Northeast India:
Himalayan Forests and Grasslands of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh

25th April – 17th May 2018

This confiding Gould’s Shortwing singing near the snow-dusted Sela Pass in Arunachal Pradesh, was universally popular, only narrowly beaten for bird of the tour, due to an incredible performance by a male Blyth’s Tragopan in Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary.

Tour leaders: Sam Woods with Rofik Islam as local guide throughout
Photos: Sam Woods unless otherwise indicated. Thanks to Rofik Islam for the use of his images of Blyth’s Tragopan, Marsh Babbler, and (Austen’s) Brown Hornbill.
Northeast India is home to some of the most wanted birds not only India, but all of the Himalayas, thus drawing birders there from far and wide; (even ones of vast world experience, as with this group, who were neither first timers to India, and were already quite familiar with many Himalayan birds). This fairly recently opened-up outlier of India (birders have largely visited the region since 2004) quickly rose to birding prominence with regular observations of some very local species known or thought to be there, but also the rediscovery of the extremely local Mishmi (Rusty-throated Wren-Babbler) in 2004 (formerly only known from a handful of specimens), and the头lining discovery of a completely new species, the very distinctive Bugun Liocichla two years later. The latter, very quickly put the name of Eaglenest into the minds of many birders worldwide. More remarkably still, this significant scientific find led the Indian government to abandon a massive road building project in the area, in favor of conserving massive tracts of forest with the establishment of the huge Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary. Where the military had set up camps following the brief invasion by China in 1962, now provides a road to access and bird the area, and perfect spaces for semi-permanent camps, which allow extended stays in the area, and therefore a reasonable chance at finding some of the long list of specialties found there, in addition to the landmark liocichla.

The strikingly patterned, impeccably-behaved Cachar Wedge-billed (Chevron-breasted) Wren-Babbler was a big hit in Mishmi Hills.
This tour however, begun at seemingly the unlikeliest of venues, a garbage dump on the edge of the two million-strong city of Guwahati in Assam, where the endangered Greater Adjutant stork was seen in the hundreds at this unlikely stronghold. From there, we traveled into the foothills of the Himalaya at Kaziranga National Park, a well-established park known for its noteworthy concentrations of Asian megafauna, leading to its nickname, “Asia’s Serengeti”. Here, herds of Indian One-horned Rhinoceros, elephants, a pair of porcupines, and a Bengal Tiger being chased out of the water by an aggressive Wild Water Buffalo were mammalian highlights. On the bird side, Blue-naped Pitta, Pallas’s Fish-Eagle, Indian Grassbird, Black-breasted (Bengal) and Finn’s Weavers, and Slender-billed Babbler were the main avian headliners, alongside more widespread and spectacular species, like Great Hornbill, and 6 species of owls (including Oriental and Collared Scops-Owls, and Brown Fish Owl).

Then, we made an extended stay in the Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary, using two camps for bases (Lama Camp, and the lower Bompu Camp), allowing us access to a wide range of elevations, and leading to an impressive bird list, which included a male Blyth’s Tragopan, the must see Bugun Liocichla, a very showy Hill Partridge, excellent views of the ordinarily difficult-to-see-well, Pale-headed Woodpecker; the local Large Blue Flycatcher, males of both Green and Purple Cochoas, a handful of Rufous-necked Hornbills, Ward’s Trogon, Spotted Elachura (a monotypic family), an exceptionally confiding Long-billed Wren-Babbler, Bar-winged Wren-Babbler among the flowering Rhododendrons of Eaglenest Pass, Sikkim Wedge-billed (Blackish-breasted) Wren-Babbler, Slender-billed, Red-billed and Coral-billed Scimitar-
Babblers, White-hooded Babbler, White-breasted, Brown, Black-throated, and Pale-billed Parrotbills, Long-tailed Broadbill, several sightings of the much wanted Beautiful Nuthatch, a handful of observations of Himalayan Cutia, a pair of Yellow-rumped Honeyguides attending their treasured active hive of honey bees, and gaudy male Scarlet Finches as highlights. It should be said too that merely birding in this pristine, scenic wilderness, among ancient forests and very old trees, also left an indelible mark on all of us. EAGLENEST is one of the GREAT PLACES IN THE WORLD TO BIRDING.

Our next stop was a three-night stay in the tiny town of Dirang, which provided us with access to three key areas nearby, the Sangti Valley (where a breeding pair of Long-billed Plovers with chicks was the standout), the spectacular snow-draped pass of Sela, and the forest-lined Mandala Road. At the pass, a Gould's Shortwing singing from the tops of close by boulders was the clear highpoint, as was a visit to a set of blooming rhododendrons by the unique Fire-tailed Myzornis, an area rich in Fire-tailed Sunbirds too. Seventeen dramatic indigo male Grandalas feeding at high altitude, Alpine Thrushes singing from rock tops, and a large flock of some sixty or more Dark-breasted Rosefinches feeding in a large concentration of blooming fuscia-colored rhododendrons was also a memorable sight there. Black-throated Prinia, and confiding Hume’s Bush Warbler and Spotted Laughingthrushes all featured on the Mandala Road.
Following Dirang, we visited Nameri National Park, hoping for the rare White-winged Duck, but falling short on that, but finding River Lapwing, River Tern, Great Thick-knee, Black-backed Forktail, Ruddy Kingfisher, Hooded Pitta, hanging Vernal Hanging-Parrot, Sand Lark, nesting Great Hornbill all providing plentiful distractions, along with a group of Gaur.

After Nameri, we visited Maguri Grasslands that brought us a close-up with the range restricted Marsh Babbler, which along with the next species (Jerdon’s Babbler), required a walk into seven feet-high grasses to track them down.

The grassland theme continued near Roing (at the base of the Mishmi Hills), which were home to some more rare and very threatened species, namely Black-breasted Parrotbill and the critically endangered Bengal Florican. In addition to those, the more widespread, but notoriously difficult Hodgson’s Frogmouth put in a performance for the ages, at eye level, and completely in the open, until we finally walked away.
Then, it was a return to the Himalayas for real, with a stay in some very basic accommodation in the magnificent Mishmi Hills. On the way up, we found the most-wanted specialty, namely the Mishmi (Rusty-throated) Wren-Babbler, a handsome bird with a tiny range, which was only seen in life for the first time in 2004. The upward journey also produced another extremely popular bird, the bold Cachar Wedge-billed (Chevron-breasted) Wren-Babbler, which could not have been seen better. Other highlights there included, Golden-breasted and Streak-throated (Manipur) Fulvettas, Scaly-breasted Cupwing calling from the treetops (seriously!), Rusty-bellied Shortwing, a good look at the dapper Sapphire Flycatcher, a proper look at a tiny male Pygmy (Blue) Flycatcher, and a Himalayan Owl that had us in awe at the atypical ease of the sighting.

Dropping back down into the foothills, the temperatures increased, and rare birds continued with the very local Chestnut-backed Laughingthrush seen at Digboi, a place that also brought us face-to-face with the local and striking Collared Treepie. A pair of Gray Peacock-Pheasants was seen well by all, along with the local Rufous-throated Fulvetta, at nearby Jeypore Forest Reserve that also yielded (Austen's) Brown Hornbill and the scarce Crow-billed Drongo.

Lastly, we returned to the grasslands at Maguri, near the city of Tinsukia, where a finale included flight songs and perched views of a nesting Bristled Grassbird, the final key bird of the tour, until recently only known from four sites in the region.
Some figures may help illustrate how truly extraordinary this tour within this Indian outpost was; **508 bird species were recorded (482 seen)**, on a tour timed a little later than usual, and so was therefore missing some wintering waterfowl and shorebird species. This included **21 raptor species, 16 woodpeckers, cuckoos, and leaf-warblers, 9 owl species were seen among 12 nightbirds recorded, 7 species of kingfisher and drongo, 6 parrotbill, yuhina, and barbet species, 5 hornbills and parrots, 4 nuthatches, 2 each of pittas, trogons, and cochoas, and (remarkably) 34 members of the laughingthrush family** were tallied, making this tour unrivaled in this regard anywhere in the world. There were also **up to 10 species with wren-babbler in their name** (no longer all considered within the same family), also making this the premier destination for this superb group of birds for which this region is rightly famous.

To surmise further, **30 mammals were seen**, which included **Indian One-horned Rhinoceros numbering more than 100 animals in a day in Kaziranga**, plentiful **Asian (Indian) Elephants** (above), along with a rare sighting of **Himalayan Crestless Porcupine**, the local **Swamp Deer**, and lots of **Hog Deer** too in this park too. However, the distant, bathing **Bengal Tiger**, which was subsequently seen off by an aggressive **Wild Water Buffalo**, was talked about the most thereafter among the mammalian highlights. Others included both **Western and Eastern Hoolock Gibbons**, a group of dozing **Capped Langurs** in our **Nameri** resort, a site which also saw us come across a group of **Gaur** visiting a forest pond. Rain is always a concern in this very wet region, and was encountered on all but two days, with heavy periods of this too. However, we were not greatly affected for long periods, in spite of our later timing of this custom tour and achieved one of the highest totals possible.

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The tasty local curries, excellent local guiding, and magnificent scenery of the area, only added to the allure and enjoyment of this remote region for us all, and more than compensated for the sometimes-basic conditions required to visit these areas (e.g. lower end hotels than normally associated with Tropical Birding tours).

TOP FIVE BIRDS OF THE TOUR:

1. BLYTH’S TRAGOPAN, Eaglenest
2. GOULD’S SHORTWING, Sela Pass
3. BUGUN LIOICHLA, Eaglenest
4. CACHAR WEDGE-BILLED (CHEVRON-BREASTED) BABBLER, Mishmi Hills
5. PURPLE COCHOA, Eaglenest

Among the other considerations for top five birds of the trip, included Bengal Florican (Roing, near the Mishmi Hills), Rufous-necked Hornbill (Eaglenest), Himalayan Owl (Mishmi Hills), Green Cochoa (Eaglenest), Sikkim Wedge-billed (Blackish-breasted) Wren-Babbler (Eaglenest), Long-billed Wren-Babbler (Eaglenest), Mishmi (Rusty-throated) Wren-Babbler (Mishmi Hills), and Spotted Elachura (Eaglenest). I am also sure that, had these species not been previously seen by all, that birds like Himalayan Cutia (Eaglenest) and Grandala (Sela Pass, Dirang) may have also been considered too.

Hundreds of endangered Greater Adjutant storks gather at the massive city dump in Guwahati; the species numbers only 1,200 birds left in the world, with this being the single best site for good numbers of the species.
Tour Summary:

25th April: Guwahati (Assam)
A city dump may not appear a particularly auspicious place to start a tour of a region famed for its pristine forests and scenery, but that is exactly what our opening gambit comprised of. However, this was not folly, or a temporary bout of insanity, because it just so happens that this garbage site is home to the largest concentration of Greater Adjutants (below) on the planet, and this species is in dire straits, with just about 1,200 individuals remaining. However, before we got there, we abruptly stopped to observe a nesting Bengal Bushlark. The dump turned out to be a true spectacle, if a little grim all at the same time; to see these giant storks standing alongside sacred cows and people, searching through the rubbish was a little surreal, but also striking and memorable in its own way. A storm whipping up, with strong winds and rain only added to the first of many unique experiences that this region offered. Other significant birds during our opening afternoon, mostly on the surrounding “bheel”, or wetland, included a male Pied Harrier bringing much admiration as it came by, a small group of Cotton Pygmy-Geese, plentiful Spotted Redshanks in sooty breeding plumage, along with our first Citrine Wagtail, and a pair of Rufescent Prinia on a nearby scrubby hillside. We retired early, with few major targets close by, and an awareness of some long days to come in the field; we closed out the day with a tasty curry in our Guwahati hotel and readied ourselves for the nearby hills in Kaziranga National Park, one of India’s most famous parks for large mammals.
26th April: Guwahati to Kaziranga NP (Assam)

Early in the morning, we headed out to World famous Kaziranga National Park, often referred to as “India’s Serengeti”, due to the outstanding concentrations of Asian megafauna readily observed there. Not long after arriving on the outskirts of this protected area, we quickly started to see how apt the nickname is, as Indian One-horned Rhinoceros, Asian Elephants, and both Swamp Deer and Hog (Golden) Deer (below) were all quickly seen in rapid succession, on a day we tallied ten mammal species. While many of these views were distant, by the day’s end, (and following our first game drive in one section of the park), we soon got closeups of all of these wonderful animals, as well as a few overflying Slender-billed Vultures, and a slew of other raptors: Pallas’s Fish Eagle, Gray-headed Fish Eagle, Changeable Hawk-Eagle, and Steppe Eagle. Kaziranga is largely flat, with a feel of the East African plains, but the rise into the Himalayas is all too evident, with the mountains sitting prominently beyond the grasslands, woodlands and jeels (pools), within the park.

Four deer species are listed for Kaziranga, one of India’s very best mammal parks; a tiger, rhinos, elephants, buffalos and porcupines were also seen! Hog Deer was particularly abundant. Sambar, Swamp Deer, and Indian (Red) Muntjac were also noted.
In and around the wet spots scattered around the dead trees, (which afforded many raptors a perch), we noted **Spot-bellied Pelican, Ruddy Shelducks, Indian Spot-billed Duck, and five species of stork**: Greater and Lesser Adjutants, Woolly-necked Stork, Asian Openbill, and a few of the stately **Black-necked Stork** too. Other avian high notes included a confiding **Puff-throated Babbler** (below), and four **parrot** species (**Rose-ringed and Alexandrine Parakeets**, and the beautiful **Blossom-headed Parakeet**). A few of the **Red-breasted Parakeets** seen were within our resort grounds, happily gorging in a fruiting tree above one of our cabins. **Indian (Indochinese/Black-billed) Rollers** were particularly prominent, here of the dark *affinis* form, which is soon to be recognized as a full species. The wooded areas provided us with our only **Black-rumped (Goldenback) Flamebacks** of the tour, along with **Yellow-footed (Green) Pigeon, Green-billed Malkoha, Scarlet Minivet, Rufous Treepie, and Buff-chested Babbler** in a section of bamboo within our resort grounds. **Kaziranga** is famed for its swathes of tall native grasslands, where we observed **Thick-billed Warbler**, the extremely handsome **Chestnut-capped Babbler**, but were frustrated by a very elusive, calling **Slender-billed Babbler**. However, a pair of **Swamp Francolins** strolling by was a good key species to get early on. In the evening, Tim and I set out from the resort to look for **nightbirds**, not taking too much time to see some calling **Large-tailed Nightjars**, and we also finally tracked down a **Collared Scops-Owl** too. For the latter, dinner was swiftly abandoned briefly, as we assembled the rest of the group to all see it too, as it was a lifer even for some of the more experienced among them.
27th April: Kaziranga NP

For our first of two full days in the Kaziranga area, we begun with what would become a traditional early morning tea (and bad instant coffee for those who preferred that!), and on this day started outside of the park. The first stop of the day was a wet one, and where we needed to walk into some muddy paddyfields and make our way to an area of tall grasses, where our hoped-for species, Black-breasted (Bengal) Weaver was soon found perched out in the early morning sun. Our premier target bird for the morning, however, was crystal clear: Blue-naped Pitta. It took its merry time to call, but when it did, Tim managed to find it frozen still amongst the undergrowth, where its head remained visible for some time, but no full body shot was possible, and so an upgrade was still desired. As the bird had then fallen silent, and we could not relocate it, we opted to visit a local tea estate for the rest of the morning, walking among local teapluckers, and dipping into the surrounding forest patches. The highlight here, was clearly a pair of Rufous-necked Laughingthrushes, but a striking Chestnut-winged Cuckoo, a generally tricky species through much of its range; and a super confiding Speckled Piculet (below) in a bamboo patch that came within 15 feet of us all were also noteworthy too. We also added another hoped-for species, the Pale-chinned Blue Flycatcher, also hanging out within the tall native bamboos, and Lineated Barbet, Fulvous-breasted Woodpecker, Gray-throated Babbler, Golden-fronted Leafbird, and (at least for John L), a Blyth’s (Asian/Indian) Paradise-Flycatcher was all also added to the checklist on the estate.
In the afternoon, following a delicious lunch at our resort, and a Blue-bearded Bee-eater (below) there thanks to John C, we returned to the national park, this time visiting a different area, the Central Ranges. The main attractions of the park were again visible from our jeeps, like rhino, elephants, and both Hog and Swamp Deer, and we racked up 11 species of mammal for the day, which later included a mother and young Himalayan Crestless Porcupine, a genuinely rare sighting there. However, this was not the mammal sighting of the afternoon; perusing the park with an experienced jeep driver among us, it was clear the guy had connections, with people stopping regularly to update him on what animals were available (and hence we knew where to find the porcupine later in the day). This all led us to rapidly turned-about jeeps, and to find ourselves staring at a large pond, where a Tiger was cooling itself by taking a prolonged soak. It was at some distance, but we managed to erect ‘scopes to get closer looks as it remained largely submerged during a hot afternoon. The observation became more interesting though, when a local Wild Water Buffalo clearly did not like a tiger in its territory and swiftly approached the bathing cat, which wisely chose to leave the water before the buffalo could reach it, and quickly slinked off into the tall grasses behind. The buffalo still seemed unhappy though, reaching the bank where the tiger had emerged and staring into the grasses, as if to say “Don’t even think about coming back, you are not welcome around here!”

Our Kaziranga resort area produced good birds like this Blue-bearded Bee-eater, Yellow-vented Flowerpecker and 3 owls
The birding was not bad either. While the mammals were a constant distraction, our excellent local guide, Rofik set about upgrading our Slender-billed Babbler experience, and this time we all got cracking looks at this grassland specialist. Rarer still, and also a grassland species, was a party of some 22 or more Finn’s (Yellow) Weaver, a globally threatened species that was a big coup for the tour and far from guaranteed. Checking for the rare and difficult Indian Grassbird at a large pond, we found some vestiges of winter birding, like Pied Avocet, Northern Shoveler, and Common Shelduck, but no sight nor sound of the grassbird as dusk approached, which was our signal to leave the park. On reaching our resort we heard an Oriental Scops-Owl before dinner, which fell silent and was unseen in a post-dinner search.

