



Field Guides Tour Report

Northern India 2020

Jan 11, 2020 to Jan 31, 2020
Terry Stevenson & Tom Johnson

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



We were bowled over by the close views of this highly coveted Wallcreeper at the Kosi barrage in Ramnagar. This "luxury nuthatch" flicked its wings as it pranced around the walls below us, revealing a rose flash with each wingstroke. Photo by guide Tom Johnson.

India. We visit every year but this incredible nation never fails to impress. Immediately upon arriving at Delhi airport and crossing the massive city to our hotel, you realize that humanity simply exists on a different scale in India. People and vehicles are everywhere, but you soon start to relax and take in the overwhelming sights and sounds (those beeping horns, for one!) - and smells - of this great land. We had a nicely compatible group for our multi-week exploration of the northern Indian Plains and Himalayan foothills - it was really fun to help everyone get to know the country a bit better and to find some of the diverse wildlife that calls the subcontinent home. This year's trip was exceptionally foggy and cool in the Plains (especially at Bharatpur), but we didn't have any issues with snow in the mountains at Nainital during our stay (right after we left, a snowstorm blew in and shut the whole town down!).

Our adventure started out with a birding outing to Okhla Bird Sanctuary across the river from New Delhi, and we enjoyed our first views of Black-necked Stork, Garganey, Indian Spot-billed Duck, Brown-hooded Gulls, Red-naped Ibis, and Purple Herons among hundreds of waterfowl and shorebirds.

Leaving the Delhi area by train, we headed south-southwest to Sawai Madhopur, home of the legendary Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve. Rising early, we boarded an open canter vehicle and drove into the park, heads on swivels as we scanned the open woodland for birds and mammals. We met with outstanding luck on our very first morning drive into the park, finding 3 Bengal Tigers - a male/ female pair, and the famous tigress named Arrowhead (for the distinctive marks on her face). The pair of tigers walked right past our vehicle without an apparent care in the world. Wow. In addition to those tigers, we saw plenty of other mammals and some great birds too, including 12 Black Storks and over 20 critically endangered Indian Vultures (perhaps attracted by a tiger kill!). In the afternoon we visited another zone of the park and saw the tigress Arrowhead again, this time right alongside the canter as she strolled along. We also enjoyed some Spotted Owlets and Great Thick-knee and Indian Thick-knee side-by-side.

With our major goal of a tiger sighting under our belt in spectacular fashion on Day 1 at Ranthambhore, we spent the other days absorbing more of the bird life in this fantastic, Jungle Book-esque setting. Other highlights near our lodging included a Bengal Fox, 3 Painted Sandgrouse, and 2 very well-camouflaged Barred Buttonquail. We took an afternoon drive to Soorwal Reservoir and spent time searching the shoreline and dry slopes, finding a surprising 76 Indian Skimmers, 2 Pallas's Gull, 5 Eurasian Curlew, Yellow-wattled Lapwing, Isabelline and Desert Wheatears among about 85 species - not a bad haul for ~3 hours, though we paid for it with some rain on the drive back to our lodge.

Leaving Ranthambhore quite satisfied with our visit, we headed on the "up" train to Bharatpur. Some of our group are still trying to figure out what Bharatpur looks like, as we were enveloped in a very thick fog during our entire visit here! Fighting through the mists, we walked and rode on bicycle rickshaws through the Bharatpur Bird Sanctuary and found Black Bittern, 3 Sarus Cranes, Eastern Orphean Warbler, and Dusky Eagle-Owls at a nest, though the weather did cut down on our waterbird scanning opportunities, for sure. We took a trip to the desolate flats at Kumher and walked in search of Indian Courser, which we found after some effort. At Bund Baretha, things were on the quiet side but we did see a big day roost of Indian Flying-Fox and five Pheasant-tailed Jacanas in a strange spot on the dam breast.

We had one more opportunity to bird Bharatpur Bird Sanctuary, but the heavy fog made things tough once again. We did see Clamorous Reed-Warbler and Spotted Redshank before heading back to the hotel for lunch. In the afternoon, we shifted gears somewhat and enjoyed a cultural tour of Fatehpur

Sikri, palace of Akbar the Great and capital of the Mughal Empire.

From our base at a very comfortable hotel in Agra, we headed out for a day trip to the Chambal River. A boat trip on the river turned up Long-legged Buzzards and Egyptian Vultures, and the spectacular and rare Gharial (a huge fish-eating crocodile). It was also impressive to see the massive and goofy Ganges Softshell Turtle that was sunning itself up on the bank. And remember the Common Hawk-Cuckoo hopping on the bank, followed in short order by a bona fide Eurasian Sparrowhawk doing much the same thing? Curious! Exploring the woods at Chambal Safari Lodge after a tasty outdoor lunch turned up Brown Boobook, Indian Scops-Owl, and a very challenging Orange-headed Thrush hopping in the dense understory.

Fog threatened our tours of cultural sites in Agra, but we chose to go to Agra Fort first and then arrived at the otherworldly Taj Mahal just in time to see the fog lift to reveal the lovely and massive structure. Plus, the crowds were not as large as usual due to the morning's initial fog. After drinking in this hugely important cultural site, we headed from Agra to Delhi in the afternoon.

Our bus ride from Delhi to the Himalaya took most of the day, but when we arrived, we enjoyed tea at a private club near Ramnagar (thanks to our host Hari!) and studied Crested Tree-Swifts, Streak-throated Swallows, and others in a swirling aerialist flock - and a Black-throated Thrush perched up in front of us, too. A nice reward for a long day on the road. Arriving at our lodge at Kumeria, The Den, we enjoyed flocks of hundreds of Red-breasted Parakeets flying to roost. During our full day in the Kumeria area (say that ten times fast!), we found such highlights as Brown Fish-Owl, Gray-bellied Tesia (wow!), Gray-capped Woodpecker, and Black-chinned Babbler. An afternoon visit to Forktail Creek eventually gave us a nice view of a Rufous-gorgeted Flycatcher.

Leaving The Den, we made a morning visit to the Garjiya temple near Ramnagar and searched the cobblestone riverbed in pursuit of... THERE - an IBISBILL! Wow, we had really nice views of this very strange shorebird as it foraged along the river's edge - we watched from a bridge over the river. Buoyed by our success, we entered Corbett National Park proper and took our jeeps (Gypsies) all the way in to the compound at Dhikala, nicely positioned in the wilderness with a broad view of the river edge and grassland in an open patch in the forest. During our days here, we scanned the open vistas and scoured the forests, finding distant Bengal Tiger (thank goodness we had closer views at Ranthambhore earlier!), Black Francolin, Red Junglefowl, Large Cuckooshrike, and 2 magnificent Great Hornbills feeding in a fruiting tree (among a huge diversity of birds and other animals). When we left, we stopped at the Kosi Barrage in Ramnagar and scanned the rock walls until...YES! Wallcreeper! This very strange, long-billed relative of the nuthatches flared its wings as it hopped along the nearly vertical rock surfaces at the barrage, showing off its unique combination of gray, black, and rose.

From the Ramnagar area, we headed up into the Himalayan foothills even higher. First, though, we stopped at the Jim Corbett Museum for a perusal of the lush grounds, finding Jungle Owlets, Hair-crested Drongos, 5 Crimson Sunbirds, and some Golden-fronted Leafbirds, too - a nice haul for this postage stamp of land. Up higher, we birded the Mongoli Valley en route to Nainital, but heavy fog cut our visit there short. However, we did still pick up a female Fire-tailed Sunbird and a few other songbirds there before heading farther upslope. At Nainital, dinner was ready for us and we enjoyed the heaters and hot water bottles in our rooms at this chilly outpost!

In the mountain resort of Nainital, we took a morning walk at Snow View, spotting Eurasian Jay, White-collared Blackbird, White-tailed Nuthatch, and bonus Hill Partridge in addition to the snow-covered high Himalayas (Nanda Devi, 25,600+ feet high, was clearly visible ~75 miles away). We tried something new with a journey to Pangoot, and while we didn't spot any pheasants, we did find some Black-faced Warblers and a really nice Bar-tailed Treecreeper. Fighting our way back into Nainital during a Republic Day traffic jam (with lots of young men taking selfies and posing with snow!), we enjoyed lunch and a nap and then birded the "Boulder Track" on the edge of town, finding Aberrant Bush Warbler, Pink-browed Rosefinch, Yellow-breasted Greenfinch, and a few other tasty treats. We even found ourselves in the middle of kids playing cricket!

