

Great Himalayan National Park and surrounds, November 2011

Introduction and itinerary

This trip was partly inspired by a superb photograph of a **Long-billed Thrush** posted on the web sometime in 2010 (not sure who posted it but *thank you*). That started thoughts of North India and when three birding friends and I found ourselves with an open window for a 2-week trip in November 2012, when flight prices for many destinations were rapidly rocketing, we jumped at some cheap flights to Delhi. John Gregory's 2010 report on his trip to see **Western Tragopan** sealed the deal once we'd learnt that November is a great time to trek in the Western Himalayas in terms of weather and ground conditions. Our second week was south of Delhi chasing some of Rajasthan's flagship birds, but this report covers our first week only, which centred on a trek in the Great Himalayan National Park (GHNP).

John's report, and also Peter Kaestner's notes from his visit in 2008 should be read in conjunction with the notes that follow – sincere thanks to both for posting and to John for fielding a few questions before we went:

http://www.surfbirds.com/trip_report.php?id=1873

<http://hillpost.in/2008/06/01/quest-for-the-western-tragopan-in-great-himalayan-national-park-ghnp/5548/people/peter>

Andy Rhodes, Ollie Wardman, Chris Wilkinson and I arrived in Bhunter, the airport town in central Himachal Pradesh close to the city of Kullu early in the morning on 5th November and followed an itinerary as follows:

Nov-11	Flights & nights	Travel & location
5th	Landed Bhunter 0805; camped	Sai Ropa village to Rolla (GHNP), 9km easy walking after 1.5hr drive
6th	Camped	Rolla to Khorli Poi, 8km very hard walking
7th	Camped	Khorli Poi
8th	Camped	Khorli Poi
9th	Camped	Khorli Poi to GHNP entrance gate via tragopan valley, 8km hard walking
10th	Homestay at Gushaini	Entrance gate to Sai Ropa village, 9km easy walking
11th	Homestay at Nadhar	Gushaini to Nadhar village, 3km hard walking after 1hr drive
12th	Hotel at Bhunter	Nadhar to Gushaini, 3km easy walking
13th	Hotel at Bhunter	Rohtang Pass by 4x4 after cancelled flight
14th	Departed Bhunter 0730	n/a

Great Himalayan National Park

The main attraction for birders in the GHNP is the chance to search for **Western Tragopan**. Additionally, the area is stunningly beautiful, completely unspoilt and inhabited by several other classy **pheasant** species, some notable **thrushes** and plenty of western Himalayan specialities. We knew we were gambling to an extent by going in the autumn. The **tragopans** were unlikely to be calling and even less likely to be responsive to playback. We were also unsure as to their elevation at this time of the year as they are known to descend as winter progresses. Well we were right about them calling. We heard nothing territorial in five days but we did hear a few contact calls. Fortunately their elevation was not a problem - they were still around their breeding area at Khorli Poi, which was completely clear of snow and looked like it would be for some time yet.

The weather was also as hoped for – dry throughout with crystal clear skies and excellent conditions underfoot. Nights were cold but a good bonfire, thick sleeping bags and decent tents did the job. There are simple cabins at the gate, at Rolla and at KP, which our team of porters and guides used as cookhouse and sleeping quarters.

An unexpected consequence of an autumn visit, perhaps one that we should have foreseen, was a deep layer of crispy leaf litter in the mixed forest favoured by the **tragopans**. This made getting around an excruciatingly noisy business, especially as there were four of us (none particularly light on our feet) plus the lead guide and our chaperone, TC. OK, so the guide and TC were pretty quiet but we weren't! We were often traversing near-vertical slopes or negotiating fallen trees, and that only made things worse. Anyway, the full story of how we got on with the **trags** is given below so skip to that section if you can't wait.

We entered the park via the Tirthan Valley where the trail follows the course of the river up, up and up. We were regularly presented with breath-taking views of mountains and crags, forested slopes, waterfalls and traditional wooden bridges. The river itself is flanked by ranks of massive, stone-washed boulders that contrast starkly with ponding water that is one minute pure blue and the next a rich golden brown depending on whether the sky is reflected or the river's gravel bed showing through. **Brown Dippers, Plumbeous Redstarts, Blue Whistling-thrushes** and **White-capped Water-redstarts** are everywhere, and **Little Forktails** pleasingly regular. **Himalayan Vultures** cruise over often and mixed **passerine** flocks are never far away. Several species of **laughingthrush** sneak through the understory while **Scaly-breasted Wren-babblers** berate you from ground level. I personally have never been anywhere so pristine.