28th April: Kaziranga NP (Assam)

Once again, following an early morning tea, we returned to the forest patch near the tea estates to try and get better looks at the same Blue-naped Pitta. It called infrequently at first, but eventually, it began calling more regularly, and after quite some time, we all got good looks at the full bird and even the bright blue nape too. Satiated with this view, we were now well-timed to return to the park as it opened, after our time looking for the pitta. On this morning, we visited the much less popular Eastern Ranges of the park, where more wooded areas occur, and less large animals, but we enjoyed some superb and varied birding in the woods and surrounding wetlands.
It turned out to be an excellent day for owls, with Spotted Owlet seen as we entered the park that was then added to by both Brown Fish-Owl and Brown Boobook (below) in broad daylight during the morning too. Good numbers of raptors again featured, which included a number of very tame Gray-headed Fish Eagles (page 16) around the edges of the wetlands. We also managed to locate several Streak-throated Woodpeckers, and Pheasant-tailed and Bronze-winged Jacanas in the wet areas, along with a late wintering Eurasian Wigeon, and some more Cotton Pygmy-Geese. The woods brought us multiple sightings of Blue-bearded Bee-eaters, a pair of Greater Flamebacks, and a single confiding Abbott's Babbler, which posed at length in the open. We had a set of local jeeps again, but in spite of 4WD capability one of them kept getting stuck in the thick muddy tracks, which created some cause for amusement, as the other driver was not impressed by that, and ended up taking over that vehicle too on several comical occasions. This was probably though evidence of recent rains that may have been the harbinger of the coming monsoon, which was due to begin sometime soon. We also heard the fluty notes of singing shamas and managed to see one of these master songsters (White-rumped Shama) during the drive.

Four species of owl featured on this one day in Kaziranga; Spotted Owlet, this Brown Boobook, and Brown Fish-Owl by day, and then an Oriental Scops-Owl in our resort at night.
During the afternoon, we took another jeep drive in the park, and again covered the Western Ranges where we’d been on our first afternoon. More Finn’s (Yellow) Weavers were seen (perhaps the same flock as before), but better still, was a scope view of the rare Indian Grassbird, a very missable species on the tour. We also saw the same nesting Great Hornbill that had been present there before. That night, back at the resort, we made a play for Oriental Scops-Owl (below) and on this occasion the bird was vocal and responsive, being seen well right inside the small grounds.

29th April: Kaziranga to Eaglenest (Lama Camp) Arunachal Pradesh

On this day, we needed to leave early as road construction meant that our drive to the main attraction of this tour, the pristine, bird-rich forests of the Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary in the Himalayas, took 7 hours or so, with a much-needed stop for Kingfisher beer and water en-route (the former perhaps being as important to this group as the latter)! By the time we reached Lama Camp (2500m/8200ft), our base for the next two nights, it was lunchtime, and so we ate quickly, and went straight out into the field, with everyone eager to explore. The opening gambit of birding was nothing short of superb. Trying near our tented camp for the main target species, the flagship Bugun Liocichla, we got not only a close response, but good looks at the bird as it foraged within a low tree. This must have been only the second species we took a serious look at there, following a conspicuous Bhutan Laughingthrush a little earlier! That would have been enough for the afternoon, but we also got crisp looks at a female Purple Cochoa that came into an eye level canopy from our elevated position along the road just above the camp, a spot which also produced a handful of Ashy Woodpigeons perched in the trees too.
The remainder of the afternoon, while skies darkened, was spent walking from the camp downhill, where we quickly found the striking Black-faced Warbler (below) and even saw our first Ward’s Trogon, albeit a Sulphur-bellied female. We took our time in locating one of the many calling Blue-winged Laughingthrushes in the area, as the floodgates were opened on a key group for this tour, the wonderful wren-babblers; a cooperative Rufous-throated Wren-Babbler was swiftly seen after being heard and seen very well by all. Other notable birds included, the first of many Beautiful Sibias, which were to become very familiar to us in the coming days; repeated flight views of a responsive Hodson’s (Whistling) Hawk-Cuckoo, and also Short-billed Minivet, Black-winged Cuckooshrike, and our first Whiskered Yuhinas. At dusk, we managed several views of Gray Nightjar, before the rains began falling in earnest.

30th April: Eaglenest (Lama Camp)
A full day was planned around Lama Camp, as it is the most reliable site and elevation for the critical Bugun Liocichla. However, we had already seen that species well, and so could focus on tracking down as much other species as possible, of which there are plentiful specialties both at this camp, and our next one to come in the following days (Bompu Camp that
allows access to lower elevations). While the walking is not hard at *Eaglenest*, due to good jeep track access in most areas, we decided to opt for two different trails, in combination with the road, on this particular day.

Our morning trail walk was in the hope of finding a rose-pink male *Ward’s Trogon* (right) which we did on finding a pair. The trail was fairly quiet, and challenging to bird, by virtue of a heavy mist hanging in the air, making it feel oddly reminiscent of the cloudforests of South America. We eventually tracked down a calling *Black-headed Shrike-Babbler*, although the mist led to only hindered views. The morning saw us get a visual on *Lesser Cuckoo*, which was an unpredictable lifer for John C, in spite of extensive birding in the region, and an impressive regional list to show for it. Clearly, this had become some kind of nemesis, which we were only too happy to address early on. The morning walk also yielded a *Sapphire Flycatcher*, but its position in the canopy made its beauty hard to appreciate in foggy conditions. While walking the road later on, we found a few calling *Golden-throated Barbets* (left) with ease, something you cannot say about many *Asian Barbets*; and used a *Collared Owlet* call not only to locate our first owlet (that are impressively conspicuous and vocal in this area), but also stir up flocks of mobbing passerines, which at various times included *Red-tailed, Blue-winged, and Chestnut-tailed Minlas, Yellow-throated and Rufous-winged Fulvettas, Yellow-cheeked and Yellow-browed Tits, and Whiskered and Black-chinned Yuhinas*. 
Strangely, the best period of birding came just before midday, when on returning to Lama Camp for a cooked lunch, the sound of a Spotted Elachura came drifting to us from a very close trail; we immediately went after this species, as being a monotypic family was much wanted by family listers like Tim among us. This bird can be tricky, but incredibly, it popped up quickly on an open perch, where it could be seen well by all of the participants; very unexpected indeed.

As the elachura show came to a close, another key species called from very nearby, which only required a shift in position of about 15 feet to get views of that too, the striking, and bold, Long-billed Wren-Babbler (below) that gave one of the greatest performances of the trip, coming in incredibly close.

Following lunch in the afternoon, we walked a different forest trail below the lodge, where a small group of Gold-naped Finches were the first ones seen. Our trail walk was partly to tap into a good area for Scaly-breasted Cupwing, but none were heard or seen. Again, in spite of rain, and fairly quiet conditions, we managed to pull out some key species, with several Himalayan Cutias not as important as they could have been for the group, as they had picked it up during a four-day extension to Bhutan just before this tour. Kenneth then found a pair of White-breasted Parrotbills, which opened our account for this group for the tour, which led to sightings of six species from this much-wanted avian group.
The same trail also brought us our first **Gray-sided Laughingthrush**, a much more striking and interesting bird than the name might suggest. A male **Gray-winged Blackbird** was also found there too. The evening plan was to make our first attempt at finding a **Hodgson’s Frogmouth well below Lama Camp**. As we waited for darkness to drift in, we battled in a futile try to see a singing **Rufous-chinned Laughingthrush** but fared better with a **Tickell’s Thrush** that was also calling in the area shortly before dusk. Just as dusk came thought the heavens opened, and blew any chance we had of the **frogmouth**, and so we retreated back to the sanctuary of the camp for the night.

**1st May: Eaglenest (Eaglenest Pass to Bompu Camp)**

Emerged from deep cover to sing out in the open during the early morning mist.

Up at the pass, a male **White-bowed Shortwing** was tempted into the open by the roadside, giving unusually good views for this often-shy species. A **Slender-billed Scimitar-Babbler** was soon heard nearby, and this anomalous scimitar-babbler was soon teed up too. Then, just after a **Brown Parrotbill** showed up, THE wren-babbler began calling nearby. We hurried there and were soon watching the boldly patterned **Bar-winged Wren-Babbler** as it sluggishly hopped around some low-lying rhododendrons. A couple of **Dark-rumped Rosefinches**, (an always scarce species throughout its range), was also a good find by Rofik in the same area, which also gave us **Streak-breasted Scimitar-Babbler**. A short walk into the woods was required to track down a couple of **Chestnut-headed Tesias**, bouncing around, sprite-like, on low mossy branches and the damp forest floor.

**Photos on next page:** TOP – The View from Eaglenest Pass, BOTTOM – Rhododendrons in bloom Eagle Nest Pass
We then stepped onto a very significant trail, the so-called “Tragopan Trail” on the Bompu Camp side of the pass, in the hope of Blyth’s Tragopan, one of the most wanted species on the tour by all and sundry. Today was not to be the day though. The tall forests there were magnificent and memorable, clearly being very old woods indeed (and a tour highlight on their own). At the trailhead, a Blue-fronted (Blue) Robin gave its fluty, haunting song regularly, but only really showed to Sam, which was not much of a shock for this notoriously elusive species. Just beyond the failed attempt at the robin, we got back on the scoresheet again, with a pair of Scaly Laughingthrushes, which showed well in some trailside tangles several times. While we walked in awe among these ancient forests hoping for horned pheasants, we ran into another Black-headed Shrike-Babbler that gave much better views than before but was interrupted by the sudden appearance of our first vivid-red male Scarlet Finch. With dark skies moving in, (and lunchtime approaching), we made the final leg to Bompu Camp, where we were greeted by bold tributes to the current Dalai Lama, and several Olive-backed Pipits feeding in the grass alongside.

Over lunch, a male and female Slaty-blue Flycatcher were both found at the back of the camp, as was an Orange-bellied Leafbird, which in spite of being a very bright bird proved hard to identify due to the sudden layer of thick cloud that considerably reduced visibility in the area and blanked out all of its considerable color!

Our afternoon out of Bompu Camp, saw us slowly walk down the road from there, where mist continued and rain was threatening from the get-go. However, it did not move in, in earnest until after Rofik had masterfully located, and drawn in, a spectacular Sikkim Wedge-billed (Blackish-breasted) Wren-Babbler (below). With the rain becoming increasingly heavy (and having already scored big with the wren-babbler), we took the cars back to the camp, and sat out most of the rest of the afternoon in our tents there. A late afternoon walk produced little, as although the rain had by then stopped, perhaps it was too late for mountain birds to be active by then. Following dinner, the rain-loaded clouds had, rather miraculously, given way to a star-studded sky! Tim and Sam could therefore not resist trying for the eighth owl of the trip, Mountain Scops-Owl. We walked the road, as we did not hear the usual one around the camp. By the time our showdown with a calling owl further down the road had begun, the skies had clouded over and rain had started to fall and was threatening to come down very heavily indeed. After several unsatisfactory looks at the owl, the rain started to lash down, and so we were just in time in getting a full-on facial from the owl by tracing our way along an elephant trail a short way into the woods. As we celebrated and backtracked to Bompu Camp, the downpour became stronger and stronger, so that by the time we reached our tents we had both received a thorough soaking! We retired, hoping for a miraculous clear, birdy dawn to come…
2nd May: Eaglenest (Sessni)

On this day we spent the entire day below Bompu Camp (above) in the area around Sessni, which does not have a camp of its own. We spent the day walking some distance (around 10km/6 miles), all on the comfortable jeep track walking slowly downhill from whence we came, with a huge list of targets to go after in one of the core birding areas of the Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary. The day was phenomenal, and the list of regional specialties considerable by the day’s end, illustrating very well the sheer quality of birding in this treasured part of India. As we made our first stop and had only been out of the vehicles for a brief moment, a male Large Niltava was spotted sitting low beside the deserted road. The day started in earnest though when Rofik and Kenneth spotted a pair of Beautiful Nuthatches moving with a mixed flock in the area, and pulses were sent soaring as it flitted from mossy branch to mossy branch, high in the trees, making it an uneasy bird to get on to. However, after some stressful moments, everyone had gotten onto the bird, before it melted back into the forest, along with the stream of other birds it was in company with like minlas, leaf-warblers, Gray-chinned Minivets, and several Sultan Tits too, another highly-desired bird on its own.
Alongside this, the first of several **Black-throated Sunbirds** that morning were also found singing close by. This was already a decent opening itself, but then a pair of **Long-tailed Broadbills** appeared suddenly by the roadside just yards from the original nuthatch sighting, so pulses were not allowed to drop. At the very point that the group got in to position to get a decent look at the broadbills, a **Green Cochoa** begun calling very close by, and the **broadbills** were swiftly abandoned for a chance at this much-wanted species. The song was loud and clear, and so the source of it was easy to determine, and shortly after **Rofik** and **Sam** had the bird lined up in the ‘scope, where all got a good eyeful of it, just as another birding group arrived and were also able to share in this great early morning opening. After self-congratulatory moments, we set off for more birds, but all acknowledged that nothing could realistically live up to this early period of birding madness. **White-spectacled and Gray-hooded Warblers** were both seen singing in close company with each other in this early morning period too. Although it was by now late spring, mixed bird parties were still in evidence, something we had been a little worried about, but we racked up many species by combing these hives of bird activity, like the striking multicolored **Silver-eared Mesia, Golden Babbler, White-naped and Black-chinned Yuhinas** (the former species was *only* seen on this single day of the entire tour), and **Rusty-fronted Barwing**.

*These frogs near Sessni were not to be disturbed from their mid-road antics, and distracted us during an afternoon lull in bird activity*
Moving further down, we heard the clear whistles of a Red-faced Liocichla, a species we had only so far heard and not close enough to do anything with. However, on this occasion, we were finally given the show we wanted; the bird was close and moved on to open perches on several memorable occasions, when the burning pinkish-red cheeks and wing patches could not be missed. By this point, before we had even had the chance to take breakfast in the field, it was clear it was shaping up to be quite a day, with the famously extraordinary diversity of Eaglesnest on full display.

A breakfast stop for porridge and Indian bread started off with a small squadron of White-throated Needletails, a regional scarcity. Then, John L, sent us all into a panic when he spotted a high-flying Rufous-necked Hornbill flying over the viewpoint where we stood that was decorated with colorful Tibetan prayer flags, symbolizing the various elements of the Earth. The lofty flight path had us craving for another of these striking Asian hornbills, so that we might get clearer looks at this smart species. The mirador also yielded the only Blyth’s Swifts of the trip, and a small number of Himalayan Swifts during a clear, fine morning. Continuing our downward journey, there were certainly moments of low activity punctuated by moments of avian rewards, including a flock that held one of our key species at this elevation, Coral-billed Scimitar-Babbler, and shortly after a Pale Blue Flycatcher watched singing by ‘scope up high in the trees.

We took lunch in Sessni, where there is little to show for being there aside from a sign with alluring local birds on it, like the Rufous-necked Hornbill with which we were not yet totally happy with. Just after lunch (when we observed a mixed party of martins hawking overhead, which included Asian and Nepal House Martins), with the sun remaining present and activity low, a pair of mating frogs held our fascination as they sat in the middle of the road until we moved them on to the safety of the verge; lucky for them, this part of the world at the time had only five cars perusing the area, two of which were ours and the others belonged to the only other birding group present. No other vehicles were seen on the days out of Bompu, another pleasurable part of birding Eaglesnest. The afternoon featured some ground-level birds too, both of which were bothersome and tricky to see, the Lesser Shortwing flitting around the group at close range, with perhaps only a few people getting satisfactory views. Thankfully though, this was not a major target for the group, who all had previous experience with the species elsewhere. However, the same could not be said of the Eyebrowed Wren-Babbler, and so Rofik persisted for longer until it showed as it foraged on a muddy bank and satisfied all, after a torrid period trying to get binoculars onto it prior to that. Another significant sighting came with the group all getting a new bird in Asian Emerald Cuckoo, a very handsome species, which we were fortunate to see a handful of times on the trip later on. That period also got us the final sighting of the tour of Beautiful Nuthatch, in a flock that had also produced a small group of Rufous-backed Sibia, another species we were specifically focusing on at this elevation. That was not the only new Sibia of the afternoon either, as two parties of Long-tailed Sibias also betrayed their presence by calling from the treetops, which allowed us to find them soon after. A small, fast moving, flock of Greater Necklaced Laughingthrushes also joined the trip list, and some repeat birds included another pair of White-breasted Parrotbills, Great and Golden-throated Barbets, Blyth’s Shrike-Babbler, and a few Himalayan Cutias. The day ended with one final babbler, with the musical Spot-throated Babbler drawing us into the undergrowth, before following a long and rewarding day in the field, we drive back uphill to Bompu Camp for the second of four nights.

3rd May: Eaglesnest (Khelong)

Another very early start was needed, as with a 4:30am dawn and a 90-minute drive to visit the lower reaches of the sanctuary (800m/2625ft), it was necessary to depart at 3:30am to be there within a reasonable time of dawn, and the highest level of bird activity in the area. Khelong is characterized by thick, tall stands of bamboo, which are home to a discrete set of birds. The key to finding some of these was to find a mixed flock and our early arrival enhanced our chances of this.
Ironically though, bird activity was low initially, with no flocks encountered. Thankfully, other birds made this a little easier to handle; firstly, a Yellow-vented Warbler sung its heart out from just overhead, our first White-throated Babblers (next page) were vociferous from the bamboo, and then a male Large Blue Flycatcher (below) was both photographed and videoed as it remained firmly fixed on its chosen perch. Yellow-bellied and Rufous-faced Warblers, both species with a propensity for bamboo, were both scored before and during another field breakfast. Then, not long after breakfast, we hit the jackpot when a flock seared through the bamboo; the first species to reveal its presence was the sudden appearance of a Pale-billed Parrotbill on an emergent bamboo strand, which usually occurs in flocks with White-hooded Babblers and Red-billed Scimitar-Babblers, as they did on this occasion, with the birds revealing themselves in that order. We needed to chase the flock from one part of the road to another to eventually get clear looks at all of the species, which we did over a period of an hour or so. A Brown-breasted Flycatcher was an acceptable write-in, in this area too, a rarely recorded spevies in the region.