On our second full day out of Nainital, we descended to the very birdy area of Sattal, where we took a walk in town before heading into the woods. First, what is that strange mammal staring at us from a tree perch?! A Himalayan Palm Civet (or Masked Palm Civet, as it is also known) - that's what! The birding was pretty darn good here, and we found Chestnut-bellied Rock Thrush, Scarlet Minivet, Rufous-bellied Niltava, and a Collared Owlet being mobbed by songbirds just in town. Heading into the forest, we found one of the most active and most diverse mixed flocks of the entire tour, including Scaly Thrush, Tickell's Thrush, Great Barbet, Blue-throated Barbet, Maroon Oriole, Small Niltava, Blue-fronted Redstart, and >150 Slaty-headed Parakeets. The birds just kept coming - every 50 feet of trail had a new treasure waiting for us. We enjoyed a monkey-free picnic lunch (sometimes the naughty macaques here steal food) and also got to see the production of a music video commemorating an upcoming wedding. Our visit to Sattal was exciting, indeed.

Leaving the Nainital area, we headed downslope and teased out a Scaly-breasted Cupwing and Chestnut-headed Tesia from the thick streamside foliage at Mongoli Valley in addition to a Himalayan Woodpecker up in the tall pines. Returning to the Banyan Retreat near Ramnagar, we were greeted by a Black-hooded Oriole attacking its reflection in the windows of the main hotel building - wow, and new for our trip. An evening return to the Kosi Barrage found us Wallcreeper for those who missed it on the first attempt, and we lucked into brief Blyth's Swift overhead before torrential rain cut our afternoon birding outing short.

We returned from Ramnagar to Delhi on a long train ride, and got to catch up on sleep or enjoy the mustard fields flash by on the way.

From our new hotel near the Delhi airport, we were nicely positioned for our final day of birding at Sultanpur National Park, a mixture of wetlands and woodlands with adjacent barren flats. As had been our experience at Bharatpur earlier in the tour, the fog was very thick, but we were able to find some great new additions including Greater Flamingos, Booted Eagle, Scaly-breasted Munia - and the diversity and abundance of waterbirds here was really great, too. One more sumptuous buffet dinner at our hotel near the airport and one final birdlist, and we then packed up for our flights back around this blue and green marble to North America.

Terry and I would like to thank you all for traveling with Field Guides to India, and we hope that once the current pandemic crisis abates, we'll see you all again out in the field. We'd also like to offer special thanks to Rakesh and the whole team at Field Guides and A&K who provided such exceptional service and logistical support.

Until next time, stay healthy, and I wish you good birding and good times.

-Tom Johnson

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

BIRDS

Anatidae (Ducks, Geese, and Waterfowl).

BAR-HEADED GOOSE (*Anser indicus*) – We saw these fine geese up close at the Chambal River.

GRAYLAG GOOSE (*Anser anser*) – These large geese were fairly common in wetlands in the Plains.

KNOB-BILLED DUCK (*Sarkidiornis melanotos*) – We admired these big, strange ducks in wetlands on the Plains, particularly at Bharatpur.

RUDDY SHELDUC (*Tadorna ferruginea*) – Scattered throughout many wetland sites, with hundreds at the Taj Mahal and in Ramnagar.

GARGANEY (*Spatula querquedula*) – Small numbers were mixed in with Eurasian Green-winged Teal at wetland sites.

NORTHERN SHOVELER (*Spatula clypeata*) – A very common duck in the Plains.

GADWALL (*Mareca strepera*) – Widespread in wetlands.

EURASIAN WIGEON (*Mareca penelope*) – These migrants were at the Okhla Bird Sanctuary and Sultanpur.

INDIAN SPOT-BILLED DUCK (*Anas poecilorhyncha*) – A widespread resident duck, like a fancy female Mallard with a stripey mask.

NORTHERN PINTAIL (*Anas acuta*) – Fairly common wintering species, including large numbers at Soorwal Reservoir.

GREEN-WINGED TEAL (*Anas crecca*) – Abundant.

RED-CRESTED POCHARD (*Netta rufina*) – These striking ducks were at Bharatpur and on the Chambal River.

COMMON POCHARD (*Aythya ferina*) – These Old World divers look like a combination of a Redhead and a Canvasback - we saw them at Okhla Bird Sanctuary and Sultanpur.

FERRUGINOUS DUCK (*Aythya nyroca*) – Good views at Bharatpur and Sultanpur.

TUFTED DUCK (*Aythya fuligula*) – These "scaup with ponytails" were with thousands of other birds at the Okhla Bird Sanctuary on our first day of birding.

COMMON MERGANSER (*Mergus merganser*) – These "Goosanders" were on the river below our hotel outside Corbett NP.

Phasianidae (Pheasants, Grouse, and Allies).

HILL PARTRIDGE (*Arborophila torqueola*) – The walk at Snow View was punctuated by a great view of a striking male calling from the forest understory.

INDIAN PEAFOWL (*Pavo cristatus*) – This is one of the world's most spectacular and widely recognized birds - and we saw them just about everywhere in the Plains. We enjoyed especially wonderful views in natural habitats at Ranthambhore.

PAINTED SPURFOWL (*Galloperdix lunulata*) – A few pairs of these stunning birds were feeding along a roadside at Ranthambhore.

BLACK FRANCOLIN (*Francolinus francolinus*) – The group had good views of two males during a drive at Corbett NP.

GRAY FRANCOLIN (*Francolinus pondicerianus*) – Rather common (especially conspicuous by voice) in the Plains.

RED JUNGLE FOWL (*Gallus gallus*) – We scored a few nice sightings of these rather familiar-looking birds in their native habitat. This is the progenitor of the domestic chicken.

KALIJ PHEASANT (*Lophura leucomelanos*) – Scattered views in forests in the Himalayan foothills - perhaps the most memorable view was in Nainital when a male and female peeked over a rock wall before launching themselves in flight downhill - right toward us!

Phoenicopteridae (Flamingos).

GREATER FLAMINGO (*Phoenicopterus roseus*) – Five of these tall, pale pink wading birds were at Sultanpur on our final day.

Podicipedidae (Grebes).

LITTLE GREBE (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*) – Common in wetland habitats in the Plains.

GREAT CRESTED GREBE (*Podiceps cristatus*) – Two were near Dhikala at Corbett NP.

Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves).

ROCK PIGEON (*Columba livia*) – Common and widespread - some were even using natural cliff sites.

ORIENTAL TURTLE-DOVE (*Streptopelia orientalis*) – We had some great views of several individuals at Snow View in Nainital.

EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE (*Streptopelia decaocto*) – Common/ widespread in the Plains.

RED COLLARED-DOVE (*Streptopelia tranquebarica*) – Much less common than the former species, but we did see a few around Kumher and Corbett NP.

SPOTTED DOVE (*Streptopelia chinensis*) – Scattered sightings, mostly in savanna habitats on the Plains.

LAUGHING DOVE (*Streptopelia senegalensis*) – A common small dove on the Plains.

ASIAN EMERALD DOVE (*Chalcophaps indica*) – This was seen by some at Corbett NP.

YELLOW-FOOTED GREEN-PIGEON (*Treron phoenicopterus*) – Very common on our route - fantastic views at Ranthambhore and Bharatpur.

PIN-TAILED GREEN-PIGEON (*Treron apicauda*) – We were pleased to find a flock of 7 of these beautiful green-pigeons while driving through Corbett NP.

Pteroclididae (Sandgrouse).

PAINTED SANDGROUSE (*Pterocles indicus*) – Spectacular! We lucked into 3 of these fine birds in the buffer zone of Ranthambhore NP - stunning views close to the vehicle.

Cuculidae (Cuckoos).

GREATER COUCAL (*Centropus sinensis*) – These big cuckoos were quite common in the Plains.

LESSER COUCAL (*Centropus bengalensis*) – This species was found during one of the drives at Corbett NP.

COMMON HAWK-CUCKOO (*Hierococcyx varius*) – One was in forest near Bund Baretha; the other was hopping around on the bank of the Chambal River. We even thought it was a small Accipiter [hawk] when we first saw it at a distance, but as we drew closer, the behavior and particular

details (that cuckoo bill, for instance) revealed its true identity!.

Apodidae (Swifts)

WHITE-RUMPED NEEDLETAIL (*Zoonavena sylvatica*) – Good views of about 10 of these swifts overhead at Corbett NP.

HIMALAYAN SWIFTLET (*Aerodramus brevirostris*) – Fairly common in the Himalayan foothills around Ramnagar and Corbett NP.

ALPINE SWIFT (*Apus melba*) – These big swifts were seen during one of the outings in Corbett NP.

BLYTH'S SWIFT (*Apus leuconyx*) – This is the local version of what used to be called "Fork-tailed Swift" pre-split. We saw one just before the rain rolled in at Sitabani Forest Reserve near Ramnagar.

LITTLE SWIFT (*Apus affinis*) – We saw these blocky swifts a few times, but the best view was overhead at Bharatpur.

Hemiprocnidae (Treeswifts)

CRESTED TREESWIFT (*Hemiprocne coronata*) – We enjoyed excellent studies of these aerialists in the Ramnagar-Corbett area.

Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots)

EURASIAN MOORHEN (*Gallinula chloropus*) – Very common in Plains wetlands, with hundreds on display at Bharatpur.

EURASIAN COOT (*Fulica atra*) – Hundreds were present at Soorwal, Bharatpur, and Sultanpur.

GRAY-HEADED SWAMPHEN (*Porphyrio poliocephalus*) – These large, stout rails were fairly common at wetland sites such as Okhla Bird Sanctuary, Bharatpur, and Sultanpur.

WHITE-BREASTED WATERHEN (*Amaurornis phoenicurus*) – Common at wetland sites (especially those with forested edges).

BROWN CRAKE (*Zapornia akool*) – One was heard at Corbett NP. [*]

Gruidae (Cranes)

SARUS CRANE (*Antigone antigone*) – It was spectacular to see and hear three of these massive cranes fly close past us during a foggy walk at Bharatpur.

Burhinidae (Thick-knees)

INDIAN THICK-KNEE (*Burhinus indicus*) – Three were standing along the edge of a lake in Ranthambhore Zone 3 - quite close to some Great Thick-knees, in fact!

GREAT THICK-KNEE (*Esacus recurvirostris*) – Repeated excellent views of these stunners at Ranthambhore, Soorwal, the Chambal River, and Corbett.

Recurvirostridae (Stilts and Avocets)

BLACK-WINGED STILT (*Himantopus himantopus*) – Common throughout the tour at wetland sites.

Ibidorhynchidae (Ibisbill)

IBISBILL (*Ibidorhyncha struthersii*) – Our sighting of a single bird at the Garjiya Devi temple along the Kosi River was wonderful - clearly a highlight of the tour for many. We watched this very strange shorebird as it slowly walked and probed for food in between the smooth river rocks. Ibisbill is the sole member of the monotypic family Ibidorhynchidae (literally "Ibisbill") and is restricted to Central Asia.

Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)

RIVER LAPWING (*Vanellus duvaucelii*) – These very handsome plovers were most common along the Chambal River and at Corbett.

YELLOW-WATTLED LAPWING (*Vanellus malabaricus*) – Four were on the dry hills near Soorwal Reservoir.

RED-WATTLED LAPWING (*Vanellus indicus*) – Very common - seen almost every day.

WHITE-TAILED LAPWING (*Vanellus leucurus*) – These small, lovely lapwings were at wetland sites like Bharatpur and Sultanpur - far less common than Red-wattled Lapwings.

KENTISH PLOVER (KENTISH) (*Charadrius alexandrinus alexandrinus*) – These small plovers were along the muddy shorelines at Soorwal and the Chambal River.

LITTLE RINGED PLOVER (*Charadrius dubius*) – Three were along the shoreline at Soorwal Reservoir.

Jacanidae (Jacanas)

PHEASANT-TAILED JACANA (*Hydrophasianus chirurgus*) – These were very difficult at Bharatpur during our visit due to the fog; however, we lucked into five on the dam wall at Bund Baretha that strutted along and showed off for us at close range.

BRONZE-WINGED JACANA (*Metopidius indicus*) – A few were in Zone 2 at Ranthambhore, but they remained invisible at Bharatpur due to the fog.

Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)

EURASIAN CURLEW (*Numenius arquata*) – Five of these impressive, long-billed shorebirds were along the shoreline at Soorwal Reservoir.

BLACK-TAILED GODWIT (*Limosa limosa*) – These widespread Eurasian godwits showed off their bright white underwings as they flew past us at Soorwal Reservoir.

RUFF (*Calidris pugnax*) – Soorwal, the Taj Mahal, and Sultanpur hosted a few of these strange Eurasian shorebirds.

TEMMINCK'S STINT (*Calidris temminckii*) – These small, clay-colored sandpipers were on mudflats at Soorwal Reservoir and along the banks of the Chambal River.

LITTLE STINT (*Calidris minuta*) – We studied a flock of 16 birds along the edge of Soorwal Reservoir. In winter, they look a LOT like Semipalmated Sandpipers from the Americas.

COMMON SNIPE (*Gallinago gallinago*) – These cryptic shorebirds were at Soorwal Reservoir and Bund Baretha.

COMMON SANDPIPER (*Actitis hypoleucos*) – These teetering sandpipers were fairly common on lakes and rivers - like an Old World Spotted Sandpiper.

GREEN SANDPIPER (*Tringa ochropus*) – This sandpiper was common in Plains wetlands - like an Old World Solitary Sandpiper.

SPOTTED REDSHANK (*Tringa erythropus*) – One emerged briefly from the fog at Bharatpur.

COMMON GREENSHANK (*Tringa nebularia*) – Like a pale Greater Yellowlegs with drab legs and a white back - this large sandpiper was a regular feature at wetland sites.

MARSH SANDPIPER (*Tringa stagnatilis*) – This needle-billed sandpiper was at Soorwal Reservoir and at Sultanpur.

WOOD SANDPIPER (*Tringa glareola*) – We found these small, common migrant shorebirds at quite a few sites in the Plains. They look like a combination of a Lesser Yellowlegs and a Solitary Sandpiper.

COMMON REDSHANK (*Tringa totanus*) – Small numbers were scattered around Plains wetland sites.

Turnicidae (Buttonquail)

BARRED BUTTONQUAIL (*Turnix suscitator*) – Two of these hard-to-see skulkers were in the open buffer zone near Ranthambhore NP. Terry kindly rounded them up on foot so we could have a second view of them.

Glareolidae (Pratincoles and Coursers)

INDIAN COURSER (*Cursorius coromandelicus*) – At least 8 of these gorgeous, plover-like shorebirds were striding around (coursing?) in the desolate plains around Kumher.

Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers)

BLACK-HEADED GULL (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*) – These widespread gulls were at Okhla Bird Sanctuary and at the Taj Mahal.

BROWN-HEADED GULL (*Chroicocephalus brunnicephalus*) – At a distance, these can look a lot like the more widespread Black-headed Gull; however, we had some nice, close flyby views at Okhla Bird Sanctuary that revealed the fancy wing pattern of this species.

PALLAS'S GULL (*Ichthyaeus ichthyaeus*) – We saw a couple of these big, impressive gulls (also called "Great Black-headed Gull") at Soorwal Reservoir and along the Chambal River.

LARGE GULL SP. (*Larus sp.*) – We saw a few cold-toned immature large gulls at the Okhla Bird Sanctuary that eluded a precise identification. These were likely "Steppe" Lesser Black-backed Gull, but at the distance we saw them, it's hard to rule out Caspian Gull (which is apparently much less common in Delhi).

WHISKERED TERN (*Chlidonias hybrida*) – These marsh terns were swooping over the river at the Okhla Bird Sanctuary and also at the Taj Mahal.

RIVER TERN (*Sterna aurantia*) – Excellent views at Ranthambhore, Soorwal, and the Chambal River, among other sites.

INDIAN SKIMMER (*Rynchops albigollis*) – Yip yip! We counted 76 of these range-restricted skimmers along the shoreline at Soorwal Reservoir, and enjoyed up close views of them as they loped back and forth in front of us. Spectacular!

Ciconiidae (Storks)

ASIAN OPENBILL (*Anastomus oscitans*) – It was surprising to see a large flock of 160 of these strange storks at Soorwal Reservoir.

BLACK STORK (*Ciconia nigra*) – We spotted these storks at Ranthambhore and Corbett.

WOOLLY-NECKED STORK (*Ciconia episcopus*) – These distinctive waders were at Ranthambhore, Soorwal, and Corbett.

BLACK-NECKED STORK (*Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus*) – Huge! These massive birds were at the water's edge at Okhla Bird Sanctuary, Bharatpur, and Corbett.

PAINTED STORK (*Mycteria leucocephala*) – Fairly common at Bharatpur and Sultanpur, and we saw them at many other wetland sites, too.

Anhingidae (Anhingas)

ORIENTAL DARTER (*Anhinga melanogaster*) – The Asian relative of the Anhinga - we saw them snaking around lakes and wetlands on several occasions in the Plains.

Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants and Shags)

LITTLE CORMORANT (*Microcarbo niger*) – Common and widespread - small with a stubby bill.

GREAT CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax carbo*) – This is the common large cormorant that we saw throughout our travels.

INDIAN CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax fuscicollis*) – Of the three cormorants we saw, this one is the most localized - we saw it at Okhla Bird Sanctuary and Bharatpur.

Pelecanidae (Pelicans)

GREAT WHITE PELICAN (*Pelecanus onocrotalus*) – We spotted two in the fog at Bharatpur, but viewing was difficult!

Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets, and Bitterns)

BLACK BITTERN (*Ixobrychus flavicollis*) – It took a bit of waiting and peering into the shadows below some wetland shrubs, but we eventually lined up on this secretive and distinctive heron as it tried to hide from us.

