogularis***  
Heard calling from near Pelling and from the Lava to Algarah road.
3. **Red Junglefowl *Gallus gallus***  
At least four were heard calling from the Khunia watchtower at Gorumara, with one heard also from the Rhino Observation Point nearby the following day.
4. **Kalij Pheasant *Lophura leucomelana***  
Ones or twos recorded from Pemayangtse, Maenam, Rashet and Lava but never seen well enough to determine the subspecies. Likely to have been *lathamii* based on range.
5. **Indian Peafowl *Pavo cristatus***  
At least ten seen from the Khunia watch tower at Gorumara with a few other sightings in the Gorumara area.
6. **Lesser Whistling-duck *Dendrocygna javanica***  
A family party of five were seen on a small pond from the Khunia watch tower at Gorumara.
7. **Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea***  
Four on the Teesta river at Kalijhora, about five along the river at Gorumara and large numbers (at least 200) at Gazoldoba.
8. **Common Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna***  
A very noteworthy sighting was of seven on the Teesta river at Gazoldoba on 23/11.
9. **Gadwall *Anas strepera***  
Seven on the Jaldhaka river at Bindu consisted of three males and four females and coincidentally seven seen on the Teesta river near Kalijhora were also of the same composition. Otherwise it was probably the commonest duck at Gazoldoba with at least 2500 there.
10. **Falcated Duck *Anas falcata***  
An excellent sighting of this very rare winter visitor to northern India was of a pair at Gazoldoba. Mike had just picked out two female Garganeys there and passed the scope for Bill to see them, only for a fantastic drake Falcated Duck to be swimming through the view as Bill looked through, immediately obscuring any thoughts of

looking at the Garganeys! Very good views were had of both male and female.

11. **Eurasian Wigeon *Anas penelope***  
Approximately 40 seen at Gazoldoba.
12. **Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos***  
Common amongst the ducks at Gazoldoba, an estimate of about 400 being a noteworthy number in India. One lone male was seen on Khecheopari Lake.
13. **Spot-billed Duck *Anas poecilorhyncha***  
About 80 seen at Gazoldoba.
14. **Northern Shoveler *Anas clypeata***  
Common at Gazoldoba, although not the dominant duck species there as is often the case further west in north India. Approximately 300 were seen.
15. **Northern Pintail *Anas acuta***  
About 200 were at Gazoldoba.
16. **Garganey *Anas querquedula***  
Two females were quite a good sighting at Gazoldoba since Garganeys generally winter much further south in India, with relatively few mid-winter records from northern parts.
17. **Common Teal *Anas crecca***  
Very common, at least 2000, at Gazoldoba.
18. **Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina***  
At least 50 were seen at close range at Gazoldoba.
19. **Common Pochard *Aythya ferina***  
About 150 at Gazoldoba.
20. **Ferruginous Pochard *Aythya nyroca***  
About 100 were seen at Gazoldoba, making this an important wintering site for this species, classified as 'near-threatened' by BirdLife International.
21. **Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula***  
The scarcest of the diving ducks at Gazoldoba, although there were still about 80 seen.
22. **Common Merganser *Mergus merganser***  
Nine birds were seen on Khecheopari Lake.
23. **Eurasian Wryneck *Jynx torquilla***  
One seen from the balcony of the Shivaji Tourist Inn in Bindu flew across the river into Bhutan. It was noted as being especially brown above and therefore was probably of the *chinensis* subspecies, which is known to be a winter visitor to eastern India [4].
24. **Speckled Piculet *Picumnus innominatus***  
One was seen well in a mixed species feeding flock at Karmi Farm.

25. **Grey-capped Pygmy Woodpecker *Dendrocopos canicapillus***  
Two or three seen on both days at Gorumara. The subspecies would have been *semicoronatus* although no specific note was made of the more extensive red at the sides of the crown.
26. **Lesser Yellownape *Picus chlorolophus***  
Two seen at Suntalekhola, one at Khecheopari Lake and one at Rumtek. The latter at least showed a slight orangey tinge to the yellow nape typical of the nominate subspecies, although Ali & Ripley [4] do state that there is a cline between this and the more westerly *simlae*.
27. **Greater Yellownape *Picus flavinucha***  
Singles seen at Suntalekhola, Kalijhora and Sangachoeling.
28. **Grey-headed Woodpecker *Picus canus***  
Singles seen, or more commonly heard, at Sangachoeling, Rabdentse, Khecheopari Lake, Rashet and Lava.
29. **Black-rumped Flameback *Dinopium benghalense***  
The only sighting was of one at Gorumara.
30. **Greater Flameback *Chrysocolaptes lucidus***  
A calling bird was heard near the Samsing Forest Rest House, one seen on shade trees in a tea plantation between Gorumara and Gazoldoba and three seen on the Mahakal Trail at Gorumara.
31. **Bay Woodpecker *Blythipicus pyrrhotis***  
Two noisy birds were seen briefly in the forest above Khecheopari Lake. The distinctive bill was not seen, although extensive red on the back of head of the male confirms this species and not Rufous Woodpecker. The black barring on brown plumage was quite similar to a hepatic female cuckoo.
32. **Great Barbet *Megalaima virens***  
Commonly heard calling and seen on a number of occasions. Recorded from all sites visited in the hills in both North Bengal and Sikkim.
33. **Lineated Barbet *Megalaima lineate***  
Only seen at Gorumara, with at least eight there.
34. **Blue-throated Barbet *Megalaima asiatica***  
Five were seen at Suntalekhola and singles were at Rumtek and Gorumara. Also one en-route sighting in North Bengal and one in Sikkim.
35. **Coppersmith Barbet *Megalaima haemacephala***  
The only record was of seven seen by a single observer at Gorumara.
36. **Oriental Pied Hornbill *Anthracoceros albirostris***  
Two were seen in trees by the Teesta river at Kalijhora and more seen at Gorumara included four from the Khunia watch tower.
37. **Indian Roller *Coracias benghalensis***  
Small numbers seen en-route in the lowlands of North Bengal on a few occasions.

38. **Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis***  
One was seen in Sikkim on a river en-route from Rabangla to Gangtok. Not seen again until singles daily at Gorumara with one also at Gazoldoba.
39. **Stork-billed Kingfisher *Halcyon capensis***  
One seen, by a single observer, by the small stream on the Mahakal Trail at Gorumara was the only sighting.
40. **White-throated Kingfisher *Halcyon smyrnensis***  
Aside from one at Khecheopari Lake, only recorded from the Gorumara area including three at Khunia and en-route from Gorumara to Bagdogra.
41. **Crested Kingfisher *Megaceryle lugubris***  
Two were seen on the Jaldhaka river south of Bindu and one was present at Bindu itself, both on the Indian and Bhutan sides of the river. There are few records for the state of West Bengal, although birds are presumably resident in these under-watched areas. In Sikkim, three were seen en-route between Gangtok and North Bengal on 20/11.
42. **Pied Kingfisher *Ceryle rudis***  
One seen in flight at Gazoldoba was the only sighting.
43. **Green Bee-eater *Merops orientalis***  
Just one record of four seen en-route in the lowlands on 10/11.
44. **Chestnut-headed Bee-eater *Merops leschenaulti***  
Four near Samsing Forest Rest House were the only ones seen.
45. **Large Hawk Cuckoo *Hierococcyx sparverioides***  
Very good views of a late migrant at Todey on 9/11.
46. **Green-billed Malkoha *Phaenicophaeus tristis***  
One near the Samsing Forest Rest House and one at Gorumara.
47. **Greater Coucal *Centropus sinensis***  
One seen at Kalijhora was the only sighting of the trip.
48. **Lesser Coucal *Centropus bengalensis***  
Two were seen in the grasslands from the Khunia watch tower at Gorumara and also heard calling from there. One bird was seen perched for a few seconds, although only the head and neck were visible. Otherwise brief flight views were obtained on two occasions.
49. **Vernal Hanging Parrot *Loriculus vernalis***  
Seen on both days at Gorumara and pleasingly gave good perched views, typically hanging upside-down from a tree trunk.
50. **Alexandrine Parakeet *Psittacula eupatria***  
Following three in flight at Samsing the only records were from Gorumara, where it was relatively common.
51. **Rose-ringed Parakeet *Psittacula krameri***  
Surprisingly the only record from the entire trip was of two at Gorumara.