It's basically a 2-day walk up to Khorli Poi, which is at 3200m. The first is easy and allows for plenty of birding as you go. The second is rather harder. We actually found it very difficult indeed. Much of the trail is steep and narrow, and it took us several hours with a long lunch break to complete, and that was with perfectly dry conditions. John G and Peter K both pass this climb off as pretty much run of the mill. Well they must be fitter than we are (and we, for the record, are four pretty ordinary 40-something guys who spend far too long sat behind desks or in meetings). John describes the small meadow at Khorli Poi nicely in his report. Note that when we were there, neither a slug plague nor any wild flowers were evident.

Panki Sood was our trek manager (for want of a better title). Panki works with Ankit Sood, head of *Sunshine Adventures* and had everything totally under control. His English is excellent and he was always very helpful. He's also a brilliant photographer and his work can easily be found on the web via a quick google search. I've resisted the temptation to include lots of GHPN photos here as most simply do not do the place justice (despite OW's undoubted photographic talent!). Some of Panki's probably do however, so check them out on the web... Panki did not accompany us for the majority of the time we were out birding. That was left to head guide Tara Chand, TC, and he kept a close eye on us, ensuring that no-one was left behind at any point. TC had good English and was extremely patient, helpful and cheerful. We all had a great time together.

Western Tragopan

Here are the headlines:

- All four of us saw Western Tragopan but we only had naked eye flight views.
- Everyone except me knowingly saw a male. Apparently I did see two, one even flying through my bins view but sad to say, both of these were nothing but grey blurs.
- AR had the best view when a male bird flew spontaneously from a ridge below him and away into the trees.
- OW and CW had reasonable views of a flushed male after we'd crept quite close to a bird located by our guide.
- And we all saw a close, flushed female.

Three solid days of searching with us in tow must have been wearing for the guides. They did well to keep smiling and certainly put in more miles than us as they scoured the valley for trags.

We tried listening for calling birds and used playback at dawn but not surprisingly, this was never successful. Our second strategy was simply walking through the areas recommended by the guides and hoping to flush birds. This obviously has big drawbacks however when there are four of you as views will inevitably be brief and only those at the front of the line will see anything. In fact, only our guides had any views this way (including one or two flushed from not too far above Rolla, another tragopan location but with no local water source so camping not possible).

By far the best strategy for us was to rely on the guides to locate birds on the ground by hearing them foraging in the leaf litter – and they can distinguish between Koklass Pheasants, monals and tragopans! This was best achieved by allowing the guide to go on ahead and quietly approach likely gullies or copses. Dhani Ram and Tulsi Ram were our main guides in the field and they managed this on three notable occasions:

1. **Dhani indicated to AR** that he could hear a foraging bird below a nearby ridge late on our first afternoon at KP. The rest of us had waited behind being somewhat in a state of shock at the amount of noise the six of us had made simply walking through the forest during our first hour on site. As AR watched the slope and ridge, a cracking male tragopan took flight and shot away into some nearby trees.

2. **Dhani and Tulsi** were working hard to locate birds on the slope on the north side of the river at KP on 8th. We were slipping and slithering our way along the slopes trying to keep up. Tulsi did find a bird and was able to walk all the way around it apparently to get back to us. As we approached the gully in question, Dhani wanted us to move faster and faster. Luckily we only needed to cross an area of bare earth so we could actually do that and stay pretty quiet. We were all just about lined up behind a fallen tree overlooking the gully when Dhani suddenly decided we were too high up the slope and we all had to scramble 20m further down. Three of us were in position when the loud double *brrrr* of a flushed tragopan's wings rang through the trees. OW and CW managed a view of what was a male trag but AR and I were blocked. As we toasted or rued our luck, a second bird suddenly flushed but none of us even glimpsed that one.
3. **On the walk down on 9th**, we detoured to a couple of new tragopan areas. The habitat looked great but was difficult to traverse being large boulders covered in herbs and other vegetation and you were never quite sure what you were about to put your foot on. Again, Dhani and Tulsi located a bird and this time we were sent in to try to get close. After some confusion as to where exactly we should be looking, we finally made our way into a broad, vegetated gully with a small stream and flushed a female trag, all of us having nice, naked eye views as she careened off down the slope. The guides then indicated that another bird was present (we actually heard both these tragopans giving repeated, mewing contact calls). We found a spot with a good view looking towards the calling bird and Tulsi set off to try to flush it in our direction. It was not to be however as the bird flew off the other way (and we realised we were actually stood in the wrong place).