Then came the trump card of the morning. We had been trying and failing to see Pale-headed Woodpecker, another bamboo denizen, but notoriously shyer than the others. They had been heard but never close. However, finally, their distinctive drums and harsh yelps were heard from close to the road, and we sprang into action. It did not take long to get one to come in, and it landed right on an open vine in full view on several occasions, proving much easier to see than anticipated, as they are famously mobile and can therefore be very hard to pin down for an entire group. The morning had turned from appearing to be a bust to a bumper morning, with this very special few hours of birding, and so next up we entered a very specific forest trail that Rofik knew of, to try for the subdued Buff-breasted Babbler. We got to the right spot quickly, being close to the road, and the bird responded quickly, but proved a tricky customer to see, until, finally it appeared closer, and lingered in a branch finally visible to all of us as it sang away in full view. While we had been trying to firm up views of the babbler, the low croaks of a Gray Peacock-Pheasant had been heard nearby, and so we hid ourselves as well as we could and tried to call it in. Unfortunately, the bird went a different way from anticipated, and was therefore not convenient for the group’s position, and was only seen by Sam and John C during this period. Walking downhill further, we finally reached the site of Khelong (right on the southern verge of the sanctuary), which is covered with prayers flags, and has a Bonsum tree as its centerpiece, an important tree that was planted by the current Dalai Lama in 1959. We took lunch under the revered tree but did not manage to find the hoped for Black-throated Prinia during a search of the surrounding scrub, something that would happen more than once on this trip concerning this usually straightforward bird!
Khelong in the lower part of the Eaglenest sanctuary was a rich hunting ground; this White-throated Bulbul was outshone by flocks holding Red-billed Scimitar-Babblers, White-hooded Babblers, and Pale-billed Parrotbills, and Rufous-vented Laughingthrushes, Rufous-necked Hornbills, White-browed Piculet, and easy Pale-headed Woodpeckers!

During lunch, we discussed our remaining species at these lower elevations and realized we were really down to three, the very rarely seen Rufous-vented Laughingthrush, which appeared a very long shot in the heat of the day, Rufous-necked Hornbill, which had been much more difficult to pin down than expected, and the unpredictable Collared Treepie. Returning to some of the areas we’d previously been that morning, we soon heard a calling Rufous-necked Hornbill, which soon took to the air, and had us running for the hills, hoping that it might perch in view. Sam and Tim were at the phalanx of the group, and Tim quickly announced he had a male flying overhead, which then dropped into a tree, where everyone got scope views of once they’d caught up. It was a smashing male hornbill and we were happy. It was then seen again in flight later, along with several Wreathed Hornbills for good measure, before a female Rufous-necked Hornbill perched for a short time too. Just after we started our recovery from the hornbill sprint, Rofik locked on to the call of a Rufous-ventecl Laughingthrush uphill from our position on the road. We went in, as this master skulker would be extremely difficult to see from the road, and so we beat our way through bothersome, head-high stinging nettles, gathered together quietly, and then were amazed to see the bird twice, giving all people views of this very difficult species. Following this, we attempted to find a Collared Treepie (but only finding a badly-timed Gray Treepie!), before we reluctantly agreed to return to Bompu, with time pressing on, and further chances of the treepie down the road to come later on the tour around Digboi.
Tropical Birding Trip Report
Northeast India (Assam & Arunachal Pradesh) custom tour April-May 2018

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4th May: Eaglenest (Bompu)

By the time we reached this, our final full day in Eaglenest, it was clear that the area around Bompu was the elevation we needed to focus on, regarding birds we had not yet seen, and so we spent the morning above the camp. Our premier target was (again), Blyth’s Tragopan. An early capture was a Sikkim Treecreeper that we had only heard prior to this point. Again, we walked amongst the wonderful ancient trees along the “Tragopan Trail” but again failed to find its namesake bird. However, we did at least hear one, but quite some way off, and it only called a few times. Our best sighting there though came just as we entered the trail, and well before we reached the area for the tragopan; a Hill Partridge (below) called very close by and so we backed off and played the call to see if it would emerge on to the trail. It did just that and circled around us to within ten to fifteen feet, giving jaw-dropping views…

Views like this of Hill Partridge at Eaglenest were wholly unexpected; our guide even made a video by I Phone!
Also, along the trail, we finally got acceptable views of the “Master Skulker”, Blue-fronted (Blue) Robin, and got close to a Darjeeling Woodpecker; Scarlet Finch also featured there. After getting back on to the road, we drove up and went in search of Broad-billed Warbler, which was heard calling beside the roadside but was initially difficult to see. However, on playing the call of a Collared Owlet not only did the Broad-billed Warbler come in to investigate, but a flock of mobbing birds containing 17 different species! These included Black-faced, Lemon-rumped, Buff-barred, and Blyth’s Leaf Warblers, Ashy-throated, Whistler’s and Chestnut-crowned Warblers, Red-tailed, Chestnut-tailed and Blue-winged Minlas, Yellow-browed and Yellow-cheeked Tits, Golden Babbler, Golden-breasted Fulvetta, Whiskered Yuhina, Silver-eared Mesia, Gray-sided Laughingthrush, Beautiful Sibia, and Green-tailed Sunbird. On the way back to the camp for lunch, we found our first roaming flock of Black-throated Parrotbills.

Rain moved in during the afternoon, and delayed our afternoon’s birding, but once we had got out again, we managed to see a male Gold-naped Finch foraging in the road and get some great looks at a singing male Purple Cochoa.
Having at least heard the tragopan the day before, we opted to again walk into this forest and try one more time before we departed for Dirang via Lama Camp in Eaglenest again on the way to there. As we entered the trail, the same Hill Partridge put on such a good performance that some people even managed to take decent video on their I Phone as it preened trailside! On getting to the now familiar area for our main avian objective, there was no obvious interest from the tragopan, with no sounds initially heard as Rofik and Sam swept the area. Then, Sam covered another gully, while Rofik covered the other side, and suddenly one called close to Sam. The group was quickly reassembled and the bird heard again, tantalizingly close. But then, it went quiet again. Thinking the bird was still close by, we combed the area we heard it, flushing a Hill Partridge, and a larger bird that remained unidentified, but was strongly thought to have been the tragopan, for moments later it called, loud and close, in the direction of where the flushed bird had gone. This time, the bird continued to call regularly, and the hairs on the backs of our necks stood on end, as we felt directly within the presence of a close tragopan. We felt we should be able to see it from the high volume of the call being emitted from the bird, but initial binocular sweeps of the area turned up nothing.
Then, suddenly, *Sam* noticed a shocking male *Blyth’s Tragopan* (page before) sitting on an open mossy branch at eyelevel! The views could not have been better. It remained on that perch for at least 20 minutes, during which time it even gave a brief display. The bird remained long enough that *Rofik*, seeing that *Sam* had a major camera malfunction at the very worst of times (i.e. best ever sightings of the tragopan), had enough time to dash all the way back down to the car, and retrieve his camera, when he got the indelible image on the previous page. Other birds recorded on the way out of *Eaglenest*, included *Chestnut-crowned Laughingthrush*, *Stripe-throated Yuhina* (below) up near *Eaglenest Pass* again, another brief sighting of a *Bugun Liocichla* near *Lama Camp*, *Yellow-bellied Fairy-Fantail*, *Rufous-bellied Woodpecker*, *Long-tailed Minivet*, and *White-tailed Nuthatch*, and *Rufous-bellied Niltava*. Best of all was a pair of *Yellow-rumped Honeyguide* seen sitting beside and visiting their treasured bee hives hanging from a cliff face within the forest. As we drove down to *Tenga* for lunch we found our only *White-throated Laughingthrushes* of the tour.

Three to four hours later we arrived in the *Dirang* area and started our birding with a visit to the *Sangti Valley*, where five *Long-billed Plovers* were seen, two of which were newly-fledged chicks. It has only fairly recently been found to breed in the area. The black-headed form of *Long-tailed Shrike* was also recorded for the first time in this area, as was a *Brown Dipper*, before we pulled into *Dirang*, when the rain started lashing down through the night.
6th May: Sela Pass (Dirang) Arunachal Pradesh

This day had some considerable challenges known ahead of it; we were to head to the highest point of the tour at Sela Pass, which peaks at around 4170m/13,700ft. With this comes extremely unpredictable weather, which cannot even be judged accurately from our base below in the town of Dirang (elevation of 1625m/5250ft). Therefore, we simply chose to go for it, and see what greets us on reaching the pass area shortly after dawn. Of course, with dawn so early, another incredibly early start was necessitated, more here for the likelihood that the early mornings have a greater record of being clear than at any other time of day, so can provide the only birdable weather of the day. We stopped just below the pass, where the air was still crisp, although we were prepared, and if anything, we were a little overlayered, as the weather was finer than it can be. We spent some time among some scarlet red Rhododendrons confirming spring had arrived at the pass, and they were being regularly attended by a true stunner of the high Himalaya, Fire-tailed Sunbird, every bit as good as it sounds. Strangely though, no myzornis joined the early morning frenzy around these rich sources of nectar. Indeed, aside from the striking sunbirds, little was in evidence except a Rufous-vented Tit singing from the nearby pines, a Ludlow’s (Brown-throated) Fulvetta, and some Buff-barred, Greenish, and Tickell’s Leaf Warblers. A Rufous-breasted Bush-Robin did call, but would not show, before we decided that we better head up higher for one of the highest priority birds of the tour while the weather was in a good place.
We rose up to the pass (having taken a field breakfast among the rhododendrons earlier) and took off on a side trail into the shallow snows of spring, knowing that we may be required to walk up to one and a half kilometers (around a mile), to reach optimal habitat for the bird we wanted. With this news Kenneth stepped out and waited near the trailhead in case we spotted something earlier on the trail. He needn’t have worried, when just about 400m/1300ft further along the trail the distinctive calls of a Gould’s Shortwing (page before) came out from the boulder strewn slope above us. On playing the call, the bird reacted quickly, and perfectly, flying and perching on a selection of open rocks around us, when this gorgeous migratory flycatcher, which is rare and local, showed itself from every possible angle, well within photographic range. Kenneth, the only other person with a camera on this tour, really needed to see this bird, and so Sam went back to get him, and he too was also able to enjoy this superb bird, which was very likely to be in the top five birds of the tour following this exemplary performance. The same area also held Himalayan White-browed Rosefinch, and some superb Alpine Thrushes were heard singing, and watched foraging on the mossy, snow studded slopes close by; a male Golden Bush-Robin also showed to all as it hopped around a boulder field. A male Himalayan Monal was also observed in flight by some in the area, and Snow Partridges were heard, but neither were openly pursued, as the group had seen both of these before. With the weather holding, we returned to the car, noting Snow Pigeons, Rosy Pipit and Alpine Accentor as we did so, then dropped over the other side of the pass, passing by a number of heavy military vehicles with mortars and other heavy weaponry, due to the position of a big army base on the mountain.

An astonishing male Grandala; yes, they really are that color! One of the classic high Himalayan species at Sela Pass
Our drop down to the other side met with only partial success; the *Solitary Snipe* was nowhere to be found, in spite of a very tight and extensive search around its regular bog; but we did encounter a flock of seventeen *Grandalas* (page before) on the return trip to the pass, with some glowing purple males showing very well, as colder weather, stronger winds, and rain started to move in, in earnest. We retreated lower down and took lunch at a restaurant that provided sanctuary from the foggy, rainy conditions, and hoped a miracle would happen for the afternoon’s birding; we were not ready to throw the towel in just yet. And, good job we did not. While the afternoon weather continued to be challenging, there were short spells of reprieve, when either the rain would subside, or the mist would roll back. During these spells, the group got cracking looks at a *Fire-tailed Myzornis* feeding on a bed of red *rhododendrons*. Sadly, following these good looks, and in spite of hundreds of the same flowering shrubs in existence at the time, the myzornis soon retreated too. However, these flowers were bursting with birds, at least 60 of which were *Dark-breasted Rosefinches*, the pollen scattered on their faces showing they were taking full advantage of this temporary boom in nectar. Another, very timid *Rufous-breasted Bush-Robin* was also spotted briefly under the *Rhododendrons* by John C, Sam, and Kenneth. *Black-faced Laughingthrushes* were again seen here too, as were our first *White-collared Blackbirds*, and only *Blue-fronted Redstarts* of the entire trip. We returned to our simple *Dirang* hotel with mixed feelings; we had enjoyed big success with the *shortwing* and *myzornis*, and the outstanding flocks of *rosefinches* amongst the *rhododendrons* were memorable, but (perhaps due to the weather) missed some *rosefinches and grosbeaks* we’d been hoping for.
7th May: Mandala Road (Dirang) Arunachal Pradesh
The day was spent (again being haunted by low cloud and rain at times), along the Mandala Road, which starts near Dirang at an altitude of around 1650m/5400ft and then rises up to a pass just over 3,000m/9850ft. Once again, we did not get as many of the target species we would have liked on this day, perhaps again due to the weather rarely being in a good place for us to do so, but with only one day available at this site, we persevered. In spite of us missing some of the hoped-for targets, most notably Blanford’s Rosefinch and Rufous-fronted (Black-browed) Tit, it was quite a birdy day (just under 100 species were recorded for the day after all), and had some excellent photo opportunities too, in the brief unpredictable clear spells. As we made our way up from our hotel, we stopped for the odd sight of a Large Hawk-Cuckoo gulping down prey on the side of the road, on the ground; this species is more normally very high in the trees. The flocks along the road on this day were superb, even if we had already seen most of the species held within them. As usual, it was easy to get these stirred up by deployment of a Collared Owlet (below) call, which at the first attempt brought in an owl up close too…
The other birds that attended this particular flock included a pair of Spot-winged Grosbeaks, our only sighting of the tour, Mrs. Gould’s Sunbird, Long-tailed Minivet, Black-winged Cuckoo-shrike, and Rufous-bellied Woodpecker. Flocks were encountered on-and-off through the day and were the source to find the following birds at various times: Blue-winged, Red-tailed, and Chestnut-tailed Minlas, Beautiful Sibia, Rufous-winged and Ludlow’s (Brown-throated) Fulvettas, White-tailed Nuthatch, White-throated Fantail, Blyth’s and Green Shrike-Babblers, Maroon Oriole, Whiskered and Rufous-vented Yuhinas, and Yellow-browed, Yellow-cheeked, Cinereous, Green-backed and Black-throated (Red-headed) Tits. Over breakfast, when the weather was good, a pair of Slaty-blue Flycatchers fed in the open, on the edge of a clearing. Taiga and Dark-sided Flycatchers made their only appearances on the tour this day, while Rufous-gorgeted Flycatcher made its first one. The morning also saw us encounter the only Eurasian (Spotted) Nutcrackers of the trip.

After breakfast lower down, we birded around the pass and beyond, where even in misty conditions we found a party of Russet Sparrows and heard the first Hume’s Bush-Warbler (above) of the day. However, it took a trip further down the far side of the pass to another specific spot to see this bird properly, which was a lifer for all, and gave crippling looks as it should have done the first time, perching and singing in the open to the happiness of the birders and photographers in us all!
Further birding on the far side of the pass led to a second and more spectacular encounter, with a mob of raucous Spotted Laughingthrushes (below) this time not doused in thick fog! Other highlights that day included Wedge-tailed (Green) Pigeon, sightings of both Common and Lesser Cuckoos, further Gray-sided Laughingthrushes, Mountain Bulbuls, singles of Red-billed Leiothrix and Rufous-bellied Niltava, a lone Mountain Hawk-Eagle overhead in one of the less cloudy spells, Gray-crowned and Whistler’s Warblers, and more Chestnut-crowned Laughingthrushes too. The most unexpected sighting of the day happened when a Northern Goshawk passed low overhead that was seen by all. Sam also managed to see the rare Arunachal Macaque by walking a short way into an extremely muddy trail and peering into the mist at a time when a troop was calling, a species amazingly only first described in 2004. Near the end of the day, we finally heard our first Black-throated Prinia, but this one would not perform to the bafflement of all. However, further down the road, a prinia’s voice was heard again, and this time it behaved more typically, giving us open views at various angles, before we reboarded our vehicles and headed back to the hotel after a birdy day, but had unfortunately lacked some of the “higher end”, more difficult species we had been hoping for.
8th May: Dirang (Arunachal Pradesh) to Nameri National Park (Assam)

Construction work meant that we did not have the time to bird the bottom end of the Mandala Road again as we would have liked, as we needed to get through the area of roadworks by a given time in the morning. As it happened, this problem proved irrelevant as we awoke to heavy rains pouring down in the area, which would have made it completely unbirdable anyway. Instead, we set off for Nameri National Park, crossing back into Assam as we headed south, and arriving at the Nameri Eco Camp by lunchtime, when we were greeted on arrival by the sight of some Capped Langurs (left) lounging in trees near the restaurant. Red-breasted Parakeets were also prominent in the resort, where they appeared to be nesting. The sticky heat of arriving back in the lowlands of Assam was quickly brought starkly to mind also.

After lunch at the resort, we set out with vehicles to the nearby Jia Bhoroli River, crossing by small boat to the other side, where the park begins. Unlike most other parks with big animals residing within them, Nameri does not have either jeep access or tracks in which to access the park, which is all done on foot, with an armed guard in tow, as we did too. Seeing elephants on this afternoon, and hearing an unseen Tiger nearby (an estimated 50 meters/160ft away) growl, and then bumping into a group of wild Gaur at a forest pool, made the need to keep close together and in close proximity to our security all too clear!
The afternoon’s birding was excellent, with many new birds added to the trip list even though we had been in the Assam lowlands before in Kaziranga. As we crossed the river, we spotted our first River Terns, River Lapwings, and Little Ringed Plovers, and also (Lesser) Pied Kingfisher. We then walked a wooded area, parallel to the river, where bird activity was almost constant, with Chestnut-bellied and Velvet-fronted Nuthatches found foraging within the same tree, White-throated Bulbuls, Lineated and Blue-throated Barbets, Greater Yellownape, Green-billed Malkoha, our only group of Jungle Babblers of the tour, and some superb perched Vernal Hanging-Parrots (actually seen hanging) all seen. We also saw our first Black Giant Squirrels, impressive in its enormity for a squirrel. Probably our best sighting of the afternoon was at least two Ruddy Kingfishers, a summer visitor that had arrived just two days earlier. Looking out at the river at viewpoints later on produced an Osprey, and around fifteen Small Pratincoles hawking over the river. Checking a forest pond for the rare White-winged Duck did not turn up this rarity, as the recent rains had expanded the areas for feeding and they were therefore not as regularly dropping into this normally regular pool of theirs, due to a sudden dearth of new wetland areas to utilize too. However, we did see three Gaur (above) there, which were very unexpected and fortunate on this tour. A Himalayan Flameback had recently been reported there too, but sadly all we could find was a pair of the much more abundant Greater Flameback.
In the late afternoon, we returned to the riverside (via a pair of Spotted Owlets that were appreciated by some sari-wearing Indian tourists there), and scoured the banks for another key species, Sand Lark, which was soon located and made some song flights while there. Several Wreathed Hornbills also passed overhead, and a Great Thick-knee was seen flying away from the river.

