



*Field Guides Tour Report*

**Bhutan 2018**

Apr 7, 2018 to Apr 26, 2018

Richard Webster & Megan Edwards Crewe with Lebo

*For our tour description, itinerary, past triplists, dates, fees, and more, please [VISIT OUR TOUR PAGE](#).*



*The handsome Ibisbill is one of Bhutan's specialties -- and a highly-sought one, thanks to being in a monotypic family. Photo by participant Myles McNally.*

A visit to Bhutan, "land of the thunder dragon", still feels like a journey to a remote and slightly mystical place. Despite new roads, a growing network of hydroelectric plants and an expanding airport, despite plentiful truck traffic (on some roads) and Wi-Fi being available in a surprising number of places, the fact that only 50,000 tourists a year are permitted to visit -- added to the fact that we go to many places where most tourists do not -- means that the country is refreshingly "unspoiled", with vast tracts of wilderness still cloaking innumerable hills and mountains between scattered towns and villages. The Bhutanese are a warm and friendly people, and our experience was greatly enhanced by the tour's visit to several cultural sites, including dzongs at Punakha and Trongsa.

We did very well with the marquee birds. We found our first Ibisbill (which was hunting industriously along the Par Chhu) only a few miles from the airport, and found another pair further down the same river a couple of days later. A male Satyr Tragopan strutted across the road in front of our bus. A male Ward's Trogon flitted along the edge of the road in Phrumsengla NP, allowing us to admire him from just about every angle. Rufous-necked Hornbills showed on five different days, often in pairs. Male Himalayan Monals gleamed against foggy mountainsides, their colors changing every time they shifted positions. Yellow-rumped Honeyguides were seen twice at cliffs with Giant Rock Bee combs; they were below us both times, so we could clearly see those yellow rumps. At least one White-bellied Heron (and maybe two -- it was hard to know if we were seeing the same bird twice, or both members of a pair) flew ponderously past along the Puna Tsang Chhu. Pairs of Blood Pheasants cavorted along mountain roadsides. Two Beautiful Nuthatches (and a busy mob of Himalayan Cutias) crawled along a succession of mossy branches, poking for tidbits. A pair of Kalij Pheasants stepped quickly across the road in front of us.

Of course, there were plenty of additional species to delight us as well. We saw a host of colorful barbets and minivets and sunbirds and warblers and babblers and bulbuls and laughingthrushes. Big mixed flocks of birds swarmed along the edges of many roads. A female Greater Painted-Snipe tiptoed through a rice paddy in the border town of Gelephu. A Red-naped Ibis foraged in a cow pasture. Two Fire-tailed Myzornis flicked through some flowering bushes in the high pass of Phrumseng La, with a male Fire-tailed Sunbird for company. A pair of Great Parrotbills gathered nesting material. Ten Himalayan Accentors shuffled across a highland pasture with a gang of Plain Mountain-Finches. A trio of Silver-Eared Mesias flitted through waist-high weeds at the edge of a roadside. Long-tailed Sibias swarmed through a dead tree. Asian Fairy-Bluebirds gobbled fruits. A Spotted Elachura bounced across a mossy hillside, occasionally peering out as us. A Blackish-breasted Babbler chortled -- right out in the open!! -- beside a little waterfall. A Greater Flameback hitched its way up a tall trunk. A Himalayan White-browed Rosefinch shared a bush with a handful of Rufous-breasted Accentors. A Green-billed Malkoha sailed along beside the bus as we exited a narrow gorge. Bright gangs of Scarlet Finches fed low in bushes along the road. Streak-breasted Scimitar-Babblers flicked through dead bamboo stems, periodically pausing to sing. And who will soon forget the spectacle of 21 Great Hornbills sailing past overhead and into some nearby fruiting trees while we enjoyed some pre-dinner cocktails at Tingtib camp?!

Our time in Bhutan wouldn't have been possible without the "behind-the-scenes" help of Mandy at FGI headquarters, our ground agents in India and Bhutan, and our hard-working Gangri crew -- including guide Lebo, driver (and spotter!) Sangay, crew chief Kaka, camp cook Boto Namgay and trainee guide Sangay Penjor.

Thanks for joining Richard and me for the adventure -- on Richard's last-ever tour to Bhutan. Your spotting abilities, stories, jokes, sense of fun (even in the rain!), easy camaraderie and more helped to make the trip a success. We hope to see you all again soon on another Field Guides tour!

-- Megan

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#### KEYS FOR THIS LIST

One of the following keys may be shown in brackets for individual species as appropriate: \* = heard only, I = introduced, E = endemic, N = nesting, a = austral migrant, b = boreal migrant

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### BIRDS

#### *Anatidae (Ducks, Geese, and Waterfowl)*

**LESSER WHISTLING-DUCK** (*Dendrocygna javanica*) – Fifty or so lifted off the Gelephu sewage ponds as we walked past, with a flurry of black wings and lots of high-pitched whistles. They circled around a few times to see if we were really going to stay, before giving up and heading out into the rice paddies.

**BAR-HEADED GOOSE** (*Anser indicus*) – One with a big gang of Ruddy Shelducks along the Puna Tsang Chhu was a nice find; most of this migrant species has already departed by the time of our tour. This is one of the very few species that goes OVER, rather than around, the Himalayas on its way north. That means coping with the oxygen deficit present at 26,000 feet! [b]

**RUDDY SHELDUCK** (*Tadorna ferruginea*) – We found 81 along the back edge of a rocky bar in the middle of Puna Tsang Chhu on our way to the Punakha Dzong for our afternoon tour there. This was an exceptionally large group -- big enough to trip the filter on eBird! The smaller group of nine we found the following day was more typical. This handsome species breeds in high altitude lakes and marshes in parts of the Himalayas.

**COMMON SHELDUCK** (*Tadorna tadorna*) – One among the big flock of Ruddy Shelducks on Puna Tsang Chhu was a surprise. This species is a widespread winter visitor in India, but only an occasional migrant through Bhutan. [b]

**GARGANEY** (*Spatula querquedula*) – A group of four -- three drakes and a hen -- with the mixed duck flock seen from our breakfast spot in Bajo, along the Puna Tsang Chhu. This species is an uncommon migrant through Bhutan. [b]

**GADWALL** (*Mareca strepera*) – Two (presumably a pair) slept alongside a Northern Pintail and a Eurasian Wigeon on the shore of a rocky bar in Puna Tsang Chhu, seen as we headed towards Punakha Dzong for our late afternoon tour there. [b]

**EURASIAN WIGEON** (*Mareca penelope*) – A trio (two drakes and a hen) snoozed along the back side of a rocky bar in the Puna Tsang Chhu en route to the Punakha Dzong, and ten paddled along the far side of Puna Tsang Chhu near our breakfast spot in Bajo. [b]

**NORTHERN PINTAIL** (*Anas acuta*) – A drake snoozed and preened along the back side of the same rocky bar where the previous species rested, near Punakha, and we saw what was probably the same bird the next day further down the Puna Tsang Chhu. [b]

**COMMON MERGANSER** (*Mergus merganser*) – Two individual females flew past our breakfast spot at Bajo, then circled back to land on the rocky island in the middle of the river.

#### *Phasianidae (Pheasants, Grouse, and Allies)*

**HILL PARTRIDGE** (*Arborophila torqueola*) – Arg! We were oh-so-close to one on the road up to Phrumseng La (La means "pass" in drongkha (the language of western Bhutan), but it just wouldn't come out where we could see it. The hollow whistles of this species were a regular part of the highland soundtrack. [\*]

**CHESTNUT-BREADED PARTRIDGE** (*Arborophila mandellii*) – This too was fairly common, though in the lower, wetter, broadleaf forests above Yongkola rather than higher up. [\*]

**RUFIOUS-THROATED PARTRIDGE** (*Arborophila rufogularis*) – Heard in various wet broadleaf forests throughout the tour, including some around Darachu (heard while we tracked down our first Large Hawk-Cuckoo) and others just above Yongkola. [\*]

**INDIAN PEAFOWL** (*Pavo cristatus*) – A trio -- a tailless male and two females -- walked through an open area just downslope from the border highway, seen as we headed towards Gelephu. Somehow, it's difficult to take these birds seriously as "wild", given the vast numbers we've all seen in captivity.

**BLOOD PHEASANT** (*Ithaginis cruentus*) – Quite common on Chele La, including several pairs cavorting along the roadside once the sun was properly up. But our best extended views probably came just below Phrumseng La, where we found a nonchalant pair foraging within a few score yards of a house. What stunners!

**HIMALAYAN MONAL** (*Lophophorus impejanus*) – Some great spotting by Lebo netted us scope views of one stepping down the grassy hill below the pass at Chele La. It foraged a bit before disappearing behind some scrubby growth. We had a second male fly above the forest and land at the top of one of the big pines -- wow! We had even closer looks at another couple of males (and brief glimpses of a female scrambling up a hill) on Pele La. What a spectacular range of iridescent colors they show -- and the colors changed every time the birds moved.

**SATYR TRAGOPAN** (*Tragopan satyra*) – A well-speckled female headed off across a grassy camping/picnic spot beside the road as soon as we brought the bus to a stop after Sangay spotted her there. We found another couple of very close females later on the same road (though they soon disappeared over the edge), but our best views came just outside Sengor, when a male ventured onto the roadside and then strutted across to the other side right in front of our bus. WOW! We spotted another male along the roadside the following day.

**KALIJ PHEASANT** (*Lophura leucomelanos*) – A pair interrupted our journey back to the Trogon Villa for a break; the female flew across the road up into the forest, while the bolder male scabbled around on the roadside before eventually joining her. Sangay Penjor, our trainee guide, spotted another pair behind a convenient cow (useful when explaining where they were) on the drive up to Pele La. And some of the gang had poor, brief glimpses of another pair scrambling up a moss-covered boulder alongside the dirt road we walked on our way down from Pele La on our last day in Bhutan.

#### *Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants and Shags)*

**LITTLE CORMORANT** (*Microcarbo niger*) – A trio rested in a dead snag near the Gelephu sewage ponds, and a few more flew past and dropped in to join them as we birded along the dirt road there.

**GREAT CORMORANT** (*Phalacrocorax carbo*) – Three -- an adult in fine breeding plumage and a couple of immature birds -- shared a well-splattered rock in the middle of Puna Tsang Chhu, south of the big hydroelectric projects.

*Anhingidae (Anhingas)*

**ORIENTAL DARTER** (*Anhinga melanogaster*) – One stood spread-eagled along the stony shore of the Manas River, seen as we birded our way towards the boat dock (and the Indian border). This is undoubtedly a significant record for Bhutan, given the fact it wasn't included in the country's field guide!

*Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets, and Bitterns)*

**WHITE-BELLIED HERON** (*Ardea insignis*) – Wahoo! It took considerable effort -- and the help of some folks from the Royal Society for the Protection of Nature in Bhutan -- but we finally spotted one flying past upriver on two different occasions (or possibly two different of a pair) along the Puna Tsang Chhu -- fantastic spotting, Martha! Our first sighting was particularly close, and the fact that there were a couple of bends in the river at that point kept it in view for a nice long time. Martha spotted the heron first both times, which earns her the title of "heron whisperer". Unfortunately, this species is now critically endangered, with fewer than 60 found worldwide in the latest survey.

**INTERMEDIATE EGRET** (*Ardea intermedia*) – One hunted in the rice paddies near the Gelephu sewage ponds, giving us the chance to study it in the scope. As its name suggests, this species is larger than the Little Egret, but smaller than the Great Egret. Among its primary identifying feature is the fact that its gape doesn't extend beyond its eye.

**LITTLE EGRET** (*Egretta garzetta*) – One flew in and landed along the rocky edge of Puna Tsang Chhu, showing nicely its bright yellow feet as it stepped along the shore; we saw what was probably the same individual again the following day, still accompanying the mixed group of ducks. This migrant is an uncommon species in Bhutan, particularly in the highlands. [b]

**CATTLE EGRET** (*Bubulcus ibis*) – A few flapped past as we headed into Gelephu, both upon our arrival, and on our return from the sewage ponds.

**INDIAN POND-HERON** (*Ardeola grayii*) – One stalked the shallows along the edge of Puna Tsang Chhu -- nice spotting Myles! This species is typically found below 350m, so that one was quite a bit higher than they normally are. We had dozens in the rice fields and sewage ponds near Gelephu, where they are more expected.

*Threskiornithidae (Ibises and Spoonbills)*

**RED-NAPED IBIS** (*Pseudibis papillosa*) – One strolled across a grassy pasture near the Gelephu sewage works, its red nape nicely visible through the scopes, and a second flew past as we birded the sewage ponds there towards the end of the day. This species is always a treat in neighboring India, where it's widespread but in low densities. It's virtually unknown in Bhutan, though a few are perhaps regular visitors to the rice paddies around the Gelephu sewage ponds. Also known as Black Ibis.

*Pandionidae (Osprey)*

**OSPREY** (*Pandion haliaetus*) – One perched on a wire high above the Puna Tsang Chhu was undoubtedly a migrant -- and a rather uncommon one at that. The subspecies found here is the nominate *haliaetus*, which shows more of a brown bib than a necklace like our North American birds do.

*Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)*

**ORIENTAL HONEY-BUZZARD** (*Pernis ptilorhynchus*) – One flew past as we birded along the Tama La road, circling once or twice before disappearing beyond the next ridge, and we saw a handful of others soaring along the ridge west of Namling. The narrow head of this species is distinctive -- the better for reaching into narrow crevices in search of bee larvae.

**HIMALAYAN GRIFFON** (*Gyps himalayensis*) – A half dozen of these huge raptors (which have a wingspan of 8.5 - 10 feet) spiraled over the Royal Rhododendron Garden in Phrumsengla NP, briefly interrupting our enjoyment of the Blood Pheasant pair and the male Fire-tailed Sunbird. We saw others on the way up Pele La (including a bird perched on a tree top which was eye level from our higher switchback), and gathering over the Phobjika valley as dusk approached.