52. **Slaty-headed Parakeet *Psittacula himalayana***  
A flock of at least 40 parakeets was seen between Pelling and Sangachoeling on 15/11. It was difficult to get good views but flight views showed obvious yellow in the tail, particularly from below, and at least one bird had a red upper mandible. At least some were therefore Slaty-headed, and it seems likely that most were.
53. **Blossom-headed Parakeet *Psittacula roseata***  
One bird from the flock between Pelling and Sangachoeling that was seen particularly well had a pale grey head and yellow bill, plus a small maroon-coloured shoulder patch. This combination of features mostly closely fits female Blossom-headed, although some of the literature referred to since states that the lower mandible is supposed to be greyish.
54. **Red-breasted Parakeet *Psittacula alexandri***  
15 were seen at Samsing and up to 30 at Gorumara.
55. **Himalayan Swiftlet *Collocalia brevirostris***  
Up to five seen on both days at Gorumara.
56. **Asian Palm Swift *Cypsiurus batasiensis***  
A flock of about ten over palms en-route to Gorumara, plus five at Gorumara Jungle Camp.
57. **Asian Barred Owlet *Glaucidium cuculoides***  
Due to its relatively diurnal nature birds were seen on several occasions, including Suntalekhola, Pemayangtse (two there), Khecheopari Lake, Fambong Lho, Lava and Gorumara.
58. **Jungle Owlet *Glaucidium radiatum***  
Single birds heard at both Kalijhora and Gorumara.
59. **Spotted Owlet *Athene brama***  
One heard calling at Gorumara Jungle Camp.
60. **Grey Nightjar *Caprimulgus indicus***  
One bird was seen well in flight after dusk at Suntalekhola on 6/11. There was only one other nightjar recorded on the entire trip: one in flight over fields near Gorumara was most likely to have been a Savanna Nightjar.
61. **Rock Pigeon *Columba livia***  
Common in all but the most forested areas.
62. **Ashy Wood Pigeon *Columba pulchricollis***  
Three were seen in flight at Maenam, followed by sightings at Lava and Neora Valley.
63. **Oriental Turtle Dove *Streptopelia orientalis***  
Considerably less common than last year (when it was recorded nearly every day): two at Karmi Farm were the only sighting during the first week. Seen more frequently in Sikkim although only one sighting, six at Rumtek, was of more than one bird. More common at Gorumara with up to 40 there. The grey sides and tip to the tail eliminate the subspecies *meena* and the obvious pinkish colour of the head, neck and underparts suggest the more easterly *agricola*.

64. **Spotted Dove *Streptopelia chinensis***  
Small numbers seen en-route in both North Bengal and Sikkim but not common. One recorded from Suntalekhola and up to three from Gorumara.
65. **Red Collared Dove *Streptopelia tranquebarica***  
Quite common at Gorumara with up to 15 there, the only other record being from Siliguri.
66. **Eurasian Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto***  
Surprisingly only one was seen on the entire trip, and that just outside Bagdogra.
67. **Barred Cuckoo Dove *Macropygia unchall***  
Two were seen in flight at dusk at Mount Narsing. As last year, when we recorded just one probable, this species is presumably difficult to find at this time of year: it is frequently reported in the spring.
68. **Emerald Dove *Chalcophaps indica***  
One was seen by a single observer at Gorumara.
69. **Yellow-footed Green Pigeon *Treron phoenicoptera***  
Only recorded from Gorumara where about 50 birds were seen from the Rhino Observation Point as they came to salt in the morning along with other pigeons and doves. The northern subspecies *phoenicoptera* is quite distinctive with obvious separation between the grey belly and the mustard-yellow breast.
70. **Pin-tailed Green Pigeon *Treron apicauda***  
One, lacking the "pin-tail", was seen with other pigeons at Gorumara.
71. **Wedge-tailed Green Pigeon *Treron sphenura***  
About six at Sangachoeling, two at Maenam, four at Lava and a flock of 20 seen in flight at Gorumara.
72. **Green Imperial Pigeon *Ducula aenea***  
Very good views of 18 with other pigeons and doves at Rhino Observation Point, Gorumara. Also seen from the Khunia watch tower and on the Mahakal Trail.
73. **White-breasted Waterhen *Amaurornis phoenicurus***  
One heard calling from the Khunia watch tower at Gorumara was the only record.
74. **Common Coot *Fulica atra***  
Only recorded from Gazoldoba where at least 150 were seen.
75. **Eurasian Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola***  
An excellent record was of one feeding by the roadside towards dusk along the Lava to Algarah road on 20/11. It flew up and landed in the leaf litter, although was only seen again in flight when we flushed it from there whilst attempting to refind it.
76. **Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago***  
Two were seen in flight at Gazoldoba.
77. **Common Redshank *Tringa totanus***  
Seven were seen at Gazoldoba.



78. **Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia***  
One was seen on the river at Gorumara and a large flock of at least 150 was at Gazoldoba.
79. **Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus***  
One seen at Gorumara was the only sighting.
80. **Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos***  
Two were seen at Gazoldoba.
81. **Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii***  
A flock of about 20 were present at Gazoldoba.
82. **Greater Painted Snipe *Rostratula benghalensis***  
Brief flight views were had of one seen from the Khunia watch tower at Gorumara on 22/11.
83. **Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius***  
Two were seen along the river at Gorumara and three at Gazoldoba.
84. **Lesser Sand Plover *Charadrius mongolus***  
A non-breeding plumaged bird was present with Little Ringed Plovers at Gazoldoba.
85. **River Lapwing *Vanellus duvaucelii***  
A flock of seven were seen along the river at Gorumara.
86. **Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus***  
An unusual bird in West Bengal, so a total of 200 at Gazoldoba was a remarkable record. 90 were present on a sand bar there and two flocks totalling 110 flew over.
87. **Red-wattled Lapwing *Vanellus indicus***  
Surprisingly scarce with just two birds seen from the Khunia watch tower at Gorumara and none at all en-route in the lowlands.
88. **Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus***  
One was present with ducks and waders on a sand bar at Gazoldoba.
89. **Osprey *Pandion haliaetus***  
Excellent views of one in flight at Gazoldoba.
90. **Oriental Honey-buzzard *Pernis ptilorhynchus***  
One was seen and photographed from Sangachoeling on 16/11 and five singles flew over Rumtek on 20/11. These were all seen apparently migrating and looked larger and longer-winged than the sedentary Indian birds, typical of the migratory Siberian subspecies *orientalis*.
91. **Black Kite *Milvus migrans***  
Just small numbers recorded en-route in the lowlands.
92. **Lesser Fish Eagle *Ichthyophaga humilis***  
One immature was seen soaring over the edge of the forest and grassland at Gorumara on 23/11. Difficult to distinguish from Grey-headed Fish Eagle at this age, but the uniform dark brown tail suggests that it was a Lesser.

93. **White-rumped Vulture *Gyps bengalensis***  
Birds seen en-route in the North Bengal lowlands on three occasions, including six on 22/11 and an impressive soaring flock of 24 at Bagdogra on 24/11.
94. **Slender-billed Vulture *Gyps tenuirostris***  
Five birds were seen soaring with White-rumped Vultures at Bagdogra on 24/11.
95. **Himalayan Griffon *Gyps himalyensis***  
One adult was seen not far from Kalijhora, two birds at Rumtek and one at Gorumara.
96. **Crested Serpent Eagle *Spilornis cheela***  
Singles were seen en-route in North Bengal on two occasions, two calling birds in flight at Lava and daily sightings at Gorumara. Also two birds were seen together en-route in Sikkim.
97. **Eurasian Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus***  
A female or immature was seen at Gazoldoba.
98. **Eastern Marsh Harrier *Circus (aeruginosus) spilonotus***  
One bird was seen very well at Gazoldoba on 23/11. A female or immature bird, it clearly showed off-white patches on the primaries below much like a *buteo*, plus whitish upper-tail coverts. Size and structure appeared identical to Eurasian Marsh Harrier and its behaviour was exactly the same, quartering over the reeds with wings held in a V and alighting on several occasions.
99. **Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus***  
A superb adult male flew directly through at Gazoldoba on 23/11, making this an excellent site for a variety of harriers!
100. **Shikra *Accipiter badius***  
The only record was of one en-route in North Bengal that was seen to catch a passerine, probably a myna.
101. **Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus***  
Singles at Suntalekhola, Karmi Farm, Rabdentse, Khecheopari Lake, Rumtek, Rashet and Lava, plus two at Maenam. One of the Maenam birds was photographed at close range and may have been a female of the wintering subspecies *nisosimilis* rather than the Himalayan *melaschistos* (which was also recorded).
102. **Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis***  
One in flight over Karmi Farm typically had a steady flapping flight without the flap-and-glide of a Eurasian Sparrowhawk.
103. **Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo***  
One was seen very well en-route to Kalijhora. Thereafter a presumably migrating individual overflew Rumtek on 20/11 and one was seen in the Gorumara grasslands.
104. **Black Eagle *Ictinaetus malayensis***  
One seen briefly at Karmi Farm with a Eurasian Sparrowhawk and good views of one seen en-route between Khecheopari Lake and Mount Narsing.