As dusk set, the local Brown Boobook, and Asian Barred Owlets both competed with each other with their loud and frequently-given calls. This did not concern us though, as we had already sighted both of these on the tour previously.

9th May: Nameri National Park

We enjoyed a full day in the park, looking not only for the White-winged Duck that evaded us unfortunately, but also the myriad other birds that the park is home to. Before breakfast, we searched the resort for birds, finding nothing new, but observing the male Great Hornbill that was nesting in the resort, come in to the feed the female, which was sealed by a layer of mud inside its nest cavity. As we crossed the river, we managed to find most of the specialties of the river edge, none of which were new by this point, like River Lapwing, River Tern, Osprey, Pied Kingfisher, and a pair of Great Thick-knees settled on the ground this time. A Black-shouldered Kite was also hovering above the grasslands that were also hosting elephants at various times of the day. Walking the wooded trails, we also found Red Junglefowl, Black-hooded Orioles, Chestnut-headed Bee-eater, Common Hill Myna, several Asian Fairy-Bluebirds, and Golden-fronted Leafbird. Woodpeckers were good on this day, even if all bar one was not a new species for the tour; Rufous Woodpecker was the new addition, while Gray-capped Pygmy Woodpecker, Lesser and Greater Yellownapes, and Greater Flamebacks were all striking species we were only too happy to see again. Several Pale-chinned Blue Flycatchers were heard during our morning walks, a specialty, although as we’d seen one very well at Kaziranga, no efforts were made to see them here. A visit to a stream in the morning produced the hoped-for pair of Black-backed Forktails, and below the tower, a Hooded Pitta (above) also gave fantastic views as it called incessantly from within the trees.
Both in the morning and afternoon, we visited a tower where pigeons were feeding en-masse. We hoped that this might bring us an Ashy-headed Green Pigeon, but we could only find Orange-breasted, Thick-billed, and Wedge-tailed Pigeons, and Green Imperial Pigeons among the hundreds of pigeons present. We also managed to find several Asian Emerald Doves and an out of place group of four Ashy Woodpigeons, not normally found at this low altitude. Some great looks of a Blue-throated Barbet (below) in a fruiting tree were also had from the same tower late in the day. In the afternoon, we found ourselves temporarily “trapped” up the tower as an elephant family came to investigate a local wallow. They soon moved away however, when we could return to ground level in time to depart the park before dusk (a requirement).

This Blue-throated Barbet joined a throng of fruit-eating birds at one lookout, where we watched Green Imperial-Pigeons, Wedge-tailed, Thick-billed, and Orange-breasted (Green) Pigeons and Ashy Woodpigeons coming in to feed and drink. Asian (Indian) Elephants also came into a muddy wallow there too.
10th May: Nameri to Maguri Grasslands (Tinsukia area, Assam)

This day saw us take a long drive to Tinsukia, our base for a single night, which would break up our long journey into the Himalayas to the remote, and little visited forests of the Mishmi Hills. Tinsukia however, lies close to an important area of native grasslands, one of the major habitats of this tour. Thus, our plan for the day was to set off early from Nameri, and stop off in the afternoon at Maguri, to try for a few grassland specialties. In spite of the fact that there are only around 9 species of serious importance from the grasslands (most of which are endangered), we needed to visit four different areas of grassland to try and see them all, as they are inconveniently not all found in one place. Thus, we had already visited Kaziranga, which provided us with Slender-billed Babbler, Indian Grassbird, and Finn’s (Yellow) Weaver; Maguri we hoped, would provide us with a good shot at Jerdon’s Babbler and Marsh Babbler, and an outside chance of Blunt-winged Warbler and Bristled Grassbird, which had both been reported this year there (the latter for the first time). On the journey between Nameri and Maguri, we passed by Kaziranga, and stopped for a short time to admire final rhinos, elephants, and Great Hornbills. Greater Adjutant, and Black-necked Stork there. In the midafternoon, we arrived at Maguri; we donned rubber boots and needed to go right into the tall grasses (above head height), to get our first skulker, the Marsh Babbler (below) which approached to within 20 feet of us and gave us all great looks at this notoriously elusive species.

An excellent capture of a difficult bird, the ultra-skulking Marsh Babbler, a rare and local dweller of tall grasses (Rofik Islam)
We then went a short distance away, but still deep inside the long grass, to find our next premier target of the afternoon. Like the Marsh Babbler, it responded quickly, although unlike that species it emerged fully into the open on the tops of the grasses and posed! (the parrotbill-like Jerdon’s Babbler, below) …

This Jerdon’s Babbler, like the Marsh Babbler before it, showed well in Maguri, after we walked into the tall grasses that they favor. Both species are declining grassland specialists of the region. This species is currently known from only around six sites in the region.

We also checked an area where Bristled Grassbird had been seen a few weeks before, and while failing to find that, we noticed a Wild Water Buffalo (next page) taking a little more interest in us than we would have liked, and so we took a wide berth until it lost interest in us and began nonchalantly grazing again. We found other birds as we continued, like Lesser Whistling-Duck, Indian Spot-billed Duck, Cinnamon and Yellow Bitterns, Lesser Adjutant, (Lesser) Pied Kingfisher, Lesser Coucal, Paddyfield Pipit, and a Watercock flushed up too. We then checked into the so-called “best hotel in the region”, which was hard to believe, but it did have hot water (for some at least) full time electricity, intermittent Internet, and the best food of the tour without question, with the Butter Chicken Masala and Nan Bread being a firm favorite we would return to later on the tour.
11th May: Digboi to Roing (Arunachal Pradesh)

In the morning we visited nearby Digboi, home to several very local specialties, and a site comprised of difficult to penetrate hilly scrubland; later we drove on to Roing, to the north, where we would again return to grasslands for one of the birds of the tour. The principle reason for visiting Digboi was to try and see the elusive Chestnut-backed Laughingthrush, a bird with a tiny range. While we heard our first laughingthrush, a White-cheeked Partridge, another local speciality, also called, and with some persuading crossed a trail, when Sam got a brief look but only Kenneth got a decent look. Then, we returned to the laughingthrush, but found another key species, Collared Treepie (next page) on the way there. We plowed our way deep into the scrub layer and then tried again for the laughingthrush, which this time came in well, though only briefly. So, while the views were good, not everybody was able to see the bird, as it positioned itself in a window only available to half of the group. While birding that area, we also found a few Greater Racket-tailed Drongos too. All too soon, we needed to move on with some very special appointments for birds to come later in the day after we had reached Roing, in the plains but with a view of the well-forested Mishmi Hills in the distance.
After lunch in our simple hotel in Roing (which did have air-con and private bathrooms, and hot water, which was more than was to come in future days), we headed out to another grassland. Although still known as “Roing”, it was in fact a 90-minute drive from there! The reason for the journey was another very rare, and rapidly-declining, grassland bird, Bengal Florican (page 50) a type of Indian bustard, which has now been lost from many of its former haunts. Picking up one of the friends of the local landowner, we alighted from the cars and amazingly found a florican almost immediately, (if only briefly) walking away from us, when it soon disappeared into denser grasslands. Walking in to try and refind it, a falcon was noticed sitting on top of a stunted tree, which proved to be an Amur Falcon on closer inspection. As we walked around the grasslands, seeking a better look at the bustard, floricans were again seen in flight, with at least 3 males and 2 females seen during only a few hours there. Other birds seen at the site, included a pair of King (Blue-breasted) Quail and a single Barred Buttonquail both of which were inadvertently flushed. Looking up from the grassy plains, the rise up into the Mishmi Hills of the Himalayan foothills could be seen clearly, which is where we headed in the late afternoon, in order to try for a nightbird just after dusk. The roadsides became clogged with bamboo, as we made our way up, and looked back down on the plains we had just come from, which now seemed immediately far away. Picking our first spot, where this particular nightbird had been recorded most recently, we were alarmed to see the wind pick up speed, and the bamboo to be swaying substantially from side-to-side.
After some discussion, with dusk not quite there yet, we opted to head higher to another area, hoping we would get out of the wind. This proved to be an intelligent plan from Rofik and the local guide, as we saw the winds withered as we ascended. As dusk fell around us, we tried the call of a [Hodgson’s Frogmouth](#) (below) and were excited to hear one calling close by almost immediately; we quickly repositioned ourselves and soon had it in the flashlight. It was a magnificent bird, a rufous female, and in a super position, completely uncovered by branches, sitting still at eye level, until we walked away!
Near Roing, we got flight views of five Bengal Floricans, a critically endangered species, numbering only 100 males in all of India.

12th May: Roing to Mishmi Hills (Arunachal Pradesh)

The day before had been something of a landmark day of the tour, but like several days in Eaglenest, the next was one of the contenders for the day of the trip, with birds all through the day, and megas at either end, and even a good nightbird to boot. Thanks, in no small party to Rofik’s local knowledge of the sites, I think we did not miss a single target species for the day, which is a rare thing on a bird tour of this nature indeed. We opened the day with the usual early morning tea and departure, by which time it was already light, with dawn being at an inconveniently early hour at this time of year in Northeast India. Our first destination was another site referred to as “Roing Grasslands”, but completely different from the one we visited the afternoon before, and in completely the opposite direction. At least this one was close to Roing (around 10km/6 miles away), and so the name seemed a better fit for this one! While we were again going after a grassland species, this site did not hold Bengal Florican, and the other site does not hold the species we were seeking here, the unpredictable Black-breasted Parrotbill, which seems to be available in some years and gone in others, even at seemingly “reliable” sites. On approaching the site, there were some great looks at a smashing Rufous-necked Laughingthrush, surely one of the best looking laughingthrushes on this tour, which is loaded with more from this group than any other tour in the World. Shortly after arriving at the main site, we found a grassland specialist we had seen previously, Chestnut-capped Babbler, and then saw several spectacular Chinese Rubythroats singing amongst the tall grasses, a sight to behold, but not our target bird either, which only took a short while later to show up, when a flock of at least three Black-breasted Parrotbills hopped in and out of the tall grasses, appearing on the upper stems, and then disappearing into the dense cover below.

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Just after getting this endangered species, we got on to our sixth and final scimitar-babbler of the tour, with a pair of Spot-breasted Scimitar-Babblers, which lingered long enough for us to all to get scope views when we wanted them too. With that, our time was done in Roing, and the mountains beckoned once more, and the highest accommodation of the tour at around 2600m/8530ft. It was only around 2 hours’ drive to our next lodging, a very old building formerly used by government employees as a mountain getaway from the heat of the Indian plains. However, rather than rush straight there, we stopped to pick up some special birds before we took lunch once there. Stopping for a calling Hill Blue Flycatcher produced no views, but the next two stops were very special indeed. First up, was a very highly-anticipated species indeed, the boldly marked Cachar Wedge-billed Wren-Babbler (Chevron-breasted Babbler), below, which we were assured might be quite easy to see that seemed a little atypical for something traditionally labeled as a “wren-babbler”. We halted beside a very specific place, played the call and waited. Initially nothing happened, but then a loud reply came from upslope, then the bird appeared briefly in amongst a dense tangle, and then when things were looking gloomy for decent views, it hopped out on to an open branch repeatedly and sung at length. It was clear to see “birds-of-the-tour” lists were already being challenged by this species, which performed so memorably, and has so much charisma. This provided to provide a very special opening to our time in the Mishmi Hills (if you do not include the evening befores Hodgson’s Frogmouth!)
Next up, was the bird that has made Mishmi so famous, *Mishmi (Rusty-throated) Wren-Babbler* (below) a species that was described from a specimen in 1947, *but not seen in life until 2004*. After that time, it has been found to be locally common, but only within a very small elevational band in the *Mishmi Hills*. Once we got into that crucial altitudinal band, we got the bird, and it showed well beyond our dreams, singing and perching in the open repeatedly. A new mammal was also found on the upward journey to the accommodation, with some roadside *Eastern Hoolock Gibbons* detected by their loud calls, and a *Large Woodshrike* was also seen, a species that was not regularly encountered on this tour.

![Mishmi (Rusty-throated) Wren-Babbler](image)

After checking into our primitive accommodation, we walked slowly uphill towards *Mayodia Pass*. A quick burst of a *Collared Owlet* recording brought in an impressive array of birds including three new ones for us in *Crimson-breasted Woodpecker*, *Streak-throated Barwing* and *Streak-throated (Manipur) Fulvetta*, although some of the other inhabitants of the flock, while not new, showed so well (to within a few feet) that they stole the show. Most notably the headlines went to a couple of *Golden-breasted Fulvettas* (page 54) and several *Black-throated Parrotbills* (next page) that both showed together at times! *Chestnut-crowned Warbler*, *Rusty-fronted Barwing*, *Stripe-throated Yuhina*, and a pair of *Ludlow’s (Brown-thoated) Fulvettas* (page 54) were also present, the latter giving us our best views yet.
The remainder of the afternoon was, quite understandably something of a letdown after the first two thirds of the day, but we added Himalayan Bluetail, and got a good look at a Rufous-gorgeted Flycatcher up near the pass. By the late afternoon, the temperature drop was very apparent and so we returned to the accommodation to set up our rooms for a cold night ahead. Then, at 6:30pm, we left again for the Mayodia Pass area in search of another much-anticipated nightbird, Himalayan Owl. Perched on 9 species of owl recorded for the trip (8 seen), this was now the only likely owl we could add at this late stage. However, traditionally, this has always been a difficult species to see. Rofik, strangely, seemed quite calm and assured about our chances, and once he lined up the first of three that night, (perched on a roadside rock at eye level), we soon understood why! Unfortunately, the closeness of the bird worked against the group seeing it, as it was only really visible from one side of each vehicle. Thus, once it flew off, it became apparent that Kenneth had never even got sight of the bird from his restricted position inside the vehicle. We all tried desperately to refind that owl, but it was soon clear it was gone, and so we resumed our night drive beyond the pass looking for another individual.

Photos on next page: TOP – Golden-breasted Fulvetta BOTTOM – Ludlow’s (Brown-throated) Fulvetta both Mishmi Hills
Amazingly, another was heard close to the road, and then found sitting in a tree, when it flew on to an open perch beside the road, where everyone got long, satiating looks at the individual as it hooted regularly within the spotlight! Seeing Himalayan Owl (left) is not common by any means on this tour and seeing this one this well felt quite exceptional. John L also saw a third individual while we were all gawping at the bird perched on an open snag.

13th May: Mishmi Hills

In complete contrast to the day before, this day was inexplicably tough for birds. For sure, some of that was likely weather-related; heavy mist in the early morning around Mayodia Pass, and a long heavy rain shower in the afternoon below there could not have helped, but even so, bird numbers seemed oddly low relative to other days of the tour. We started up at the pass, following an early breakfast, hoping for a very rare sighting of a Sclater’s Monal, which (not surprisingly) did not happen. However, our more realistic focus was to try and track down our main remaining key species at Mishmi, the handsome Rusty-bellied Shortwing, which dwells within the thick stands of bamboo near the pass. We had no trouble in hearing them, or glimpsing them initially, with something like four birds being heard and several flitting through various binoculars here and there. However, after a long running battle, Sam finally pinned one down and this time it sat still for long enough for us all to see it well. Then the morning turned alarmingly quiet for a long period, and the birding was really tough; Scaly-breasted Cupwings remained unheard, despite being in a core zone for the species, although we did see some more confiding Streak-throated (Manipur) Fulvetas (page 57) and Chestnut-tailed Minlas, and more Stripe-throated Yuhinas, Black-throated Parrotbills, a White-tailed Nuthatch, a pair of Streak-breasted Scimitar-Babblers, and some Chestnut-bellied Rock-Thrushes being all to show for our morning around the pass.

We returned to the lodging for lunch and a short break, before deciding to focus below there after then, having spent all morning higher up. During lunch, Sam got close up to a Gray-sided Bush-Warbler, Yellow-billed (Gold-billed) Blue Magpie, and Gold-naped Finch right on the hill beside the property. Then, after lunch the drive downhill started very promisingly, with a small party of Gold-naped Finches feeding on the wet road, followed by a female Blyth’s Tragopan (next page) which skipped off the side of the road, once the first car had seen it. A little playback later, and it was back out in full view again, when we were all wishing so much it could have been a male, with such good views available!
Once we reached the spot we had planned to bird our way down from, the rain that had been petering in and out, came in with force, falling very strongly indeed, and causing us to retreat to the vehicles just after a close viewing of a party of Yellow-throated Fulvetta and a Green Shrike-Babbler, and we waited for a miraculous halt to the rain. Just prior to the onslaught of rain, we’d been playing the call of Pygmy (Blue) Flycatcher, which clearly had a delayed reaction to this, appearing and calling just above our cars, just as the heaviest rain began. However, we all hopped out and got good looks, making this all worth it. We waited for some time in the cars, hoping for the rain to abate. However, after an hour or so, most headed back to the accommodation to avoid it, and while a few of us continued on, as the rain did, rather unpredictably, move on. In spite of this, the late afternoon was low, save for a few Whiskered Yuhinas, Yellow-cheeked Tits, Striated Laughingthrushes, and a lone Gray-winged Blackbird. In the evening, the skies were amazingly studded with stars, so Tim and Sam could not resist going out in search of the same Himalayan Owls, or the chance at a new mammal, with us tantalizingly close to reaching 30 mammal species for the trip. However, we drew a blank on both fronts, and so soon returned to the lodging for another chilly night.
14th May: Mishmi Hills to Roing (Arunachal Pradesh)

This was to be our final day in the Mishmi Hills, and so we made the most of it; starting with an early run up to the pass, then returning to our lodging for both breakfast and lunch, either side of which we birded the forests below there. After lunch, we packed up as we birded our way down to the town of Roing in the plains of Brahmaputra but still within sight of the Himalayan foothills. The weather on this day was a marked improvement on recent days, and subsequently too was the birding, and we enjoyed a rich day of birding in these scenic hills. Indeed, it was so clear that we could view the plains below and even pick out the sinuous Dibang River far below.