**CRESTED SERPENT-EAGLE** (*Spilornis cheela*) – Lovely views of a calling bird soaring over the soccer field near the ranger's station at Royal Manas NP, with quick views of another perched briefly (i.e. until we pulled up) along the road near Gashari.

**MOUNTAIN HAWK-EAGLE** (*Nisaetus nipalensis*) – Two spiraled up out of the valley as we birded along the road east of DoChu La, showing their strongly barred underwings and underparts nicely as they circled against the trees. We saw other more distant birds soaring over hillsides in many highland parts of the tour.

**RUFIOUS-BELLIED EAGLE** (*Lophotriorchis kienerii*) – One made repeated circles over the forest along the Tama La road, some small prey item clenched firmly in one foot, and we saw another couple of birds (an adult and an immature bird) soaring past as we drove along the Mangde Chhu valley after visiting the Trongsa Dzong. This beautiful raptor is widespread across much of Asia.

**BLACK EAGLE** (*Ictinaetus malaiensis*) – Regular in the highlands and seen particularly over the wet forest of Phrumsengla, where we watched them gliding through the treetops (where they hunt) from several of our picnic tables. The broad, rectangular wings of this species -- and the way they hold their long primaries splayed out -- is distinctive.

**HEN HARRIER** (*Circus cyaneus*) – Lebo spotted a male coursing low over the Phobjika valley as we searched for the juvenile Black-necked Crane that had been reported there. Unfortunately, it dropped down into the grass near some cows and disappeared before everybody got on the right part of the huge valley.

**CRESTED GOSHAWK** (*Accipiter trivirgatus*) – One flew in and landed in the lower branches of a tree along the Tama La hillside, giving us the chance to study it in the scope -- where its crest was clearly visible and we could see the distinctive streaking on its throat. We had another in an impressive display flight over the forest west of Tingtibi; it fluttered in a most peculiar way with its white undertail coverts all fluffed out. This species is far smaller than the Northern Goshawk, measuring 12-18 inches in length rather than 20-24.

**SHIKRA** (*Accipiter badius*) – One soared along the power line wires marching up the hill from one of the hydroelectric plants along the Puna Tsang Chhu, its unmarked underparts and pale gray back helping to identify it.

**BESRA** (*Accipiter virgatus*) – Our first was perched in a dead snag near one of our picnic breakfast spots in Phrumsengla NP -- good spotting, Martha! We caught glimpses of it as the fog ebbed and flowed, until the bird flapped off into the gloom (sparking cries of alarm from nearby little birds). We saw another in flight higher up in the park.

**EURASIAN SPARROWHAWK** (*Accipiter nisus*) – Scattered individuals throughout the tour, including one big female that had us dreaming of Northern Goshawk high up in Phrumsengla NP. This is the most common accipiter found on the tour.

**BLACK KITE (BLACK-EARED)** (*Milvus migrans lineatus*) – Lebo spotted two perched in the top of a dead snag along the road down from Chele La, putting their feathers in order before heading out for the next leg of their migration, and we spotted another trio circling over the ridge west of Tingtibi. This subspecies is sometimes split out (with the subspecies *formosanus*) as "Black-eared Kite".

**COMMON BUZZARD (STEPPE)** (*Buteo buteo vulpinus*) – The buzzard we saw sitting on a dead snag in a farm field west of Gelephu was probably this subspecies. [b]

**HIMALAYAN BUZZARD** (*Buteo refectus*) – The most common buteo of the tour, seen in the highlands in several locations. We saw a variety of color morphs, but the very dark bird we spotted at Yutong La (right near the pass gate) is the classic plumage. This species was split from the Common Buzzard fairly recently. Buteos in this region are in a state of nomenclatural, taxonomic, and systematic chaos. Clements now splits Himalayan Buzzard from Common Buzzard using the name "Buteo refectus", but some taxonomists regard 'refectus' as an invalid name, and use 'burmanicus' instead.

Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots)

**WHITE-BREASTED WATERHEN** (*Ammaurornis phoenicurus*) – Two scuttled across the road near Puna Tsang Chhu as we followed our first Rusty-cheeked Scimitar-Babblers along the river bank, and we spotted another two at the Gelephu sewage works the following afternoon. This species is slowly "invading" the valleys of Bhutan as they are converted to rice paddies.

**BLACK-TAILED CRAKE** (*Zapornia bicolor*) – We had fabulous views of one singing challenges at the edge of marshy spot just outside Paro -- so much for that common knowledge that rails are shy and retiring!

Ibidorhynchidae (Ibisbill)

**IBISBILL** (*Ibidorhyncha struthersii*) – We found our first between the airport and our first hotel -- one stalking down the stony edge of the Par Chhu, rummaging around between the smooth, rounded boulders. We found another pair doing the same (and regularly flying back and forth across the water) further down the river the following day. This species is the sole member of its family -- Ibidorhynchidae.

Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)

**RIVER LAPWING** (*Vanellus duvaucelii*) – Quite common along the stony river banks and islets on the first few days of the tour, including a calling bird with a tiny puffball of a chick along the Puna Tsang Chhu at our picnic breakfast spot in Bajo, and a trio of somewhat older chicks just before our last picnic lunch there. This species is considered to be "Near Threatened". [N]

**RED-WATTLED LAPWING** (*Vanellus indicus*) – Almost ridiculously common in the rice paddies outside Gelephu, with dozens of pairs sprinkled across the little dikes separating the fields, and many others flying (noisily) around the whole area. We saw a couple of others on the far side of the Puna Tsang Chhu just before our last picnic lunch in Bhutan.

**LITTLE RINGED PLOVER** (*Charadrius dubius*) – At least three birds pattered around on a rocky islet in the middle of the Puna Tsang Chhu, seen from our breakfast spot in Bajo.

Rostratulidae (Painted-Snipes)

**GREATER PAINTED-SNIPE** (*Rostratula benghalensis*) – Wow! Richard spotted a female flying across the rice paddies near the Gelephu sewage works, and (with only minimal effort) we tracked her down after she landed, and watched through the scopes as she foraged her way across one of the small paddies. Though it is a widespread resident in India and has been recorded in Nepal, this species isn't known from Bhutan, so our sighting probably represents one of the few records (perhaps even the first) for the country.

Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)

**COMMON SANDPIPER** (*Actitis hypoleucos*) – A few scattered along the stony rivers early in the tour, with another couple along the Puna Tsang Chhu near our last picnic lunch spot. This species is closely related to (and looks a lot like the winter version of) North America's Spotted Sandpiper. [b]

**GREEN SANDPIPER** (*Tringa ochropus*) – One preened among the river stones beside a puddle near the Par Chhu, seen as we birded from the riverside dike. Though (like the previous species) it regularly bobs its tail, this species lacks the white "spur" that extends up in front of the wing of the Common Sandpiper. [b]

**COMMON GREENSHANK** (*Tringa nebularia*) – One of these winter visitors flew in and landed in one of the rice paddies near the Gelephu sewage works. As you'd expect, this overwinters only in the southernmost stretches of the country. [b]

**COMMON REDSHANK** (*Tringa totanus*) – A couple of birds foraging along the edge of Puna Tsang Chhu were the last new birds of the trip. Their red legs were clearly visible, even from the other side of the river, and the white wedge on the trailing edge of their wings when they flew clinched the ID. These were the first Richard had ever seen in Bhutan! [b]

Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers)

**BROWN-HEADED GULL** (*Chroicocephalus brunnicephalus*) – What looked to be a first-year bird flapped high overhead as we worked our way up to the Phrumsengla pass. This is a reasonably common passage migrant in Bhutan. [b]

Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)

**ROCK PIGEON** (*Columba livia*) – Common around cities and towns, with a scattered few around solitary farms as well. And, of course, there was the one that used Martha for target practice while we waited on a truss bridge for Lebo to sort out our permits for the DoChu La pass visit.

**SNOW PIGEON** (*Columba leuconota*) – A flock of 15 or so flew past at Chele La -- first rather distantly along some high tension wires, and later landing in a flurry of (very attractive) wings just up the hill from where we stood.

**SPECKLED WOOD-PIGEON** (*Columba hodgsonii*) – Four of these big pigeons at eye-level in the early morning sunshine near a building just past Yutong La were an unexpected treat. They shifted around a bit from perch to perch, so we got to see them from just about every conceivable angle -- and one even did a display flight.

**ORIENTAL TURTLE-DOVE** (*Streptopelia orientalis*) – Nearly ubiquitous, missing only on the days we were in the lowlands along Bhutan's border with India. We saw a few of these in their gliding display flights as well.

**RED COLLARED-DOVE** (*Streptopelia tranquebarica*) – A pair of these small doves (which are only two-thirds of the size of the better-known Eurasian Collared-Dove) sat at the top of a leafless little tree in the rice paddies near the Gelephu sewage ponds. Males and females are quite strikingly different in plumage.

**SPOTTED DOVE** (*Streptopelia chinensis*) – Reasonably common, particularly in the middle part of the tour, when we were at our lowest elevations. This tends to be a dove of disturbed habitats.

**BARRED CUCKOO-DOVE** (*Macropygia unchall*) – We spotted our first few in the morning mist at Darachu -- including one that we initially thought was a Mountain Imperial-Pigeon, which shows just how foggy it was! Fortunately, the fog soon lifted and we were treated to scope views of several different birds. We saw others, principally in flight, at Tingtibi and Phrumsengla NP.

**ASIAN EMERALD DOVE** (*Chalcophaps indica*) – This forest dove can be a challenge to see well, so we were pleased to find one waddling along right in the middle of the road at Royal Manas NP. We saw a few others in flight in the lowlands.

**PIN-TAILED PIGEON** (*Treron apicauda*) – A pair sunning themselves in some bamboo in the Mangde Chhu gorge showed especially well. We saw others in flight over Royal Manas NP and in the hills west of Nganglam.

**WEDGE-TAILED PIGEON** (*Treron sphenurus*) – The high-pitched musical whistling of this forest species was heard on several days (principally in Phrumsengla NP, but also on the ridge west of Nganglam), but the birds themselves were never seen. [\*]

**MOUNTAIN IMPERIAL-PIGEON** (*Ducula badia*) – Regular in the middle portion of the tour, first in flight and then in a whole series of increasingly satisfying views. We watched one bird on Tama La carry a series of twigs past on its way (presumably) to a growing nest. [N]

#### Cuculidae (Cuckoos)

**GREEN-BILLED MALKOHA** (*Phaenicophaeus tristis*) – One sailed along between us and the river as we jounced along the new road north of Nganglam, showing nicely its very long, white-tipped tail. It landed in a small, leaning pine, and clambered its way up through the branches to the top before launching itself off across the road and up the hill. This species is globally threatened.

**CHESTNUT-WINGED CUCKOO** (*Clamator coromandus*) – One of these summer visitors made several passes high over our heads along the road through the Mangde Chhu gorge, its distinctive chestnut wings flashing in the early morning sunshine. Unfortunately, it landed out of view in one of the area's bigger trees, still shouting challenges.

**ASIAN KOEL** (*Eudynamis scolopaceus*) – We heard one calling as we exited the Punakha Dzong, and another calling near the Gelephu sewage works. [\*]

**ASIAN EMERALD CUCKOO** (*Chrysococcyx maculatus*) – One perched high in a tree along the ridge west of Nganglam, delighting Jenny, for whom it was a key target bird.

**BANDED BAY CUCKOO** (*Cacomantis sonneratii*) – One heard calling along the entrance road at Royal Manas NP on our morning's visit there. [\*]

**SQUARE-TAILED DRONGO-CUCKOO** (*Surniculus lugubris*) – As with most of the cuckoos, we heard more of these than we saw. One right over our campsite at Tingtibi was most cooperative though, singing its heart out from the branches of a leafless tree. The loud, rising, "stair step" song of this species made it relatively easy to remember.

**LARGE HAWK-CUCKOO** (*Hierococcyx sparverioides*) – Our first was a very high-flying bird that left the neighborhood after first singing a few rounds of its loud song at the Royal Botanical Garden. Fortunately, we found another singing right over the road on our way to our camp at Darachu; though it was a rather gloomy late afternoon, we got great looks through the scopes. The song of this one was a regular part of the tour soundtrack.

**HODGSON'S HAWK-CUCKOO** (*Hierococcyx nasicolor*) – We heard one at Darachu, then had quick views of another (showing the hawk-like flight profile that gives the species its name) when it flew in and landed along the road in Mangde Chhu gorge. And a few in the group happened to be looking in the right direction when one (which Richard had seen when we first arrived at that particular spot) flashed across the road and disappeared into Phrumsengla's verdant forest.

**LESSER CUCKOO** (*Cuculus poliocephalus*) – One was calling -- loudly -- right near the start of the dirt track we walked on the west side of Pele La as we climbed off the bus. We got a few brief looks at barred belly and head between the leaves before it zipped off for another flight display; it was certainly actively defending its territory!

**INDIAN CUCKOO** (*Cuculus micropterus*) – We heard the loud "Madagascar!" song of this summer resident during our picnic breakfast at the Gashari turnoff one morning, and Sangay and Lebo tracked it down and got it in the scopes for us while we ate. We heard others elsewhere near Nganglam.

**HIMALAYAN CUCKOO** (*Cuculus saturatus*) – As usual, we heard FAR more of these than we saw, but we did catch up with one cooperative bird along the road west of Nganglam; it perched right over the road, allowing scope views -- though at first, those views were only of its butt! We had another perched bird near our lunch spot on Pele La that let us see a more classic "full frontal" view.

**COMMON CUCKOO** (*Cuculus canorus*) – We heard the classic "cuckoo clock" song of this species on several days towards the end of the tour; like many of the other cuckoos, they seemed to be late arriving this year. [\*]

#### Strigidae (Owls)

**MOUNTAIN SCOPS-OWL** (*Otus spilocephalus*) – Terry and Megan heard one of these calling up the hill from the Nganglam hospital parking lot on the evening of the great "ring removal" incident. [\*]

**COLLARED OWLET** (*Glaucidium brodiei*) – Heard on more than half of the days of the tour -- sometimes multiple times a day -- but sadly never close, and never seen. [\*]

**ASIAN BARRED OWLET** (*Glaucidium cuculoides*) – A very responsive bird near the crest of DoChu La, flapped over our heads and landed on a big diagonal branch just beyond the new buildings, giving us a great chance to study it in the scopes; its whole body quivered as it called. We had fine looks at another in Royal Manas NP, and heard others elsewhere.