105. **Greater Spotted Eagle *Aquila pomarina***  
Two individual migrating birds were seen within ten minutes of each other over Kalijhora on 14/11.
106. **Steppe Eagle *Aquila nipalensis***  
Migrating birds were seen on a few occasions with eight at Karmi Farm, one at Kalijhora, 12 in the late afternoon at Rabdentse and six nearby at Sangachoeling the following morning, and one also at Fambong Lho. There is probably a considerable passage through this region although the dates would suggest that the peak is probably a few weeks earlier. Birds were flying between west and south. Whether these birds continue west to winter in northeast Africa with the bulk of the Steppe Eagle population, or are part of the smaller population that winters in India, is unknown.
107. **Mountain Hawk Eagle *Spizaetus nipalensis***  
Singles of the nominate Himalayan subspecies were seen at Sangachoeling, Pemayangtse, Rumtek and Neora Valley, and en-route sightings in Sikkim included four between Khecheopari Lake and Mount Narsing.
108. **Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus***  
Single birds were seen at Bindu (including in Bhutan), Kalijhora, Maenam and en-route in both North Bengal and Sikkim on two occasions each.
109. **Peregrine *Falco peregrinus***  
Two birds were seen at Gorumara from the Rhino Observation Point on 23/11 and two were also seen at Gazoldoba later the same day. One of the Gorumara birds was constantly mobbed by Ashy Woodswallows.
110. **Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis***  
Two were seen at Gazoldoba.
111. **Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus***  
Eight were seen at Gazoldoba on 23/11.
112. **Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis***  
Three were seen at Gazoldoba on 23/11. Few records from West Bengal, but undoubtedly overlooked as in much of the rest of north India.
113. **Little Cormorant *Phalacrocorax niger***  
Only seen in the lowlands with a couple of records en-route plus birds seen at Gorumara and Gazoldoba.
114. **Indian Cormorant *Phalacrocorax niger***  
At least one was seen at Gazoldoba, but probably overlooked here.
115. **Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo***  
Four seen on the river at Kalijhora, small numbers en-route on the rivers in Sikkim, plus a few at Gazoldoba.
116. **Little Egret *Egretta garzetta***  
Only recorded en-route once and with a single on the river at Gorumara.
117. **Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea***  
One was seen at Gazoldoba.
-

118. **Great Egret *Casmerodius albus***  
A single at Gazoldoba and one at Gorumara.
119. **Intermediate Egret *Egretta intermedia***  
Up to three at Gorumara were the only ones seen.
120. **Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis***  
Recorded on a few occasions in the lowlands of North Bengal, but not seen in Sikkim.
121. **Indian Pond Heron *Ardeola grayii***  
Recorded at Gorumara but only one other en-route sighting in North Bengal.
122. **Black Ibis *Pseudibis papillosa***  
Two were seen at Gorumara, probably the easternmost point of their range.
123. **Asian Openbill *Anastomus oscitans***  
About eight were seen at Gazoldoba.
124. **Black Stork *Ciconia nigra***  
A single was seen on the river at Kalijhora and two were at Gorumara National Park.
125. **Asian Fairy Bluebird *Irena puella***  
A pair seen in the early morning of 24/11 on the Mahakal Trail was Mike's 450<sup>th</sup> species in the last 29 days in India!
126. **Long-tailed Broadbill *Psarisomus dalhousiae***  
Good views of six during a brief stop at Chapramari on 10/11 and at least three on the Mahakal Trail on 24/11.
127. **Golden-fronted Leafbird *Chloropsis aurifrons***  
One was seen at Khecheopari Lake and three at Gorumara and the Mahakal Trail.
128. **Orange-bellied Leafbird *Chloropsis hardwickei***  
A pair were seen at Suntalekhola, two also at Sangachoeling and one at Rashet in the lower Neora Valley.
129. **Brown Shrike *Lanius cristatus***  
A few sightings en-route in the lowlands, including four on 22/11.
130. **Long-tailed Shrike *Lanius schach***  
Recorded three times en-route in North Bengal and twice in Sikkim. Otherwise two were seen from the Khunia watch tower and two at Gazoldoba. All birds were of the black-headed subspecies *tricolor*.
131. **Grey-backed Shrike *Lanius excubitoroides***  
Singles at Bindu, Karmi Farm and Sangachoeling, two from the Khunia watch tower and a number of en-route sightings; the commonest shrike species encountered.
132. **Yellow-billed Blue Magpie *Urocissa flavirostris***  
Two noisy birds at Tiger Hill, four at Fambong Lho and one at Neora Valley. Not seen well enough to note the subspecies, although presumably they would have

been the nominate, with pale yellow underparts and a greyer mantle than the western *cucullata*.

133. **Green Magpie *Cissa chinensis***  
Although not recorded last year ones or twos were seen at several sites this year, including Suntalekhola, Bindu, Todey, Karmi Farm, Rabdentse, Khecheopari Lake, and ten were seen at the botanical garden at Rumtek.
134. **Rufous Treepie *Dendrocitta vagabunda***  
A few sightings in the lowlands, including Gorumara, but only one sighting, of two birds at Suntalekhola, at any significant altitude.
135. **Grey Treepie *Dendrocitta formosae***  
Much the commoner treepie seen with records from most hill sites visited in both North Bengal and Sikkim.
136. **House Crow *Corvus splendens***  
Generally common especially in the lowlands, but with a few also seen around habitation in the hills.
137. **Large-billed Crow *Corvus macrorhynchos***  
Small numbers regular at several sites. No notable counts were made. All the birds seen appeared to be "Jungle Crows", i.e. *culminates* or *levillantii*, with none approaching the more raven-like *tibetosinensis*.
138. **Ashy Woodswallow *Artamus fuscus***  
About six seen at Suntalekhola with a similar number at Samsing and up to 15 at Gorumara, where they did not tolerate the presence of a Peregrine there.
139. **Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus***  
One was seen and heard briefly on the Mahakal Trail.
140. **Black-hooded Oriole *Oriolus xanthornus***  
Two near the Samsing Forest Rest House and up to four at Gorumara and the Mahakal Trail were the only ones recorded.
141. **Maroon Oriole *Oriolus traillii***  
Excellent views of two at Suntalekhola, singles seen at Kalijhora, Pemayangtse, Khecheopari Lake, Maenam and up to four at Gorumara and the Mahakal Trail.
142. **Large Cuckooshrike *Coracina macei***  
Two noisy birds were seen and heard (a call not unlike that of Plum-headed Parakeet) at Gorumara. Presumably they were of the Himalayan foothills subspecies *nipalensis*.
143. **Black-winged Cuckooshrike *Coracina melaschistos***  
One was seen at Samsing Forest Rest House and up to four were at Gorumara National Park and the Mahakal Trail.
144. **Grey-chinned Minivet *Pericrocotus solaris***  
One male was seen amongst other minivets at Suntalekhola on 7/11, although it is quite possible that others were overlooked there.