Starting up at the pass, on the way up an unfortunate incident occurred that did not reveal itself until much later in the day. An incident of some significance, the significance of which was not realized until it was too late. As the first car ascended the road, Tim caught sight of a female pheasant, which then took flight and dropped off of the road, when it revealed it had a white tip to the tail, which translates to only one thing: Sclater’s Monal, a real gripper for the rest of the group! He did mention the detail at the time, but I guess people were suffering from sleep deprivation at this late stage of the tour and did not take in the significance of it all!
Moving up to the pass, the amount of birds singing made it all too clear that the bird activity was much higher than the previous day. Straight off, a group of *Streak-throated Barwings* (below) showed themselves out in the open, and this was followed up by a stellar performance from a pair of *Scaly Laughingthrushes*, which even emerged onto the treetops!

Mixed flocks were very active up there too, that held our final *Yellow-bellied Fairy-Fantails*, *Rufous-capped Babblers*, *Chestnut-tailed Minlas* (next page) *Rufous-winged Fulvetas* (page 60) and *Ludlow’s (Brown-throated) Fulvetas* of the tour. The pass also gave us another, second, look at the oddball *Slender-billed Scimitar-Babbler* (page 60), which had not featured since *Eaglenest* and felt like eons ago by this stage of the tour! A *Gray-headed Woodpecker* that showed well at *Mayodia Pass* was also the first one seen on the trip, in spite of multiple vocal records. A few *Yellow-billed (Gold-billed) Blue Magpies* were also present too, and we also amassed a total of six *Mountain Hawk-Eagles* in the air too, a testament to the change in the weather if ever there was one! Our stomachs were grumbling, in spite of the plentiful birds, and so we got into the vehicles and prepared to drive downhill to take breakfast before returning to the forest. However, just as the first car pulled away, a species that had been eluding us at every corner finally called: *Scaly-breasted Cupwing*, we had not even heard one in spite of considerable effort at numerous sites right up until then!
The bird came in once we had all reassembled, and amazingly, (and quite un-Cupwing-like), eventually made it way to the canopy of the trees to call from! After that extraordinary moment, we noticed a Ferruginous Flycatcher hawking from an open snag (where were all of these birds yesterday!?) After breakfast, we birded the road below the accommodation, which yielded our best views yet of a Black-headed Shrike-Babbler in a low tree, along with our first Fire-breasted Flowerpeckers (page 61) and we also got an upgraded look at the tiny Sapphire Flycatcher, this time in much better light than our fog-affected view earlier on the tour at Eaglenest. However, the main highlight of the late morning was provided when we followed up some strange coughing sounds echoing from the slope opposite, and John L, John C, and Kenneth, all found a pair of (Mishmi) Takin walking the slope! After lunch, we birded our way down the road back towards Roing, where we spent another night. As we did so, we saw other birds like Whistler’s Warblers, Green Shrike Babblers, a circling Peregrine Falcon, a Black Eagle, and Plumbeous and White-capped Redstarts too. However, the undoubted headliner from these lower altitudes was a Rufous-chinned Laughingthrush that called loudly and clearly, but initially from a place we simply could not see it. However, eventually it was tempted into some bamboo, where we all got good clear looks at this notorious skulker. The same area also held some more Gray-sided Laughingthrushes. We spent another night in Roing, which had been planned to break up the journey to Tinsukia and allow us a full day in the Mishmi area (if needed) the next day.
15th May: Digboi and Soraipong Forest Reserve (Assam)

With so little to search for around Roing, we decided to instead head to the “Oil City of Assam”, Digboi again, hoping to get the Chestnut-backed Laughingthrush once more for those who missed it the first time. This met with partial success, as John L managed a good view, but Tim who was standing right next to him, did not, as the bird only showed in the slimmest of windows. After a hot and sweaty try, just after a rainstorm had cleared, with few other birds seen, save for a Changeable Hawk-Eagle, we gave it up for lunch, and then spent the afternoon in a forest patch in Soraipong, where recent sightings of the extremely rare Pale-capped Pigeon had us dreaming of that mythical species. It was an afternoon filled with pigeons, but not that one, as we had Wedge-tailed, Pin-tailed, Thick-billed and Mountain and Green Imperial Pigeons. The same area also produced a couple of sightings of Ruddy Kingfisher, and a nice low-down look at a Blue-throated Blue Flycatcher. A Violet Cuckoo also flew over the clearing calling on several occasions but did not stop, a (Oriental) Dollarbird showed up on a dead snag, and several Blue-throated Barbets were seen at the forest edge. Gray-headed and Rufous Woodpeckers were also seen there too, as were Greater Racket-tailed and Bronzed Drongos, Chestnut-bellied Nuthatch, Blue-winged Leafbird, and Black-backed Forktail.
16th May: Jeypore and Soraipong Forest Reserves (Assam)

On this day we remained in the Digboi area, first visiting the wonderful Jeypore Forest Reserve for much of the day, before returning to Soraipong for a final (unsuccessful) attempt at the Pale-headed Pigeon. Jeypore opened brightly, with a Crow-billed Drongo and a pair of White-crowned Forktails located shortly after arrival too, as a new mammal, with a troop of noisy Western Hoolock Gibbons located in the treetops. An ultra-confiding Black-backed Dwarf-Kingfisher also showed before we had even taken breakfast. Just after our now customary field breakfast, a mixed flock of laughingthrushes came in overhead, which included both Lesser and Greater Necklaced Laughingthrushes. With the Lesser that meant we had now seen all SIXTEEN of the possible laughingthrushes on the itinerary! Walking along the quiet, deserted, forest road in the park, we watched several Black-backed Forktails feeding on the road verge, and then heard one of the calls we had been hoping to hear: Gray Peacock-Pheasant (below). While Sam tried to draw the calling bird across a gap, the pair of pheasants instead did the reverse and walked across the road in sight of all the group! Sam was able to sneak into the gully where he was able capture this photo of one of them…The same could not be said of the calling White-cheeked Partridges in the same gully, which remained firmly hidden and stuck to their reputation as a rarely-seen species steadfastly.
Moving further down the road, a pair of **Oriental Honey Buzzards** passed over, and a blue flash darting along the river proved to be the only **Blue-eared Kingfisher** of the tour. Then, **Rofik** locked on to a very important call indeed, that of the **Rufous-throated Fulvetta**. This was our only chance at this very local species, and it did not prove overly difficult, emerging out of the densest vegetation to give us all an eyeful on several occasions as two different groups were encountered before lunchtime. This wonderfully rich patch of rainforest had convinced us, we were having a great time within this large forest reserve, and soon after we bumped into a lively flock that from the sound, we could tell, held a **Silver-breasted Broadbill** within it. Sadly, though it never showed among the myriad other species present in the same flock, like **Speckled Piculet**, **Red-headed Trogon**, **Lesser Yellownape**, **Sultan Tit**, **Nepal Fulvetta**, **Velvet-fronted Nuthatch**, **Blue-winged Leafbird**, **Crow-billed and Bronzed Drongos**, and **White-bellied Erpornis**. Just after we had cleared through the flock a number of times over, **Tim** spotted an **Asian Barred Owlet** sitting high in the trees. Other highlights seen that morning included several white male **Blyth’s Paradise-Flycatchers**, **Black-hooded and Maroon Orioles**, **Gray Treepie**, and **Pin-striped Tit-Babbler**. However, the main showstopper in the late morning was a group of four **(Austen’s) Brown Hornbills** (below, by Rofik Islam) which were seen initially in flight only, then seen perched several times.

![Brown Hornbill](image)

*This tour was all about getting rare and difficult species, which are mostly-difficult in other parts of their range. This could be said of the **(Austen’s) Brown Hornbill**, which is arguably easier at Jeypore (where we saw it) than anywhere else in its range.* (Rofik Islam)
The latter part of the day saw us return to Soraipong Forest Reserve, where many Thick-billed, Wedge-tailed, and Pintailed Pigeons were seen, like before, and our 30th and final mammal of the tour, with an Assamese Macaque perched up by the clearing. We again got close to, but did not see, a calling White-cheeked Partridge. We had just one final morning to go to bring a close to this tour of a very little-known part of India, which quite often feels very far removed from the more well visited parts of the subcontinent. This region has its own unique feel, and a discrete set of birds, many of which are genuinely rare and local. The last day would see us go after a final couple of those by returning to Maguri Grasslands, before flying back to Delhi in the afternoon…

A happy group just after scoring our last rarity of the tour on the final day - Bristled Grassbird – at Maguri Grasslands in Assam, a very local species only listed for around 4-5 sites in all of Arunachal Pradesh and Assam
17th May: Maguri Grasslands to Delhi/Departure

As we had an early afternoon flight out of Dibrugarh to Delhi, this allowed us some early morning time to bird Maguri Grasslands again, and even take a short boat trip there, before returning to our Tinsukia hotel to shower, clean up and check out. While we had seen the two most regularly seen grassland target birds at the site during our previous visit (i.e. Marsh and Jerdon’s Babblers), we were going back for two more difficult ones that had been reported there recently, Bristled Grassbird, and Blunt-winged Warbler. Not knowing the precise whereabouts of the latter in this vast area, we tried the approximate area but never elicited a response. While we searched we found two Watercock, Yellow, Black, and Cinnamon Bitterns, Purple Heron, Oriental Darter, Citrine Wagtail, Greater and Lesser Coucals, and (Lesser) Pied Kingfisher. As we walked out into the grass to the exact spot where a Bristled Grassbird had been seen just days before, a handful of King (Blue-breasted) Quail took to the air. On reaching the grassbird site, there was no initial evidence of its presence either, before it flew up and gave a quick burst of song, then disappeared into dense vegetation. Then, finally it emerged onto an open stem for several occasions, and was also seen taking off with food, implying breeding was well underway. This was a mega bird that recent birdlife surveys had only found at a total of 4-5 sites (this not being one of them), in recent surveys of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. We then finished with a short boat trip, where Oriental Skylark was added to the list, and Bengal Bushlarks were seen too, along with Pheasant-tailed and Bronze-winged Jacanas to bring this amazing tour to a close.
We had visited a remote region of **India**, and a very special one indeed too, that until only recently was closed to foreign visitors (even now special permissions are required). This was planned in order to see the incredible number of rare birds of both the scenic **Himalayan forests** and **highly-threatened grasslands**. While this did mean we had to “rough it” on occasion, relative to many birding tours, and spent eight nights under canvas, these were comfortable walk-in tents, and we were very well looked after at the camps, who are now well used to catering for the needs of birding groups. The payoff was not only the awe-inspiring birds, like **Blyth’s Tragopan**, **Purple Cochoa**, **Gould’s Shortwing**, and **Cachar Wedge-billed (Chevron-breasted) Wren-Babbler**, but also seeing some utterly unique forests, which were packed with interesting birds. As a guide having traveled extensively, I would rank **Eaglenest (previous page)** as one of the World’s great wildernesses.

This picture is a good illustration of what this tour was about; in the foreground are the Himalayan forests in the **Mishmi Hills**, home to many rare and local forest species, and beyond lie the plains of the **Brahmaputra/Dibang Rivers**, where rare grassland birds occur.
Sambar, the largest Asian deer species, Kaziranga; one of 13 mammal species seen at that site

BIRD & MAMMAL LISTS:

BIRDS
The taxonomy of the bird list follows: Clements, James F., White, Anthony W., and Fitzpatrick, John W. The Clements Checklist of Birds of the World. Cornell, 2007. This list is up to date with the major changes published by Cornell up until August 2017.

GO  indicates a species that was seen by the GUIDE ONLY.

H   indicates a species that was only HEARD, and not seen

*Notes on selective species are also included for specialties of the tour, and other much-wanted species.
Anatidae (Ducks, Geese, and Waterfowl)

Lesser Whistling-Duck \hspace{0.5cm} Dendrocygna javanica
Ruddy Shelduck \hspace{0.5cm} Tadorna ferruginea
Common Shelduck \hspace{0.5cm} Tadorna tadorna
1 was seen at Kaziranga.

Cotton (Teal) Pygmy Goose \hspace{0.5cm} Nettapus coromandelianus
Recorded in Guwahati and Kaziranga only.

Northern Shoveler \hspace{0.5cm} Spatula clypeata
Gadwall \hspace{0.5cm} Mareca Strepera
Eurasian Wigeon \hspace{0.5cm} Mareca penelope
Indian Spot-billed Duck \hspace{0.5cm} Anas poecilorhyncha

Phasianidae (Pheasants, Grouse, and Allies)

(Common/Necklaced) Hill Partridge \hspace{0.5cm} Arborophila torqueola
One showed extraordinarily well on two consecutive days above Bompu in Eaglenest.

Chestnut-breasted (Hill) Partridge \hspace{0.5cm} Arborophila mandelli
Rufous-throated Partridge \hspace{0.5cm} Arborophila rufogularis
White-cheeked (Hill) Partridge \hspace{0.5cm} Arborophila atrogularis
One was seen well by Kenneth only, at Digboi; others were heard in that area too.

Gray Peacock-Pheasant \hspace{0.5cm} Polyleccton bicalcaratum
One of the standout moments of the tour was everybody getting good looks at this species at Jeypore.

Blue-breasted (King) Quail \hspace{0.5cm} Synoicus chinensis
Several were flushed up at the Bengal Florican site near Roing, and others were seen in Maguri.

Swamp Francolin \hspace{0.5cm} Francolinus gularis
Two were seen during the end of our first jeep drive in Kaziranga, where it is one of the key birds.

Red Junglefowl \hspace{0.5cm} Gallus gallus
Blood Pheasant \hspace{0.5cm} Lophophorus impejanus
Heard at Sela near Dirang, although no effort was made to see it on this custom tour.

Himalayan Monal \hspace{0.5cm} Lophophorus impejanus
A male was seen in flight at Sela Pass.

Sclater's Monal \hspace{0.5cm} Lophophorus sclateri
Tim was very lucky to see a female take off of the road at Mayodia and see the white tail tip.

Snow Partridge \hspace{0.5cm} Lerwa lerwa
As this species had been seen by all of the group previously, we did not make any serious efforts to find the calling birds at Sela.

Blyth's Tragopan \hspace{0.5cm} Tragopan blythii
VOTED AS THE BIRD OF THE TOUR, The views of a male sitting in the open, and even briefly displaying for more than 30mins will never be forgotten. These were genuinely dream views of a spectacular bird, above Bompu Camp, Eaglenest. A female, was also seen on the road at Mishmi Hills.

Temminck's Tragopan \hspace{0.5cm} Tragopan temminckii
Two different birds were heard near Eaglenest Pass and wouldn’t come in (all participants had seen this species before so we did not give it long there).

Kalij Pheasant \hspace{0.5cm} Lophura leucomelas
Several pairs frequented the roads at Eaglenest, making them conspicuous and easy to see at times.

Podicipedidae (Grebes)

Little Grebe \hspace{0.5cm} Tachybaptus ruficollis
### Ciconiidae (Storks)

**Asian Openbill**  
*Anastomus oscitans*  
Fairly common in the lowlands of Assam, where they were particularly numerous at **Kaziranga**.

**Woolly-necked Stork**  
*Ciconia episcopus*  
Seen on all of our three days in **Kaziranga**, where more than forty were seen in a single day.

**Black-necked Stork**  
*Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus*  
This stately stork was seen daily in **Kaziranga**, with up to ten seen there.

**Lesser Adjutant**  
*Leptoptilos javanicus*  
A handful were seen on five days of the tour, around **Guwahati** and **Kaziranga**.

**Greater Adjutant**  
*Leptoptilos dubius*  
This stork is endangered, and seen at **Kaziranga** and **Guwahati** dump, where 250 were present.

### Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants and Shags)

**Little Cormorant**  
*Microcarbo niger*  

**Indian Cormorant (Shag)**  
*Phalacrocorax fuscicollis*

### Anhingidae (Anhingas)

**Oriental Darter**  
*Anhinga melanogaster*

### Pelecanidae (Pelicans)

**Spot-billed Pelican**  
*Pelecanus philippensis*

A handful were seen every day in Kaziranga NP.

### Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets, and Bitterns)

**Yellow Bittern**  
*Ixobrychus sinensis*  
Several were seen on each of our visits to **Maguri Grasslands** in Assam.

**Cinnamon (Chestnut) Bittern**  
*Ixobrychus cinnamomeus*  
One was seen on each of our trips to **Maguri Grasslands**.

**Black Bittern**  
*Ixobrychus flavicollis*  
One was seen flying over at **Maguri Grasslands** on the final morning.

**Gray Heron**  
*Ardea cinerea*  
A few were seen in **Kaziranga National Park**.

**Purple Heron**  
*Ardea purpurea*  
Recorded at three sites; in **Guwahati**, at **Kaziranga**, and at **Maguri Grasslands**.

**Intermediate Egret**  
*Ardea alba modesta*  

**Little Egret**  
*Egretta garzetta*  

**Indian Pond-Heron**  
*Ardeola grayii*  

**Striated (Little/Green-backed) Heron**  
*Butorides striata*  
A few were seen in **Nameri**.

**Black-crowned Night-Heron**  
*Nycticorax nycticorax*  

### Threskiornithidae (Ibis and Spoonbills)

**Glossy Ibis**  
*Plegadis falcinellus*  

**Black-headed (Oriental/Black-necked) Ibis**  
*Threskiornis melanocephalus*  

### Pandionidae (Osprey)

**Western Osprey**  
*Pandion haliaetus haliaetus*  

Seen a twice at **Nameri NP** only.
Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)

Black-shouldered (-winged) Kite  
Two sightings, at Namdapha and also at Maguri Grasslands.

Oriental (Crested) Honey-Buzzard  
Two sightings in Kaziranga, and another in Jeypore Forest Reserve.

Slender-billed (Indian) Vulture  
Gyps tenuirostris

Himalayan Griffon (Vulture)  
Gyps himalayensis

Two sightings in Kaziranga.

Crested Serpent-Eagle  
Spilornis cheela

Five sightings on the tour, at Kaziranga, and Jeypore.

Changeable Hawk-Eagle  
Nisaetus limnaetus

Singles seen on three consecutive days in Kaziranga, and another single in Digboi.

Mountain Hawk-Eagle  
Nisaetus nipalensis

Recorded on four days, with 6 on one day in the Mishmi Hills; also Eagle Nest and the Mandala Road.

Black Eagle  
Ictinactes malaiensis

Seen three times in Eagle Nest and then twice in the Mishmi Hills.

Steppe Eagle  
Aquila nipalensis

Three birds were seen during one afternoon jeep drive in Kaziranga.

Hen Harrier  
Circus cyaneus

One was seen inside Kaziranga National Park.

Pied Harrier  
Circus melanoleucos

A striking male appeared late in the day alongside Deepor Beel in Guwahati.

Crested Goshawk  
Accipiter trivirgatus

One passed overhead in Khelong (Eagle Nest).