**HIMALAYAN OWL** (*Strix nivicolum*) – A couple of Striated Laughingthrushes started making a bit of a ruckus as we birded along the road north of Namling, and Richard spotted what he thought was a raptor move through the trees. However, when it moved again, he realized it was an owl, and with a bit of maneuvering, we managed to get it in both scopes. It was certainly wide-eyed -- and wide brown eyes at that! This species was split from the former Tawny Owl complex; the subspecies in Bhutan is the nominate "nivicolum".

#### Caprimulgidae (Nightjars and Allies)

**GRAY NIGHTJAR** (*Caprimulgus jotaka*) – Sangay spotted a bird hunting from the road as we drove towards Po Chhu in the pre-dawn darkness one morning. It sat for about a minute on the edge of the pavement, giving us the chance to see it well in the beam of the headlights.

#### Apodidae (Swifts)

**WHITE-THROATED NEEDLETAIL** (*Hirundapus caudacutus*) – A swirling flock of these summer visitors zipped back and forth over the forest west of Nganglam, flashing their distinctive white vents and throats. These are among the fastest flyers in the world, capable of speeds in excess of 100 mph in level flight!

**HIMALAYAN SWIFTLET** (*Aerodramus brevirostris*) – Common the first week or so of the tour, with the big flock hunting low over the field near our picnic breakfast site at Bajo (along the Puna Tsang Chhu) drawing particular attention.

**BLYTH'S SWIFT** (*Apus leuconyx*) – Regular throughout much of the tour, from Darachu (where we saw our first little group streaming over the forest ridge) to our last morning on Pele La. They were particularly numerous around some sheer cliffs along the road to Phrumseng La, where they were apparently preparing to breed -- there appeared to be some serious courtship flights going on! This species is called Fork-tailed Swift in most regional field guides.

**HOUSE SWIFT** (*Apus nipalensis*) – A scattering around the Gelephu sewage works, with others over our breakfast spot on Tama La. The white rump patch on this medium-large species helps with its quick identification.

**ASIAN PALM-SWIFT** (*Cypsiurus balasensis*) – Scattered birds in the middle part of the tour, including a few zooming around the checkpoint at Sarpang, more at Royal Manas NP and still others over the ridges west of Nganglam. The small size and long pointed tail of this species helps distinguish it from Bhutan's other regularly occurring species.

#### Trogonidae (Trogons)

**RED-HEADED TROGON** (*Harpactes erythrocephalus*) – We heard several calling along the road near the Gashari turnoff, but our only views were frustrating glimpses of a furtive pair below us in a heavily vegetated gully. We had better views of a female perched (facing away from us) on a roadside branch in Phrumsengla NP the next day -- nice spotting, Terry!

**WARD'S TROGON** (*Harpactes wardi*) – About three minutes after we arrived at our very first stop on our first morning at Phrumsengla NP, we heard one calling far uphill. Our patience was rewarded when a male eventually made an appearance, flashing in to land in a tree right near the road. Wow! He hung around for a long time, shifting his perch every now and then, until another bus load of birders arrived to chase him off up the hill.

#### Upupidae (Hoopoes)

**EURASIAN HOOPOE** (*Upupa epops*) – One perched on a roadside wire distracted many of us as we headed down to where our first Ibisbill was rummaging along the stream-side. We watched another singing along the Puna Tsang Chhu before breakfast the next morning (his whole body shaking as he pumped out his three-note song), and spotted an impressive six around our hotel in the Bumthang valley.

#### Bucerotidae (Hornbills)

**GREAT HORNBILL** (*Buceros bicornis*) – Our first was a big male perched atop a tall pine in the village of Serutar, seen while we searched for White-bellied Heron. But the best encounter was undoubtedly at Tingtibi camp, where 21 of these enormous birds swooped past overhead as we enjoyed our pre-dinner cocktails. They settled in for a bit of fruit munching before tucking themselves in for the night -- and we got to watch many of them fly out again the next morning. We saw others flying over the river at Royal Manas NP.

**ORIENTAL PIED-HORNBILL** (*Anthracoceros albirostris*) – Sangay spotted our first -- right near the road outside Sarpang -- which led to the spotting of a variety of other things, including our first Indian Roller and Golden Langurs. We found another resting quietly in a tree along the river at Royal Manas NP while we waited for the boat to take us across.

**RUFOUS-NECKED HORNBILL** (*Aceros nipalensis*) – Probably the most widespread of the tour's hornbills, with pairs seen well -- and heard -- on many days. The birds right near the road in Phrumsengla NP were particularly obliging, allowing us to get good looks at their distinctive beaks.

**WREATHED HORNBILL** (*Rhyticeros undulatus*) – One bounced through a fruiting tree in a plantation along the border highway, delicately plucking fruits with that giant beak, and we spotted another pair along the road at Royal Manas NP. The all-white tail of this species is unique among the hornbills possible on this trip.

#### Alcedinidae (Kingfishers)

**COMMON KINGFISHER** (*Alcedo atthis*) – One of these small kingfishers perched on a snag wedged in a rocky islet along the Po Chhu. [b]

**WHITE-THROATED KINGFISHER** (*Halcyon smyrnensis*) – Quite common along the Puna Tsang Chhu, and in the lowlands and foothills along the Indian border, including some hunting from boulders in the rivers.

**CRESTED KINGFISHER** (*Megaceryle lugubris*) – Surprisingly common (according to Richard) this year, with a couple near the huge dzong at Punakha, others along the Po Chhu, two perched hopefully over a dry riverbed near the Sarpang checkpoint, another pair near the checkpoint outside Gelephu, and one along the road on our drive back to Paro. This is by far the largest of Bhutan's kingfishers, with a huge bill, a distinctively shaggy crest and a very checkered-looking plumage.

#### Meropidae (Bee-eaters)

**BLUE-BEARDED BEE-EATER** (*Nyctyornis athertoni*) – A distinctly large-headed bee-eater seen singly on four days -- including one hawking insects from a variety of trees along the road through the Mangde Chhu gorge (carrying them all off uphill, presumably to a nest), another hunting northwest of Nganglam, and one that rocketed out of a nest hole in Phrumsengla NP after we'd been standing along the nearby road for several minutes.

**CHESTNUT-HEADED BEE-EATER** (*Merops leschenaulti*) – Small groups on scattered days, including some hawking insects all around our bus as we waited to get through a checkpoint near Sarpang, and others soaring over Royal Manas NP and Drangme Chhu.

#### Coraciidae (Rollers)

**INDIAN ROLLER** (*Coracias benghalensis*) – Our distant look at birds near Sarpang and the Gelephu sewage ponds were improved by very close scope studies of several pairs at Royal Manas NP -- including one bird sitting on one end of a badminton net and another riding the tip of the trunk of the playground elephant.

**DOLLARBIRD** (*Eurystomus orientalis*) – Super views of several pairs in the more open areas of Royal Manas NP, including two birds hunting near the soccer field. In flight, they show the white "silver dollar" wing spots that give them their name.

#### Megalaimidae (Asian Barbets)

**GREAT BARBET** (*Psilopogon virens*) – Common in moist, broadleaf forests throughout the tour, though missing from the highest elevations; its continuous, rather monotonous calls were a regular part of the tour soundtrack. We saw some at Darachu, and another in Royal Manas NP, but our best views probably came just downhill from Pele La, when we found a handful of calling birds in a treetop right beside the road.

**LINEATED BARBET** (*Psilopogon lineatus*) – Our first bounced through the same tree as our first Wreathed Hornbill, along the road between Sarpang and Gelephu. But our best looks came at Royal Manas NP, where we found one determined bird doing its best to keep a pair of Greater Yellownapes from using another hole just above the one it had chosen to use. [N]

**GOLDEN-THROATED BARBET** (*Psilopogon franklinii*) – Quite common in middle and higher-elevation broadleaf forests in the middle part of the tour, with particularly good looks at one excavating a nest hole in a skinny trunk along the road over Tama La. Their song was certainly well-represented on the tour soundtrack! [N]

**BLUE-THROATED BARBET** (*Psilopogon asiaticus*) – A common species in lowland broadleaf forests, where it replaces the previous higher-elevation species. We had some lovely looks at them in Royal Manas NP and along the Mangde Chhu gorge, and heard many others elsewhere in the foothills along the border with India.

#### Indicatoridae (Honeyguides)

**YELLOW-RUMPED HONEYGUIDE** (*Indicator xanthonotus*) – At least four swirled around the colony of Giant Rock Bees on a cliff down the hill from the visitor's center at the Royal Botanical Garden, their distinctive yellow rumps (and faces) flashing as they flew. We got nice views as they checked out the fallen honeycombs and perched on nearby twigs. This species is considered "Near Threatened", though there is no estimate of their population.

*Picidae (Woodpeckers)*

**WHITE-BROWED PICULET** (*Sasia ochracea*) – Fabulous views of one of these tiny woodpeckers as it swiveled on its bamboo stick perch during a pre-breakfast birding outing near Nganglam, with another in a little patch of bamboo hanging over the road in Phrumsengla NP. This one measures a mere 3.5 to 4 inches.

**GRAY-CAPPED WOODPECKER** (*Dendrocopos canicapillus*) – One of these small woodpeckers (which used to be called Gray-capped PYGMY-Woodpecker) hitched along the branches of a leafless little roadside tree along the road through the Mangde Chhu gorge, just before the Striated Prinia made its appearance.

**FULVOUS-BREASTED WOODPECKER** (*Dendrocopos macei*) – We found our first in the Mangde Chhu gorge (shortly after spotting our first Blue-throated Barbet), and saw others on the ridges west and northwest of Nganglam.

**RUFIOUS-BELLIED WOODPECKER** (*Dendrocopos hypertyrhus*) – This was the first woodpecker of the tour -- a handsome bird that came in to one of the big trees just down the hill from the parking lot at DoChu La, just about the time the fellow lit the incense burner. We saw a couple of others briefly near the pond at the Royal Botanical Garden. Despite its (rather poor) name, the entire front of the woodpecker -- from chin to undertail -- is rufous.

**CRIMSON-BREASTED WOODPECKER** (*Dendrocopos cathpharius*) – The last of the woodpeckers found on this trip, not recorded until we reached Phrumsengla NP -- where we had very nice roadside views of several. A few of the group saw one near our campsite in Sengor, and we saw another on the west side of Pele La.

**DARJEELING WOODPECKER** (*Dendrocopos darjellensis*) – A trio chased each other around in the same tree as the previous species (and only a few minutes later), then flashed off across the road in the direction of the 108 chortens. This is the biggest of the black and white woodpeckers possible on this tour.

**LESSER YELLOWNAPE** (*Picus chlorolophus*) – Seen on a handful of days in the middle of the tour, though less common than the next species. We found the two yellownapes together in Phrumsengla NP, which was convenient for comparison purposes -- though initially rather confusing. "There's a Greater Yellownappe!" "No, I'm sure it's a Lesser." "No, it's a Greater -- look at its yellow chin." "But how about its barred belly?" Ah, the old two bird conundrum!

**GREATER YELLOWNAPE** (*Picus flavinucha*) – Regular, particularly in the middle part of the tour. The pair jousting with a determined Lined Barbet at Royal Manas NP gave us especially nice looks.

**GRAY-HEADED WOODPECKER** (*Picus canus*) – Sangay spotted one hammering on a trunk at our Tingtibi campsite shortly after we arrived, and managed to get it in a scope. Most of those who were upright during the break before dinner managed to scurry out for a look before it departed.

**PALE-HEADED WOODPECKER** (*Gecinulus grantia*) – A sneakily quiet individual stole in for a quick look at us when Richard tried some playback for this species. Of course, we'd already moved on to something else that had flown past by the time it arrived, so some in the group struggled to find the right tree before it flashed off again. This is a bamboo specialist.

**RUFIOUS WOODPECKER** (*Micropternus brachyurus*) – One near the exit of our Tingtibi campsite road got us all out of the bus again only moments after we'd climbed in. This species is a bit smaller than the Bay Woodpecker, and has a rather small dark bill, rather than a large pale one.

**GREATER FLAMEBACK** (*Chrysocolaptes guttaeristatus*) – Wow -- this is one big, colorful woodpecker! We spotted a single bird in the broadleaf forest of Royal Manas NP, its golden back glowing against the darker leaves. The nominate subspecies is the one found in Bhutan.

**BAY WOODPECKER** (*Blythipicus pyrrhotis*) – A pair along the road on Tama La showed well as they rummaged, and we saw others in Phrumsengla NP. This species is larger than the tour's other "brown woodpecker", the paler, dark-billed Rufous Woodpecker.

*Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras)*

**EURASIAN KESTREL** (*Falco tinnunculus*) – Scattered individuals, mostly at higher elevations -- including a couple hunting over the Punakha Dzong (apparently nesting in the mouth of one of the golden dragon's adorning the dzong's roof), one peering down from a wire along the Po Chhu, one along the road at Darachu, and several in the Bumthang valleys.

**EURASIAN HOBBY** (*Falco subbuteo*) – A pair alternately perched in a huge tree in the courtyard of Drukgyel Dzong and rocketed out over the surrounding fields on our first afternoon, returning again and again to the same few branches. We saw others hunting near the Gashari turnoff, including one sweeping through that massive river of migrating dragonflies.

*Psittaculidae (Old World Parrots)*

**ROSE-RINGED PARAKEET** (*Psittacula krameri*) – A few distant groups flew past (screeching) at the Gelephu sewage works, and we managed to find a few birds perched up at the top of a big tree way out across the rice fields.

**RED-BREASTED PARAKEET** (*Psittacula alexandri*) – Several little groups perched close overhead around the ranger station at Royal Manas NP, giving us some fine scope views.