145. **Long-tailed Minivet *Pericrocotus ethologus***  
Two were seen at Sangachoeling.
146. **Short-billed Minivet *Pericrocotus brevirostris***  
A good sighting of about 100 came from Suntalekhola and there were also six at Kalijhora.
147. **Scarlet Minivet *Pericrocotus flammeus***  
About 40 were seen at Suntalekhola with Short-billed Minivets and small numbers were recorded at Samsing, Chapramari, Karmi Farm and Kalijhora. At Gorumara there was up to 60 seen, and a flock of 40 was seen en-route in North Bengal. There was just one en-route sighting of four in Sikkim.
148. **Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrike *Hemipus picatus***  
Six at Suntalekhola, six at Bindu and eight at Kalijhora showed a brown mantle and were clearly of the *capitalis* subspecies.
149. **Yellow-bellied Fantail *Rhipidura hypoxantha***  
Three were seen at Sangachoeling, singles at Khecheopari Lake, Maenam, Fambong Lho and Rumtek, and three at Rashet.
150. **White-throated Fantail *Rhipidura albicollis***  
Singles, of one the dark-breasted races, seen at Suntalekhola, Karmi Farm, Kalijhora, Pemayangtse, Rumtek and Gorumara.
151. **Black Drongo *Dicrurus macrocercus***  
Recorded en-route on a few occasions, in the lowlands only, and in the Gorumara area.
152. **Ashy Drongo *Dicrurus leucophaeus***  
Small numbers seen at Suntalekhola, Samsing, Bindu, Kalijhora and Gorumara in North Bengal, with Sikkim records restricted to one at Fambong Lho and about six at a stop en-route between Khecheopari Lake and Mount Narsing. These were a distinctive paler grey than the more western birds and were therefore probably of the *hopwoodi* subspecies.
153. **Bronzed Drongo *Dicrurus aeneus***  
Common at Suntalekhola where up to eight were seen. Also seen at nearby Samsing and Bindu, with ones or twos from Kalijhora, Lava and Gorumara. The only Sikkim record was of two en-route between Khecheopari Lake and Mount Narsing, seen together with Ashy Drongos.
154. **Lesser Racket-tailed Drongo *Dicrurus remifer***  
Two were seen on the Mahakal Trail.
155. **Spangled Drongo *Dicrurus hottentottus***  
Up to three were seen at Suntalekhola, Samsing, Bindu, Chapramari and Kalijhora, with daily sightings from the Gorumara area including six near the Khunia watch tower. One seen briefly with the Ashy and Bronzed Drongos between Khecheopari Lake and Mount Narsing was the only one recorded from Sikkim.
156. **Greater Racket-tailed Drongo *Dicrurus paradiseus***  
One was seen well at Suntalekhola and there were brief sightings of two at Gorumara on two occasions.
-

157. **Black-naped Monarch *Hypothymis azurea***  
Three were seen at Suntalekhola and there was one at Chapramari.
158. **Common Iora *Aegithina tiphia***  
The only records were of four at Kalijhora and one at Gorumara.
159. **Large Woodshrike *Tephrodornis gularis***  
Good views of a feeding flock of 15 *pelvica* birds on the Mahakal Trail.
160. **Brown Dipper *Cinclus pallasii***  
Seen on the river Jaldhaka at Bindu, both in India and in Bhutan, and also seen briefly at Kalijhora.
161. **Chestnut-bellied Rock Thrush *Monticola rufiventris***  
A pair were seen at Karmi Farm with another pair at Sangachoeling, then singles at Khecheopari Lake and twice en-route stops in Sikkim.
162. **Blue Rock Thrush *Monticola solitarius***  
Two were seen from the balcony of Shivaji Tourist Inn at Bindu and singles were seen at Kalijhora, twice en-route in Sikkim, at Gazoldoba and at Gorumara.
163. **Blue Whistling Thrush *Myophonus caeruleus***  
Common with records from nearly every site visited. An interesting lowland sighting was of one in a tea plantation between Gorumara and Gazoldoba.
164. **Plain-backed Thrush *Zoothera mollissima***  
One was seen by a single observer at Rashet in the lower Neora Valley.
165. **White-collared Blackbird *Turdus albocinctus***  
Brief sightings of one at Tiger Hill and one at Rashet.
166. **Gould's Shortwing *Brachypteryx stellata***  
The undoubted highlight of the trip for Mike and Sujana was one seen well at Tiger Hill. First seen by Mike it gave excellent views for about 30 seconds, plus a few seconds for a breathless Sujana who arrived just in time after hearing Mike's frantic shouts! This species is mentioned for Tiger Hill by Kazmierczak and Singh [7] although there are very few records.
167. **Dark-sided Flycatcher *Muscicapa sibirica***  
Two were seen at Suntalekhola, two at Bindu and one at Todey, although there were no sightings after these.
168. **Slaty-backed Flycatcher *Ficedula hodgsonii***  
A pair were seen at Khecheopari Lake and one at Maenam.
169. **Rufous-gorgetted Flycatcher *Ficedula strophilata***  
Several sightings included three at Karmi Farm and at Fambong Lho, plus ones or twos at Tiger Hill, Pemayangtse, Sangachoeling, Khecheopari Lake, Rumtek, Rashet and Lava.
170. **Red-throated Flycatcher *Ficedula (parva) albicilla* [Taiga Flycatcher]**  
Ones or twos were seen at Suntalekhola, Samsing, Bindu, Kalijhora, Khecheopari Lake and Rashet, with three at Gorumara. About one bird in four were seen well

enough to assign to subspecies and all of these were, as expected based on range, *albicilla*.

171. **Ultramarine Flycatcher *Ficedula superciliaris***  
Singles were seen at Sangachoeling and Pemayangtse.
172. **Slaty-blue Flycatcher *Ficedula tricolour***  
Two seen at Bindu, one in India and one in Bhutan, were the only definite sightings.
173. **Sapphire Flycatcher *Ficedula sapphire***  
A single observer sighting of one at Rumtek was the only record.
174. **Verditer Flycatcher *Eumyias thalassina***  
One bird was seen at Karmi Farm and two were at the botanical gardens in Rumtek, plus there was one en-route sighting in North Bengal.
175. **Large Niltava *Niltava grandis***  
A pair was seen briefly not far from Bindu and singles were seen in Sikkim at Sangachoeling and Maenam.
176. **Small Niltava *Niltava macgregoriae***  
One was at Suntalekhola, two at Bindu and one at Rumtek.
177. **Rufous-bellied Niltava *Niltava sundara***  
Singles at Suntalekhola and Todey, followed by two at Kalijhora, one at Rumtek and an en-route sighting in Sikkim.
178. **Grey-headed Canary Flycatcher *Culicicapa ceylonensis***  
Seen at all sites visited in North Bengal except Tiger Hill, the Lava area and Gazoldoba, the maximum being four at Kalijhora. Interestingly in Sikkim we only recorded one bird, at Pemayangtse.
179. **Orange-flanked Bush Robin *Tarsiger cyanurus***  
One bird at Kalijhora was giving short bursts of song and was presumed to be an immature male. Otherwise one was seen at Sangachoeling with two in the Neora Valley.
180. **Golden Bush Robin *Tarsiger chrysaeus***  
A male was seen in the garden of Mount Pandim hotel, Pemayangtse, on two occasions, and two were seen at Fambong Lho.
181. **White-browed Bush Robin *Tarsiger indicus***  
A female was seen briefly from the trail to Tiffindara at Lava.
182. **Oriental Magpie Robin *Copsychus saularis***  
Recorded from Bindu and Gorumara, with en-route sightings in both North Bengal and Sikkim on a couple of occasions.
183. **White-rumped Shama *Copsychus malabaricus***  
Seen and heard singing at Kalijhora and on three occasions in the Gorumara area.
184. **Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros***  
One female seen at Suntalekhola was the only sighting.