Shikra  
Accipiter badius

One was seen in Kaziranga.

Besra  
Accipiter virgatus

One was seen in the woods at Eagle Nest.

Eurasian Sparrowhawk  
Accipiter nisus

A single was seen at Sela only.

Northern Goshawk  
Accipiter gentilis

A rare sighting of this species was made at the Mandala Road, near Dirang.

Black (Black-eared) Kite  
Milvus migrans lineatus

Recorded on about three days of the tour, including around Guwahati.

Pallas’s Fish-Eagle  
Haliaeetus leucoryphus

Two were seen on each visit to Kaziranga.

Gray-headed Fish-Eagle  
Haliaeetus ichthyaetus

Amazing views were had of multiple individuals from our jeep drives in side Kaziranga.

Otidae (Bustards)

Bengal Florican  
Houbaropsis bengalensis

Five different individuals were observed in a magnificent sighting at least 3 males near Roing, with the Mishmi Hills standing prominently in the background, towering over the plains where we were.
Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species</th>
<th>Scientific Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White-breasted Waterhen</td>
<td>Amaurornis phoenicurus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black-tailed Crake</td>
<td>Zapornia bicolor H</td>
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<tr>
<td>Watercock</td>
<td>Gallicrex cinereal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gray-headed Swamphen</td>
<td>Porphyrio poliocephalus</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eurasian Moorhen</td>
<td>Gallinula chloropus</td>
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Burhinidae (Thick-knees)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species</th>
<th>Scientific Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Great Think-knee</td>
<td>Esacus recurvirostris</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Recurvirostridae (Stone-curlew)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species</th>
<th>Scientific Name</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black-winged Stilt</td>
<td>Himantopus himantopus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pied Avocet</td>
<td>Recurvirostra avosetta</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species</th>
<th>Scientific Name</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pacific Golden-Plover</td>
<td>Pluvialis fulva</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>River Lapwing</td>
<td>Vanellus duvaucelii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red-wattled Lapwing</td>
<td>Vanellus indicus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long-billed Plover</td>
<td>Charadrius dubius jerdoni</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rostrulidae (Painted Snipes)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species</th>
<th>Scientific Name</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Greater Painted Snipe</td>
<td>Rostratula benghalensis</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Jacanidae (Jacanas)

<table>
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<th>Species</th>
<th>Scientific Name</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pheasant-tailed Jacana</td>
<td>Hydrophasianus chirurgus</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bronze-winged Jacana</td>
<td>Metopidius indicus</td>
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</table>

Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species</th>
<th>Scientific Name</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Temminck’s Stint</td>
<td>Calidris temminckii</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pin-tailed Snipe</td>
<td>Gallinago stenura</td>
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<tr>
<td>Common Sandpiper</td>
<td>Actitis hypoleucos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spotted Redshank</td>
<td>Tringa erythropus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common Greenshank</td>
<td>Tringa nebularia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wood Sandpiper</td>
<td>Tringa glareola</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Turnicidae (Buttonquails)
Barred Buttonquail *Turnix suscitator*
One was flushed up in the *Bengal Florican* grasslands near *Roing*.

Glareolidae (Pratincoles and Coursers)
Small Pratincole *Glareola lacteal*
Up to fifteen were seen hawking the main river at *Nameri*.

Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers)
Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrid*
River Tern *Sterna aurantia*
Three or more were seen each day in *Nameri*.

Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)
Rock Pigeon *Columba livia*
Snow Pigeon *Columba leuconota*
Half a dozen or so were seen up at the apex of *Sela Pass*.
Ashy Wood-Pigeon *Columba pulchricollis*
5 were seen by *Lama Camp* at *Eaglenest*, then another 4 were seen at *Nameri*, an unusual site for them.

Oriental Turtle-Dove *Streptopelia orientalis*
Red Collared (Turtle-) Dove *Streptopelia tranquebarica*
Spotted Dove *Streptopelia chinensis*
Barred Cuckoo-Dove *Macropygia unchall*
Asian (Common) Emerald Dove *Chalcophaps indica*
Orange-breasted (Green) Pigeon *Treron bicinctus*

Thick-billed Pigeon *Treron curvirostra*
More than 200 birds were seen at *Soraipong Forest Reserve*, near *Digboi*.

Yellow-footed Pigeon *Treron phoenicopterus*
Pin-tailed Pigeon *Treron apicauda*
A few were seen around *Khelong* in *Eaglenest*, and several more were seen at *Soraipong*.

Wedge-tailed Pigeon *Treron sphenurus*
Recorded at three sites; *Eaglenest (Khelong)*, *Nameri*, and *Soraipong*.

Green-tailed Imperial-Pigeon *Ducula aenea*
Mountain Imperial-Pigeon *Ducula badia*
Unusually, also seen at *Soraipong* in the lowlands, as well as the usual highland sites.

Cuculidae (Cuckoos)
Greater Coucal *Centropus sinensis*
Lesser Coucal *Centropus bengalensis*
Green-billed Malkoha *Phaenicophaeus tristis*
Chestnut-winged Cuckoo *Clamator coromandus*
Two of these striking birds were seen, one at *Kaziranga*, and *Ken* found another at *Khelong, Eaglenest*.

Asian Koel *Eudynamys scolopaceus*
Asian Emerald Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx maculatus*
Seen on three occasions in the lower parts of *Eaglenest*.

Violet Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx xanthorhynchus*
Recorded at *Kaziranga, Digboi, and Soraipong*. 
Banded Bay Cuckoo  
One was seen near Roing.

Plaintive Cuckoo  

Square-tailed Drongo-Cuckoo  

Large Hawk-Cuckoo  

Hodgson’s (Whistling) Hawk-Cuckoo  
One was seen at Lama Camp, Eaglenest; others were heard at Soraipong.

Lesser (Small) Cuckoo  
Heard regularly, and also seen at in both Eaglenest and the Mishmi Hills.

Indian Cuckoo  

Himalayan Cuckoo  
Seen a few times in Eaglenest and regularly heard in the Mishmi Hills.

Common (Eurasian) Cuckoo  

Strigidae (Owls)  

Mountain Scops-Owl  
Tim and Sam got some cracking views, and then got drenched, during a nightwalk out of Bompu Camp, Eaglenest.

Collared Scops-Owl  
We were very happy with some superb looks near our resort in Kaziranga.

Oriental Scops-Owl  
Excellent views were had in the grounds of our resort in Kaziranga.

Brown Fish-Owl  
This big owl was seen twice in a jeep drive in Kaziranga; a nesting adult and juvenile, and then another adult.

Collared Owlet  
An amazingly abundant bird at Eaglenest and in the Mishmi Hills, seen on at least five occasions.

Asian Barred Owlet  
One was seen in our resort in Kaziranga, and Tim found another at Jeypore Forest Reserve.

Spotted Owlet  
Two sightings, once on a game drive in Kaziranga, and then on a game walk in Nameri.

Brown (Himalayan) Wood-Owl  
One was heard at some distance near the frogmouth site north of Roing.

Himalayan (Chinese Tawny) Owl  
On an extraordinary night in the Mishmi Hills, we saw 2 different individuals very well, with John L seeing a third!

Brown Boobook  
We got good daytime views in Kaziranga; another was heard calling within the camp in Nameri.

Podargidae (Frogmouths)  

Hodgson’s Frogmouth  
Our first try at Eaglenest ended in complete failure with a torrential downpour at just the wrong time; our second attempt above Roing was incredible with unbeatable looks of an unobscured bird at eye level.

Caprimulgidae (Nightjars and Allies)  

Gray Nightjar  
Three were seen just before it started to rain in earnest at Lama Camp at Eaglenest.

Large-tailed Nightjar  
Tim and Sam saw one flying through the spotlight at close range in Kaziranga.
Apodidae (Swifts)

Brown-backed/Silver-backed Needletail  
*Hirundapus sp.*
Squadrons of these were seen in poor light in *Nameri* and *Soraipong* but not seen well enough to ID positively.

Himalayan Swiftlet  
*Aerodramus brevirostris*

Blyth’s Swift  
*Apus blythi*

A few were seen near *Sessni (Eaglenest)*; the only ones seen.

House Swift  
*Apus nipalensis*

Asian Palm-Swift  
*Cypsiurus balasiensis*

Trogonidae (Trogons)

Red-headed Trogon  
*Harpactes erythrocephalus*

Seen at *Eaglenest* and *Jeypore Forest Reserve*.

Ward’s Trogon  
*Harpactes wardi*

A female and pair was seen near *Lama Camp, Eaglenest*. Another was heard uphill from *Bompu*.

Upupidae (Hoopoes)

Eurasian Hoopoe  
*Upupa epops*

Bucerotidae (Hornbills)

Great Hornbill  
*Buceros bicornis*

This magnificent hornbill, surely one of Asia’s classic bird species was seen at both *Kaziranga* and *Nameri*, where nests were seen, and the male was seen feeding the female, who was sealed in the nest by a mud barrier.

Rufous-necked Hornbill  
*Aceros nipalensis*

Unquestionably one of the specialties of the tour; seen three or four times at *Eaglenest* in *Sessni* and *Khelong*.

(Austen’s/White-throated) Brown Hornbill  
*Anorrhinus austeni*

This rarely seen hornbill was seen at one of the best sites anywhere to see it, *Jeypore Forest Reserve*, where 4 were seen.

Oriental Pied-Hornbill  
*Anthracoceros albirostris*

Wreathed Hornbill  
*Rhyticeros undulates*

Recorded at both *Eaglenest* and *Nameri*.

Aldedinidae (Kingfishers)

Common Kingfisher  
*Alcedo atthis*

Blue-eared Kingfisher  
*Alcedo meninting*

One was seen fleetingly at *Jeypore Forest Reserve* as it darted by.

Black-backed (Oriental) Dwarf-Kingfisher  
*Ceyx erithaca*

Atypically long looks at a perched bird were had during our morning in the wonderful *Jeypore Forest Reserve*.

Stork-billed Kingfisher  
*Pelargopsis capensis capensis*

A few were seen in *Kaziranga*.

Ruddy Kingfisher  
*Halcyon coromanda coromanda*

The late timing of this custom tour made this species possible; seen at both *Nameri* and *Soraipong*, having only arrived in recent days.

White-throated Kingfisher  
*Halcyon smyrnensis*

(Lesser) Pied Kingfisher  
*Ceryle rudis*

Meropidae (Bee-eaters)

Blue-bearded Bee-eater  
*Nyctyornis athertoni*

Seen at least four times in *Kaziranga*, including within our resort.

Green Bee-eater  
*Merops orientalis*
Blue-tailed Bee-eater  

Chestnut-headed Bee-eater  

Coraciidae (Rollers)  

Indian (Indocheinese/Black-billed) Roller  

A regularly seen bird in the Assam lowlands (e.g. Kaziranga, Nameri).

PLEASE NOTE: A paper is due to be published soon confirming the widely anticipated split of this subspecies.

(Oriental) Dollarbird  

Megalaimidae (Asian Barbets)  

Coppersmith Barbet  

Great Barbet  

Lineated Barbet  

Golden-throated Barbet  

Blue-throated Barbet  

Indicatoridae (Honeyguides)  

Yellow-rumped Honeyguide  

This odd Himalayan bird was seen below Lama Camp (Eaglenest); a pair were sitting by their cliffside beehive.

Picidae (Woodpeckers)  

Speckled Piculet  

White-browed Piculet  

Gray-capped (Pygmy) Woodpecker  

Fulvous-breasted (Pied) Woodpecker  

Rufous-bellied Woodpecker  

This mismatched looking woodpecker was seen at Lama Camp (Eaglenest), and also on the Mandala Road.

Crimson-breasted Woodpecker  

One was seen near Mayodia, Mishmi Hills.

Darjeeling (Pied) Woodpecker  

One was seen along the Tragopan Trail above Bompu Camp, Eaglenest.

Lesser Yellownape  

Recorded on four occasions, at Kaziranga, Eaglenest, Nameri, and Jeypore.

Greater Yellownape  

Observed in Eaglenest and also in Nameri.

Streak-throated Woodpecker  

A couple were seen in Kaziranga.

Gray-headed (-faced) Woodpecker  

Seen in the Mishmi Hills and Soraipong, near Digboi.

Black-rumped (Lesser Goldenback) Flameback  

Just a single pair was seen, in Kaziranga.

Pale-headed Woodpecker  

We were very fortunate in our experience with this notoriously shy species, seeing a pair in the open at Khelong, Eaglenest.

Rufous Woodpecker  

Seen at first (several times) in Nameri, and then again in Soraipong.
### Greater (Goldenback) Flameback
*Chrysocolaptes guttacristatus guttacristatus*
Recorded in Kaziranga, Nameri, and Soraipong.

### Bay Woodpecker
*Bythipicus pyrrhotis*

### Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras)

#### Amur (Eastern Red-footed) Falcon
*Falco amurensis*
A single bird was seen near Roing, at the Bengal Florican site.

#### Oriental/Eurasian Hobby
*Falco sp.*
A flyby hobby could not be identified to species, at Nameri.

#### Peregrine Falcon
*Falco peregrinator*
One was seen circling above the lower Mishmi Hills.

### Psittaculidae (Old World Parrots)

#### Alexandrine Parakeet
*Psittacula eupatria*

#### Rose-ringed Parakeet
*Psittacula krameria*

#### Blossom-headed (Rosy-headed) Parakeet
*Psittacula roseate*
Only recorded at Kaziranga, where it was seen in small numbers daily.

#### Red-breasted Parakeet
*Psittacula alexandri*

#### Vernal Hanging Parrot
*Loriculus vernalis*
Some nice perched (and hanging) views of this tiny parrot at Nameri, the only site it was recorded.

### Eurylaimidae (Asian and Grauer’s Broadbills)

#### Long-tailed Broadbill
*Psarisomus dalhousiae*
We got excellent looks twice at Eaglenest (Sessni and Khelong); the first sighting was largely ignored at the sudden appearance of a Green Cochoa overhead!

#### Silver-breasted Broadbill
*Serilophus lunatus rubropygius*
In spite of following a flock, and hearing it, on and off, for an hour, we simply could not locate one at Jeypore.

### Pittidae (Pittas)

#### Hooded Pitta
*Pitta sordida cucullata*
Heard at a few sites, with an excellent view obtained in Nameri.

#### Blue-naped Pitta
*Hydrornis nipalensis*
One of the key targets just outside the park at Kaziranga, although it took two days to get good views. Another was heard at Jeypore. Arguably one of the hardest pittas to see away from this region.

### Vangidae (Vangas, Helmetshrikes, and Allies)

#### Large Woodshrike
*Tephrodornis virgatus*
Five sightings on the tour (Kaziranga, Khelong, and Jeypore).

#### Bar-winged (Pied) Flycatcher-shrike
*Hemipus picatus*

### Artamidae (Woodswallows)

#### Ashy Woodswallow
*Artamus fuscus*

### Aegithinidae (Ioras)

#### Common Iora
*Aegithina tiphia*

### Campephagidae (Cuckoo-shrikes)

#### Gray-chinned Minivet
*Pericrocotus solaris*

#### Short-billed Minivet
*Pericrocotus brevirostris*
Recorded around Lama Camp (Eaglenest), and in the Mishmi Hills.

#### Long-tailed Minivet
*Pericrocotus ethologus*

#### Scarlet Minivet
*Pericrocotus speciosus speciosus*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Large Cuckoo-shrike</th>
<th>Coracina macei nipalensis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black-winged Cuckoo-shrike</td>
<td>Lalage melaschistos</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Laniidae (Shrikes)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brown Shrike</th>
<th>Lanius cristatus cristatus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Long-tailed Shrike</td>
<td>Lanius schach tricolor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gray-backed Shrike</td>
<td>Lanius tephronotus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Black-headed Shrike-Babbler</th>
<th>Pteruthius rufiventri</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blyth’s (White-browed) Shrike-Babbler</td>
<td>Pteruthius aeralatus validirostris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green Shrike-Babbler</td>
<td>Pteruthius xanthochlorus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black-eared Shrike-Babbler</td>
<td>Pteruthius melanotis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White-bellied Erpornis</td>
<td>Erpornis zantholeuca</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Oriolidae (Old World Orioles)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Black-hooded Oriole</th>
<th>Oriolus xanthornus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maroon Oriole</td>
<td>Oriolus trailii</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Dicruridae (Drongos)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Black Drongo</th>
<th>Dicrurus macrocercus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ashy Drongo</td>
<td>Dicrurus leucophaeus hopwoodi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crow-billed Drongo</td>
<td>Dicrurus annectans</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At least four birds were seen during a really enjoyable morning at the Jeypore Forest Reserve.

### Monarchidae (Monarch Flycatchers)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Black-naped Monarch</th>
<th>Hypothymis azurea</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blyth’s Paradise-Flycatcher</td>
<td>Terpsiphone affinis saturatior</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

John L saw one first at a Kaziranga tea estate, then another few were seen by all in Jeypore.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yellow-billed (Gold-billed) Blue-Magpie</th>
<th>Urocissa flavirostris</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One was noted along the Mandala Road near Dirang, and then seen repeatedly in the Mishmi Hills.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rufous Treepie</th>
<th>Dendrocitta vagabunda</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gray Treepie</td>
<td>Dendrocitta formosae</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collared Treepie</td>
<td>Dendrocitta frontalis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A stunning, uncommon, local specialty; seen at Digboi during one visit only (although heard the other time).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eurasian (Spotted) Nutcracker</th>
<th>Nucifraga caryocatactes macella</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Several were seen along the Mandala Road, near Dirang, the only site at which it was recorded.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Red-billed Chough</th>
<th>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax himalayanus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seen at the very top at Sela Pass.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>House Crow</th>
<th>Corvus splendens</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Large-billed (Eastern Jungle) Crow  
*Corvus macrorhynchos levaillantii*

Large-billed (Northern Jungle) Crow  
*Corvus macrorhynchos japonensis*

**Alaudidae (Larks)**

Bengal Bushlark  
*Mirafra assamica*

Another regional specialty, seen in Guwahati, Kaziranga, and also Maguri.

Oriental Skylark  
*Alauda gulgula*

**Hirundinidae (Swallows)**

Gray-throated (Brown-throated/Plain) Martin  
*Riparia chinensis*

Barn Swallow  
*Hirundo rustica*

Red-rumped Swallow  
*Cecropis daurica nipalensis*

Asian House-Martin  
*Delichon dasypus*

Just recorded the once at Eaglenest.