GRAY HERON (*Ardea cinerea*) – This is the widespread large heron of the Old World - much like the Great Blue Heron in North America.

PURPLE HERON (*Ardea purpurea*) – Slender and colorful - this lovely heron was at several Plains wetland sites including Okhla and Sultanpur.

GREAT EGRET (*Ardea alba*) – Common and widespread.

INTERMEDIATE EGRET (*Ardea intermedia*) – Less common than Great Egret - it looks, well... INTERMEDIATE in size/ structure between Great Egret and Cattle Egret. We often spotted them with their necks held out fairly straight instead of crooked.

LITTLE EGRET (*Egretta garzetta*) – Common and widespread - this is the Old World relative of the Snowy Egret from the Americas.

CATTLE EGRET (*Bubulcus ibis*) – Abundant - often wandering around looking for insects on the edges of the busy roads.

INDIAN POND-HERON (*Ardeola grayii*) – Common; often present in muddy ditches in the middle of busy towns.

STRIATED HERON (*Butorides striata*) – This small heron is fairly common in the Plains - like a paler/ grayer version of Green Heron.

BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON (*Nycticorax nycticorax*) – These cosmopolitan herons were at Bharatpur and Ranthambhore.

Threskiornithidae (Ibises and Spoonbills)

GLOSSY IBIS (*Plegadis falcinellus*) – Scattered sightings of small numbers at Plains wetland sites.

BLACK-HEADED IBIS (*Threskiornis melanocephalus*) – Reasonably common; we probably tallied over a hundred between our wetland sites in the Plains.

RED-NAPED IBIS (*Pseudibis papillosa*) – Wow - we saw a lot of these this time! Sometimes we only see this species at the Chambal River, but on this tour, they were at Okhla Bird Sanctuary, Sultanpur, and in agricultural fields during our drives around the Agra area.

EURASIAN SPOONBILL (*Platalea leucorodia*) – Small numbers of these lovely and strange wading birds were scattered around Plains wetland sites.

Pandionidae (Osprey)

OSPREY (*Pandion haliaetus*) – These raptors were hunting fish at Soorwal Reservoir and at Corbett NP.

Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)

BLACK-WINGED KITE (*Elanus caeruleus*) – A fairly common roadside sight in the Plains. The best view was probably the one perched on a wire behind our hotel at Ranthambhore.

EGYPTIAN VULTURE (*Neophron percnopterus*) – Repeated sightings of this striking vulture in the Plains, including a couple flying around the dome of the Taj Mahal!

ORIENTAL HONEY-BUZZARD (*Pernis ptilorhynchus*) – We saw a few soaring at great height, but it is hard to top the memory of the close individual perched above our Gypsies at Ranthambhore.

RED-HEADED VULTURE (*Sarcogyps calvus*) – A couple perched up and soared over during our visit to Corbett NP.

INDIAN VULTURE (*Gyps indicus*) – This species used to be quite common, but declined precipitously due to inadvertent poisoning (by diclofenac, an anti-inflammatory drug formerly commonly given to cattle in India) - now the Indian Vulture is considered a critically endangered species. We were fortunate to see 21 hanging around a roost site in Ranthambhore NP - perhaps lingering in an area near a tiger kill? Indeed, shortly after our sighting of the vultures, we crossed paths with two beautiful tigers.

HIMALAYAN GRIFFON (*Gyps himalayensis*) – We saw plenty of these huge vultures in the mountains near Nainital.

CRESTED SERPENT-EAGLE (*Spilornis cheela*) – Our best views of these big raptors were at Ranthambhore NP. It seemed a bit chilly for serpents to be active, but the eagles seemed to think otherwise!

CHANGEABLE HAWK-EAGLE (CHANGEABLE) (*Nisaetus cirrhatus limnaeetus*) – A few nice views at Corbett NP.

MOUNTAIN HAWK-EAGLE (*Nisaetus nipalensis*) – One soared over the river near The Den at Corbett; later, we found another at Sattal.

GREATER SPOTTED EAGLE (*Clanga clanga*) – Common in the fog at Bharatpur.

BOOTED EAGLE (*Hieraetus pennatus*) – We enjoyed extended, close views of a soaring bird at Sultanpur on our final outing.

STEPPE EAGLE (*Aquila nipalensis*) – This declining species was a regular feature in the Himalayan foothills.

IMPERIAL EAGLE (*Aquila heliaca*) – One was seen at a distance at Bharatpur.

EURASIAN MARSH-HARRIER (*Circus aeruginosus*) – These elegant raptors coursed over wetlands at Okhla, Bharatpur, and a few other sites we visited in the Plains.

HEN HARRIER (*Circus cyaneus*) – One was seen over the open grassland at Dhikala in Corbett NP.

SHIKRA (*Accipiter badius*) – We saw these *Accipiter* hawks regularly in the Ranthambhore area.

EURASIAN SPARROWHAWK (*Accipiter nisus*) – The birds we saw along the Chambal River were really lovely, especially the one that was standing on the river bank and allowed us to cruise right up to it! We had to double check its hawk bona fides carefully after seeing a Common Hawk-Cuckoo in a similar posture just minutes earlier!

BLACK KITE (*Milvus migrans*) – Amazingly common on the Indian Plains, with thousands visible in the air over Delhi.

PALLAS'S FISH-EAGLE (*Haliaeetus leucoryphus*) – These raptors were a regular feature along the waterways around Corbett NP.

LESSER FISH-EAGLE (*Haliaeetus humilis*) – We watched two of these large raptors along the river at The Den, near Corbett.

LONG-LEGGED BUZZARD (*Buteo rufinus*) – Great views along the banks of the Chambal River during our boat trip. This species looks a bit like a strawberry blonde Rough-legged Hawk.

Strigidae (Owls)

INDIAN SCOPS-OWL (*Otus bakkamoena*) – Excellent views of a day-roosting pair at Ranthambhore; later, we saw some more in vine tangles at Bharatpur.

DUSKY EAGLE-OWL (*Bubo coromandus*) – A spectacular adult was tending to two chicks in a stick nest in the wetlands at Bharatpur. Remember those glowing eyes?

BROWN FISH-OWL (*Ketupa zeylonensis*) – A day-roosting bird at The Den was nice, but the birds calling near Dhikala during the daytime were spectacular!

TAWNY FISH-OWL (*Ketupa flavipes*) – One was on a day roost above the river near The Den (in relatively close proximity to a Brown Fish-Owl!).

COLLARED OWLET (*Glaucidium brodiei*) – One was attracting the ire of many small songbirds at Sattal.

JUNGLE OWLET (*Glaucidium radiatum*) – The pair at the Jim Corbett Museum was quite showy; we saw a few others near Ramnagar during the evening hours.

SPOTTED OWLET (*Athene brama*) – We ended up seeing these small, handsome owls regularly in open woods in the Plains - our final tally was a remarkable 17 individuals!

BROWN BOOBOOK (*Ninox scutulata*) – The day-roosting bird drew itself up into a very skinny posture when we spotted it in the forest at the Chambal Safari Lodge.

Upupidae (Hoopoes)

EURASIAN HOOPOE (*Upupa epops*) – These widespread migrants were scattered through the Plains. Superb views in the open woodland at Sultanpur.

Bucerotidae (Hornbills)

GREAT HORNBILL (*Buceros bicornis*) – These two enormous birds were feeding on small fruits in the forest canopy at Corbett NP - it was almost ridiculous to watch them nimbly handle the fruits with such large bills. We were quite lucky to get to watch these rare birds in their element.

INDIAN GRAY HORNBILL (*Ocyrceros birostris*) – This Plains species, a small hornbill, was at Bund Baretha and Bharatpur.

Alcedinidae (Kingfishers)

COMMON KINGFISHER (*Alcedo atthis*) – These tiny kingfishers were fairly common along water in the Plains and in the Himalayan foothills.

STORK-BILLED KINGFISHER (*Pelargopsis capensis*) – One of these scarce, striking birds put in a brief appearance along a stream during a drive at Ranthambhore.

WHITE-THROATED KINGFISHER (*Halcyon smyrnensis*) – An attractive and very common resident of the Plains.

CRESTED KINGFISHER (*Megaceryle lugubris*) – We saw these big, striking kingfishers along swift rivers in the Himalayan foothills.

PIED KINGFISHER (*Ceryle rudis*) – This was the mid-sized kingfisher that we often saw hovering high above lakes and rivers.

Meropidae (Bee-eaters).

BLUE-BEARDED BEE-EATER (*Nyctornis athertoni*) – Wow - this uncommon, big beauty was perched on a wire near the Banyan Retreat.

Coraciidae (Rollers).