*Eurylaimidae (Asian and Grauer's Broadbills)*

**LONG-TAILED BROADBILL** (*Psarisomus dalhousiae*) – After hearing them for several days in the middle elevation forests, we finally connected with an active little group along the ridge near the Gashari turnoff, watching as they hunted and interacted with much calling and flicking of their long tails. We saw others along the road northwest of Nganglam, and in Phrumsengla NP.

*Vangidae (Vangas, Helmetshrikes, and Allies)*

**LARGE WOODSHRIKE** (*Tephrodornis virgatus*) – A noisy pair near the soccer field at the Royal Manas NP's ranger station were seen nicely in the scopes. They spent a lot of time flying back and forth between tall trees all around the field (pretty much the entire time we watched the Asian Water Buffalo herd).

**BAR-WINGED FLYCATCHER-SHRIKE** (*Hemipus picatus*) – Singles in the Mangde Chhu gorge and along the road near the Gashari turnoff.

*Artamidae (Woodswallows)*

**ASHY WOODSWALLOW** (*Artamus fuscus*) – One hunted from an electricity pylon near the Bird View Resort in Panbang, and we saw others coursing over the forest on the ridge west of Nganglam -- again hunting from electricity wires.

*Campephagidae (Cuckooshrikes)*

**GRAY-CHINNED MINIVET** (*Pericrocotus solaris*) – Common and widespread in middle elevation broadleaf forests throughout much of the tour, often in mixed flocks with the next species for nice comparisons. The pale faces of the males are distinctive.

**SHORT-BILLED MINIVET** (*Pericrocotus brevirostris*) – The most common of the tour's "black-faced" minivets, seen in many of the same places (and often in the same flocks) as the previous species. Telling this species from the next two is a challenge; wing markings and voice are the most reliable traits.

**LONG-TAILED MINIVET** (*Pericrocotus ethologus*) – The last found -- and least common -- of this tour's minivets, seen only in Phrumsengla NP and on the highest heights of Pele La; normally, they're fairly common. Their tails were certainly noticeably longer than those of the other species!

**SCARLET MINIVET** (*Pericrocotus speciosus*) – The largest of the tour's minivets, and the one found at the lowest elevations (though it also extends well up into the middle elevations). Unlike some of the others, we never found them consorting with other minivet species.

**BLACK-WINGED CUCKOOSHRIKE** (*Lalage melaschistos*) – A singing bird at the top of a tree (which was fortunately at eye level from our "perch" along the road) gave a virtuoso performance (which sounded remarkably like the opening bars of "Three Blind Mice") while we ogled through the scopes. This was a common species throughout much of the tour.

#### Laniidae (Shrikes)

**BROWN SHRIKE** (*Lanius cristatus*) – One perched up on a bush near the Gelephu sewage ponds was a bit of a surprise; most of these winter visitors have already departed for points further north by the time of our tour.

**LONG-TAILED SHRIKE** (*Lanius schach*) – Generally found at lower elevations than the next species, and often in more disturbed habitats. We found several -- all the distinctively dark "tricolor" subspecies -- along the road near Yongkola, with another at Tama La.

**GRAY-BACKED SHRIKE** (*Lanius tephronotus*) – Very common and widespread at higher elevations, and seen well on many days -- often perched on wires or fence posts along the road.

#### Vireonidae (Vireos, Shrike-Babblers, and Erpornis)

**BLACK-HEADED SHRIKE-BABBLER** (*Pteruthius rufiventer*) – We had a fabulous encounter with this eastern Himalayan specialty along the road in Phrumsengla NP; it sang from a couple of short trees, sitting right in the open on several different perches and giving us the chance to examine it from virtually every angle. Wow! This is a species we don't get every year.

**BLYTH'S SHRIKE-BABBLER (CHESTNUT-WINGED)** (*Pteruthius aeralatus validirostris*) – Our first were a showy pair at Darachu, and we saw others on Tama La, on the ridge west of Nganglam and in Phrumsengla NP (including a pair with the Himalayan Cutia and Beautiful Nuthatch flock). Now known to be related to the vireos (it's amazing what DNA research is revealing) this is one of the four species that resulted from the split of the former White-browed Shrike-Babbler.

**BLACK-EARED SHRIKE-BABBLER** (*Pteruthius melanotis*) – Arg! Though we spotted this handsome little species on two occasions -- once on Tama La and the other in Phrumsengla NP -- they weren't particularly cooperative either time, and were only seen by a handful of folks.

**WHITE-BELLIED ERPORNIS** (*Erpornis zantholeuca*) – A few folks spotted one briefly at Darachu in that big mixed flock along the road, but most of the group didn't catch up with one until the following morning on Tama La. We saw others in the Mangde Chhu gorge, at Royal Manas NP and in Phrumsengla NP. This species is widespread across much of Asia, but isn't particularly common in Bhutan.

#### Oriolidae (Old World Orioles)

**SLENDER-BILLED ORIOLE** (*Oriolus tenuirostris*) – We heard several orioles singing in the forest around the ranger station at Royal Manas NP, but the only one we actually laid eyes on was this species rather than the more-expected Black-hooded Oriole. The combination of the black "U bend" around the back of the head and the long, slender bill are distinctive.

**MAROON ORIOLE** (*Oriolus traillii*) – We heard the rich, mellow song of this widespread species on many days of the tour, and had plenty of fine views of the singers. In flight, the rusty-maroon tail of the male is pretty eye-catching!

#### Dicruridae (Drongos)

**BLACK DRONGO** (*Dicrurus macrocerus*) – Abundant around Gelephu, with others at Tama La. This species tends to be found in more open areas than the next, often hunting around houses and towns.

**ASHY DRONGO** (*Dicrurus leucophaeus*) – Easily the most common and widespread of the tour's drongos, seen on many days -- usually hunting from a roadside wire or an open tree branch. This species gets higher in altitude than do the other drongos seen on the tour.

**BRONZED DRONGO** (*Dicrurus aeneus*) – The smallest of this tour's drongos, seen regularly in the broadleaved forests from Tama La to Phrumsengla NP. The glossy, iridescent plumage sometimes looked amazingly blue.

**LESSER RACKET-TAILED DRONGO** (*Dicrurus remifer*) – This was the racket-tailed species with the longer bare shafts on its tail feathers (relative to the length of its body). We saw it on about half the days of the tour, mostly in middle elevation broadleaf forests. Those long tails made for some dramatic flybys!

**HAIR-CRESTED DRONGO** (*Dicrurus hottentottus*) – Our first, in the Mangde Chhu gorge, got away before everyone saw it. Fortunately, we found others on several days around Nganglam, including one at a nest. In some regional field guides, this species is called Spangled Drongo. [N]

**GREATER RACKET-TAILED DRONGO** (*Dicrurus paradiseus*) – A lower elevation species, with our best views coming in Royal Manas NP; we saw others at Sarpang and in the bamboo forest northwest of Nganglam. This species has shorter tail shafts than its smaller cousin does, and its rackets are larger and curled. It also has a decidedly floppy topknot!

#### Rhipiduridae (Fantails)

**WHITE-THROATED FANTAIL** (*Rhipidura albicollis*) – In small numbers, but regular in the understory of broadleaf forests throughout much of the tour. Our first flitted along a fence rail near the Darachu campsite, seen by some as we enjoyed our first looks at Gray-winged Blackbird, and their eye-catching "fan dance" caught our attention regularly.

#### Monarchidae (Monarch Flycatchers)

**BLACK-NAPED MONARCH** (*Hypothymis azurea*) – Some of the group spotted one (or both) of a pair swirling around a little gully near the turnoff to Gashari, west of Nganglam, not far from where we saw our first Himalayan Cuckoo. We had another briefly at Royal Manas NP. In poor light, this species can look gray, rather than blue.

#### Corvidae (Crows, Jays, and Magpies)

**EURASIAN JAY** (*Garrulus glandarius*) – One appeared out of the fog to sit in a big dead tree just above us at the Royal Botanical Garden, and those on the right side of the bus spotted another along the road the following morning.



**YELLOW-BILLED BLUE-MAGPIE** (*Urocissa flavirostris*) – Regular at higher elevations, with particularly nice looks at a few bouncing around on the ground right in front of the bus where we stopped to look at our first Spotted Laughingthrushes and a busy mob in the trees around the pond at the Royal Botanical Garden. They sure make some funny noises!

**COMMON GREEN-MAGPIE** (*Cissa chinensis*) – One foraging low along the road near the Gashari turnoff gave us a good chance to study it in the scopes. We saw others outside Nganglam and with a big mixed flock in Phrumsengla NP. What a gorgeous bird!

**RUFIOUS TREEPIE** (*Dendrocitta vagabunda*) – A few worked their way through trees around the Gelephu sewage works. This is an Indian plains species, so is only found in a very narrow strip at the very southern edge of Bhutan.

**GRAY TREEPIE** (*Dendrocitta formosae*) – This one, on the other hand was common in broadleaved forests from Burichu (where we saw our first ones while waiting for the White-bellied Herons to make an appearance) to Phrumsengla NP.

**EURASIAN MAGPIE (BLACK-RUMPED)** (*Pica pica bottanensis*) – Seen only around the Bumthang valleys, where they were quite common.

**EURASIAN NUTCRACKER (SOUTHERN)** (*Nucifraga caryocatactes macella*) – Abundant at the highest elevations, where we regularly found them perched atop tall evergreen trees. Their calls were a common part of the highland soundtrack.

**RED-BILLED CHOUGH** (*Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*) – Another highland species, including a noisy flock of 200 or more outside Sengor at our birding stop just out of town.

**HOUSE CROW** (*Corvus splendens*) – Some of the group spotted this typically urban species around Thimphu, but most didn't catch up to it until we reached the border town of Gelephu, where they were abundant -- particularly around the garbage pails!

**LARGE-BILLED CROW (LARGE-BILLED)** (*Corvus macrorhynchos tibetosinensis*) – Very common and widespread throughout -- including the single bird (generally) that always magically appeared as we sat down to a picnic breakfast or lunch; by the end of the tour, we were joking that the crew brought it along from place to place!

**LARGE-BILLED CROW (EASTERN)** (*Corvus macrorhynchos leuallantii*) – This is the subspecies of Large-billed Crow found in Bhutan's lowlands -- like around the town of Gelephu and its sewage ponds.

#### Hirundinidae (Swallows)

**BANK SWALLOW** (*Riparia riparia*) – Good numbers coursed low over the Puna Tsang Chhu, mingling with the Himalayan Swiftlets and Asian House Martins near our picnic breakfast spot along the river in Bajo. This one is called Sand Martin in most Old World field guides.

**BARN SWALLOW** (*Hirundo rustica*) – Small numbers swirled over the more open forest near the Gashari turnoff west of Nganglam. The subspecies generally found in the area, "rustica", is creamy-white underneath.

**RED-RUMPED SWALLOW** (*Cecropis daurica*) – Some swirled over the Punakha Dzong during our visit, and this was the common swallow over the southern stretches of the tour route -- including over the sewage ponds at Gelephu, where we probably got our best looks at their red rumps.

**ASIAN HOUSE-MARTIN** (*Delichon dasypus*) – Dozens spiraled over a field near our picnic breakfast spot along the river at Bajo, mingling with the scores of Himalayan Swiftlets.

**NEPAL HOUSE-MARTIN** (*Delichon nipalense*) – A few coursed back and forth over the forest at Phrumsengla NP, their white bellies flashing. Against the dark forest, we could clearly see their dark throats and vents, which help to separate them from the previous species. We saw others at the falls at the upper end of the park, with still more along the road near Trongsa.

#### Stenostiridae (Fairy Flycatchers)

**YELLOW-BELLIED FAIRY-FANTAIL** (*Chelidorhynch hypoxantha*) – Seen in small numbers, mostly at middle and higher elevations.; it's an altitudinal migrant, moving downslope for the winter and upslope again in the spring to breed. Formerly thought to be related to the other fantails -- which it resembles in behavior -- it has been moved to the small "fairy flycatcher" family following genetic studies.

**GRAY-HEADED CANARY-FLYCATCHER** (*Culicicapa ceylonensis*) – A few each day in Phrumsengla NP, with others at Tama La and Darachu.

#### Paridae (Tits, Chickadees, and Titmice)

**FIRE-CAPPED TIT** (*Cephalopyrus flammiceps*) – Two flicked through trees along the dirt track that we visited on our way down from Pele La. Like many tits, they proved to be rather frenetic, rarely sitting in one place for long as they bounced around looking for food. Our best looks came when they found some alder cones to investigate; then we got some nice scope views.

**YELLOW-BROWED TIT** (*Sylviparus modestus*) – We found a few of these very plain little tits with a mixed flock at DoChu La, and another pair at the Royal Botanical Garden just beyond the pass itself. Another bird spotted just above Namling in Phrumsengla NP proved to be a stumper of a quiz bird!

**SULTAN TIT** (*Melanochlora sultanea*) – Wow -- the size and bright colors of this big tit are striking! We found our first along the Tama La road (good spotting, Martha!) with others in Royal Manas NP and in the forest northwest of Nganglam.

**COAL TIT (HIMALAYAN)** (*Periparus ater aemodius*) – Seen nicely on several days in the highlands, including a few with mixed flocks on Chele La and others near our camp at Sengor, at Yutong La and on Pele La. This is very widespread Eurasian species, with many subspecies across a range that stretches from Ireland to Taiwan. [N]

**RUFIOUS-VENTED TIT** (*Periparus rubiventris*) – Another highland species, with especially nice studies of a confiding pair along the road on Chele La. The rufous vent on this one can be tough to see (though it showed well on our Chele La birds) which can make it difficult to separate from the similar Coal Tit; fortunately, the latter has a little row of white spots on the wing coverts that the Rufous-vented Tit lacks.

**GRAY-CRESTED TIT** (*Lophophanes dichrous*) – Another highland species, seen in small numbers on Chele La, Yutong La and in the highest reaches of Phrumsengla NP. This is typically the least common of the highland tits.

**GREEN-BACKED TIT** (*Parus monticolus*) – Ubiquitous; seen well on many days all throughout the tour (typically in busy pairs).

**YELLOW-CHEEKED TIT** (*Machlolophus spilonotus*) – A few scattered groups, with especially nice looks at a showy pair over our picnic breakfast spot above Namling in Phrumsengla NP.