185. **Hodgson's Redstart *Phoenicurus hodgsoni***  
Excellent views were had of four at Bindu, including one in Bhutan. One was also seen at Khecheopari Lake.
186. **Blue-fronted Redstart *Phoenicurus frontalis***  
One was seen at Todey and it was particularly common at Tiger Hill with at least 20 seen there. Also seen at Lava in North Bengal and noted to be very common in Sikkim, where records came from all sites.
187. **White-capped Water Redstart *Phoenicurus leucocephalus***  
Regularly seen on or near most rivers, the peak count was five at Bindu and at least eight on the journey between Khecheopari Lake and Mount Narsing in Sikkim.
188. **Plumbeous Water Redstart *Phoenicurus fuliginosus***  
Very similar status to White-capped Water Redstart and very frequently seen together. Six seen at Bindu and eight between Khecheopari Lake and Mount Narsing were the maximum counts.
189. **Little Forktail *Enicurus scouleri***  
Three were seen at Bindu and one en-route not far from there, with en-route sightings at road-crossing streams on two occasions in Sikkim.
190. **Slaty-backed Forktail *Enicurus schistaceus***  
Quite commonly encountered en-route where the road crossed any streams. One was at Suntalekhola, two displaying birds at Bindu (seen in both India and Bhutan) and three en-route birds were seen between Bindu and Todey. Seen at five separate occasions in Sikkim, with one bird also on a stream at Rashet.
191. **Siberian Stonechat *Saxicola maura***  
Two seen at Bindu, with one also on the Bhutan side of the border there, and singles at Kalijhora, Khecheopari Lake and on three other occasions in Sikkim. At least six seen in the Gorumara area.
192. **Pied Bushchat *Saxicola caprata***  
One seen en-route from Lava to Gorumara was the only sighting of the trip.
193. **Grey Bushchat *Saxicola ferrea***  
Two were seen at Suntalekhola, Todey and Karmi Farm, three at Fambong Lho, one at Rumtek and singles en-route on three occasions.
194. **Chestnut-tailed Starling *Sturnus malabaricus***  
A flock of 30 were seen at Samsing, 20 at Chapramari and up to 40 at Gorumara.
195. **Asian Pied Starling *Sturnus contra***  
Noted on several occasions in lowland areas where it is clearly common, including at Gorumara.
196. **Common Myna *Acridotheres tristis***  
Very common in lowland areas, with a number of records of small numbers also from higher altitudes.
197. **Jungle Myna *Acridotheres fuscus***  
One en-route between Lava and Gorumara was the only sighting away from

Gorumara National Park itself. Here up to 30 were seen from the Rhino Observation Point.

198. **Hill Myna *Gracula religiosa***  
Several were seen in the Suntalekhola and Samsing area, including one flock of about 50 birds. Also noted were 15 at Bindu, 40 at Chapramari, one at Karmi Farm, 40 at Kalijhora and up to eight at Gorumara, plus a remarkable 500 near Samsing on 22/11.
199. **Chestnut-bellied Nuthatch *Sitta castanea***  
Seen at Samsing, Bindu, Todey (with three there), Karmi Farm, Tiger Hill, Kalijhora, Gorumara plus on one occasion in Sikkim en-route between Maenam and Gangtok.
200. **White-tailed Nuthatch *Sitta himalayensis***  
Generally found to replace Chestnut-bellied Nuthatch at higher altitude sites, one was seen at Tiger Hill and there were records also from Sangachoeling, Rabdentse, Pemayangtse, Khecheopari Lake, Maenam, Fambong Lho plus the Lava and Neora Valley area.
201. **Velvet-fronted Nuthatch *Sitta frontalis***  
Up to four seen at Karmi Farm, one at Tiger Hill and two at Gorumara.
202. **Rusty-flanked Treecreeper *Certhia nipalensis***  
A treecreeper seen at Karmi Farm was thought to be this species. Otherwise just two other treecreepers were seen on the entire trip and these, at Samsing, were only seen briefly and could not be identified.
203. **Winter Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes***  
One, a dark bird probably of the *nipalensis* subspecies, was seen at very close range on the Lava to Algarah road.
204. **Rufous-vented Tit *Parus rubidiventris***  
One seen well in the Neora Valley had a greyish belly and was therefore of the subspecies *beavani*.
205. **Coal Tit *Parus ater***  
Singles were seen at Karmi Farm and Tiger Hill, five at Sangachoeling, at least 12 at Rumtek and ten in the Neora Valley.
206. **Green-backed Tit *Parus monticolus***  
Easily the commonest tit species recorded with records from Todey (about 15), Karmi Farm (at least 25), Pemayangtse, Sangachoeling, Khecheopari Lake, Mount Narsing, Maenam, Fambong Lho, Rumtek, Rashet and Lava.
207. **Yellow-browed Tit *Sylviparus modestus***  
Three were seen at Karmi Farm and there were one or two at several Sikkim sites, including Sangachoeling, Rabdentse and Khecheopari Lake. More notable counts were 10 at Rumtek and eight in the Neora Valley.
208. **Sultan Tit *Melanochlora sultanea***  
Three were seen at Suntalekhola on 7/11. Two of these were in a tree inside the grounds of the Suntalay Khola Wilderness Camp, but unfortunately all were only seen briefly.

209. **Black-throated Tit *Aegithalos concinnus***  
 Up to 20 were seen at Karmi Farm and there were other flocks of about this size seen at Sangachoeling, Rabdentse, Khecheopari Lake, Neora Valley and Lava, with smaller numbers from Fambong Lho and Rumtek.
210. **Plain Martin *Riparia paludicola***  
 Only seen near the river at Kalijhora and between Gorumara and Bagdogra.
211. **Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica***  
 One juvenile was seen with Wire-tailed Swallows at Gazoldoba.
212. **Wire-tailed Swallow *Hirundo smithii***  
 Four birds were seen perched on wires at Gazoldoba. Extremely unusual in this area, with just a single record highlighted by Grimmett, Inskipp and Inskipp [1].
213. **Nepal House Martin *Delichon nipalensis***  
 A flock of about 50 was seen on two occasions not far from Kolbong in North Bengal. In Sikkim five at Pemayangtse and 30 at Sangachoeling were eclipsed by a flock of at least 200 seen not far from Khecheopari Lake.
214. **Goldcrest *Regulus regulus***  
 Five were seen in pines at Sangachoeling Gompa, about 10 in the Neora Valley and four in the grounds of the Lava Forest Rest House.
215. **Striated Bulbul *Pycnonotus striatus***  
 Excellent views of two in a large feeding flock of smaller birds at Rabdentse, followed by nine at Fambong Lho. Also recorded from Rashet and Lava.
216. **Black-crested Bulbul *Pycnonotus melanicterus***  
 The *flaviventris* subspecies was seen twice, with six at Kalijhora and four at Gorumara.
217. **Red-whiskered Bulbul *Pycnonotus jocusus***  
 Three at Samsing, about ten at Kalijhora and at least 20 in the Gorumara area.
218. **Himalayan Bulbul *Pycnonotus leucogenys***  
 Small numbers recorded from Today, Karmi Farm and three occasions in Sikkim, including at Rumtek.
219. **Red-vented Bulbul *Pycnonotus cafer***  
 One of the darker subspecies, probably *bengalensis*, was fairly common at most sites visited in both North Bengal and Sikkim, although no notable counts were recorded.
220. **Ashy Bulbul *Hypsipetes flavalus***  
 Three birds were seen in pines at the top of the ridge at Suntalekhola.
221. **Mountain Bulbul *Hypsipetes mccllellandii***  
 Three birds were seen well but briefly at Karmi Farm, with two seen also at Fambong Lho.
222. **Black Bulbul *Hypsipetes leucocephalus***  
 Pale grey birds of the subspecies *psaroides* were quite common in the hills with

sightings from Suntalekhola, Karmi Farm, Sangachoeling, Khecheopari Lake, Maenam, Fambong Lho, Rumtek, Neora Valley and Lava.

223. **Plain Prinia *Prinia inornata***

The only records were of one at Gazoldoba and one between Gorumara and Bagdogra.

224. **Oriental White-eye *Zosterops palpebrosa***

Quite common, unlike last year when we only had one sighting. This year recorded from Suntalekhola, Bindu, Todey (where there were at least 50), Karmi Farm, Kalijhora, Khecheopari Lake and Rumtek.

225. **Chestnut-headed Tesia *Tesia castaneocoronata***

There were brief sightings of birds at Chapramari, Karmi Farm, Khecheopari Lake, Rumtek (two) and once at an en-route stop in Sikkim. Calls that were probably this species were heard on several occasions and it is presumably quite common.

226. **Grey-bellied Tesia *Tesia cyaniventer***

One bird seen briefly at Chapramari, a few metres from a Chestnut-headed Tesia, was followed by one seen well (and photographed) at Gorumara on two consecutive days.

227. **Brownish-flanked Bush Warbler *Cettia fortipes***

Very good views had of two at Sangachoeling, with one other seen at Fambong Lho.

228. **Yellowish-bellied Bush Warbler *Cettia robustipes***

One was seen at Tiger Hill and one briefly in the Neora Valley.

229. **Grey-sided Bush Warbler *Cettia brunnifrons***

Two were seen by a single observer at Fambong Lho.