INDIAN ROLLER (*Coracias benghalensis*) – These chunky birds were often seen as we were driving, but we were fortunate to have some great views of their vibrant colors and enchanting expressions.

Megalaimidae (Asian Barbets).

COPPERSMITH BARBET (*Psilopogon haemacephalus*) – One was foraging with a mixed flock at the Okhla Bird Sanctuary on our first day together.

GREAT BARBET (*Psilopogon virens*) – They were tough to see, but we eventually had some views of a pair that were foraging and calling in the canopy at Sattal.

LINEATED BARBET (*Psilopogon lineatus*) – A few were spotted in the Ramnagar area.

BROWN-HEADED BARBET (*Psilopogon zeylanicus*) – Similar to the Lineated Barbet but found in the Plains; they were fairly easy to see, with particularly excellent looks at Okhla on Day 1.

BLUE-THROATED BARBET (*Psilopogon asiaticus*) – That one in the mixed flock at Sattal sure was memorable.

Picidae (Woodpeckers).

EURASIAN WRYNECK (*Jynx torquilla*) – We saw one on the lawn at Jungle Vilas near Ranthambhore on two different days - it was nice to study this very strange woodpecker up close and personal.

BROWN-CAPPED WOODPECKER (*Yungipicus nanus*) – One was foraging with a mixed flock of songbirds at Ranthambhore.

GRAY-CAPPED WOODPECKER (*Yungipicus canicapillus*) – This was the pygmy woodpecker that we found regularly in the Corbett area.

YELLOW-CROWNED WOODPECKER (*Leiopicus mahrattensis*) – A pair showed off nicely as we watched from the vehicle at Ranthambhore.

BROWN-FRONTED WOODPECKER (*Dendrocytes auriceps*) – We encountered a handful in the Nainital area.

FULVOUS-BREASTED WOODPECKER (*Dendrocopos macei*) – Seen several times around Corbett.

HIMALAYAN WOODPECKER (*Dendrocopos himalayensis*) – One was a nice bonus during our Mongoli Valley hike. It took a bit of work but we eventually had good scope views in the tall pines.

RUFIOUS WOODPECKER (*Micropternus brachyurus*) – Some folks enjoyed nice views of this excellent bird during an outing at Corbett.

HIMALAYAN FLAMEBACK (*Dinopium shorii*) – One was along the trail in the Mongoli Valley.

BLACK-RUMPED FLAMEBACK (*Dinopium benghalense*) – This was the common flameback of the Plains, including Ranthambhore where we saw them regularly.

LESSER YELLOWNAPE (*Picus chlorolophus*) – One was with that marvelous mixed flock at Sattal.

STREAK-THROATED WOODPECKER (*Picus xanthopygaeus*) – Corbett was where we found this lovely woodpecker.

GRAY-HEADED WOODPECKER (*Picus canus*) – Another great Corbett specialty on this tour - we had some very nice views from the vehicles.

GREATER YELLOWNAPE (*Chrysophlegma flavinucha*) – How about the bird that was looking at its reflection in the window at The Den near Corbett? That was a pretty amazing view on our first morning birding in the Corbett area. We saw a few more at Sattal, too.

Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras).

COLLARED FALCONET (*Microhierax caerulescens*) – A couple of sightings of this tiny falcon in the forest at Corbett.

EURASIAN KESTREL (*Falco tinnunculus*) – Scattered sightings in the Plains and also at Dhikala in Corbett.

PEREGRINE FALCON (*Falco peregrinus*) – Ours were widespread - perched on the towers at Okhla Bird Sanctuary, Chambal River, and the Mongoli Valley.

Psittaculidae (Old World Parrots).

ALEXANDRINE PARAKEET (*Psittacula eupatria*) – While we waited for our park entrance permits to be approved at Corbett, we entertained ourselves by watching these large-billed parakeets in the trees above the park gate.

ROSE-RINGED PARAKEET (*Psittacula krameri*) – Widespread and common in the Plains, even in big cities like Delhi and Agra.

SLATY-HEADED PARAKEET (*Psittacula himalayana*) – We saw a few in the Himalayan foothills, but nothing prepared us for the big flock of >150 that were flushed by a raptor at Sattal.

PLUM-HEADED PARAKEET (*Psittacula cyanocephala*) – Scattered across the Plains; we struggled to get good views until we had them nice and close outside the Banyan Retreat.

RED-BREASTED PARAKEET (*Psittacula alexandri*) – Common in very large flocks in the Corbett area, especially near the Den. We estimated 650 flying over in several flocks on our first evening there!

Campephagidae (Cuckooshrikes).

LONG-TAILED MINIVET (*Pericrocotus ethologus*) – We saw these lovely minivets regularly with mixed flocks in the Himalayan foothills.

SCARLET MINIVET (*Pericrocotus speciosus*) – One of these beauties perched below eye level during our walk through town at Sattal.

LARGE CUCKOOSHRIKE (*Coracina macei*) – One was at Corbett NP during one of the drives out from Dhikala.

Oriolidae (Old World Orioles).

BLACK-HOODED ORIOLE (*Oriolus xanthornus*) – Wow - the one at the Banyan Retreat was intent on combat with its reflection in one of the lobby windows. It seemed to be winning!

MAROON ORIOLE (*Oriolus traillii*) – The one that was whacking a caterpillar on a branch at Sattal was a highlight of a very good walk there.

Vangidae (Vangas, Helmetshrikes, and Allies).

COMMON WOODSHRIKE (*Tephrodornis pondicerianus*) – Linda found one during a walk at our lodge near Ranthambhore.

BAR-WINGED FLYCATCHER-SHRIKE (*Hemipus picatus*) – These mid-story songbirds accompanied mixed flocks in Corbett NP.

Aegithinidae (Ioras).

COMMON IORA (*Aegithina tiphia*) – One was near our lodge at Ranthambhore for part of the group.

Rhipiduridae (Fantails).

WHITE-THROATED FANTAIL (*Rhipidura albicollis*) – These fantails were fairly common in forest in the Himalayan foothills.

WHITE-BROWED FANTAIL (*Rhipidura aureola*) – We found these in the forest at Ranthambhore.

Dicruridae (Drongos).

BLACK DRONGO (*Dicrurus macrocercus*) – This was the common drongo of open areas (often in agricultural fields) - sort of like a kingbird of India.

ASHY DRONGO (*Dicrurus leucophaeus*) – Several sightings in the area of Corbett NP.

WHITE-BELLIED DRONGO (*Dicrurus caerulescens*) – A few of these nicely marked drongos were around Ranthambhore NP.

BRONZED DRONGO (*Dicrurus aeneus*) – Great studies at Corbett and also at Sattal.

HAIR-CRESTED DRONGO (*Dicrurus hottentottus*) – We had some lovely views of these fancy drongos in fruiting trees around the Jim Corbett Museum.

Laniidae (Shrikes).

BAY-BACKED SHRIKE (*Lanius vittatus*) – A few were in the area of the lodge at Ranthambhore - one was actually hunting the hedges just outside our rooms!

LONG-TAILED SHRIKE (*Lanius schach*) – A common shrike of the Plains.

GREAT GRAY SHRIKE (INDIAN) (*Lanius excubitor lahtora*) – During our walk down to the Chambal River, we saw one of these at a distance through the scopes.

Corvidae (Crows, Jays, and Magpies).

EURASIAN JAY (*Garrulus glandarius*) – Only one, but it was a close one! We enjoyed a single clever jay at the food stand at Snow View, Nainital.

BLACK-HEADED JAY (*Garrulus lanceolatus*) – This garrulous jay was in a few locations in the Nainital area.

RED-BILLED BLUE-MAGPIE (*Urocissa erythroryncha*) – A couple of these magnificent magpies were at The Den near Corbett; others were in the Nainital and Sattal areas. What a striking, elegant bird!

RUFOUS TREEPIE (*Dendrocitta vagabunda*) – Super common in wooded areas of the Plains, including at Ranthambhore, where they are overly friendly and landed on our safari vehicles.

GRAY TREEPIE (*Dendrocitta formosae*) – A flock showed up and perched briefly in treetops during a stop at the "Three Gods" below Nainital.

HOUSE CROW (*Corvus splendens*) – Abundant in the Plains.

LARGE-BILLED CROW (LARGE-BILLED) (*Corvus macrorhynchos japonensis*) – This was the form that we saw in the middle elevations around Nainital.

LARGE-BILLED CROW (INDIAN JUNGLE) (*Corvus macrorhynchos culminatus*) – The "Indian Jungle Crow" of the Plains - quite common.

Stenostiridae (Fairy Flycatchers).

YELLOW-BELLIED FAIRY-FANTAIL (*Chelidorhynch hypoxanthus*) – Several solid sightings in forest of the Corbett area and also at Sattal.