Here are my thoughts for what they're worth on seeing these birds out of the breeding season:

- **Dhani and Tulsi are so skilful** that they can locate trags on the ground on any day providing the area hasn't been walked in the days before. If it has been walked, the trags will have flushed and moved on. You only have so many chances therefore in any one location to try for views. If we'd realised this, we may have opted to move to Shilt after our second day at Khorli Poi, Shilt being another good site for tragopans a short day's hike away (and with water for camping).
- **Communicating with Dhani and Tulsi** was quite difficult with no language in common. This meant we were often trying to guess precisely where the located birds were, where we should be or what, generally, was going on. This is the main issue that would make an immense difference for autumn birders looking for Western Tragopan in the GHNP if it were resolved. One solution might be for TC's role to subtly change from chaperone to dedicated interpreter. The guides were superb but anyone making an autumn visit in future might do well to discuss these ideas with Panki or Ankit prior to trekking.
- **I suppose it has to be said** that birding as a team of four probably worked against us – but I doubt that that will surprise anyone reading this report. The trags are not too flighty however and even we managed to get close to a few.



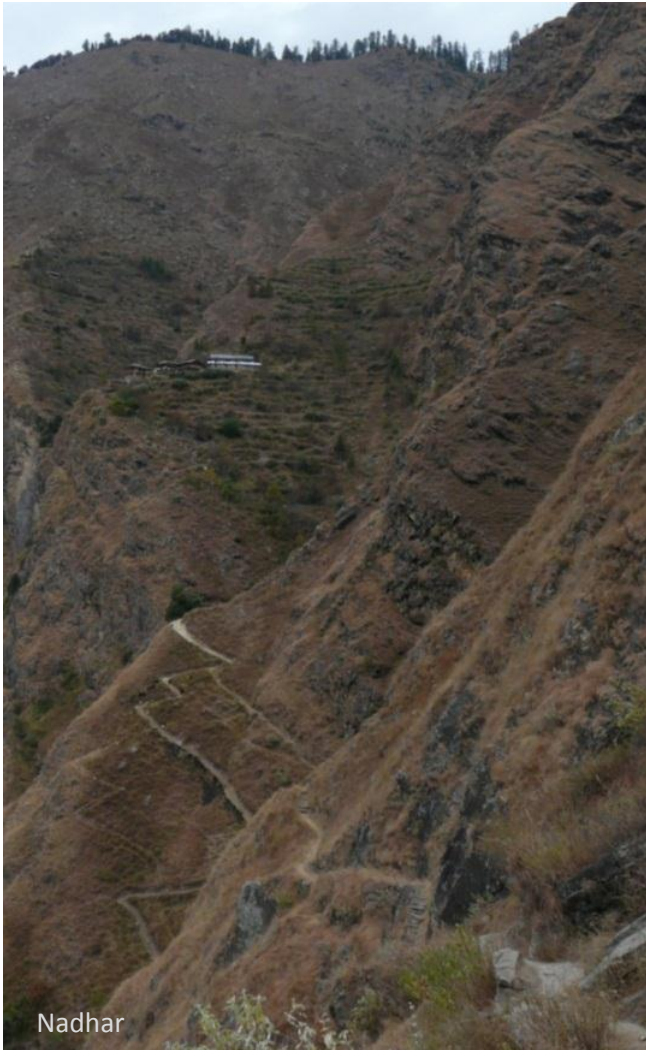
Dhani, Pradhan and Tulsi deep in tragopan country

Cheer Pheasant

This was our main target at Nadhar village, which lies outside of the GHNP. Nadhar is really a homestead housing an extended family of farmers – and very hospitable they are too. We enjoyed our time there but did not manage to see Cheer Pheasant. It may have been partly due to a recent fire on the hillside. The homestead is wedged into a precipitous grassy slope high above Gushaini. We did see a few nice species however and it was another amazing place to visit.