Nepal House-Martin  
*Delichon nipalense*

Recorded at three sites, Eaglenest, Sela, and Nameri.

**Stenostiridae (Fairy-flycatchers)**

Yellow-bellied Fairy-Fantail  
*Chelidorhynx hypoxantha*

Seen multiple times in both Eaglenest and the Mishmi Hills.

Gray-headed Canary-Flycatcher  
*Culicicapa ceylonensis*

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

Yellow-browed Tit  
*Sylviparus modestus*

Sultan Tit  
*Melanochlora sultanae*

Observed several times in flocks at Eaglenest; also recorded at Nameri and Jeypore.

Coal Tit  
*Periparus ater aemodius*

Rufous-vented Tit  
*Periparus rubidiventris*

Gray-crested Tit  
*Lophophanes dichrous*

Green-backed Tit  
*Parus monticolus*

Cinereous (Gray) Tit  
*Parus cinereus*

Yellow-cheeked (Black-spotted Yellow) Tit  
*Machlolophus spilonotus*

**Aegithalidae (Long-tailed Tits)**

Black-throated (Red-headed/crowned) Tit (Bushtit)  
*Aegithalos concinnus iredalei*

**Sittidae (Nuthatches)**

Chestnut-bellied Nuthatch  
*Sitta cinnamoventris*

White-tailed Nuthatch  
*Sitta himalayensis*

Velvet-fronted Nuthatch  
*Sitta frontalis*

Beautiful Nuthatch  
*Sitta Formosa*

Unquestionably a specialty of this tour; seen on three separate occasions in one day at Eaglenest (Sessni).

**Certhiidae (Treecreepers)**

Sikkim (Brown-throated/Hume’s) Treecreeper  
*Certhia discolor*

Seen once, just above Bompu Camp in Eaglenest.

**Troglodytidae (Wrens)**

Eurasian (Northern/Winter) Wren  
*Troglodytes troglodytes*

**Cinclidae (Dippers)**

Brown Dipper  
*Cinclus pallasii*

One was seen in the Sangti Valley close to Dirang.
Pycnonotidae (Bulbuls)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Striated Bulbul</td>
<td><em>Pycnonotus striatus</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black-crested Bulbul</td>
<td><em>Pycnonotus flaviventris</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red-vented Bulbul</td>
<td><em>Pycnonotus cafer</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red-whiskered Bulbul</td>
<td><em>Pycnonotus jocosus</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brown-breasted Bulbul</td>
<td><em>Pycnonotus xanthorrhous</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White-throated Bulbul</td>
<td><em>Alophoixus flaveolus</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

First picked up at Khelong (Eaglenest), and then again at Nameri, and Jeypore.

Mountain Bulbul                    | Ixos mclellandii              |
(Himalayan) Black Bulbul           | Hypsipetes leucocephalus psaroides |

Regulidae (Kinglets)

Goldcrest                         | Regulus regulus               |

Pnoepygidae (Cupwings)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pygmy Cupwing (Wren-Babbler)</td>
<td><em>Pnoepyga pusilla</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scaly-breasted Cupwing (Wren-Babbler)</td>
<td><em>Pnoepyga albiventer</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Surprisingly difficult, and only heard the once, at Mayodia, where we saw one oddly calling from the top of a tree!

Regulidae (Kinglets)

Goldcrest                         | Regulus regulus               |

Scotocercidae (Bush Warblers and Allies)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gray-bellied (Yellow-browed) Tesia</td>
<td><em>Tesia cyaniventer</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slaty-bellied Tesia</td>
<td><em>Tesia olivae</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gray-sided Bush Warbler</td>
<td><em>Cettia brunnifrons</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chestnut-headed Tesia</td>
<td><em>Cettia castaneocoronata</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black-faced Warbler</td>
<td><em>Abroscopus schisticeps</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountain Tailorbird (Leaftoiler)</td>
<td><em>Phyllergates cucullatus</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yellow-bellied Warbler</td>
<td><em>Abroscopus superciliaris</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rufous-faced Warbler</td>
<td><em>Abroscopus albogularis</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broad-billed Warbler</td>
<td><em>Tickellia hodgsoni</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brownish-flanked (Strong-footed) Bush Warbler</td>
<td><em>Horornis fortipes fortipes</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hume's (Yellowish-bellied) Bush Warbler</td>
<td><em>Horornis brunnescens</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another regional specialty, seen twice along the Mandala Road, but still tougher than anticipated.

Phylloscopidae (Leaf Warblers)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dusky Warbler</td>
<td><em>Phylloscopus fuscatus</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tickell's Leaf Warbler</td>
<td><em>Phylloscopus affinis</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashy-throated Warbler</td>
<td><em>Phylloscopus maculipennis</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Recorded at the top of the Mandala Road, and at Sela Pass.
Pale-rumped (Lemon-rumped) Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus chloronotus*
Recorded at *Eaglenest* and the *Mishmi Hills.*

Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus*

Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides*

Around ten birds were seen at *Sela Pass.*

Large-billed Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus magnirostris*

Blyth's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus reguloides*

Yellow-vented Warbler *Phylloscopus cantator*

This local species was seen at *Khelong* in the lower part of *Eaglenest.*

Gray-hooded Warbler *Phylloscopus xanthoschistos*

A couple were seen in *Eaglenest.*

White-spectacled Warbler *Seicercus affinis*

A few were seen in *Eaglenest* and another was heard in *Mishmi Hills.*

Gray-crowned Warbler *Seicercus tephrocephalus*

Two singing birds were seen on the lower part of the *Mandala Road.*

Whistler's Warbler *Seicercus whistleri whistleri*

Regularly recorded, in *Eaglenest,* on the *Mandala Road,* and in the *Mishmi Hills.*

Gray-cheeked Warbler *Seicercus poliogenys*

Heard and seen in both *Eaglenest* and the *Mishmi Hills.*

Chestnut-crowned Warbler *Seicercus castaniceps*

Acrocephalidae (Reed Warblers and Allies)

Thick-billed Warbler *Iduna aedon*

Observed twice in *Kaziranga.*

Locustellidae (Grassbirds and Allies)

Striated Grassbird *Megurulus palustris*

Spotted Bush Warbler *Locustella thoracica*

Heard at the *Black-breasted Parrotbill* site near *Roing,* and another was heard at *Maguri.*

Russet Bush Warbler *Locustella mandelli mandelli*

One was seen along the *Mandala Road.*

Bristled Grassbird *Chaetornis striata*

Within Arunachal Pradesh and Assam this species is only known from around 4 sites. Rofik discovered it at another, *Maguri,* this year, which is where we finally tracked it down on our final birding of the tour.

Cisticolidae (Cisticolas and Allies)

Zitting Cisticola *Cisticola juncidis*

Golden-headed (Bright-headed/capped) Cisticola *Cisticola exilis*

Common Tailorbird *Orthotomus sutorius*

Dark-necked Tailorbird *Orthotomus atrogularis*

Black-throated Prinia *Prinia atrogularis atrogularis*

Another specialty that is typically easy, but not on this tour, when it took several failed attempts before good views on the *Mandala Road,* near *Dirang* came to our palpable relief.

Rufescent Prinia *Prinia rufescens*

A pair was located near *Guwahati* on our first day.

Yellow-bellied Prinia *Prinia flaviventris flaviventris*

Ashy Prinia *Prinia socialis*

Plain Prinia *Prinia inornata*
Paradoxornithidae (Parrotbills, Wrentit, and Allies)

**Fire-tailed Myzornis** *Myzornis pyrrhoura*
One of the starlets of the tour; seen very well at a bed of vivid red rhododendrons near Sela Pass.

**Golden-breasted (Lioparus) Fulvetta** *Lioparus chrysotis*
A stunning species, seen exceptionally well in the Mishmi Hills; also seen at Eaglenest.

**Jerdon's Babbler** *Chrysomma altirostre*
A grassland specialist, which showed very well during our first visit to Maguri.

**Streak-throated (Manipur) Fulvetta** *Fulvetta manipurensis manipurensis*
Another tour specialty; easy to come by near Mayodia, where seen at least three times, and down to fifteen feet!

**Brown Parrotbill** *Cholornis unicolor*
One showed well, but was quickly upstaged by a Bar-winged Wren-Babbler, at Eaglenest Pass.

**Gray-headed Parrotbill** *Psittiparus gularis*
A pair was seen in a mixed flock with Gray-headed Parrotbills, Red-billed Scimitar-Babblers, and White-browed Scimitar-Babblers.

**Black-breasted Parrotbill** *Paradoxornis flavirostris*
This rare species was seen near Roing, on the plains just below the Mishmi Hills, where at least four were seen.

**Pale-billed (Black-browed) Parrotbill** *Chleuasicus atrosuperciliaris*
A handful were seen in a mixed flock with Gray-headed Parrotbills, Red-billed Scimitar-Babblers, and White-browed Scimitar-Babblers at Khelong in Eaglenest.

**Black-throated (Gray-breasted) Parrotbill** *Suthora nipalensis poliotis*
Seen first near Bompu (Eaglenest), and then seen extremely close in the Mishmi Hills.

**White-breasted (Greater Rufous-headed) Parrotbill** *Psittiparus ruficeps*
Two pairs were seen in Eaglenest, around Lama Camp and Sessni.

Zosteropidae (White-eyes, Yuhinas, and Allies)

**Striated Yuhina** *Yuhina castaniceps*
Just seen on the one day around Sessni in Eaglenest.

**White-naped Yuhina** *Yuhina bakeri*

**Whiskered Yuhina** *Yuhina flavicollis*

**Stripe-throated Yuhina** *Yuhina gularis*

**Rufous-vented Yuhina** *Yuhina occipitalis*
First seen near Eaglenest Pass, and then again along the Mandala Road near Dirang.

**Black-chinned Yuhina** *Yuhina nigrimenta*

**Oriental White-eye** *Zosterops palpebrosus*

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

**Chestnut-capped Babbler** *Timalia pileata*
This smashing babbler was seen in the grasslands of Kaziranga and then again in Roing.

**Pin-striped Tit-Babbler** *Mixornis gularis*

**Golden Babbler** *Cyanoderma chrysaeum*

**Buff-chested Babbler** *Cyanoderma ambiguum*

**White-browed Scimitar-Babbler** *Pomatorhinus schisticeps*

**Rufous-capped Babbler** *Cyanoderma ruficeps*

**Rufous-throated Wren-Babbler** *Spelaearnis caudatus*
Another rare and local specialty on the tour, seen extremely well at Eaglenest.
Rusty-throated (Mishmi) Wren-Babbler *Spelaeornis badeigularis*
Rediscovered in 2004, following initial discovery in 1947; seen very well on the ascent to Mayodia in Mishmi.

Bar-winged Wren-Babbler *Spelaeornis troglodytoides*
A stunning, beautifully patterned wren-babbler; seen flitting around the rhododendrons at Eaglenest Pass.

Red-billed (Orange-billed) Scimitar Babbler *Pomatorhinus ochraceiceps*
A few were seen, following some chasing up and down the road, at Khelong in Eaglenest. Typically, in tall native bamboos, within a flock with Pale-billed Parrotbills and White-hooded Babblers.

Coral-billed (Black-crowned) Scimitar Babbler *Pomatorhinus ferruginosus ferruginosus*
Two sightings around Sessni in Eaglenest.

Slender-billed (Sickle-billed) Scimitar Babbler *Pomatorhinus superciliosus*
This anomalous Scimitar-Babbler was encountered at Eaglenest Pass, and Mayodia Pass (Mishmi).

Streak-breasted Scimitar Babbler *Pomatorhinus ruficollis*
Recorded around Lama Camp (Eaglenest), and Mayodia (Mishmi Hills).

White-browed Scimitar Babbler *Pomatorhinus schisticeps*
Just the one was seen, within the native giant bamboos in Khelong, Eaglenest.

Spot-breasted Scimitar Babbler *Megapomatorhinus mcclellandi*
A cooperative pair was seen beside some grasslands in Roing, where the species was only discovered recently.

Gray-throated Babbler *Stachyris nigiceps*
Blackish-breasted (Sikkim/Himalayan) Wedge-billed) Babbler *Stachyris humei*
One of the major targets of the tour, seen extremely close a short walk from Bompu Camp in Eaglenest. Very nearly made the Top Five Birds of the Tour.

Chevron-breasted (Cachar/Manipur Wedge-billed) Babbler *Stachyris roberti*
A staggeringly good performance from this striking much-wanted regional specialty in the Mishmi Hills. After that impressive performance, a totally expected entry into the TOP FIVE BIRDS OF THE TOUR.

Pellorneidae (Ground Babblers and Allies)

(Indian) White-hooded Babbler *Gampsorhynchus rufulus*
A few flocks were seen in the giant bamboos at Khelong, Eaglenest.

Yellow-throated Fulvetta *Schoeniparus cinereus*
A few small, twittering, confiding flocks were seen in both Eaglenest and the Mishmi Hills.

Rufous-winged Fulvetta *Schoeniparus castaneiceps*
Rufous-throated Fulvetta *Schoeniparus rufogularis*
A specialty only possible at Jeypore, where two different birds were found, and seen at close range.

Puff-throated Babbler *Pellorneum ruficeps*
Puff-throated Babbler *Pellorneum palustre*
A scarce and shy grassland specialty; one was seen up close, deep inside the grasslands at Maguri.

Spot-throated Babbler *Pellorneum albiventre*
This musical bird closed our day below Sessni, Eaglenest.

Buff-breasted Babbler *Pellorneum tickelli*
With patience, a stakeout paid off in Khelong Eaglenest, where one showed to all after a time.

Eyebrowed Wren-Babbler *Napothera epilepidota*
Another tricky species to see well at first, although finally we all got more than decent looks at Sessni, Eaglenest.

Long-billed Wren-Babbler *Napothera malacoptila*
A fantastic specialty of the tour, seen within eight feet (no exaggeration) near Lama Camp, Eaglenest.

Abbott’s Babbler *Turdinus abbotti*
Excellent views were a surprise at Kaziranga.
Indian (Rufous-rumped) Grassbird  
Gruminicola bengalensis
This rare grassland specialist was seen with the aid of Sam’s Swarovski ‘scope from the jeep in Kaziranga, a very fortunate sighting of a genuinely rarely seen species at this site.

Leiothrichidae (Laughingthrushes and Allies)

Ludlow’s (Brown-throated) Fulvetta  
Alcippe ludlowi
This handsome fulvetta was seen at Eaglenest Pass, Sela Pass, Mandala Road, and twice in the Mishmi Hills.

Nepal Fulvetta  
Alcippe nipalensis

Striated Laughingthrush  
Grammatoptila striata

Himalayan Cutia  
Cutia nipalensis
This much wanted species was found three times in Eaglenest (Lama, Bompu, and Sessni areas).

Striated Babbler  
Turdoides earlei

Slender-billed Babbler  
Turdoides longirostris
One of the grassland specialties which were one focus of the tour; seen from our jeep in Kaziranga.

Jungle Babbler  
Turdoides striata striata

White-crested Laughingthrush  
Garrulax leucolophus

Lesser Necklaced Laughingthrush  
Garrulax monileger
The final laughingthrush added to the list, in Jeypore, completing all 16 possible laughingthrushes for the tour!

Rufous-chinned Laughingthrush  
Ianthocincla rufogularis
Due to some excellent work from Rofik (again!), one showed well in the end in the Mishmi Hills.

Spotted Laughingthrush  
Ianthocincla ocellata
A classic Himalayan bird, seen close in the fog at Eaglenest Pass, and then in clear weather on the Mandala Road.

Greater Necklaced Laughingthrush  
Ianthocincla pectoralis

White-throated Laughingthrush  
Ianthocincla albogularis
A couple were seen on the way down from Eaglenest, near the town of Tenga.

Rufous-necked Laughingthrush  
Ianthocincla ruficollis
This gorgeous laughingthrush (Sam’s personal favorite), was seen at Kaziranga tea estate and near Roing.

Chestnut-backed Laughingthrush  
Ianthocincla nuchalis
A very local species seen twice at Digboi, when three out of four people managed a view of this very shy species.

Rufous-vented Laughingthrush  
Ianthocincla gularis
Another very shy laughingthrush. Thanks to some great off-road work managed by Rofik and following a significant battle with the giant nettles there, we all managed to see a calling pair near Khelong, Eaglenest.

Gray-sided Laughingthrush  
Ianthocincla caerulata
One of the more regularly seen laughingthrushes, at Eaglenest, Mandala Road, and in the Mishmi Hills.

Bhutan Laughingthrush  
Trochalopteron imbricatum
Only recorded around Lama Camp (Eaglenest) where the species was readily found.

Scaly Laughingthrush  
Trochalopteron subunicolor
A pair was seen above Bompu in Eaglenest, and then an amazingly showy pair was seen in the treetops at Mayodia.

Blue-winged Laughingthrush  
Trochalopteron squamatum
A pair was encountered just below Lama Camp (Eaglenest).

Black-faced Laughingthrush  
Trochalopteron affine
Regularly encountered below Sela Pass, near Dirang.

Chestnut-crowned Laughingthrush  
Trochalopteron erythrocephalum
Regularly encountered in Eaglenest, Dirang, and the Mishmi Hills.
Beautiful Sibia  
**Heterophasia pulchella**  
A pleasantly common bird in **Eaglenest**, **Mandala Road**, and in the **Mishmi Hills**.

Long-tailed Sibia  
**Heterophasia picaoides**  
Only recorded on the one day, near **Sessni in Eaglenest**, when around ten birds were found.

Silver-eared Mesia  
**Leiothrix argentauris**  
Recorded in **Eaglenest** around **Sessni, Bompu, and Khelong**.

Red-billed Leiothrix (Peking Robin)  
**Leiothrix lutea**  
Seen a couple of times in **Eaglenest**, and again along the **Mandala Road**.

Red-tailed Minla  
**Minla ignotincta**  
A wonderfully common bird in **Eaglenest**, especially around **Lama and Bompu Camps**.

Rufous-backed Sibia  
**Minla annectens**  
A handful were seen during our day in the **Sessni area of Eaglenest**.

Bugun Liocichla  
**Liocichla bugunorum**  
Following its discovery in 2006 a must see bird at **Eaglenest**. We were VERY fortunate to see this at the first attempt beside **Lama Camp**. Listed as one of the **TOP FIVE BIRDS OF THE TOUR**.

Red-faced (Crimson-faced) Liocichla  
**Liocichla phoenicea**  
Excellent views of another of the striking laughingthrush species in the **Sessni area of Eaglenest**.