GRAY-HEADED CANARY-FLYCATCHER (*Culicicapa ceylonensis*) – We had repeated nice views, including good numbers at The Den and at the Jim Corbett Museum.

Paridae (Tits, Chickadees, and Titmice).

COAL TIT (BLACK-CRESTED) (*Periparus ater melanolophus*) – Brief views during our montane excursion to Pangoot.

GREEN-BACKED TIT (*Parus monticolus*) – This colorful tit was fairly common in Himalayan mixed flocks.

CINEREOUS TIT (*Parus cinereus*) – The biggest numbers we found were around the Corbett and Sattal areas in the foothills.

HIMALAYAN BLACK-LORED TIT (*Machlolophus xanthogenys*) – Wow - this one is a real stunner. We found these crested tits on several occasions around Corbett and Sattal.

Alaudidae (Larks).

ASHY-CROWNED SPARROW-LARK (*Eremopterix griseus*) – Soorwal Reservoir and Kumher hosted our sightings of these distinctive larks (is "distinctive lark" an oxymoron?).

GREATER SHORT-TOED LARK (*Calandrella brachydactyla*) – Common in the flats around Kumher and Sultanpur.

CRESTED LARK (*Galerida cristata*) – These big, expressive larks were along the Chambal River and on the flats at Sultanpur.

Cisticolidae (Cisticolas and Allies).

COMMON TAILORBIRD (*Orthotomus sutorius*) – Scattered sightings of this relatively inconspicuous, gnatcatcher-like songbird mousing around trees and hedgerows.

GRAY-BREASTED PRINIA (*Prinia hodgsonii*) – Our sole sighting was of a flock of 7 along the road at Sattal.

ASHY PRINIA (*Prinia socialis*) – Common in scrubby areas of the Plains.

PLAIN PRINIA (*Prinia inornata*) – We saw these prinias scattered around woodlots and brush in the Plains, including at Bharatpur and Sultanpur.

ZITTING CISTICOLA (*Cisticola juncidis*) – This species was found in Corbett NP during our full day out of Dhikala.

Acrocephalidae (Reed Warblers and Allies).

MOUSTACHED WARBLER (*Acrocephalus melanopogon*) – One was ticking as it skulked under the waterside hedge at Bharatpur (in exactly the same spot we found one in 2019).

BLYTH'S REED WARBLER (*Acrocephalus dumetorum*) – Common, especially by voice, along the edge of the water at Bharatpur.

CLAMOROUS REED WARBLER (BROWN) (*Acrocephalus stentoreus brunnescens*) – This warbler is huge! I think everyone who saw this one was impressed by its very large size compared to the former species.

Pnoepygidae (Cupwings).

SCALY-BREASTED CUPWING (*Pnoepyga albiventer*) – It took several tries and some strategic positioning, but we eventually had this little feathered mouse (like an Asian version of a tapaculo!) scuttle past our feet in the Mongoli Valley.

Hirundinidae (Swallows).

GRAY-THROATED MARTIN (*Riparia chinensis*) – This small swallow was fairly common near water in the Plains.

EURASIAN CRAG-MARTIN (*Ptyonoprogne rupestris*) – Once circled high overhead at The Den as we skywatched from the lawn.

DUSKY CRAG-MARTIN (*Ptyonoprogne concolor*) – These gray-brown swallows were found along cliffs and over lakes at Ranthambhore.

BARN SWALLOW (*Hirundo rustica*) – A fairly common wintering bird; seen regularly in mixed flocks of aerialists.

WIRE-TAILED SWALLOW (*Hirundo smithii*) – Close views of these striking swallows at Soorwal Reservoir and Sultanpur.

RED-RUMPED SWALLOW (*Cecropis daurica*) – Scattered sightings - the best were probably at the Kosi Barrage in Ramnagar.

STREAK-THROATED SWALLOW (*Petrochelidon fluvicola*) – Repeated sightings in mixed flocks, with good views at Soorwal Reservoir and Ramnagar.

COMMON HOUSE-MARTIN (*Delichon urbicum*) – We saw these martins on a couple of occasions around Ramnagar; studies of photos helped to exclude the similar Asian House-Martin.

NEPAL HOUSE-MARTIN (*Delichon nipalense*) – These were the house-martins that we saw overhead at The Den a few times.

Pycnonotidae (Bulbuls).

BLACK-CRESTED BULBUL (*Rubigula flaviventris*) – We found two of these well-appointed bulbuls at Corbett NP.

RED-VENTED BULBUL (*Pycnonotus cafer*) – Very common, almost throughout the trip.

RED-WHISKERED BULBUL (*Pycnonotus jocosus*) – Scattered sightings, with ten along the driveway of the Club Mahindra Corbett in Ramnagar.

WHITE-EARED BULBUL (*Pycnonotus leucotis*) – Our sightings of this sharply marked bulbul were at Bharatpur.

HIMALAYAN BULBUL (*Pycnonotus leucogenys*) – This recurve-crested bulbul was a common sight in the Himalayan foothills.

BLACK BULBUL (PSAROIDES GROUP) (*Hypsipetes leucocephalus psaroides*) – Flocks were peppered throughout the foothills, but the 40 we saw at Sattal were particularly impressive.

ASHY BULBUL (*Hemixos flava*) – Our first were at Forktail Creek near Corbett, and we saw a few more inside the park.

Phylloscopidae (Leaf Warblers).

BUFF-BARRED WARBLER (*Phylloscopus pulcher*) – Nicely colored, nicely named - this small leaf warbler put in a few nice appearances low to the ground in mixed flocks near Nainital.

HUME'S WARBLER (*Phylloscopus humei*) – Omnipresent in wooded areas in the Plains - we grew quite accustomed to staring up at them from below.

LEMON-RUMPED WARBLER (*Phylloscopus chloronotus*) – These very small, pale-rumped warblers were scattered around the Nainital area - we tallied our best count (7) at Sattal.

COMMON CHIFFCHAFF (*Phylloscopus collybita*) – A common wintering bird in the Plains. Those black legs help distinguish this drab bird from other small warblers.

WHISTLER'S WARBLER (*Phylloscopus whistleri*) – This surprised-looking warbler popped up several times for us near Corbett and in the forest at Sattal.

GREENISH WARBLER (*Phylloscopus trochiloides*) – A joke of a name (most *Phylloscopus* are greenish), but we did enjoy the ones we found at Ranthambhore, Sultanpur, and the Jim Corbett Museum.

GRAY-HOODED WARBLER (*Phylloscopus xanthoschistos*) – This was one of the most common warblers in the Corbett-Nainital foothills.

Scotocercidae (Bush Warblers and Allies).

GRAY-BELLIED TESIA (*Tesia cyaniventer*) – We had a hard time getting good views of this wren-like bird hopping around in the streambed near The Den - finally it showed off its tailless, leggy form - a Tesia! Too bad it didn't show for everyone, though.

GRAY-SIDED BUSH WARBLER (*Cettia brunnifrons*) – This skulker came out of the dense, low vegetation in the stream valley at Sattal.

CHESTNUT-HEADED TESIA (*Cettia castaneocoronata*) – It took some work, but we got to see this handsome skulker a few times briefly in Mongoli Valley.

BLACK-FACED WARBLER (*Abroscopus schisticeps*) – The forest was pretty quiet at Pangoot, but we did see a small group of these odd warblers there - a new bird for our tour's list!

ABERRANT BUSH WARBLER (*Horornis flavolivaceus*) – It took a few views to work this one out - it was in a tangle on the Boulder Track at Nainital.

Aegithalidae (Long-tailed Tits).

BLACK-THROATED TIT (*Aegithalos concinnus*) – Several small flocks in the vicinity of Nainital.

Sylviidae (Sylvia Warblers, Parrotbills, and Allies).

LESSER WHITETHROAT (*Sylvia curruca*) – This wintering songbird was quite common in the Plains, even in areas with very few trees.

EASTERN ORPHEAN WARBLER (*Sylvia crassirostris*) – This one popped up and gave us a nice view on a foggy day at Bharatpur, showing off its high contrast head and pale eye.

YELLOW-EYED BABBLER (*Chrysomma sinense*) – This was seen by some folks at Corbett NP during our full day out of Dhikala.

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

INDIAN WHITE-EYE (*Zosterops palpebrosus*) – A very common, conspicuous songbird of mixed flocks throughout our journey.

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

BLACK-CHINNED BABBLER (*Cyanoderma pyrrhops*) – We found a couple of these butterscotch-colored, low-level skulkers at The Den, and also in the Nainital area.

RUSTY-CHEEKED SCIMITAR-BABBLER (*Megapomatorhinus erythrogenys*) – Mostly heard, but seen briefly by a few folks. These big babblers were strangely unresponsive during our attempts.

Leiothrichidae (Laughingthrushes and Allies).