Panki was also told about a Cheer Pheasant roost site up above the GHNP entrance gate while we were there – perhaps not surprising and we'd already noticed that the habitat looked ideal. Panki was taken up on the evening of 9th by the local herder

and did indeed see a Cheer coming to roost. Frustratingly, the path up was judged to be too tough for us and Panki wasn't prepared to risk it before dawn the next morning (note that Panki is an experienced mountaineer). There is certainly potential to add Cheer Pheasant to the GHNP itinerary if an accessible site was found – over to you, *Sunshine Adventures*!



Other species

As well as the GHNP, Nadhar village and the Rohtang Pass, we also had time to bird the rivers, some woodland and some edge habitats around Gushaini, Bhunter and Kullu.

Our full species list appears below. Endemics and regional endemics however included the **tragopan, Himalayan Monal, Himalayan Parakeet; Brown-fronted, Himalayan Pied & Scaly-bellied Woodpeckers; Himalayan Bulbul, Tickell's Thrush, Black-chinned Babbler, Rufous Sibia, Whistler's Warbler, Spot-winged & White-throated Tits, Variegated Laughingthrush, White-cheeked Nuthatch, Pink-browed Rosefinch and Black-and-yellow Grosbeak.**

Other exciting birds were **Upland Buzzard, Lammergeier, Golden Eagle, Koklass & Kalij Pheasants, Snow Pigeon, Crested Kingfisher, Upland Pipit, Long-billed Thrush, White-collared Blackbird, Himalayan Bluetail, Blue-capped Redstart, Spotted & Little Forktails, Blue-throated Flycatcher, Rufous-bellied Niltava, White-browed Fulvetta, Scaly-breasted Wren-babbler, Chestnut-headed Tesia, Wallcreeper, Altai Accentor, Collared Grosbeak, Red & Yellow-billed Choughs, Spotted Nutcracker and Yellow-billed Blue magpie.** We wondered why **Ibisbill** has not been recorded locally and Panki confirmed that his team had never come across it.

Animals were few and far between but we saw a beautiful **Himalayan Weasel** up at KP on 8th and a **Himalayan Goral** on the walk down on the 9th. We also saw evidence of **Asian Black Bears** in areas where they'd been digging for roots.

Sunshine Adventures

Ankit Sood of *Sunshine Adventures* dealt with all our booking arrangements efficiently by email: sunhimalaya@gmail.com

These included return flights from Delhi to Bhunter (cheaper if booked in India), road travel, hotels and homestays, and everything needed for the trek including a team of 10 porters and guides. We were immensely impressed with the package. The food provided on the trek was excellent and included the now-legendary *bed-tea* and *bed-porridge* (how's your quest going to persuade your better half to sort that for you back home, Ollie?!). We only had to carry small day packs with layers, water, lunches and a field guide – which was just as well – but the loads the porters took up the hill were huge. The whole team were hard working and cheerful throughout, and we felt we were in very capable hands. Many, many thanks to the whole Kullu team.

Web: <http://www.sunshineadventure.com/>

Other logistics

With so much arduous hiking and several days of serious scrambling, we all felt very fortunate not to have taken any debilitating falls or even twisted an ankle. At one point I had the choice of sliding over a waterfall via an icy rock or bailing into an adjacent pool of glacial water. I opted for the pool and Dhani hauled me out. Anti-inflammatory tablets and a couple of elastic bandages were well worth taking along even if we only needed them for minor aches and pains.

Winter clothes and some thermal layers were pretty much essential at KP. The days warmed up in the sun but as soon as it set, or slid behind the tallest trees, the temperature plummeted to as low as 0°C. Frost was on the ground every morning at KP although the camping experience was never really unpleasant because we had no wind or rain. We'd have been more comfortable at night with modern, 'self-inflating' bed mats but we got by with the simple ones provided by the trekking team.