230. **Thick-billed Warbler *Acrocephalus aedon***

Very good views had of one in thick scrub and lantana at Samsing. Also one seen from the Khunia watch tower at Gorumara and two from the Rhino Observation Point there.

231. **Common Tailorbird *Orthotomus sutorius***

One or two birds recorded from Samsing, Todey, Rumtek, Gorumara and en-route in Sikkim.

232. **Common Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybitis***

One was seen in the grasslands from the Khunia watch tower in Gorumara.

233. **Buff-barred Warbler *Phylloscopus pulcher***

One seen by a single observer in the botanical gardens at Rumtek was, surprisingly, the only sighting.

234. **Ashy-throated Warbler *Phylloscopus maculipennis***

Regularly recorded and usually common. Birds were seen at Suntalekhola, Todey, Karmi Farm (at least 30), all sites visited in Sikkim, Lava and the Neora Valley.

235. **Lemon-rumped Warbler *Phylloscopus chloronotus***

Small numbers seen at various sites, including Suntalekhola, Bindu, Karmi Farm,

Khecheopari Lake, Fambong Lho and Rumtek, where the peak of about ten was recorded.

236. **Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus***  
Two were seen (and heard) at Fambong Lho and there were sightings also at Rumtek and Gorumara.
237. **Hume's Warbler *Phylloscopus humei***  
Relatively common with sightings from Suntalekhola, Bindu, Todey, Karmi Farm (at least 15), Tiger Hill, Kalijhora, Sangachoeling, Khecheopari Lake, Maenam, Fambong Lho, Rumtek, Neora Valley and Lava.
238. **Blyth's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus reguloides***  
Two were seen briefly at Sangachoeling.
239. **Yellow-vented Warbler *Phylloscopus cantator***  
One was seen well at Suntalekhola, one at Kalijhora and one also at Gorumara.
240. **Golden-spectacled Warbler *Seicercus burkii***  
Records of either Golden-spectacled Warbler or Whistler's Warbler came from a number of sites, although only a small proportion could be confidently assigned to either species due to lack of knowledge of the key distinguishing features. Criteria used for identification were mainly from the Family Introductions section of Kazmierczak and van Perlo [2], although on a few occasions birds were seen that appeared to show some pro Golden-spectacled characters and some pro Whistler's characters. The most useful features appeared to be the blackness of the lateral crown stripes and the extent of the extension of these towards the bill, plus the strength of the yellow colouration below. However, these features were still indeterminate with the views possible for the majority of birds seen. The presence or absence of a wing-bar was considered to be of little use for identification, as was altitudinal range outside of the breeding season. Two birds seen at Suntalekhola on 7/11 were considered to be Golden-spectacled, whilst birds at Bindu, Todey, Karmi Farm (where five were seen together), Tiger Hill and Gorumara were not positively identified.
241. **Whistler's Warbler *Seicercus whistleri***  
One definite was seen at Sangachoeling, two at an en-route stop between Khecheopari Lake and Mount Narsing, up to ten at Rumtek and one in the Neora Valley.
242. **Grey-hooded Warbler *Seicercus xanthoschista***  
Widespread although not as common as further west in the Himalayas. Recorded at Suntalekhola, Karmi Farm (with up to 25 there), Sangachoeling, Pemayangtse, Rabdentse, Khecheopari Lake, Maenam, Fambong Lho and Rumtek.
243. **White-spectacled Warbler *Seicercus affinis***  
One was seen well at Rumtek. One seen at Suntalekhola was either this species or Grey-cheeked Warbler.
244. **Grey-cheeked Warbler *Seicercus poliogenys***  
There were single observer sightings at Sangachoeling and at a stop between Maenam and Gangtok, plus another seen well at Rashet.

245. **Chestnut-crowned Warbler *Seicercus castaneiceps***  
This attractive bird proved quite widespread. Following singles at Suntalekhola and Today there were three at Karmi Farm and ones or twos at Rabdentse, Sangachoeling, Fambong Lho, Rumtek, Lava and the Neora Valley.
246. **Broad-billed Warbler *Tickellia hodgsoni***  
Brief views were had of one at Tiger Hill and a flock of four at Maenam, plus a single en-route between Maenam and Gangtok.
247. **Black-faced Warbler *Abroscopus schisticeps***  
The only one was a single observer sighting at a roadside stop between Maenam and Gangtok on 18/11.
248. **Striated Grassbird *Megalurus palustris***  
One heard singing at Gazoldoba was the only record.
249. **White-throated Laughingthrush *Garrulax albogularis***  
After four at Suntalekhola, the only other sighting was of an impressive flock of 80 birds at Pemayangtse.
250. **White-crested Laughingthrush *Garrulax leucolophus***  
Flocks of up to 10 were seen at Suntalekhola, Karmi Farm, Rumtek and twice en-route in Sikkim.
251. **Greater Necklaced Laughingthrush *Garrulax pectoralis***  
One was seen briefly with White-throated Laughingthrushes at Suntalekhola and a flock of about six where seen from the Rumtek to Song road.
252. **Rufous-necked Laughingthrush *Garrulax ruficollis***  
A flock of 20 was seen at Bindu, on the Bhutan side of the river. Seen in the late afternoon they were actively feeding in low bushes and consequently we had very good views.
253. **Striated Laughingthrush *Garrulax striatus***  
In North Bengal a flock of four were seen at Today, birds were heard at Karmi Farm and small numbers were recorded at Lava and Rashet. In Sikkim there were several sightings of up to four birds, including at Sangachoeling, Rabdentse, Pemayangtse, Maenam, Fambong Lho and Rumtek.
254. **Spotted Laughingthrush *Garrulax ocellatus***  
About four were seen briefly at Tiger Hill by a single observer.
255. **Grey-sided Laughingthrush *Garrulax caerulatus***  
Two were seen briefly at Sangachoeling whilst two flocks totalling about ten birds pleasingly gave very good views at Rashet in the Neora Valley.
256. **Streaked Laughingthrush *Garrulax lineatus***  
Not the common bird that it is in the western Himalayas, but up to six birds were seen at Pemayangtse, Sangachoeling, Mount Narsing and Rashet.
257. **Blue-winged Laughingthrush *Garrulax squamatus***  
About four were seen briefly in bamboo at Tiger Hill, one was seen briefly at Maenam, about eight gave good views in a flock at Fambong Lho that contained

four different species of laughingthrushes and it was also recorded from Rumtek and Lava.

258. **Black-faced Laughingthrush *Garrulax affinis***  
One at Sangachoeling and four at Fambong Lho were the only sightings. Interestingly recorded as “relatively common” last year.
259. **Chestnut-crowned Laughingthrush *Garrulax erythrocephalus***  
Following up to six at Tiger Hill this proved to be the most widespread of the laughingthrushes, with sightings from all Sikkim sites visited, including ten at Fambong Lho, plus small numbers from Lava and the Neora Valley.
260. **Red-faced Liocichla *Liocichla phoenicea***  
One of the highlights of the trip, five were seen at Fambong Lho. One gave brief views in a mixed flock of laughingthrushes and then four were seen reasonably well as they moved through the low vegetation, although never really showing in the open.
261. **Rusty-cheeked Scimitar Babbler *Pomatorhinus erythrogenys***  
Two seen at Mount Narsing was the only sighting.
262. **Streak-breasted Scimitar Babbler *Pomatorhinus ruficollis***  
One was seen quite well in dense vegetation at Sangachoeling and another was seen in the Neora Valley.
263. **Slender-billed Scimitar Babbler *Xiphirhynchus superciliaris***  
Excellent close views were had of one in a mixed species feeding flock at Sangachoeling, and two were seen in thick bamboo in the Neora Valley.
264. **Scaly-breasted Wren Babbler *Pnoepyga albiventer***  
One rufous morph seen at Todey gave excellent views and was photographed. Another heard calling at Rabdentse eventually showed itself very briefly and finally a white morph was seen at Rashet.
265. **Pygmy Wren Babbler *Pnoepyga pusilla***  
One at Sangachoeling, one at Khecheopari Lake, two at Maenam and one at Gorumara. Also birds en-route in Sikkim on three occasions included three (one seen and two heard) within a 300m stretch between Maenam and Gangtok.
266. **Rufous-capped Babbler *Stachyris ruficeps***  
Seen amongst flocks of other species, particularly Rufous-winged Fulvettas, at Samsing, Rabdentse, Sangachoeling, Fambong Lho, Rumtek, Rashet and Lava, where the maximum count of four was recorded.
267. **Golden Babbler *Stachyris chrysaea***  
Six were seen well at a roadside stop between Maenam and Gangtok, with another five seen at Rashet.
268. **Grey-throated Babbler *Stachyris nigriceps***  
Although not recorded last year, this time small numbers were quite common at several sites, i.e. Suntalekhola, Karmi Farm, Rabdentse, Sangachoeling, Rumtek (where the maximum count of six occurred), Rashet and Lava.