COMMON BABBLER (*Turdoides caudata*) – Our sightings of these UNcommon babblers (uncommon relative to Jungle Babbler, anyway) were at Ranthambhore, Soorwal, and Bund Baretha.

LARGE GRAY BABBLER (*Turdoides malcolmi*) – We found these long-tailed babblers in rowdy flocks at many times in the Plains, though they never rivaled Jungle Babblers in number.

JUNGLE BABBLER (*Turdoides striata*) – A common and conspicuous bird at many sites on our tour - they were frequent and bold companions in the national parks.

WHITE-THROATED LAUGHINGTHRUSH (*Ianthocincla albogularis*) – Over 25 of these chatty laughingthrushes came in to check us out in the forest at Sattal.

STREAKED LAUGHINGTHRUSH (*Trochalopteron lineatum*) – This was a very common laughingthrush that we encountered repeatedly in the greater Nainital area.

CHESTNUT-CROWNED LAUGHINGTHRUSH (*Trochalopteron erythrocephalum*) – These lovely laughingthrushes showed off just a couple of times in the Nainital area.

RUFOS SIBIA (*Heterophasia capistrata*) – This gorgeous laughingthrush appeared at Nainital and Sattal.

RED-BILLED LEIOTHRIX (*Leiothrix lutea*) – We were fortunate to enjoy this stunning, small laughingthrush in its native range in the Himalayan foothills. The species is commonly seen in the cagebird trade.

BLUE-WINGED MINLA (*Actinodura cyanouroptera*) – Another beautiful, small laughingthrush. This one was with the mixed flocks at Sattal.

Tichodromidae (Wallcreepers)

WALLCREEPER (*Tichodroma muraria*) – Yip yip! This special songbird was one of our many tour highlights. We saw the Wallcreeper at the Kosi Barrage on two occasions, and had one fly up just below us and land on the wall just a few meters away. It was spectacular to watch the odd, pulsing foraging motions of this peculiar relative of the nuthatches.

Sittidae (Nuthatches)

CHESTNUT-BELLIED NUTHATCH (*Sitta cinnamoventris*) – These richly colored nuthatches were in forest in the Corbett area and at Sattal.

WHITE-TAILED NUTHATCH (*Sitta himalayensis*) – We saw this species only at Snow View, Nainital. The white tail is tough to see.

VELVET-FRONTED NUTHATCH (*Sitta frontalis*) – These were in the Corbett area and at Sattal, too - a very glamorous nuthatch, blue above with a red bill and black forehead.

Certhiidae (Treecreepers)

BAR-TAILED TREECREEPER (*Certhia himalayana*) – Our first was at Pangoot, and then we ended up seeing more at Nainital and especially Sattal.

Cinclidae (Dippers)

BROWN DIPPER (*Cinclus pallasii*) – An adult and a fledged juvenile were along the river below The Den.

Sturnidae (Starlings)

EUROPEAN STARLING (*Sturnus vulgaris*) – A few people noted this species during a train ride, but they aren't common here! We didn't seem to mind too much.

ROSY STARLING (*Pastor roseus*) – Five were in the Ranthambhore buffer zone near our lodge there.

ASIAN PIED STARLING (*Gracupica contra*) – We saw these striking black and gray starlings often during our loop through the Plains.

BRAHMINY STARLING (*Sturnia pagodarum*) – We saw these along a fenceline near our Ranthambhore lodge.

COMMON MYNA (*Acridotheres tristis*) – Common in most places we traveled, especially on the Plains.

BANK MYNA (*Acridotheres ginginianus*) – These well-appointed mynas are rather fond of human-rich environments like city squares and railroad stations.

JUNGLE MYNA (*Acridotheres fuscus*) – About five were with a few Wild Boar at great distance from the Dhikala compound - tough to see well in the scope.

Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies)

SCALY THRUSH (*Zoothera dauma*) – This one is a real cryptic beauty - a chunky thrush with a complex pattern of scaling across its whole body. We saw ours well along the forest trail at Sattal.

ORANGE-HEADED THRUSH (*Geokichla citrina*) – One played hard to get in the understory at Chambal Safari Lodge.

GRAY-WINGED BLACKBIRD (*Turdus boulboul*) – We found these thrushes in the mountains at Pangoot and Sattal.

TICKELL'S THRUSH (*Turdus unicolor*) – A couple of individuals fed on the ground along the forest trail at Sattal.

WHITE-COLLARED BLACKBIRD (*Turdus albocinctus*) – Two were at Snow View during our morning hike.

BLACK-THROATED THRUSH (*Turdus atrogularis*) – More common this year (we actually missed it entirely in 2019), with sightings at Corbett and Sattal.

Muscicapidae (Old World Flycatchers)

INDIAN ROBIN (*Copsychus fulicatus*) – A common bird of the Plains, especially around buildings and farms.

ORIENTAL MAGPIE-ROBIN (*Copsychus saularis*) – We saw plenty of these pleasantly plump songbirds along the edge of forest in the Plains.

SMALL NILTAVA (*Niltava macgrigoriae*) – Our only one was in the forest at Sattal.

RUFOS-BELLIED NILTAVA (*Niltava sundara*) – One skulked along the edge of the road through town at Sattal.

VERDITER FLYCATCHER (*Eumyias thalassinus*) – The most memorable was one that fed above our lunch table in the courtyard of the Chambal Safari Lodge. Such an interesting shimmery blue color!

BLUETHROAT (*Luscinia svecica*) – Small numbers of wintering birds were fairly confiding along trails in the Plains. They are a lot easier to see here than they are in the breeding season in Alaska!

BLUE WHISTLING-THRUSH (*Myophonus caeruleus*) – This very large Old World Flycatcher was a common sight at dawn and dusk in the mountain foothills. We saw many of them flying off the edges of the roads as we drove by.

HIMALAYAN BLUETAIL (*Tarsiger rufilatus*) – This close relative of the Red-flanked Bluetail put in a few appearances at Nainital and Sattal.

GOLDEN BUSH-ROBIN (*Tarsiger chrysaeus*) – Tough to see! One posed briefly for a few folks in the fog below the Three Gods near Nainital.

SLATY-BLUE FLYCATCHER (*Ficedula tricolor*) – Ours were at Corbett and Sattal.

RUFIOUS-GORGETED FLYCATCHER (*Ficedula strophiate*) – Our best sightings of this nervous flycatcher were at Forktail Creek, Sattal, and Mongoli Valley.

LITTLE PIED FLYCATCHER (*Ficedula westermanni*) – A female at The Den gave us a nice identification challenge, and we saw another inside Corbett, too.

TAIGA FLYCATCHER (*Ficedula albicilla*) – Also called "Red-throated Flycatcher" here. Less common as a wintering bird in the Plains than the following species.

RED-BREASTED FLYCATCHER (*Ficedula parva*) – We often found these tail-cocking songbirds perched low in open woodlands as they looked around in their relentless pursuit of small insects. Identification of non adult male Red-breasted/ Taiga flycatchers is quite challenging, but we had a good time working out the details.

BLUE-FRONTED REDSTART (*Phoenicurus frontalis*) – One was in the forest at Sattal just before we got into the big mixed flock.

PLUMBEOUS REDSTART (*Phoenicurus fuliginosus*) – These small "water redstarts" were often seen in the mountains as they hunted insects from river rocks.

WHITE-CAPPED REDSTART (*Phoenicurus leucocephalus*) – This is the other "water redstart" that we saw foraging along streams and rivers in the mountains.

BLUE-CAPPED REDSTART (*Phoenicurus coerulescapus*) – Several well-spaced sightings in the general Nainital area.

BLACK REDSTART (*Phoenicurus ochruros*) – We saw these tail-quivering flycatchers in the Plains on several occasions, including 7 at Sultanpur on our final day.

CHESTNUT-BELLIED ROCK-THRUSH (*Monticola rufiventris*) – One posed nicely along the road through town at Sattal.

BLUE ROCK-THRUSH (*Monticola solitarius*) – At least one perched up on the corner of the partially constructed bridge abutments at the Chambal River.

SIBERIAN STONECHAT (*Saxicola maurus*) – Just a couple of these open country flycatchers - at Okhla, Ranthambhore, and Soorwal Reservoir.

PIED BUSHCHAT (*Saxicola caprata*) – We saw these widespread Indian flycatchers at Okhla and Bund Baretha.

GRAY BUSHCHAT (*Saxicola ferreus*) – Ours were at Corbett and Sattal.

ISABELLINE WHEATEAR (*Oenanthe isabellina*) – Two each at Soorwal Reservoir and the Kumher "courser" flats. These long distance migrants showed well enough to drink in all the details that help separate them from Northern Wheatear and other similar species.

DESERT WHEATEAR (*Oenanthe deserti*) – Quite a few sightings of these masked bandits in open, barren country - at Soorwal, Kumher, Chambal River, and Sultanpur.