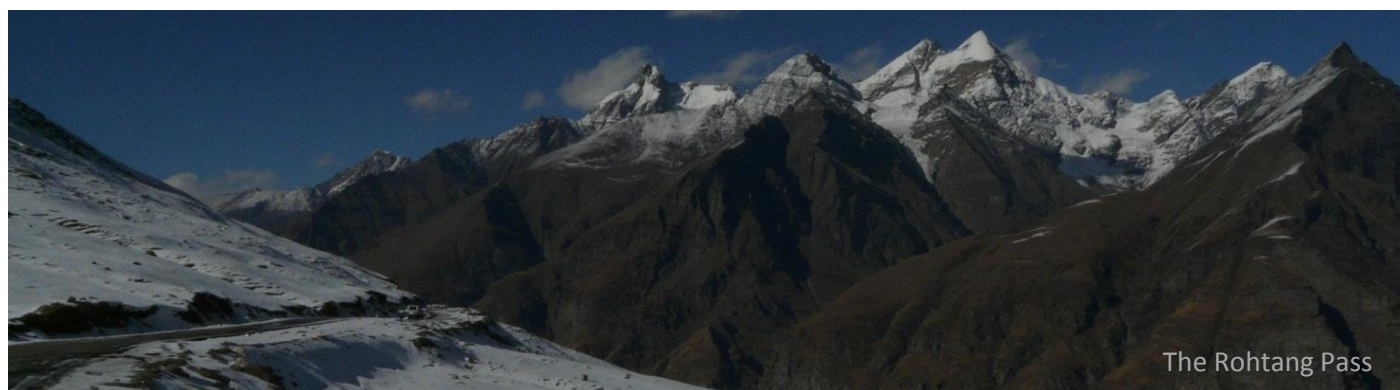
We took large rucksacks for our main bags, as requested by Ankit. *Sunshine Adventures* provided warm sleeping bags, which were very good. Our own light-weight liners were also useful for just that extra bit of warmth.

Our flight up to Bhunter was with *Kingfisher Airlines* and fine; while our flight back was with *Air India* and cancelled at the last minute. Both flights leave early in the morning so we'd recommend an early arrival at Bhunter airport to allow options in the event that your flight is cancelled. We had the impression that it was a fairly common hazard... Unfortunately for us, the *Kingfisher* flight was taxiing down the runway as we arrived at the airport so a transfer was not an option. We were offered a 12hr taxi ride instead but opted to take a refund and catch the scheduled *Kingfisher* flight the next morning.

Hence we had a full day spare and Panki very kindly agreed to drive us up the Rohtang Pass, which was a few hours to the north and ultimately links India to China. Our day in another spectacularly scenic area was busy with sight-seeing traffic and we actually saw few birds despite scanning hard for **snowcock**. There must be good birds up there however and *A Birdwatcher's Guide To India* (Kazmierczak & Singh) does give some details of how to see them. Kazmierczak & Singh was a very useful read prior to the trip in fact. A superb masala lunch and perfect chai at a roadside café near the top were memorable.

Panki's 4x4 had a clutch problem at 3979m and we had to limp slowly down during the afternoon. It was a great relief when it started working again after an hour in first gear.

We didn't suffer from noticeable altitude sickness at all, though perhaps we would have if we'd driven up the pass before our week in the park. Catch *Ice Road Trucker's* on TV if you can for more fun and games up the Rohtang pass...



Species list

This is roughly based on Rasmussen & Anderton 2005, and broadly covers our joint efforts over the nine days.