#### Aegithalidae (Long-tailed Tits)

**BLACK-THROATED TIT** (*Aegithalos concinnus*) – Regular (though in small numbers) in middle elevation forests from Sarpang to Nganglam, often in little groups or mixed flocks. This species (like the next) is related to North America's Bushtit.

**BLACK-BROWED TIT** (*Aegithalos iouschistos*) – Only a lucky few got on our first, in a mixed flock in a pine forest on Chele La; the rest of the group had to wait until almost the end of the tour to catch up! Fortunately, we found some at Sengor, then had even better views of several in a mixed flock on Yutong La. This species is also known as Rufous-fronted Tit.

#### Sittidae (Nuthatches)

**CHESTNUT-BELLIED NUTHATCH** (*Sitta cinnamoventris*) – Regular in the middle elevation broadleaved forests of the middle part of the tour.

**WHITE-TAILED NUTHATCH** (*Sitta himalayensis*) – By far the most common nuthatch of the trip, seen on many days. This is the one that looks somewhat like North America's Red-breasted Nuthatch. [N]

**BEAUTIFUL NUTHATCH** (*Sitta formosa*) – Well here's one that lives up to its hype! Our first was a very soggy bird singing in the rain from a dead snag in Phrumsengla NP. We found it and its mate with a big gang of Himalayan Cutias the following day, and spent a delightful 20 minutes or so watching them all forage along mossy trunks and branches at eye level.

#### Tichodromidae (Wallcreeper).

**WALLCREEPER** (*Tichodroma muraria*) – One on a sandy, stone-studded bank along Par Chhu was a nice cap to our visit along the dike road; it crept along the steep wall, flicking its beautiful scarlet wings incessantly and allowing long, leisurely views. This is a wintering visitor to the country (often found on ruins and along stony rivers, according to the Field Guide to the Birds of the Indian Subcontinent) but is typically gone by the time of our tour.

#### Certhiidae (Trecreeper).

**HODGSON'S TRECREEPER** (*Certhia hodgsoni mandellii*) – One with a big mixed flock on Chele La proved very cooperative, moving smoothly from trunk to trunk. This is a recent split from Eurasian Trecreeper.

**SIKKIM TRECREEPER** (*Certhia discolor*) – Seen first with a mixed flock on Darachu, and later on Tama La. This is the darkest-bellied of Bhutan's trecreepers (split from the former Brown-throated Trecreeper complex) and is typically found at lower elevations than the other two Bhutanese species.

#### Cinclidae (Dippers).

**BROWN DIPPER** (*Cinclus pallasii*) – Our first bounced under a bridge near Paro our first afternoon, then flashed off down the river before everybody figured out exactly where it was. Fortunately, we found at least three others along the Po Chhu a few days later, including one that was repeatedly leaping into the water after prey.

#### Pycnonotidae (Bulbuls).

**STRIATED BULBUL** (*Pycnonotus striatus*) – Our first was a bird in the fog, just down the hill from our Darachu camp. We found more on Tama La and others in Phrumsengla NP; they all looked ever so slightly disheveled.

**BLACK-CRESTED BULBUL** (*Pycnonotus flaviventris*) – Scattered individuals in the lower-elevation broadleaved forests from Sarpang to Nganglam.

**RED-VENTED BULBUL** (*Pycnonotus cafer*) – Common at lower and middle elevations throughout much of the tour, especially in disturbed areas. One bouncing along the edge of the river near the Punakha Dzong managed to get itself in more than a few pictures.

**RED-WHISKERED BULBUL** (*Pycnonotus jocosus*) – A group of four or so flicked through some emerging ferns along the road from Sarpang to Gelephu, occasionally sitting right up on top for a good look around, and we saw others in scattered locations around Tingtibi and Nganglam. This is a widespread species, but not particularly common in Bhutan.

**HIMALAYAN BULBUL** (*Pycnonotus leucogenys*) – We found a trio of these, which are rare along our tour route, just after traversing the white-knuckle section of the new road between Nganglam and the main east-west highway. They nibbled berries from spikes in a roadside tree on a hairpin below us, giving us great scope views until they were chased off by the local Red-vented Bulbuls.

**WHITE-THROATED BULBUL** (*Alophoixus flaveolus*) – We had poor looks at our first pair (on our first afternoon visit to Royal Manas NP) but fortunately caught up with a more cooperative bird there the following morning and with another in a mixed flock near the Gashari turnoff.

**BLACK BULBUL** (*Hypsipetes leucocephalus*) – One of the more common bulbuls of the trip, seen on most days -- often in big migrating flocks, like the dozens and dozens we saw flying past in tight bunches as dusk approached on the ridge west of Nganglam.

**ASHY BULBUL** (*Hemixos flavala*) – Especially nice views of a pair near the house of the "heron lady", where we hung out for a bit, waiting for news on the White-bellied Heron, and of a couple of singing birds in some bamboo near Nganglam. What we couldn't figure out was why this one isn't called the "Chartreuse-winged Bulbul"!

**MOUNTAIN BULBUL** (*Ixos mclellandii*) – Pairs seen on several days in the mountains (appropriately enough), often with mixed flocks.

#### Regulidae (Kinglets).

**GOLDCREST** (*Regulus regulus*) – At least one with a big mixed flock on Chele La. This species looks and acts like (and is in the same genus as) North America's kinglets. This species is generally pretty rare across Bhutan, though it's also easy to overlook.

#### Pnoepygidae (Cupwings).

**SCALY-BREADED CUPWING** (*Pnoepyga albiventer*) – Arg! We followed several singing birds back and forth along the road over Phrumseng La, but just couldn't find a place where we could get a look. We certainly got very familiar with their loud, whistled song though! [\*]

**PYGMY CUPWING** (*Pnoepyga pusilla*) – Whew; it took a lot of patience, but we got there in the end! It took two days -- and two birds -- in Phrumsengla NP (and we heard a lot more than those two), but eventually everybody got a look at one of these little skulkers twitching through the darkest of tangles along the road in Phrumsengla NP. Our second bird was the more cooperative, skirting along the edge of a fairly "open" (ha ha) patch near one of the little waterfalls and sitting in plain view a couple of times for brief seconds.

#### Scotocercidae (Bush Warblers and Allies).

**GRAY-BELLIED TESIA** (*Tesia cyaniventer*) – We joked that tesia should be spelled "tease ya" after trying in vain to see three different individuals calling close to the road [\*]

**SLATY-BELLIED TESIA** (*Tesia olivea*) – And this one was no better! We managed to call it right up the hill until it was within feet of us -- but not a single one of us laid eyes on it. Arg! [\*]

**CHESTNUT-HEADED TESIA** (*Cettia castaneocoronata*) – Finally, a cooperative tesia! After hearing yet another one with no success (and beginning to despair that we were ever going to actually see a tesia of ANY kind), we lucked into a cooperative bird just outside Sengor. It flicked through a moss-covered little tree, peering out from among the leaves.

**YELLOW-BELLIED WARBLER** (*Abroscopus superciliosus*) – We spotted one of these small bamboo specialists in a big clump of bamboo just above our Tingtibi campsite and found a couple of others in the Mangde Chhu gorge.

**RUFOUS-FACED WARBLER** (*Abroscopus albogularis*) – After hearing one in the Mangde Chhu gorge, we spotted a couple in a mixed flock near the Gashari turnoff west of Nganglam.

- BLACK-FACED WARBLER** (*Abroscopus schisticeps*) – Most of the group saw our first -- a couple of birds flitting along the edge of a little pasture across the road from our picnic lunch spot down the hill from the summit of DoChu La. We found others in Phrumsengla NP and along the hillside track we walked on our descent from Pele La.
- MOUNTAIN TAILORBIRD** (*Phyllergates cucullatus*) – One along the road above Namling showed far too briefly -- and right when several other things were also appearing -- which meant some of the gang missed getting a look at it. Though it looks like a tailorbird (and is still named as such), this species is not closely related to the REAL tailorbirds.
- BROWNISH-FLANKED BUSH WARBLER** (*Horornis fortipes*) – Scattered birds in the highlands, including one that circled all around us in the dead bamboo stand at the Royal Botanical Garden. The song of this one reminded a lot of us of the songs of Australia's whippbirds.
- HUME'S BUSH WARBLER** (*Horornis brunnescens*) – We found a nicely confiding bird in a patch of bamboo forest in Phrumsengla NP (very near our Great Parrotbills) which sang repeatedly for us.

*Phylloscopidae (Leaf Warblers)*

- COMMON CHIFFCHAFF (SIBERIAN)** (*Phylloscopus collybita tristis*) – One flicked through the scruffy vegetation along the edge of the Puna Tsang Chhu, eventually ending up in the same bush as our Crested Bunting. This is a rare migrant through Bhutan.
- TICKELL'S LEAF WARBLER** (*Phylloscopus affinis*) – A few seen by a few folks early in the tour, but our best group view came near the Trogon Villa, where we saw one sitting on top of a roadside shrub, and later watched it twitch along a bamboo fence rail. This was one of the plainest of the warblers we saw, with no wing markings and only a faint black eye line.
- BUFF-BARRED WARBLER** (*Phylloscopus pulcher*) – We found a few with a little mixed flock on Chele La, but our best views came late in the tour - in the higher stretches of Phrumsengla NP (and the pass itself), on Yutong La, and on Pele La. Its white outer tail feathers are distinctive in flight.
- ASHY-THROATED WARBLER** (*Phylloscopus maculipennis*) – Another species that was fairly common at higher elevations, always as part of a mixed flock. Like the previous species, this one has some white on its outer tail feathers, but the grayish throat and whitish supercilium are distinctly different.
- PALE-RUMPED WARBLER** (*Phylloscopus chloronotus*) – Another little "leaf warbler" found in small numbers in the higher passes; this one lacks any white in the tail. Split from the Pallas's Warbler, it was formerly known as "Lemon-rumped Warbler".
- HUME'S WARBLER** (*Phylloscopus humei*) – We saw several individuals that were either this species or Yellow-browed Warbler, but we never got a good enough look to nail the ID. This is an altitudinal migrant in Bhutan, moving to the plains for the winter and back to the higher mountains to breed.
- LARGE-BILLED LEAF WARBLER** (*Phylloscopus magnirostris*) – We struggled to get a look at our first one, high in Phrumsengla NP, then found them EVERYWHERE on the day we drove from Yongkola to Sengor. Their five-note song was certainly heard repeatedly on the drive.
- BLYTH'S LEAF WARBLER** (*Phylloscopus reguloides*) – Common throughout much of the tour, though missing completely at the lowest elevations. The very yellow bill is a good ID feature for this one.
- YELLOW-VENTED WARBLER** (*Phylloscopus cantator*) – Scattered individuals seen on Darachu, in the Mangde Chhu gorge and at our breakfast spot northwest of Nganglam, with others heard in Royal Manas NP. This is a rather local species, found only from Nepal to Laos.
- GRAY-HOODED WARBLER** (*Phylloscopus xanthoschistos*) – Very common in the broadleaf forests of middle and lower elevations, seen (and heard!) daily from Darachu to Phrumsengla NP.
- GOLDEN-SPECTACLED WARBLER** (*Seicercus burkii*) – The original Golden-spectacled Warbler was split into five species, including this one and Whistler's. In Bhutan this is the lower elevation breeder of the two; we saw them with several mixed flocks, first on our descent from Darachu, then near the Gashari turnoff, and finally in Phrumsengla NP.
- WHISTLER'S WARBLER** (*Seicercus whistleri*) – Our first flicked through the brush below us on a foggy morning at DoChu La, glowing against the brown twigs. We found another in a mixed flock near Sengor, and a few more along the old road on Pele La. This species breeds at higher elevations than the previous one does.
- WHITE-SPECTACLED WARBLER** (*Seicercus affinis*) – One with a mixed flock along the Tama La road showed nicely as it flitted up through the branches. That broad white eye ring is pretty eye-catching against its dark gray head.
- GRAY-CHEEKED WARBLER** (*Seicercus poliogenys*) – Daily in Phrumsengla NP, with another in a mixed flock along the track we walked on the west side of Pele La.
- CHESTNUT-CROWNED WARBLER** (*Seicercus castaniceps*) – Particularly nice looks at this handsome little warbler on the track west of Pele La, with others seen in Phrumsengla NP (including twice around Namling).

*Cisticolidae (Cisticolas and Allies)*

- COMMON TAILORBIRD** (*Orthotomus sutorius*) – Regular in disturbed areas at middle elevation this year with sightings on four days -- including one mooching around in the garden of the "heron lady's" house at Berichu and a showy bird near our hotel in Yongkola. We heard the repetitive 'pitchik pitchik pitchik' of this common species on another couple of days too.
- STRIATED PRINIA** (*Prinia crinigera*) – After a bit of effort (trying to find a bird we'd seen fly across the road in front of the bus in the Mangde Chhu gorge), we found one sharing a tree with a couple of Striated Yuhinas.
- BLACK-THROATED PRINIA** (*Prinia atrogularis*) – A pair crept through some dense roadside vegetation in Phrumsengla NP, occasionally hitching up to the top for a quick look around. The subspecies found in Bhutan is the nominate atrogularis.
- GRAY-CROWNED PRINIA** (*Prinia cinereocapilla*) – Upon further research, Richard is pretty sure that this is the species many of us saw skulking through the bushes near the fruit stand at Serutar, while we waited for the RSPN Bhutan folks to check for the presence of the White-bellied Heron. He writes "I checked the newish photo guide to the subcontinent, and found a photo with a larger, contrasting rufous forehead. The Handbook behind the Bhutan field guide describes 'a touch of rufous-brown on forehead (absent on Ashy).' Rasmussen and Anderton say 'In non-breeding plumage, note rufescent base of forehead and supercilium'. Other books say supercilium is a mix of rufous and whitish; supercilium absent in breeding plumage, as in some other prinias. Elevation and habitat fine." It's a scarce, threatened species.