269. **Striped Tit Babbler *Macronous gularis***  
 About six, constantly calling birds, were seen very well at Kalijhora. Another that was heard, and then seen, from the Rumtek to Song road, was at an unusually high altitude of about 1700m: it is listed as occurring from the duars (plains) to 600m in [6], up to 900m in [2] and in the "foothills" in [1].
270. **Jungle Babbler *Turdoides striatus***  
 Two recorded en-route in the North Bengal lowlands was the only sighting.
271. **Red-billed Leiothrix *Leiothrix lutea***  
 Some reasonably large flocks were seen at Tiger Hill, Rabdentse, Maenam, Fambong Lho (at least 40), Rumtek, Rashet and Lava. The central and eastern Himalaya birds are of the subspecies *calipyga*.
272. **White-browed Shrike Babbler *Pteruthius flaviscapis***  
 One male was seen briefly at Sangachoeling.
273. **Black-eared Shrike Babbler *Pteruthius melanotis***  
 A good series of records with one at Suntalekhola, up to three at Karmi Farm, one at Rabdentse which gave exceptionally good views in a large feeding flock, five at Maenam and two roadside birds between there and Gangtok.
274. **Rusty-fronted Barwing *Actinodura egertoni***  
 Very good views of up to seven at Pemayangtse where they were seen daily, four at Khecheopari Lake, five at Fambong Lho and also recorded at Lava.
275. **Hoary-throated Barwing *Actinodura nipalensis***  
 One at Pemayangtse and five at Maenam were the only records.
276. **Blue-winged Minla *Minla cyanouroptera***  
 Several were recorded in the first week in North Bengal, with up to 12 at Suntalekhola, six at Samsing, six at Todey, and up to 12 at Karmi Farm where it was recorded on each of the three days there. Surprisingly no further records, and therefore none were recorded from Sikkim.
277. **Chestnut-tailed Minla *Minla strigula***  
 Recorded at several sites including five at Karmi Farm, small numbers at Tiger Hill, Sangachoeling, Rabdentse, Pemayangtse, Khecheopari Lake, about 30 at Maenam, ten at Rumtek and up to 15 at Lava and in the Neora Valley.
278. **Red-tailed Minla *Minla ignotincta***  
 Two at Suntalekhola, two at Todey, daily sightings from Karmi Farm with an impressive maximum count of 40 there. Fewer in Sikkim with one at Sangachoeling, one at Maenam and three at Fambong Lho.
279. **Golden-breasted Fulvetta *Alcippe chrysotis***  
 A fantastic flock of about 15 was seen at Tiger Hill, one was seen at Pemayangtse and four in the Neora Valley.
280. **Rufous-winged Fulvetta *Alcippe castaneiceps***  
 Quite common in the hills with records from Karmi Farm, Tiger Hill, Pemayangtse, Rabdentse, Sangachoeling, Fambong Lho, Lava and the Neora Valley. Large flocks were seen at Rabdentse (about 40), Sangachoeling (about 30) and Lava (about 25).



281. **White-browed Fulvetta *Alcippe vinipectus***  
Only seen on three occasions but in large numbers each time. It was the commonest species seen at Tiger Hill and there were about 20 seen at both Maenam and Lava. The birds showed the lightly streaked throat of the *chumbiensis* subspecies.
282. **Nepal Fulvetta *Alcippe nipalensis***  
Small numbers were quite regular constituents of feeding flocks, with records from Suntalekhola, Karmi Farm (about ten there), Pemayangtse, Rabdentse, Sangachoeling, Fambong Lho, Rumtek and Rashet.
283. **Rufous Sibia *Heterophasia capistrata***  
One of the most common birds in the hills, with sightings at Todey, Karmi Farm, Tiger Hill, Kalijhora, all sites visited in Sikkim, plus Lava and Neora Valley.
284. **Long-tailed Sibia *Heterophasia picaoides***  
Excellent views of five seen at Suntalekhola.
285. **White-naped Yuhina *Yuhina bakeri***  
Six were seen at Suntalekhola.
286. **Whiskered Yuhina *Yuhina flavicollis***  
After a single at Suntalekhola, eight were seen at Todey, ten at Tiger Hill and then many in Sikkim. Records were from all sites with a peak of about 30 at Fambong Lho. Also common at Lava and the Neora Valley.
287. **Stripe-throated Yuhina *Yuhina gularis***  
Common at Tiger Hill where up to 30 were seen but only recorded otherwise from Rumtek and Neora Valley.
288. **Rufous-vented Yuhina *Yuhina occipitalis***  
Six were seen at Tiger Hill, a few at Sangachoeling and Pemayangtse and then several in the Neora Valley and at Lava, where up to 40 included a large flock at dawn that had obviously roosted together.
289. **Black-chinned Yuhina *Yuhina nigrimenta***  
A fast moving flock of 10 were seen at Suntalekhola.
290. **White-bellied Yuhina *Yuhina zantholeuca***  
Eight were seen at Suntalekhola, singles at Todey and Karmi Farm, five at Kalijhora and one at Fambong Lho.
291. **Fire-tailed Myzornis *Myzornis pyrrhoura***  
Following poor and very brief views of one at Pemayangtse, one was seen well at Sangachoeling and there were other brief views of one at Maenam and one in the Neora Valley.
292. **Brown Parrotbill *Paradoxornis unicolor***  
About six were seen well in thick bamboo at Tiger Hill.
293. **Black-throated Parrotbill *Paradoxornis nipalensis***  
The only record was a single observer sighting of two flocks in the Neora Valley.

294. **Sand Lark *Calandrella raytal***  
Six were seen on the muddy flats at Gazoldoba.
295. **Plain Flowerpecker *Dicaeum concolor***  
Two seen at Chapramari and two at Khecheopari Lake were the only sightings.
296. **Fire-breasted Flowerpecker *Dicaeum ignipectus***  
Relatively common in Sikkim with records from all sites visited with maximums of six at Sangachoeling and five at Khecheopari Lake. Not so many in North Bengal, but records still from Suntalekhola, Todey, Karmi Farm and in the Neora Valley.
297. **Scarlet-backed Flowerpecker *Dicaeum cruentatum***  
About four were seen well at Gorumara.
298. **Mrs Gould's Sunbird *Aethopyga gouldiae***  
The only record was a single observer sighting of one in the Neora Valley.
299. **Green-tailed Sunbird *Aethopyga nipalensis***  
By far the commonest sunbird. After one at Karmi Farm they were seen frequently in Sikkim, with records from Pemayangtse, Sangachoeling, Khecheopari Lake, Maenam, Fambong Lho and Rumtek. Also a few noted at Lava and in the Neora Valley.
300. **Black-throated Sunbird *Aethopyga saturata***  
One was seen briefly at Todey.
301. **Crimson Sunbird *Aethopyga siparaja***  
Three were seen at Kalijhora but these were the only sightings.
302. **Fire-tailed Sunbird *Aethopyga ignicauda***  
Four were seen at Karmi Farm and four also at Sangachoeling. Unlike Green-tailed, which were usually seen in ones and twos, the Fire-tailed Sunbirds were seen all together.
303. **Streaked Spiderhunter *Arachnothera magna***  
The only record was a single observer sighting of one at Kalijhora.
304. **House Sparrow *Passer domesticus***  
Recorded a few times in habitation en-route and at Bindu and Maenam.
305. **Russet Sparrow *Passer rutilans***  
One female was seen en-route between Pemayangtse and Khecheopari Lake.
306. **Eurasian Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus***  
Replaced the House Sparrow at higher elevations in Sikkim and in Lava village.
307. **White Wagtail *Motacilla alba***  
One bird at Suntalekhola, a few at Kalijhora and one en-route sighting in Sikkim. Several at Gorumara included at least 200 roosting near the Khunia watch tower and 40 were also seen at Gazoldoba. The only subspecies definitely recorded was *alboides*.