1+ = Seen commonly in/at suitable habitat/altitude

F, M = Female, Male

Species	First date	First location	Notes & additional sites
Common Coot	05/11/2011	Bhunter	1
Great Cormorant	05/11/2011	Bhunter	1+
Gadwall	12/11/2011	Bhunter	A few on the river
Teal	12/11/2011	Bhunter	A few on the river
Black Francolin	05/11/2011	Gushaini to Rolla	1
Chukar	11/11/2011	Nadhar	2
Western Tragopan	06/11/2011	Khorli Poi	Flight views only of a M, another M seen on 8th, and a F on 9th (when 2 birds also heard contact calling)
Koklass Pheasant	07/11/2011	Khorli Poi	Heard only today, a few flushed on subsequent days around KP and a couple of unsatisfactory flight views obtained, very flighty birds
Himalayan Monal	06/11/2011	Rolla to Khorli Poi	1+, at least 10 today and some excellent flight views over the next 4 days, just 1 seen on the ground, very vocal
Kalij Pheasant	05/11/2011	Gushaini to Rolla	1 near Rolla and another on 10 th
Speckled Piculet	10/11/2011	GHNP entrance gate	1
Brown-fronted Woodpecker	12/11/2011	Bhunter	1
Himalayan Woodpecker	08/11/2011	Khorli Poi	1
Scaly-bellied Woodpecker	05/11/2011	Gushaini to Rolla	1F and a few others at different locations, common at Nadhar

Great Barbet	05/11/2011	Gushaini to Rolla	3 and more on the way down
Eurasian Hoopoe	12/11/2011	Bhunter	1
Long-tailed Shrike	12/11/2011	Bhunter	1
Crested Kingfisher	05/11/2011	Bhunter	1 and 2 on 12 th
Rose-ringed Parakeet	05/11/2011	Bhunter	1+
Himalayan Parakeet	10/11/2011	GHNP entrance gate to Gushaini	c20 (western Slaty-headed)
Collared Owlet	05/11/2011	Gushaini to Rolla	1
Snow Pigeon	07/11/2011	Khorli Poi	c20 on the crags above KP and c20 on 13 th
Eurasian Collared-dove	05/11/2011	Bhunter	1+
Black-eared Kite	05/11/2011	Bhunter	1+
Lammergeier	06/11/2011	Rolla to Khorli Poi	1 and a few more over KP, Nadhar and the Rohtang road
Himalayan Griffon Vulture	05/11/2011	Gushaini to Rolla	1+
Eurasian Griffon Vulture	05/11/2011	Gushaini to Rolla	1, ratio of Himalayan to Eurasian approx 20:1
Northern Goshawk	07/11/2011	Khorli Poi	1 photographed by Panki
Changeable Hawk-eagle	12/11/2011	Bhunter	1 probable
Eurasian Sparrowhawk	05/11/2011	Gushaini to Rolla	1F and a couple more over a week
Upland Buzzard	06/11/2011	Khorli Poi	1 high above KP looked good for Upland Buzzard
Himalayan Buzzard	13/11/2011	Rohtang pass road, 3979m	4 looked good for this split
Golden Eagle	07/11/2011	Khorli Poi	1 and 1 at Nadhar on 11 th
Eurasian Hobby	11/11/2011	Nadhar	1 probable
Common Kestrel	05/11/2011	Gushaini to Rolla	1+
Yellow-billed Blue-magpie	05/11/2011	Kullu	1+
Rufous Treepie	12/11/2011	Bhunter	1+
Spotted Nutcracker	06/11/2011	Rolla to Khorli Poi	3 and a few seen every day above Rolla, the minimally spotted form
Red-billed Chough	13/11/2011	Rohtang pass road, 3979m	10
Yellow-billed Chough	13/11/2011	Rohtang pass road, 3979m	5
Large-billed Crow	05/11/2011	Kullu	1+
Common Raven	06/11/2011	Rolla to Khorli Poi	Odd singles seen at altitude
Eurasian Crag Martin	11/11/2011	Nadhar	A few probables seen
Yellow-bellied Fantail	05/11/2011	Gushaini to Rolla	1+
White-browed Fantail	12/11/2011	Bhunter	1
White-throated Fantail	10/11/2011	GHNP entrance gate to Gushaini	1
Brown Dipper	05/11/2011	Gushaini to Rolla	1+
Blue Whistling Thrush	05/11/2011	Gushaini to Rolla	1+
Long-billed Thrush	05/11/2011	Gushaini to Rolla	Great views of a subadult at the small trail-side waterfall just before Ropa village. The thrush ripped up thick moss as it foraged on damp rocks. The gulley also held Little and Spotted Forktails and a WC W-redstart - brilliant! It was birdless on the way down though 4 days later.
Tickell's Thrush	09/11/2011	Khorli Poi to GHNP entrance gate	Good views of an imm M
White-collared Blackbird	06/11/2011	Rolla to Khorli Poi	2 and just 2 more on 9 th
Eurasian Blackbird	10/11/2011	GHNP entrance gate to Gushaini	M & F seen poorly, 'Tibetan' seems most likely according to Rasmussen's range maps unless they were Grey-winged
Rufous-gorgeted Flycatcher	05/11/2011	Gushaini to Rolla	1F and several more over subsequent days
Rufous-bellied Niltava	05/11/2011	Gushaini to Rolla	1
Blue-throated Flycatcher	05/11/2011	Gushaini to Rolla	1
Himalayan Red-flanked Bluetail	07/11/2011	Khorli Poi	1M and a few more over subsequent days down to the GHNP gate
Black Redstart	07/11/2011	Khorli Poi	1F associating with a forest flock, probably Black, a brief view only