*Paradoxornithidae (Parrotbills, Wrentit, and Allies)*

- FIRE-TAILED MYZORNIS** (*Myzornis pyrrhoura*) – Yahoo! Our first brief encounter with a pair of this spectacular species was met with considerable dismay from the half of the group who hadn't been in the right position to see them fly across the path near the Phrumsengla pass. Fortunately, they returned to mob the "owl" (really Richard's magic recording), and then to feed at some nearby rhododendron flowers. We had another showy bird at Yutong La the following day. This is another of Bhutan's many stunners.

**GOLDEN-BREASTED FULVETTA** (*Lioparus chrysotis*) – A pair in the bamboo near our picnic breakfast spot in Phrumsengla NP on the morning we left Trogon View Lodge were among the last of a great flurry of new birds. This species is easily missable, one of several bamboo specialists that has become more difficult because of the vast die-off of bamboo across the country.

**WHITE-BROWED FULVETTA** (*Fulvetta vinipectus*) – Plenty of these endearing little birds seen well in the highlands -- often within feet of where we stood. They were typically part of mixed flocks, including few consorting with our first Rufous-vented Tits on Chele La.

**GREAT PARROTBILL** (*Conostoma aemodium*) – Two in a bamboo grove above Sengor were gathering material for their big nest, gathering mouthfuls of thin strips of bark (with much pulling and tugging) and carrying them off down the hill to the top of a small spruce tree. [N]

**BROWN PARROTBILL** (*Cholornis unicolor*) – The sudden (and very unexpected) appearance of a trio during our picnic breakfast near Yutong La led to a complete abandonment of the table. The birds bounced up through some leafless trees among the sprouting bamboo, giving us some excellent views through the scopes.

**GRAY-HEADED PARROTBILL** (*Psittiparus gularis*) – Our first were a rather furtive quartet Sangay spotted foraging in some bushes along the ridge west of Nganglam; with some patience and persistence (i.e. there were plenty of other things to look at while we waited), they eventually came out where we could see them nicely. We saw them along the same stretch of road the following day.

**WHITE-BREASTED PARROTBILL** (*Psittiparus ruficeps*) – A few worked their way through a rather scraggly little tree overhanging the road to Tama La, occasionally even hanging upside down as they foraged, and we saw others, much closer, along the road through Phrumsengla NP. This species was split from the former Greater Rufous-headed Parrotbill complex.

*Zosteropidae (White-eyes, Yuhinas, and Allies)*

**STRIATED YUHINA** (*Yuhina castaniceps*) – Best seen along the road through the Mangde Chhu gorge, where a pair started in the same tree as the Striated Prinia, then flicked across the road to investigate the twigs in a tree right over our heads. A few folks had gotten an earlier look at one (or more) along the Tama La road.

**WHITE-NAPED YUHINA** (*Yuhina bakeri*) – Especially nice looks along the Darachu road, when a big noisy gang of them descended into a mountain stream bed, taking vigorous baths in a few puddles we could see from the road. We saw others in Phrumsengla NP. This is something of a regional speciality, not found on many tour routes.

**WHISKERED YUHINA** (*Yuhina flavicollis*) – Very common in the wetter broadleaf forests of the middle elevations, with especially nice looks along the Darachu road, where a gang of them displaced the previous species at a roadside puddle. This was easily the most common and widespread yuhina of the tour.

**STRIPE-THROATED YUHINA** (*Yuhina gularis*) – Pairs of these -- largest of the yuhinas -- accompanied a number of the mixed flocks we found in the highlands towards the end of the tour. Generally, this species is found higher up than the previous one, though there is a broad area of overlap.

**RUFIOUS-VENTED YUHINA** (*Yuhina occipitalis*) – Another species of the high passes. We found our first little group on Chele La, then didn't see them again until we reached Sengor and the upper reaches of Phrumsengla NP. We saw some around our breakfast spot on Pele La. These have rufous napes as well as rufous vents -- and the napes are a lot easier to see!

**BLACK-CHINNED YUHINA** (*Yuhina nigrimenta*) – A few folks got one one with a big mixed flock near the Menchuna chorten on our day on DoChu La, but most had to wait until we found a couple of others with a mixed flock in the Mangde Chhu gorge.

**ORIENTAL WHITE-EYE** (*Zosterops palpebrosus*) – Fairly common in broadleaf forest at middle and lower elevations, usually with mixed flocks.

*Timaliidae (Tree-Babblers, Scimitar-Babblers, and Allies)*

**PIN-STRIPED TIT-BABBLER** (*Mixornis gularis*) – Two worked through some chest-high vegetation just below the road near our picnic breakfast spot in Royal Manas NP, talking to each other and occasionally peeping out of the leaves. The "pin stripes" of its common name refer to the very fine dark streaking on its pale yellow underparts.

**GOLDEN BABBLER** (*Cyanoderma chrysaeum*) – Our first were a pair with the big mixed flock along the Darachu road (peeking out of the bushes not far from our first Coral-billed Scimitar-Babbler), with others on Tama La, in the Mangde Chhu gorge and around the Gashari turnoff.

**RUFIOUS-CAPPED BABBLER** (*Cyanoderma ruficeps*) – A sprinkling seen in the higher elevation forests towards the end of the tour, including one bouncing through some knee-level vegetation with some Rufous-winged Fulvettas along the edge of the road in Phrumsengla NP.

**RUFIOUS-THROATED WREN-BABBLER** (*Spelaeoris caudatus*) – Fabulous looks at one of these understory skulkers along the road in Phrumsengla NP, where we found one working along an overhanging bank, flicking through the dangling roots and branches. What a little cutie!

**CORAL-BILLED SCIMITAR-BABBLER** (*Pomatorhinus ferruginosus*) – Our first, with a mixed flock along the road at Darachu, proved a bit too elusive for some of the the group as it peered out of various tangles. Fortunately, we had another chance in Phrumsengla NP with a somewhat more cooperative bird. Its red bill is certainly distinctive.

**STREAK-BREASTED SCIMITAR-BABBLER** (*Pomatorhinus ruficollis*) – A couple of birds lurking along the edge of one of the trails through the dead bamboo at the Royal Botanical Garden showed their streaked breasts nicely a few times as we pushed them along ahead of us as we walked. We heard others at Darachu and Phrumsengla NP.

**WHITE-BROWED SCIMITAR-BABBLER** (*Pomatorhinus schisticeps*) – Seen in the Mangde Chhu gorge, and heard in several forest locations around Nganglam. This is a species we don't see every year.

**RUSTY-CHEEKED SCIMITAR-BABBLER** (*Megapomatorhinus erythrogenys*) – Up close and personal views of a confiding (singing!) pair of birds between the road and the Puna Tsang Chhu on the morning we explored the Po Chhu -- seen with the impressive bulk of the Punakha Dzong in the background, with others in a paddock at Yongkola.

**GRAY-THROATED BABBLER** (*Stachyris nigriceps*) – We spotted two among a mixed flock on the Darachu road (just as the fog was starting to lift a bit), some spotted another pair along the road through the Mangde Chhu gorge, and we another little group near the Gashari turnoff (with others heard northwest of Nganglam).

**BLACKISH-BREASTED BABBLER** (*Stachyris humei*) – Wow, wow, wow! It took a while, but we ended up getting spectacular views of one of these skulkers when it perched up beside a little waterfall in Phrumsengla NP. This one is also known (in some field guides) as Himalayan (or Sikkim) Wedge-billed Babbler.

*Pellorneidae (Ground Babblers and Allies)*

**WHITE-HOODED BABBLER** (*Gampsorhynchus rufulus*) – We found a little group of adults and youngsters working through a small patch of bamboo along the road in the Mangde Chhu gorge. This is a bamboo specialist -- and one we often miss.

**YELLOW-THROATED FULVETTA** (*Schoeniparus cinereus*) – A couple of birds with a big mixed flock along the Darachu road spent most of their time hanging around with a Nepal Fulvetta -- occasionally only knee-high within feet of where we were standing. We saw others nicely on the Tama

La road and in Phrumsengla NP; this species can be quite responsive.

**RUFOUS-WINGED FULVETTA** (*Schoeniparus castaneiceps*) – Some spectacularly good looks in Phrumsengla NP (as high as the pass), including some flitting waist-high along the roadside where we found our Black-headed Shrike-Babbler, with others along the track we walked west of Pele La.

**LONG-BILLED WREN-BABBLER** (*Napothera malacoptila*) – Everybody certainly heard its loud whistling song! A lucky few also spotted it as it crept back and forth through the vegetation hanging over a cut bank along the road in Phrumsengla NP.

*Leiothrichidae (Laughingthrushes and Allies)*

**NEPAL FULVETTA** (*Alcippe nipalensis*) – One with our first big Rusty-fronted Barwing flock, keeping company with a couple of Gray-throated Babblers and a couple of Yellow-throated Fulvettas, and we found another with a gang of Silver-eared Mesias west of Nganglam. The gray head and big white eye ring of this species made it easy to pick out of the crowd.

**STRIATED LAUGHINGTHRUSH** (*Grammatoptila striata*) – This large, jay-like bird was common in the broadleaf forests, and as one of the "good" laughingthrushes -- as in gratifyingly easy to see.

**HIMALAYAN CUTIA** (*Cutia nipalensis*) – Yowza! Fabulous views of these handsome creatures west of Nganglam, where we found a trio investigating some trees along the road, and even better looks at a gang of 8 or 9 that swarmed through trees along road in the Phrumsengla NP, in the company of a couple of Beautiful Nuthatches. They act like (stocky, super-sized) nuthatches.

**JUNGLE BABBLER** (*Turdoides striata*) – A half dozen or so in a garden in Gelephu, seen as we drove back to our hotel from the sewage ponds. This is a widespread species in the Indian subcontinent, but is only found in the very southern part of Bhutan.

**WHITE-CRESTED LAUGHINGTHRUSH** (*Garrulax leucolophus*) – An adult and a gaggle of fledged youngsters circled around us along the road through the Mangde Chhu gorge, and we saw others on the Tama La road and in Phrumsengla NP.

**LESSER NECKLACED LAUGHINGTHRUSH** (*Garrulax monileger*) – This, on the other hand, was a "bad" laughingthrush. It lurked in the bushes along the road through the Mangde Chhu gorge and never really showed itself.

**RUFOUS-CHINNED LAUGHINGTHRUSH** (*Ianthocincla rufogularis*) – We heard this one calling on several days in Phrumsengla NP. Richard calls this one a BAD laughingthrush, and it certainly lived up to its billing this year. [\*]

**SPOTTED LAUGHINGTHRUSH** (*Ianthocincla ocellata*) – Some bouncing along in a roadside pullout in the pre-dawn half light on Chele La were a nice surprise -- this can be a hard bird to see well.

**GREATER NECKLACED LAUGHINGTHRUSH** (*Ianthocincla pectoralis*) – After hearing some around Tingtibi, we had reasonably good views of a little group along the road near the Gashari turnoff; after skulking back and forth through the underbrush, they eventually flew, one by one, across the road. This can be another "bad" laughingthrush.

**WHITE-THROATED LAUGHINGTHRUSH** (*Ianthocincla albogularis*) – This probably rates as the easiest of all of Bhutan's laughingthrushes to see; we found it on many days in the highlands, often in big numbers -- including ten or so in a tree near the start of the trail up to Drukgyel Dzong on our first afternoon in Bhutan, a mob feeding on the ground near the restrooms at the Royal Botanical Garden, and another big group working their way across a pasture in front of a house in Namling.

**RUFOUS-NECKED LAUGHINGTHRUSH** (*Ianthocincla ruficollis*) – Fine views of a couple of birds along the edge of a pasture in Yongkola, seen on two successive days there. This can be a tough species to get a good look at.

**RUFOUS-VENTED LAUGHINGTHRUSH** (*Ianthocincla gularis*) – We heard several along the road near the Gashari turnoff last one afternoon, and some of the group got reasonable views of one or more the following morning. They stayed low in roadside vegetation, creeping through below waist height and only occasionally flicking briefly into the open. This may be the first time any tour group has ever seen this bird in Bhutan!

**GRAY-SIDED LAUGHINGTHRUSH** (*Ianthocincla caerulea*) – We heard this "bad" species on Darachu and along the Tama La road, and a few people got quick glimpses of one in Phrumsengla NP.

**BHUTAN LAUGHINGTHRUSH** (*Trochalopteron imbricatum*) – Our first was with a big mixed flock on Darachu; it appeared in the middle of a bush (in about the same place as our first Coral-billed Scimitar-Babbler) as the flock started to move away. We found a second bird in Phrumsengla NP. Split from the Streaked Laughingthrush of the western Himalayas, this is as close to a Bhutanese endemic as there is.

**SCALY LAUGHINGTHRUSH** (*Trochalopteron subunicolor*) – At least one (and probably two) along the old road on Pele La faked us out initially by singing an aberrant song. Getting this one in the scopes was definitely atypical -- even if it WAS backlit!

**BLUE-WINGED LAUGHINGTHRUSH** (*Trochalopteron squamatum*) – Seen poorly by some on Darachu, with another heard singing (and singing and singing) at a road bend in Phrumsengla NP. As you can probably guess, this is another "bad" laughingthrush.

**BLACK-FACED LAUGHINGTHRUSH** (*Trochalopteron affine*) – One sitting on a road sign on Chele La got our laughingthrush list off to a good start. We also saw this highland species well on Pele La (where it kept distracting us during our search for the Scaly Laughingthrush), at Yutong La, and in Phrumsengla NP.

**CHESTNUT-CROWNED LAUGHINGTHRUSH** (*Trochalopteron erythrocephalum*) – Two down the hill below us at Drukgyel Dzong our first afternoon and another two bouncing around on the grass by the pond at the Royal Botanical Garden gave us our best views. We saw others in Phrumsengla NP, but mostly we just heard them -- regularly.

**RUFOUS SIBIA** (*Heterophasia capistrata*) – Remember how excited everybody was to see our first pair, skulking in a bush near the confluence of the rivers that create the Wang Chhu? Little did we know then how ridiculously common -- and showy -- this species would prove to be.