BROWN ROCK CHAT (*Oenanthe fusca*) – This wheatear-by-another-name is particularly fond of rock walls and crumbling cliffs.

Nectariniidae (Sunbirds and Spiderhunters).

PURPLE SUNBIRD (*Cinnyris asiaticus*) – This was the common sunbird that we saw several times in the Plains - the best show was in the flowering trees at Sultanpur on our final day together.

FIRE-TAILED SUNBIRD (*Aethopyga ignicauda*) – A female was at Mongoli Valley and took a little while to piece the ID together as we had brief glimpses in the bushes - not a species we typically encounter on the tour.

GREEN-TAILED SUNBIRD (*Aethopyga nipalensis*) – Just a few - at The Den and Sattal. At both sites, feeding in flowering shrubs.

CRIMSON SUNBIRD (*Aethopyga siparaja*) – Five, including some nice red birds, were in the tall flowering trees at the Jim Corbett Museum.

Chloropseidae (Leafbirds).

GOLDEN-FRONTED LEAFBIRD (*Chloropsis aurifrons*) – Two were in the tall flowering trees at the Jim Corbett Museum.

ORANGE-BELLIED LEAFBIRD (*Chloropsis hardwickii*) – I think everyone enjoyed the close looks in the yard at The Den, and then we saw another in the Jim Corbett Museum garden.

Estrildidae (Waxbills and Allies).

INDIAN SILVERBILL (*Euodice malabarica*) – We found tight flocks on several occasions, including ~95 at the edge of the barren flats at Kumher.

SCALY-BREASTED MUNIA (*Lonchura punctulata*) – Ten were in the wetlands at Sultanpur on our final day.

Prunellidae (Accentors).

RUFIOUS-BREASTED ACCENTOR (*Prunella strophiate*) – Two of these skulkers were in the rocky hedges below the "Three Gods" near Nainital.

Passeridae (Old World Sparrows).

HOUSE SPARROW (*Passer domesticus*) – We saw flocks regularly in the Plains and foothills.

RUSSET SPARROW (*Passer cinnamomeus*) – This House Sparrow relative was found in the mountains in the greater Nainital area.

YELLOW-THROATED SPARROW (*Gymnoris xanthocollis*) – Also called Chestnut-shouldered Petronia; we saw a tight flock of about 30 at Ranthambhore.

Motacillidae (Wagtails and Pipits).

GRAY WAGTAIL (*Motacilla cinerea*) – This elegant, long-tailed wagtail was regularly found right at the edge of water.

WESTERN YELLOW WAGTAIL (*Motacilla flava*) – We saw a mix of plumages including some very handsome individuals with slate blue-gray heads walking around on the lawn at the Taj Mahal, at Soorwal Reservoir, and at Sultanpur.

CITRINE WAGTAIL (*Motacilla citreola*) – These wagtails were at a few Plains sites including Okhla Bird Sanctuary on our first day out.

WHITE-BROWED WAGTAIL (*Motacilla maderaspatensis*) – This striking wagtail was seen regularly at wetlands sites in the Plains. Most wagtails are fairly long distance migrants, but this one is a resident in the subcontinent.

WHITE WAGTAIL (*Motacilla alba*) – A common wintering species in many locations, including walking around in the cultural sites at Fatehpur Sikri and the Taj Mahal.

PADDYFIELD PIPIT (*Anthus rufulus*) – At least two posed nicely at Sultanpur on our final day, though the fog didn't help our study.

TAWNY PIPIT (*Anthus campestris*) – Soorwal Reservoir and Kumher gave us our best views of this widespread species.

TREE PIPIT (*Anthus trivialis*) – One was in an open patch of woodland in Zone 2 at Ranthambhore.

OLIVE-BACKED PIPIT (*Anthus hodgsoni*) – These unusual woodland-dwelling pipits were at Sattal (good views in the forest at the edge of the lake) and Sultanpur.

Eringillidae (Finches, Euphonias, and Allies).

COMMON ROSEFINCH (*Carpodacus erythrinus*) – Four were on the outskirts of town at Sattal.

PINK-BROWED ROSEFINCH (*Carpodacus rodochroa*) – Five of these gorgeous finches posed below eye level during our "Boulder Track" walk at Nainital.

YELLOW-BREASTED GREENFINCH (*Chloris spinoides*) – We saw these finches in with the Pink-browed Rosefinches at Nainital.

Emberizidae (Old World Buntings).

ROCK BUNTING (*Emberiza cia*) – Over a dozen fed on the rocky slopes near the "Three Gods" below Nainital.

WHITE-CAPPED BUNTING (*Emberiza stewarti*) – One perched briefly in the woodland canopy during one of our outings in Ranthambhore.

MAMMALS

INDIAN FLYING-FOX (*Pteropus giganteus*) – This was the common large fruit bat that we saw very well at Bund Baretha and a few other sites.

TOMB BAT SP. (*Taphozous* sp.) – This group of bats is tough to identify unless they're in the hand, but we got to see a few of them quite nicely by looking up into the gaps in the walls at Fatehpur Sikri.

RHESUS MACAQUE (*Macaca mulatta*) – These pink-faced, brown primates were a very common feature of our journey. We had to make sure they didn't steal our picnic lunches on a few occasions!

COMMON LANGUR (*Presbytis entellus*) – A bit more reserved than the Macaques, these lanky gray primates were often seen grooming each other in large lounging groups.

INDIAN HARE (*Lepus nigricollis*) – One was seen on the day of our first visit to Bharatpur.

PALM SQUIRREL (*Funambulus pennanti*) – Ubiquitous in the Plains, including at major cultural sites like the Agra Fort.

BENGAL FOX (*Vulpes bengalensis*) – A special sighting, and a lifer for both leaders - this pale sand-colored fox was alongside the track in the Ranthambhore buffer zone, and we got to enjoy it for a couple of minutes before it went to ground.

COMMON JACKAL (*Canis aureus*) – Also called Indian Golden Jackal. We saw these coyote-like canids a few times, including a pack at Soorwal Reservoir.

YELLOW-THROATED MARTEN (*Martes flavigula*) – Folks in one vehicle were fortunate to see one of these striking weasels running along a wall in Nainital as we were driving along through town.

MASKED PALM CIVET (*Paguma larvata*) – This was a fun one - a strange, very soft-looking mammal was spotted in a nearby tree just as we started birding at Sattal. We looked at it and it looked at us... and we didn't really know what it was for a bit - but we sorted it out after a bit of research. Other names = Gem-faced Civet and Himalayan Palm Civet.

COMMON MONGOOSE (*Herpestes smithi*) – Also known as Ruddy Mongoose - some good views of animals out in the open foraging along the roadside at Ranthambhore.

TIGER (*Panthera tigris*) – This was a birding trip, but for many, the top bird was this superlative cat. At Ranthambhore, we had sightings of three individual tigers on our first day in the field, including VERY close encounters as these massive carnivores sauntered past us. Arrowhead, a tigress that we saw on two outings, covered some serious ground in one day while hunting for her hidden cubs. Later at Corbett, we had two more tiger sightings (albeit at some distance across the grasslands).

INDIAN ELEPHANT (*Elephas maximus*) – A tusker in musth (the elephant equivalent of the rutting season for deer - a state of increased testosterone and elevated aggression) was at very close range along the road just outside Corbett National Park. This animal had been seen threatening vehicles and our drivers were a bit nervous to be around him. Inside the park, we found another dozen elephants grazing near the edge of the large river at Dhikala.

WILD BOAR (*Sus scrofa*) – These hairy pigs were seen nicely at Ranthambhore and Corbett. At Corbett, a couple of boars were attended by Jungle Mynas (though the mynas were tough to see well in the grass).

MUNTJAC (BARKING DEER) (*Muntiacus muntjak*) – Our only sightings of these small, odd deer were in the Corbett area.

SPOTTED DEER (*Axis axis*) – Also called Axis Deer or Chital, this familiar Indian deer was very common in the protected reserves we visited.

HOG DEER (*Axis porcinus*) – The least common deer we encountered - three were seen during our outings on the full day inside Corbett NP (while based out of Dhikala).

SAMBAR (*Cervus unicolor*) – This large, dark brown elk-like deer with the shaggy coat is the favored food of the Bengal Tiger. They were quite common at Ranthambhore and Corbett.

NILGAI (*Boselaphus tragocamelus*) – This largest of the Asian antelope was a regular feature of protected areas, especially near water. The big gray males are also known as blue bulls.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Other animals:

Marsh Mugger

Gharial

Ganges Softshell Turtle

Indian Tent Turtle

Indian Flapshell Turtle - the ones at Sultanpur NP

Northern House Gecko

Chequered Keelback - the snakes at Soorwal Reservoir

Totals for the tour: 336 bird taxa and 19 mammal taxa