Streak-throated Barwing  
**Actinodura waldeni**  
Recorded several times around **Mayodia, Mishmi Hills**.

Rusty-fronted Barwing  
**Actinodura egertoni**  
Seen repeatedly in **Eaglenest** and the **Mishmi Hills**.

Blue-winged Minla (Siva)  
**Actinodura cyanouroptera**  

Chestnut-tailed Minla (Bar-throated Siva)  
**Actinodura strigula**

Irenidae (Fairy-Bluebirds)  

Asian Fairy-bluebird  
**Irena puella**  

Muscicapidae (Old World Flycatchers)  

Dark-sided Flycatcher  
**Muscicapa sibirica**  

One was seen in the **Mishmi Hills**.

Brown-breasted Flycatcher  
**Muscicapa muttui**  

One seen (and photographed) at **Khelong in Eaglenest** was a rarity for the sanctuary.

Ferruginous Flycatcher  
**Muscicapa ferruginea**  

One was seen at **Mayodia Pass**.

Oriental Magpie-Robin  
**Copsychus saularis**

White-rumped Shama  
**Copsychus malabaricus**

White-gorgeted Flycatcher  
**Anthipes monileger**

Only glimpses of this very elusive flycatcher were had in the **Sessni area of Eaglenest**.

Pale-chinned Blue Flycatcher  
**Cyornis poliogenys**  

A regional speciality, seen well at a tea estate in **Kaziranga**.

Pale Blue Flycatcher  
**Cyornis unicolor**  

A singing bird was scoped up in **Eaglenest**.

Blue-throated (Blue) Flycatcher  
**Cyornis rubeculoides rubeculoides**  

Good views of a male were had in **Soraipong Forest Reserve near Digboi**.

Large Blue Flycatcher  
**Cyornis magnirostris**  

Another speciality of the tour; a singing male was seen, photographed and videoed in **Khelong, Eaglenest**.

www.tropicalbirding.com  
+1-409-515-9110  
info@tropicalbirding.com
Hill Blue-Flycatcher  
Just the one was heard on the way up to Mayodia, Mishmi Hills.

Large Niltava  
One was seen perched by the roadside early in the morning near Sessni, Eaglenest.

Small Niltava  
Heard repeatedly, although never tried for in the Sessni area of Eaglenest.

Rufous-bellied Niltava  
Recorded on a handful of occasions, at Eaglenest, in Dirang, and in the Mishmi Hills.

Verditer Flycatcher  
Eumyias thalassinus

Rusty-bellied Shortwing  
Brachypteryx hyperythra

After a long running battle with several calling birds, Sam found one that remained in view for all, near Mayodia.

Gould's Shortwing  
Brachypteryx stellate

ONE OF THE TOP FIVE BIRDS OF THE TOUR. Absolutely jaw-dropping views of a bird singing from boulders at Sela Pass was undoubted “big moment”. Meanwhile, it was surrounded by scenic snowcapped peaks.

Lesser Shortwing  
Brachypteryx leucophrys

Heard regularly in Eaglenest, where one was seen briefly in the Sessni area.

White-browed (Himalayan) Shortwing  
Brachypteryx montana cruralis

An excellent male popped out onto the road in full view at Eaglenest Pass.

Indian Blue Robin  
Larvivora brunnea

Blue Whistling-Thrush  
Myophonus caeruleus

(Northern) White-crowned Forktail  
Enicurus leschenaulti indicus

A pair was seen in Jeypore.

Black-backed Forktail  
Enicurus immaculatus

Recorded at three different sites; Nameri, Soraipong, and Jeypore.

Chinese (White-tailed) Rubythroat  
Calliope tschebaiewi

At least two stunning males were seen in full song at the Black-breasted Parrotbill site in Roing.

White-tailed (Blue) Robin  
Cinclidium leucurum

Grandala  
17 were seen actively feeding just over the far side of Sela Pass, a sight to behold. A classic Himalayan bird.

Himalayan Bluetail  
Tarsiger rufilatus

One female showed up at Mayodia Pass, Mishmi Hills.

Rufous-breasted Bush Robin  
Tarsiger hyperythrus

A shy male was seen several times just below Sela Pass, seen by only half of the group.

White-browed Bush Robin  
Tarsiger indicus

One was seen below Sela Pass.

Golden Bush Robin  
Tarsiger chrysaeus

Several gaudy males were seen on the boulders near the top of Sela Pass.

Slaty-backed Flycatcher  
Ficedula sordida

Slaty-blue Flycatcher  
Ficedula tricolor

Some good looks of a male and female were had at Bompu Camp Eaglenest and on the Mandala Road.

Snowy-browed Flycatcher  
Ficedula hyperythra

Pygmy (Blue) Flycatcher  
Ficedula hodgsoni

After poor views in Eaglenest, we finally get good looks at a male in the Mishmi Hills during a heavy downpour.

Rufous-gorgeted Flycatcher  
Ficedula strophiata

A few were seen near Mayodia Pass, Mishmi Hills.
Sapphire (Blue) Flycatcher  
*Ficedula sapphira*

Another specialty: this tiny canopy flycatcher was seen twice, at **Lama Camp (Eaglenest)**, and in the **Mishmi Hills**.

Little Pied Flycatcher  
*Ficedula westermannii*

Ultramarine Flycatcher  
*Ficedula superciliaris*

One was seen along the **Mandala Road, near Dirang**.

Taiga Flycatcher  
*Ficedula albicilla*

Blue-fronted Redstart  
*Phoenicurus frontalis*

Plumbeous Redstart  
*Phoenicurus fuliginosus*

White-capped Redstart  
*Phoenicurus leucocephalus*

Chestnut-bellied Rock-Thrush  
*Monticola rufiventris*

Seen regularly in the **Mishmi Hills**; also, on the **Mandala Road** and in **Eaglenest**.

Blue-capped Rock-Thrush  
*Monticola cinclorhynchus*

Several of these strikingly patterned flycatchers were seen in the **Lama Camp vicinity at Eaglenest**.

Gray Bushchat  
*Saxicola ferreus*

**Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies)**

Long-tailed Thrush/Himalayan (Forest) Thrush  
*Zoothera sp.*

A flight view of one of these species was had in **Mishmi Hills**, but we could not relocate it or get it to call.

Alpine (Plain-backed) Thrush  
*Zoothera mollissima*

At least four birds were seen foraging amongst the boulders, and singing, at the top of **Sela Pass**.

Tickell's Thrush  
*Turdus unicolor*

Two were seen in **Eaglenest**, and another was heard along the **Mandala Road**.

White-collared Blackbird  
*Turdus albocinctus*

Recorded in the **Dirang area at both Sela Pass and the Mandala Road**.

Gray-winged Blackbird  
*Turdus boulboul*

Four birds were seen near **Lama Camp, Eaglenest**, and then again in the **Mishmi Hills**.

Purple Cochoa  
*Cochoa purpurea*

One of the **TOP BIRDS OF THE TOUR**. A female and a male were seen well in **Eaglenest (Lama/Bompu)**.

Green Cochoa  
*Cochoa viridis*

Just as our first **Long-tailed Broadbills** appeared in **Eaglenest**, they were dropped the moment a cochoa was heard singing clearly overhead, which was soon seen very well through the Swarovski ‘scope; a much-wanted bird of the tour, and **ONE OF THE BIRDS OF TOUR**. Eaglenest is arguably the best place to find both cochoas in spring.

**Sturnidae (Starlings)**

Common Hill Myna  
*Gracula religiosa*

Asian Pied Starling  
*Gracupica contra*

Chestnut-tailed (Gray-headed) Starling  
*Sturnia malabarica*

Common Myna  
*Acridotheres tristis*

Bank Myna  
*Acridotheres gingenianus*

Great (White-vented) Myna  
*Acridotheres grandis*  

**Chloropseidae (Leafbirds)**

Blue-winged Leafbird  
*Chloropsis cochinchinensis kinneari*

Only recorded in **Soraipong** and **Jeypore**.

Golden-fronted Leafbird  
*Chloropsis aurifrons*

Recorded in **Kaziranga, Nameri**, and **Soraipong**.

Orange-bellied Leafbird  
*Chloropsis hardwickii hardwickii*

Only recorded at **Eaglenest, at Bompu and Sessni**.
Dicaeidae (Flowerpeckers)

Yellow-vented Flowerpecker
One was located in the resort at Kaziranga, early one morning.

Plain Flowerpecker
Heard in Nameri National Park.

Fire-breasted Flowerpecker
A handful was seen on one day in the Mishmi Hills.

Scarlet-backed Flowerpecker
One was seen in Kaziranga.

Sunbirds and Spiderhunters (Nectariniidae)

Ruby-cheeked Sunbird
A few birds were seen on one day in Kaziranga.

Purple Sunbird
Seen in Guwahati and Kaziranga.

Fire-tailed Sunbird
This spectacular species was seen feeding in blooms of red Rhododendrons in the high Himalaya at Sela Pass.

Black-throated Sunbird
Several were seen below Bompu Camp in Eaglenest; another showed up at Jeypore.

(Mrs.) Gould’s Sunbird

Green-tailed Sunbird

Crimson Sunbird
Just a few were seen by Sam at Digboi.

Little Spiderhunter
One was seen briefly in Soraipong.

Streaked Spiderhunter

Accentors (Prunellidae)

Alpine Accentor
A few were seen up at Sela Pass.

Rufous-breasted Accentor
Heard along the Mandala Road although not pursued.

Motacillidae (Wagtails and Pipits)

Western Yellow (Gray-headed) Wagtail

Western Yellow (Sykes’) Wagtail

Citrine (Gray-backed) Wagtail

Gray Wagtail

White (Hodgson’s/Himalayan) Wagtail

Paddyfield Pipit

Rosy Pipit

Olive-backed Pipit

Elachuridae (Spotted Elachura)

Spotted (Wren-Babbler) Elachura
This was a much-wanted species, as it is a monotypic family, and we were very fortunate to get incredible looks as one sung on an open branch for all of the group to see, beside Lama Camp (Eaglenest); totally unexpected.
Fringillidae (Finches, Euphonias, and Allies)

**Spot-winged Grosbeak** *Mycerobas melanozanthos*
A pair was found within a mixed flock on the Mandala Road.

**White-winged Grosbeak** *Mycerobas carnipes*

**Common Rosefinch** *Carpodacus erythrinus*

**Scarlet Finch** *Carpodacus sipahi*
A smashing bird, and predictably popular with the group; seen at least three times at Eaglenest.

**Dark-rumped Rosefinch** *Carpodacus edwardsii*
This always-difficult rosefinch was seen at Eaglenest Pass.

**Himalayan White-browed Rosefinch** *Carpodacus thura*
Four or more of these birds, including some stunning males, were seen at the scenic Sela Pass.

**Brown Bullfinch** *Pyrrhula nipalensis nipalensis*
A pair was seen below Lama Camp in Eaglenest.

**Red-headed Bullfinch** *Pyrrhula erythrocephala*
Only seen briefly in flight at Eaglenest, so a big disappointment.

**Gray-headed Bullfinch** *Pyrrhula erythaca*
A group of about six birds were 'scoped along the Mandala Road.

**Gold-naped Finch** *Pyrrhoplectes epaulette*
Another specialty on the tour, seen on several occasions both in Eaglenest and also in the Mishmi Hills.

**Dark-breasted Rosefinch** *Procarduelis nipalensis*
A mobile group of 60-70 birds feeding in a cluster of striking red rhododendrons at Sela was quite a sight.

**Plain Mountain Finch** *Leucosticte nemoricola*
Seen around Sela Pass.

**Red (Common) Crossbill** *Loxia curvirostra himalayensis*
A female was found by Sam along the Mandala Road, near Dirang.

Passeridae (Old World Sparrows)

**House Sparrow** *Passer domesticus*

**Russet (Cinnamon) Sparrow** *Passer rutilans*

**Eurasian Tree Sparrow** *Passer montanus*

Ploceidae (Weavers and Allies)

**(‘Eastern’) Baya Weaver** *Ploceus philippinus burmanicus*
One was seen near Guwahati on our first day.

**Yellow (Finn’s) Weaver** *Ploceus megarhynchus*
One of the tour specialties. This endangered species may number *under 3,000 mature individuals* and is in rapid decline across its range. Therefore, we were very happy to see a flock of at least 22 at Kaziranga.

**Bengal (Black-breasted) Weaver** *Ploceus benghalensis*
Ten or so birds were seen outside the park in Kaziranga, following a muddy walk into some paddyfields.

Estrildidae (Waxbills and Allies)

**White-rumped Munia** *Lonchura striata*

**Chestnut Munia** *Lonchura atricapilla*
MAMMALS

**Western Hoolock Gibbon**  
*Hoolock hoolock*  
Hoolocks are separated by the *Dibang River*; this one was seen at *Jeypore*, to the *south of the river*.

**Eastern Hoolock Gibbon**  
*Hoolock leuconedys*  
Observed at the base of the *Mishmi Hills*, *north of the Dibang River*.

**Rhesus Macaque**  
*Macaca mulatta*  
Readily seen in the lowlands of Assam, around *Kaziranga* and *Nameri*.

**Assamese Macaque**  
*Macaca assamensis*  
One animal was seen at *Soraipong, near Digboi*.

**Arunachal Macaque**  
*Macaca muznala*  
This rare, shy, and recently-described monkey (2004), was seen just off the *Mandala Road, Dirang*.

**Capped Langur**  
*Trachypithecus pileatus*  
A slumbering troop was present on arrival at the *Nameri Eco Camp*; another was seen in *Eaglenest*.

**Asian (Indian) Elephant**  
*Elephas maximus indicus*  
Conspicuous in both *Kaziranga* and *Nameri*.

**Greater (Indian) One-horned Rhinoceros**  
*Rhinoceros unicornis*  
It must be one of the Great Wonders of the Natural World to see *rhinos* in fantastically healthy numbers anywhere on the planet, *and Kaziranga* must be the number one place to do so, due to dramatic declines across all rhino species in recent years. We saw *over one hundred animals in a single day in the park*, an awe-inspiring site, with many of them feeding nonchalantly beside our jeep at close range. There is a reason that Kaziranga is considered one of the World’s “must see” parks!

**Indian (Red) Muntjac**  
*Muntiacus muntjac*  
One of these richly-colored deer was seen near a tea estate in *Kaziranga*.

**Sambar**  
*Rusa unicolor*  
Asia’s largest deer was seen in *Kaziranga National Park*.

**Swamp Deer (Barasingha)**  
*Rucervus duvaucelii*  
This extremely localized deer is very patchily distributed in northern and central India; we saw it easily in *Kaziranga*, which has a famously healthy population of this large deer and is arguably the very best place to see the species.

**Hog (Golden) Deer**  
*Axis porcinus*  
Abundant within *Kaziranga National Park*.

**Gaur**  
*Bos gaurus*  
A big shock was seeing a small group (3) of gaur in *Nameri*, drinking from a forest pool.

**Wild (Water) Buffalo**  
*Bubalus arnee*  
Wonderfully abundant in *Kaziranga*, and also seen at *Maguri Grasslands*. Undoubtedly, the best sighting came in Kaziranga; while we were watching a distant *Bengal Tiger* soaking in a beel, a buffalo took extreme offence to this and directly approached the bathing tiger, which on seeing the rapid approach of the buffalo, made the wise move to get out of the water sharpish, and disappear into the sanctuary of the nearby long grasses. Even after the tiger had long disappeared out of view, the angered buffalo stood on the riverside staring intently at the spot where the tiger had vanished into the grass, as if to dare it to come back and see what happens if it chose to do so!

**(Mishmi) Takin**  
*Budorcas taxicolor taxicolor*  
Some odd, deep angry sounding grunts led us to a pair of these large beasts in the *Mishmi Hills*, where Kenneth was quick to lock on to them. Very surprising sighting, and apparently only rarely heard too.

**Indian (Eurasian) Wild Pig (Wild Boar)**  
*Sus scrofa cristatus*
Regularly encountered in **Kaziranga**.

**Bengal** Tiger  
*Panthera tigris tigris*

A BIG surprise; while **Kaziranga** boasts a healthy population of tigers, this cat is still fairly rarely seen by visiting bird groups, due to the dense tall grasses making them hard to observe there. We saw one, if distantly, soaking in a large lake, which got the aggressive attention of a testy local buffalo, which chased it out of the water and into the safety of the dense grasses out of sight of the still bristling buffalo!

**Gray Mongoose**  
*Herpestes edwardsii*

A couple of sightings in the Assamese lowlands.

**(Himalayan)** Yellow-throated Marten  
*Martes flavigula*

One was seen briefly by some in **Nameri**.

**Smooth-coated Otter**  
*Lutrogale perspicillata*

A couple of relaxed groups were observed in **Kaziranga**.

**Large-eared Pika**  
*Ochotona macrotis*

Sam found one of these well-named mammals sheltering under a *rhododendron* just below **Sela Pass**.

**Himalayan Crestless (Hodgson’s/Malayan)** Porcupine  
*Hystrix brachyura*

Another big mammal surprise was a pair of these animals (mother and juvenile) in **Kaziranga**; our local guide, (who is from Kaziranga) had only seen the species on only a handful of occasions, illustrating its scarcity.

**Black Giant Squirrel**  
*Ratufa bicolor*

This impressive 30 inch-long squirrel was watched several times in **Nameri National Park**.

**Particoloured Flying Squirrel**  
*Hylopetes alboniger*

Tim and Sam found an individual in flight near the resort in **Kaziranga**, whilst tracking down a **Collared Scops-Owl**.

**Hoary-bellied (Irrawaddy/Ayewaddy) Squirrel**  
*Callosciurus pygerythrus*

Recorded in **Kaziranga**, **Nameri**, and in **Digboi**.

**Pallas’s Squirrel**  
*Callosciurus erythraeus*

Seen in **Nameri** and **Soraipong**.

**Himalayan Striped Squirrel**  
*Tamiops mcclellandii*

Seen regularly in **Eaglenest**, and then again in **Jeypore**.

**Orange-bellied Himalayan Squirrel**  
*Dremomys lokriah*

Several were seen in **Eaglenest**, then later in the **Mishmi Hills**.

**Himalayan Field (White-footed Himalayan) Rat**  
*Rattus nitidus*

One ran into the dining tent at **Bompu Camp, Eaglenest**.

**Indian Flying Fox**  
*Pteropus giganteus*

A small flight of these huge bats was seen close to the city of **Tinsukia**.