308. **White-browed Wagtail *Motacilla maderaspatensis***  
Two seen by the river at Bindu, including in Bhutan, and recorded also from Kalijhora and Gazoldoba.
309. **Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla citreola***  
One was seen at Gorumara and about 15, probably *thunbergi*, seen at Gazoldoba.
310. **Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea***  
A few were seen in the Bindu area and one or two regularly en-route in Sikkim as well as at Fambong Lho. Four were seen at Lava.
311. **Paddyfield Pipit *Anthus rufulus***  
Two were seen at Gorumara and one en-route between Gorumara and Bagdogra.
312. **Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni***  
Small numbers were recorded at all sites except Suntalekhola, Samsing, Bindu and Chapramari, with the peak counts being ten at Karmi Farm and 20 at Sangachoeling.
313. **Rufous-breasted Accentor *Prunella strophiiata***  
Singles were seen well at Sangachoeling, Pemayangtse and Maenam.
314. **Maroon-backed Accentor *Prunella immaculata***  
Although not recorded last year there were several sightings of small flocks this time around. Six were at Pemayangtse, eight at Maenam, a total of at least 25 in the Neora Valley and ten at Lava. All the sightings were of small parties feeding on paths in the forest, and they seemed particularly faithful to the same small area.
315. **Baya Weaver *Ploceus philippinus***  
At least one was seen at Gazoldoba although a flock of about 40 weavers there was probably this species also.
316. **Indian Silverbill *Lonchura malabarica***  
Only recorded by one observer in Siliguri itself. This is slightly outside of its known range, and may indicate a captive origin, or a possible eastwards range expansion.
317. **Scaly-breasted Munia *Lonchura punctulata***  
Recorded near Bagdogra and then a single bird in flight at Khunia, Gorumara.
318. **Black-headed Munia *Lonchura malacca***  
Three white-bellied birds were seen at Gazoldoba.
319. **Yellow-breasted Greenfinch *Carduelis spinoides***  
Small flocks were seen at Pemayangtse, Sangachoeling and Maenam.
320. **Dark-breasted Rosefinch *Carpodacus nipalensis***  
The most frequent rosefinch seen although most sightings were of females or immatures. Records came from Sangachoeling, Rabdentse, Pemayangtse, Maenam, Fambong Lho, Neora Valley and Lava. Note that none of the female or immature birds seen showed a darker breast as depicted in Grimmett, Inskipp & Inskipp [1], but all had uniform brown underparts. However, there is no mention of a darker breast within the text so it is presumed that the plate is wrong.

321. **Pink-browed Rosefinch** *Carpodacus rhodochrous*  
A single female was seen at Maenam. A notable record since this species is relatively uncommon in the east of its range.
322. **Dark-rumped Rosefinch** *Carpodacus edwardsii*  
Four females or immatures seen at Neora Valley were the only sighting. They were feeding deep inside the same bush they were noted in there the previous year.
323. **Spot-winged Rosefinch** *Carpodacus rodopeplus*  
A pair were seen along the track at Rashet. A scarce species in India, with records generally restricted to areas considerably further north.
324. **Little Bunting** *Emberiza pusilla*  
One was seen by a single observer at Sangachoeling and two more were seen at Khecheopari Lake.

## OTHER WILDLIFE

1. **Indian Flying Fox *Pteropus giganteus***  
At least 500 were seen emerging from a roost at dusk on the main road a few kilometres from Chalsa.
2. **Assamese Macaque *Macaca assamensis***  
Recorded en-route between Bagdogra and Suntalekhola, in the Kalijhora area, on three occasions.
3. **Rhesus Macaque *Macaca mulatta***  
Seen at Samsing, Khecheopari Lake, once en-route in Sikkim and at Gorumara.
4. **Golden Jackal *Canis aureus***  
Recorded from Kalijhora and Pemayangtse with four at the latter site.
5. **Hog Badger *Arctonyx collaris***  
Three were seen by a single observer at Sangachoeling.
6. **Indian Grey Mongoose *Herpestes edwardsii***  
Two at Suntalekhola.
7. **Leopard *Panthera pardus***  
Three very young leopard cubs were being kept in a cage at Gorumara after apparently having been abandoned by their mother in a nearby tea plantation.
8. **Wild Boar *Bos gaurus***  
One from the Rhino Observation Point at Gorumara.
9. **Spotted Deer *Axis axis***  
A few were seen at Gorumara from the Rhino Observation Point.
10. **Indian Muntjac (Barking Deer) *Muntiacus muntjak***  
Seen or heard at Rabdentse, Pemayangtse, Maenam and in the Neora Valley.
11. **Gaur *Bos gaurus***  
A herd of 10 were seen from the Khunia watch tower at Gorumara and another five seen from the Rhino Observation Point there.
12. **Hoary-bellied Himalayan Squirrel *Callosciurus pygerythrus***  
Ones or twos seen at Sangachoeling, Pemayangtse, Khecheopari Lake, Rumtek, Rashet and Lava.
13. **Himalayan Striped Squirrel *Callosciurus macclellandi***  
Singles recorded from Sangachoeling, Maenam and the Tiffindara trail at Lava.
14. **Orange-bellied Himalayan Squirrel *Dremomys lokriah***  
One seen at Tiger Hill and one at Khecheopari Lake.
15. **Particoloured Flying Squirrel *Hyloptes alboniger***  
One was seen by a single observer at Rashet.

## REFERENCES

### Field Guides and Reference Material

- [1] Birds of the Indian Subcontinent; Richard Grimmett, Carol Inskipp & Tim Inskipp; Christopher Helm; 1998. *The main, very useful, reference guide although not without some inaccuracies.*
- [2] A Field Guide to the Birds of the Indian Subcontinent; Krys Kazmierczak & Ber van Perlo; Pica Press; 2000; *Generally not such good plates, but good supplementary information, description of bird sounds, and better distribution maps.*
- [3] A Photographic Guide to the Birds of India and the Indian Subcontinent, Bikram Grewal, Bill Harvey & Otto Pfister; Periplus; 2002; *useful complimentary information to the other field guides, and two of the authors were trip participants!*
- [4] Handbook of the Birds of India and Pakistan, Sálim Ali & S Dillon Ripley, Oxford University Press; 1983. *Invaluable reference material with detail unmatched by more recent guides.*
- [5] Birds of Sikkim, Sálim Ali.
- [6] Birds of Eastern Himalaya, Sálim Ali.

### Site Guides

- [7] A Birdwatchers' Guide to India; Krys Kazmierczak & Raj Singh; Birdwatchers' Guides, Prion; 1998. *Very good detailed site information for all sites except Gorumara National Park and Chapramari Wildlife Sanctuary.*

### Trip Reports

- [8] Birding Trip to North Bengal, India; November 2002; Mike Prince; [http://www.bubo.org/trips/india\\_2002\\_northbengal.pdf](http://www.bubo.org/trips/india_2002_northbengal.pdf). *Our visit to the Lava, Neora Valley, Gorumara and Chapramari areas, plus the Sandakphu trek, one year previous.*

## CONTACTS

For further information regarding this trip report, or if you require any help with arrangements in visiting North Bengal or Sikkim, please contact:

Mike Prince

E-mail: [mike@bubo.org](mailto:mike@bubo.org)

Sujan Chatterjee

E-mail: [sujan75@vsnl.net](mailto:sujan75@vsnl.net)

Raj Basu (Help Tourism)

E-mail: [helptourism@satyam.net.in](mailto:helptourism@satyam.net.in)

Address: 143 Hill Cart Road

Post Box 67

Siliguri 734 401

India

This report is hosted by:

- **Delhibird** [www.delhibird.org](http://www.delhibird.org)



delhibird  
The Northern India Bird Network

- **Kolkata Birds** [www.kolkatabirds.com](http://www.kolkatabirds.com)  
(including photos from the trip available at <http://www.kolkatabirds.com/hillbirdsofind/tripimagelist.htm>)
- **BUBO** [www.bubo.org](http://www.bubo.org)  
(including more photos at [http://www.bubo.org/photo/031106\\_NorthBengal/](http://www.bubo.org/photo/031106_NorthBengal/))