**LONG-TAILED SIBIA** (*Heterophasia picaoides*) – A big group swarmed through a tree near our picnic lunch spot on Darachu, and another group did the same along the road through the Mangde Chhu gorge. We found still more with some Rufous Sibilas near the Gashari turnoff. Our new tour route has added this species to the list.

**SILVER-EARED MESIA** (*Leiothrix argenteauris*) – Our first were a pair along the road at Darachu, found just as the fog started to lift. We had especially nice views of a confiding trio foraging along the road west of the Gashari turnoff; they were certainly a lot more cooperative than the nearby Rufous-vented Laughingthrushes were! And we found another handful northwest of Nganglam. This must surely be one of the prettiest babblers.

**RED-BILLED LEIOTHRIX** (*Leiothrix lutea*) – Though this one would give it a run for its money! After getting poor views (or less-than-the-whole-group views) of birds at Darachu and Phrumsengla NP, we finally got some eye-popping looks at one along the track on the west side of Pele La -- at pretty much the last place we had a chance for them. This species has been introduced to Hawaii.

**RED-TAILED MINLA** (*Minla ignotincta*) – Our first looks, on Darachu, were definitely less than ideal. Fortunately, we found others around Namling and Sengor that proved more cooperative. This is another altitudinal migrant that joins up in big flocks during the winter.

**RUFOUS-BACKED SIBIA** (*Minla annectens*) – One seen (and heard) on each of our visits to the Gashari turnoff area west of Nganglam. This is another a localized species we've added thanks to our new tour route.

- RED-FACED LIOCICHLA** (*Liocichla phoenicea*) – One sat in the open for a 20 seconds or so (which might be close to a record!) at one of our stops along the road to Tama La. The next quartet we "saw" (a few shapes flitting in a bush and then dashing across to a concealed gully) were behaving far more typically.
- HOARY-THROATED BARWING** (*Actinodura nipalensis*) – A mob along the edge of the road near Namling were decidedly cooperative, spending long minutes within yards of us as they rummaged through the branches looking for tidbits. We found another big group near our breakfast spot downhill from Yutong La. This is another regional specialty.
- RUSTY-FRONTED BARWING** (*Actinodura egeroni*) – More common than the previous species, with fine views of many in our mixed flock at Darachu, and others seen well at Tama La and in Phrumsengla NP.
- BLUE-WINGED MINLA** (*Actinodura cyanouroptera*) – Good looks on half a dozen days, including at our lunch spot on Tama La, where a massive flock swarmed through the bushes all around our gazebo, giving us up-close-and-personal views. This is another species that flocks up in the winter.
- CHESTNUT-TAILED MINLA** (*Actinodura strigula*) – We didn't find this high elevation species until the very end of the tour, and then we found it in multiple places on each of the last four days! Also known as Bar-throated Siva.

*Irenidae (Fairy-bluebirds)*

- ASIAN FAIRY-BLUEBIRD** (*Irena puella*) – Our first were a little group feeding in fruiting bushes along the road through Royal Manas NP. Fortunately for Myles, who was a bit under the weather that day, we found another male along the road north of Nganglam on our pre-breakfast explorations there. Another very handsome species.

*Muscicapidae (Old World Flycatchers)*

- DARK-SIDED FLYCATCHER** (*Muscicapa sibirica*) – Our first was hunting from a dead snag high above us on Yutong La -- nice spotting, David! We found another pair hunting from small dead trees along the hillside track we walked on our way down from Pele La, which gave us the chance to really study them up close. As Richard pointed out, they look a bit like little Olive-sided Flycatchers. Also known as Siberian Flycatcher.
- ORIENTAL MAGPIE-ROBIN** (*Copsychus saularis*) – A sprinkling of birds at lower and middle elevations, where we often spotted them perched on roadside wires and fences. This is a lowland species which is spreading steadily up Bhutan's valleys as forests are opened for agriculture and hydroelectric dams.
- WHITE-RUMPED SHAMA** (*Copsychus malabaricus*) – A singing male perched several times along the path in Royal Manas National Park, allowing scope views. Across much of southeast Asia, this species is hard-hit by the caged bird trade; it's beautiful AND has a beautiful song, which makes it a real target for bird poachers.
- WHITE-GORGETED FLYCATCHER** (*Anthipes monileger*) – Unfortunately, this one was less the cooperative. We had one in the understory along the road in Phrumsengla NP. Some saw it well when it perched on some bare open twigs below the road, some only saw it flit back and forth from one dark, obscured perch to another, and some never saw it at all!
- PALE BLUE FLYCATCHER** (*Cyornis unicolor*) – A singing bird along the ridge west of Nganglam posed nicely for scope views. This is a summer visitor to Bhutan.
- BLUE-THROATED FLYCATCHER** (*Cyornis rubeculoides*) – Rhys spotted our first -- a male in the Mangde Chhu gorge. We found another male in Royal Manas NP, and a couple of females in the forests near Nganglam. This one can be a skulker, but all of our birds were pretty cooperative.
- LARGE NILTAVA** (*Niltava grandis*) – The "do re mi" song of this species was a regular part of the tour's soundtrack in the wetter broadleaf forest. Our best views came at Darachu, when we found a male singing quietly from his perch on a water hose strung through the trees.
- SMALL NILTAVA** (*Niltava macgrigoriae*) – This was the third of the niltavas we saw on the same morning at Darachu as we worked our way down the hill; we found a pair along the road shortly after seeing our Large Niltava. We saw others in Phrumsengla NP and heard more calling from the forest around the Gashari turnoff.
- RUFOUS-BELLIED NILTAVA** (*Niltava sundara*) – A male only a foot or so above the ground right beside the road was a surprise as we zoomed down Darachu in our bus -- particularly because he stayed put when we backed up for a better look!
- VERDITER FLYCATCHER** (*Eumyias thalassinus*) – Common and widespread throughout much of the tour, seen regularly hunting -- and singing -- from high, open perches in broadleaved forests.
- LESSER SHORTWING** (*Brachypteryx leucophris*) – We heard one singing along the road at Darachu, but never saw it. [\*]
- WHITE-BROWED SHORTWING** (*Brachypteryx montana*) – One of these skulkers worked through short, moss-draped vegetation gradually providing more views beside the road in the higher stretches of Phrumsengla NP.
- BLUE WHISTLING-THRUSH** (*Myiophonus caeruleus*) – Ubiquitous, missing only on a couple of days at the lowest elevations. They regularly bounced along the roadsides (barely getting out of the road as we went past), and their lovely, whistled songs were notable. We had particularly nice views of one bathing right under the bridge at the Trongsa Dzong.
- LITTLE FORKTAIL** (*Enicurus scouleri*) – Two flicked along the mossy, wet sides of a handsome waterfall in Phrumsengla NP, working their way steadily upwards. This species is distinctive thanks to its very short tail.
- BLACK-BACKED FORKTAIL** (*Enicurus immaculatus*) – One at Royal Manas NP waggled its way along the edge of the road for a few seconds before disappearing out of view.
- SLATY-BACKED FORKTAIL** (*Enicurus schistaceus*) – Sangay spotted our first pair along the Tama La road as we headed for our campsite in Tingtibi. One stood stock-still on a little pile of rocks while the other trotted back and forth along the road. We saw others in the Mangde Chhu gorge and Royal Manas NP.
- HIMALAYAN BLUETAIL** (*Tarsiger rufilatus*) – Good numbers on Chele La, including a young male singing lustily from short trees beside the outhouse near our picnic breakfast spot. We found an adult male in Phrumsengla NP, probably headed up to the high pass, where he'll breed.
- WHITE-BROWED BUSH-ROBIN** (*Tarsiger indicus*) – They led us on a merry dance up and down the road past a bamboo stand on the way to Phrumsengla pass, but EVENTUALLY we caught up with first a rather subdued female and then a beautifully bright male. As we saw, this species tends to stick to the forest understory.
- GOLDEN BUSH-ROBIN** (*Tarsiger chrysaeus*) – One flitted through the deepest, densest part of some roadside vegetation high in Phrumsengla NP, seen by a few but only heard by most of the gang. This is often a tough species to get a look at.
- RUFOUS-GORGETED FLYCATCHER** (*Ficedula strophiatea*) – This one, on the other hand, was nicely accommodating, seen well on many occasions, particularly towards the end of the trip when we reached the higher passes where they'll breed.
- SAPPHIRE FLYCATCHER** (*Ficedula sapphira*) – A male hunting in the midstory of forest along the road west of Nganglam was a nice find; this migrant is only found on about one-third of our tours.

- LITTLE PIED FLYCATCHER** (*Ficedula westermanni*) – We had poor looks at one near our lunch spot on Darachu, but fortunately improved on that with others seen (at least briefly) in Phrumsengla NP.
- ULTRAMARINE FLYCATCHER** (*Ficedula superciliaris*) – Many saw our first -- a female near our picnic lunch spot on the "downside" of DoChu La. Others along the Tama La road and in the Mangde Chhu gorge helped the rest catch up with this handsome little canopy species.
- BLUE-FRONTED REDSTART** (*Phoenicurus frontalis*) – Good numbers of showy birds high on Chele La (where it will probably breed) and a rather drabber female in a clearing near Namling.
- PLUMBEOUS REDSTART** (*Phoenicurus fuliginosus*) – Like the next species, this one was common on rivers and streams in the highlands, particularly on the first half of the tour.
- WHITE-CAPPED REDSTART** (*Phoenicurus leucocephalus*) – Very common along the various mountain rivers and streams we passed, with especially nice studies of one bathing in (and hunting beside) the little stream that flowed past the Trongsa Dzong. This one is also known as "River Chat".
- HODGSON'S REDSTART** (*Phoenicurus hodgsoni*) – A few spotted one in an agricultural field near the Paro recycling center (through a gap in the trees while we tried to get a look at the Little Buntings), and some spied a female at the Royal Botanical Garden, but most didn't catch up with one until we reached the Mangde Chhu gorge. This is a winter visitor to Bhutan, and most of them seemed to have already departed.
- BLACK REDSTART** (*Phoenicurus ochruros*) – A single migrant male bounced across a hillside pasture high on Chele La, distracting us briefly from our search for accentors, and another flitted around near the roadside breakfast spot where we found our Brown Parrotbills. Big numbers of this species overwinter in India.
- CHESTNUT-BELLIED ROCK-THRUSH** (*Monticola rufiventris*) – Seen on five days, including a pair that made repeated visits to the ground around some fallen honeycombs at the first place we found Yellow-rumped Honeyguides and one singing from a treetop along the track we walked on our last morning, west of Pele La.
- BLUE-CAPPED ROCK-THRUSH** (*Monticola cinclorhynchus*) – Generally found at lower elevations than the previous species, with particularly nice views of a loudly singing male along the road through the Mangde Chhu gorge. We saw others along the Tama La road, and in Yongkola.
- BLUE ROCK-THRUSH** (*Monticola solitarius*) – A male sat on a rock beside the river, just under the bridge at the Punakha Dzong, giving us great views. We found another pair at the Royal Botanical Garden on our foggy visit there, and spotted another along the road on our way back to Paro.
- SIBERIAN STONECHAT (SIBERIAN)** (*Saxicola maurus maurus*) – A pair flicked along the edge of the river near the Thimphu sewage ponds, and another scuttled around in a field across the road from our breakfast spot in Bajo (along the edge of the Puna Tsang Chhu).
- GRAY BUSHCHAT** (*Saxicola ferreus*) – Seen well on multiple occasions, including a pair bouncing around in the grass at the Royal Botanical Garden and another pair hunting from fence posts in a Yongkola pasture.

*Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies)*

- WHITE-COLLARED BLACKBIRD** (*Turdus albocinctus*) – Regular in the highlands, with especially nice views of several around our campsite in Sengor. They were common on most of the higher passes.
- GRAY-WINGED BLACKBIRD** (*Turdus boulboul*) – A few near our campsite in Darachu, including a male that sat up on a fence post, showing his gray wing to perfection. This is typically an uncommon species.

*Sturnidae (Starlings)*

- COMMON HILL MYNA** (*Gracula religiosa*) – We found our first just as we were climbing into the bus at the end of our afternoon outing to the first few kilometers of the Royal Manas NP road. Fortunately (since they were rather far away and didn't stay long), we had much better looks at a far more cooperative pair near the soccer field at the ranger camp the following morning. What a load of silly noises this species makes!
- ASIAN PIED STARLING** (*Gracupica contra*) – We stopped for our first few, perched in a tree along the road near Sarpang, and spotted others wandering along the roadside elsewhere near the Indian border.
- CHESTNUT-TAILED STARLING** (*Sturnia malabarica*) – A little group in a scraggly roadside tree just outside Sarpang stopped us in our tracks for the half minute or so that they stayed put. This was another good spot by driver Sangay!
- COMMON MYNA** (*Acridotheres tristis*) – Abundant in disturbed areas in the lowlands and middle elevations of the south.
- JUNGLE MYNA** (*Acridotheres fuscus*) – A few seen along the road near Sarpang with others northwest of Nganglam -- and a surprising handful along the road in Trongsa.

*Chloropseidae (Leafbirds)*

- GOLDEN-FRONTED LEAFBIRD** (*Chloropsis aurifrons*) – Nice views of a couple at the "heron lady's" house at Burichu, seen as we waited for the White-bellied Heron to make an appearance, with others at Royal Manas NP, and along the ridges around Nganglam.
- ORANGE-BELLIED LEAFBIRD** (*Chloropsis hardwickii*) – Easily the more common of the two leafbirds seen on the trip, with daily sightings on the southern stretches of the trip.

*Dicaeidae (Flowerpeckers)*

- PLAIN FLOWERPECKER** (*Dicaeum minullum*) – Our first was a male that sang from some of the bigger trees along a stretch of road in the Mangde Chhu gorge, seen not long after we spotted our first Rufous-bellied Eagle; the name is certainly appropriate! We saw others along the ridge west of Nganglam, not far from the Gashari turnoff.
- FIRE-BREASTED FLOWERPECKER** (*Dicaeum ignipectus*) – We never got the full-frontal, in-your-face view of a male that many were hoping for, but we did get nice looks at the (fairly plain) female hovering like a fat little hummingbird around the tips of some leaves and flowers near Darachu, and another female at Phrumsengla NP. And a lucky few laid eyes on a male on Tama La.

*Nectariniidae (Sunbirds and Spiderhunters)*

- FIRE-TAILED SUNBIRD** (*Aethopyga ignicauda*) – Our first was a male we spotted briefly on the open hillside above our picnic spot near Namling, but our best views -- by far -- came near the pass at Phrumseng La, when we had up-close-and-personal views of several males near our first Fire-tailed Myzornis, with others near the house where the Blood Pheasants cavorted in the side yard.
- BLACK-THROATED SUNBIRD** (*Aethopyga saturata*) – Regular in low and middle elevation broadleaved forests on the southern leg of the tour, found almost daily from Darachu to Phrumsengla. Males are pretty dark overall -- though that maroon back and some purple highlights on the head positively glow in good light.
- GOULD'S SUNBIRD** (*Aethopyga gouldiae*) – A stunner seen regularly at higher elevations. This one is actually named for ornithologist John Gould's wife Elizabeth, who was the natural history artist who illustrated all of her husband's books (though she seldom got credit during her lifetime and

Richard not-so-jokingly referred to her as John's slave). Hence our periodic references to Ms. Gould's Sunbird, which was its former name!

**GREEN-TAILED SUNBIRD** (*Aethopyga nipalensis*) – Probably the most common sunbird in absolute numbers -- principally because they seemed particularly inclined to join "predator mobs". We had many fine views of stunning males and plainer females -- including one pivoting mere yards away while we ogled our first Rufous-winged Fulvettas and Black-headed Shrike-Babbler.

**CRIMSON SUNBIRD** (*Aethopyga siparaja*) – Seen on a trio of days in the lowlands and foothills, including a male that returned several times to the top of a big open tree along the road through the Mangde Chhu gorge. Talk about eye candy!

**STREAKED SPIDERHUNTER** (*Arachnothera magna*) – Daily at lower elevations, including one perched in the Mangde Chhu gorge -- nice spotting, David!

#### *Prunellidae (Accentors)*

**ALPINE ACCENTOR** (*Prunella collaris*) – One flicked among the mass of prayer flag poles at Chele La, never more than a few feet off the ground. This one is plain gray on the front, with a rufous-striped back. It nests in parts of the Himalayas, as well as further north.

**HIMALAYAN ACCENTOR** (*Prunella himalayana*) – Ten shuffled across an alpine pasture in the company of a big mob of Plain Mountain-Finches, high on Chele La. This species is a winter visitor to Bhutan, heading further north to breed.

**RUFIOUS-BREADED ACCENTOR** (*Prunella strophiatea*) – A trio shared a bush with a female Himalayan White-browed Rosefinch on Yutong La, and we found a single, much brighter-plumaged bird beside the old road on Pele La later that afternoon. This subtly handsome species is a winter visitor to Bhutan and usually the more frequently seen one.

#### *Motacillidae (Wagtails and Pipits)*

**CITRINE WAGTAIL** (*Motacilla citreola*) – A handsome male strode around on the scum floating on top of one of the sewage ponds (which doesn't bear thinking too hard about!) at the Gelephu sewage works. This species breeds in the western Himalayas, but is only a winter visitor and passage migrant through Bhutan.

**GRAY WAGTAIL** (*Motacilla cinerea*) – One flushed down the road ahead of us as we birded west of Nganglam, then landed along the white stripe on the far side of a curve, wagging its way back and forth as it searched for tasty morsels. [b]

**WHITE WAGTAIL** (*Motacilla alba*) – Regular at the start and end of the trip, mostly at higher (but not highest) elevations. We saw three different subspecies: the widespread "alboides" (which is the dark-hooded one with a little white mask) and a few "baicalensis" and "leucopsis" along the Puna Tsang Chhu. The first subspecies breeds in Bhutan, while the other two are winter visitors.

**WHITE-BROWED WAGTAIL** (*Motacilla maderaspatensis*) – Small numbers along the Puna Tsang Chhu and at Burichu (near the house where we hung around waiting for the White-bellied Heron to make an appearance), with another near our lunch spot at Pantang. This is a plains species that has begun to move into Bhutan as rice paddies proliferate along the rivers.

**PADDYFIELD PIPIT** (*Anthus rufulus*) – We saw a couple of these long-legged pipits in the rice fields around the Gelephu sewage works, including one carrying a mouthful of food, presumably to a nest. [N]

**OLIVE-BACKED PIPIT** (*Anthus hodgsoni*) – Regular throughout much of our tour route, with breeding birds already returned to some of the higher passes (including Chele La and DoChu La) and small groups of migrants in forested areas lower down.

#### *Elachuridae (Spotted Elachura)*

**SPOTTED ELACHURA** (*Elachura formosa*) – Formerly thought to be a wren-babbler, this species has proved to be so distinctive it's now in its own family -- far down the checklist from the wren-babblers! We heard plenty in Phrumsengla NP, but it took some patience and persistence to actually see one. After several unsuccessful attempts, we finally found a singing bird working its way across a nicely sloping bank above the road and it peeked out now and again giving us short looks.

#### *Emberizidae (Old World Buntings)*

**CRESTED BUNTING** (*Melophus lathami*) – A male sang from the top of a bush along the Puna Tsang Chhu, giving us nice scope looks on our drive back from our early morning up the Po Chhu.

**LITTLE BUNTING** (*Emberiza pusilla*) – Two of these small winter visitors flitted through the vegetation over a little stream near the recycling center at Paro, distracting us for a bit from our search for Black-tailed Crake.

#### *Fringillidae (Finches, Euphonias, and Allies)*

**COLLARED GROSBEAK** (*Mycerobas affinis*) – A few right along the road near the summit of Chele La, with a gray-headed female making the closest approach -- in a bush right beside the group.

**SPOT-WINGED GROSBEAK** (*Mycerobas melanozanthos*) – A male singing from a treetop over a guesthouse near Yutong La was a surprise; Richard had never seen them quite so high before.

**WHITE-WINGED GROSBEAK** (*Mycerobas carnipes*) – The most common of the tour's grosbeaks, seen well on Chele La (where a little group swirled through the fog near the summit, and another few distracted us from our search for accentors a bit lower down), Phrumseng La and Yutong La. Males of this species have a single discrete white patch in the wing, a yellow wingbar, and yellow (rather than white) tips to the tertial feathers.

**SCARLET FINCH** (*Carpodacus sipahi*) – A little gang of these strikingly bright birds worked through some trees at the edge of the road at Tama La, drawing plenty of attention; the females were a bit harder to spot among the leaves! We found a few others along the ridge west of Nganglam.

**DARK-RUMPED ROSEFINCH** (*Carpodacus edwardsii*) – A male rummaged around on the ground under some bushes in Phrumsengla NP as we fished for parrotbills, seen thanks to some great spotting by guide-in-training Sangay Penjor.

**HIMALAYAN WHITE-BROWED ROSEFINCH** (*Carpodacus thura*) – We heard some on our very first visit to the highlands (on Chele La), but had to wait until the penultimate day to actually see one. We found a female sharing a bush on Yutong La with a handful of similarly-plumaged (but structurally very different) Rufous-breasted Accentors. This was an unusual year for rosefinches; we usually see both more individuals and more species!

**BROWN BULLFINCH** (*Pyrrhula nipalensis*) – Two sat high in a leafless tree just up the road from our breakfast spot above Namling (in Phrumsengla NP), giving us quick looks in the scope before they bounded off to join a group that was passing over. These are far less colorful than the next species.

**RED-HEADED BULLFINCH** (*Pyrrhula erythrocephala*) – Especially nice views of a single bird that dropped into a bush right beside us on Pele La as we wandered along the road before breakfast. Some of the group spotted a single bird with a little mixed flock along a cliff face above Namling, and we saw others at Yutong La.



**GOLD-NAPED FINCH** (*Pyrrhoptectes epauletta*) – A pair in a field at Namling showed nicely, perching up in some scrubby bushes at the edge of a pasture near our hotel.

**PLAIN MOUNTAIN-FINCH** (*Leucosticte nemoricola*) – A gang of 50 or more swarmed across a pasture high on Chele La, occasionally lifting into flight to change positions. They certainly outnumbered the accentors hiding among the group!

**RED CROSSBILL** (*Loxia curvirostra*) – We found a flock of 15 or so sitting in a leafless treetop along the road just above Sengor, and a single male right beside the road in one of the Bumthang valleys. This is generally a scarce species in Bhutan.

**TIBETAN SERIN** (*Spinus thibetanus*) – A flock of 15 or so flashed past as we worked our way west towards Pele La; they landed in an alder, where some folks got a quick look before a line of loud, belching trucks flushed them out again.

#### Passeridae (Old World Sparrows)

**RUSSET SPARROW** (*Passer rutilans*) – Quite common throughout much of the trip (though missing from the lowest elevations), including some bouncing around in the parking lot of the Paro airport. Lots of good looks at these engaging birds, which are related to the well-known House Sparrow.

**EURASIAN TREE SPARROW** (*Passer montanus*) – Another common and widespread species, typically around human habitation, and generally at lower and middle elevations.

#### Estrildidae (Waxbills and Allies)

**WHITE-RUMPED MUNIA** (*Lonchura striata*) – Some got on a little group of these small birds at our Tingtibi campsite, while waiting for the gang to gather for our post-breakfast walk.

**SCALY-BREASTED MUNIA** (*Lonchura punctulata*) – A handful flitted through a bush along the Puna Tsang Chhu, seen as we followed our first Rusty-cheeked Scimitar-Babblers up the road. This species is "invading" Bhutan from the plains of India, working their way up the river valleys as the surrounding countryside is converted to rice paddies.

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## MAMMALS

**ASSAMESE MACAQUE** (*Macaca assamensis*) – The most widespread of the tour's primates, seen on scattered days throughout the country, including a few males wandering along roadsides (looking surprisingly thuggish) and some quietly snoozing or grooming each other on a rocky ledge beside a big waterfall in Phrumsengla NP. This species has a significantly shorter tail than do the next three.

**COMMON LANGUR** (*Presbytis entellus*) – Sangay spotted our first -- a single animal rooting around behind a dirt pile on the side of a mountain road; it scampered back into the trees as soon as we stopped for a look. Fortunately, we found dozens of others on the far side of the Mangde Chhu gorge, balancing on riverside boulders or clinging to the cliff face as they apparently gobbled up some mineral deposit.

**GOLDEN LANGUR** (*Presbytis geei*) – Gratifyingly common in the lowlands along the Indian border. This is not quite a Bhutanese endemic (it's found just across the border into India in the Manas area), but it's close. We saw at least a half dozen good-sized groups going about their daily activities near the Indian border over the course of three days. In Bhutanese culture, seeing one during a journey is considered to be a good omen -- so we're set!

**CAPPED LANGUR** (*Presbytis pileata*) – A little band munched on leaves in some trees along the road through Phrumsengla NP, giving us a good chance to study them at leisure. This is the darkest of the three langurs, and it's found further east in Bhutan than the other two species are.

**PIKA SP.** (*Ochotona roylei*) – Plenty of great views of these endearing little critters in the highlands, where they were very common. The ones flashing through the "pika tunnels" -- paths worn under the overhanging mossy banks in a bamboo grove along the road near Phrumseng La -- were especially entertaining. There are a half dozen species of pika in Bhutan, and this is the most common and widespread one, but we can't be 100% sure of what we had.

**BLACK GIANT SQUIRREL** (*Ratufa bicolor*) – Lebo spotted one for us, splayed out on a branch at Tama La, and we spotted another in the Mangde Chhu gorge the following day. This squirrel is big enough that it's sometimes mistaken for a monkey!

**IRAWADDY SQUIRREL** (*Callosciurus pygerythrus*) – Also known as Hoary-bellied Squirrel, this is a species of lower elevations, told from the Himalayan Ground-Squirrel by its grayish-white (rather than rusty) belly. We saw it on four days, principally around Nganglam.

**HIMALAYAN STRIPED SQUIRREL** (*Tamiops maccllellandi*) – This is the one that looks a bit like a chipmunk. We saw these arboreal squirrels in middle to upper elevation forests on half a dozen days.

**HIMALAYAN GROUND-SQUIRREL** (*Dremomys lokriah*) – Another widespread species, seen on six days across the tour, typically at elevations above 1500m. This one is also known as Orange-bellied Squirrel.

**RED FOX** (*Vulpes vulpes*) – One raced down the road ahead of us as we drove through Phrumsengla NP, and another (much paler) animal kept a wary eye on us from a hillside below the road in one of the Bumthang valleys. The subspecies "montana", sometimes known as Hill Fox, is the one found in the Bhutan and across the rest of the Himalayas.

**WILD BOAR** (*Sus scrofa*) – We saw a large one race across the road -- tail held high -- as we descended towards the Phobjika valley. According to the book "Mammals of Bhutan", the animals found in Bhutan are hybrids between Wild Boars and domestic pigs.

**MUNTJAC (BARKING DEER)** (*Muntiacus muntjak*) – We heard the distinctive, gruff "barks" of this species on several days, and saw it once -- a tiny, golden female that scrambled off the roadside and up the first part of a steep dirt side road as we headed north out of Nganglam.

**ASIAN WATER BUFFALO** (*Bubalus bubalis*) – A big herd of these impressive creatures foraged near the soccer field at the Royal Manas NP ranger station, occasionally lifting their massive heads (with those oh-so-scary pointy horns) to glare down their noses in our direction. We gave them plenty of room when starting down the trail! They're probably a mix of wild and feral animals; wild bulls often join domestic cows in herds around Manas.

#### Herps

**COMMON HOUSE GECKO** (*Hemidactylus frenatus*) – Small numbers in our Gelephu hotel and at Bird View Resort. This widespread species has been introduced to tropical areas all around the world.

**ORIENTAL GARDEN LIZARD** (*Calotes versicolor*) – These were the sizable red-headed green lizards we saw on several days. There are three species of *Calotes* possible in Bhutan, but the others show at least some level of striping or bars on the body and tail.

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## ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

**Totals for the tour: 359 bird taxa and 13 mammal taxa**