Blue-capped Redstart	11/11/2011	Nadhar	3 and also on 12 th
Blue-fronted Redstart	09/11/2011	Khorli Poi to GHNP entrance gate	3 near the gate and also on 10 th
White-capped Water-redstart	05/11/2011	Gushaini to Rolla	1+
Plumbeous Water-redstart	05/11/2011	Gushaini to Rolla	1+
Little Forktail	05/11/2011	Gushaini to Rolla	3 and odd ones seen regularly above Gushaini
Spotted Forktail	05/11/2011	Gushaini to Rolla	1 at the small trail-side waterfall just before Ropa village
Common Stonechat	05/11/2011	Kullu	1
Grey Bushchat	05/11/2011	Kullu	1 and also seen at Bhunter
Common Myna	05/11/2011	Kullu	1+
White-tailed Nuthatch	06/11/2011	Rolla to Khorli Poi	2 chunky nuthatches seen were probably White-tailed but could equally have been Kashmir
White-cheeked Nuthatch	06/11/2011	Rolla to Khorli Poi	1 today and several more over the next 3 days, superb birds with a distinctive bleating call
Wallcreeper	10/11/2011	GHNP entrance gate	1 and a few more over the next few days (near Bhunter, Nadhar and above Kullu)
Eurasian Treecreeper	05/11/2011	Gushaini to Rolla	Just a couple seen above Rolla
Bar-tailed Treecreeper	05/11/2011	Gushaini to Rolla	1 and a few more above Rolla on subsequent Days
Winter Wren	13/11/2011	Rohtang pass road, 3979m	1
Rufous-vented Tit	12/11/2011	Bhunter	1 briefly
White-throated Tit	07/11/2011	Khorli Poi	6 in a forest flock
Rufous-naped Tit	06/11/2011	Rolla to Khorli Poi	A common component of forest flocks at higher altitudes
Spot-winged Tit	06/11/2011	Rolla to Khorli Poi	3 and a few more in forest flocks at higher altitude
Grey-crested Tit	06/11/2011	Rolla to Khorli Poi	1
Great Tit	05/11/2011	Gushaini to Rolla	1+
Green-backed Tit	05/11/2011	Gushaini to Rolla	1+
Black-throated Tit	05/11/2011	Gushaini to Rolla	1+, a common component of flocks
Goldcrest	07/11/2011	Khorli Poi	1+
Himalayan Bulbul	05/11/2011	Gushaini to Rolla	1+
Black Bulbul	05/11/2011	Gushaini to Rolla	1+, the 'pale-eared' western form
Oriental White-eye	05/11/2011	Gushaini to Rolla	1+
Chestnut-headed Tesia	06/11/2011	Rolla to Khorli Poi	2 and 2 on 10 th
Brownish-flanked Bush-warbler	10/11/2011	GHNP entrance gate to Gushaini	1 probable seen
Grey-sided Bush-warbler	09/11/2011	Khorli Poi to GHNP entrance gate	1 just above the gate
Siberian Chiffchaff	05/11/2011	Gushaini to Rolla	1+
Ashy-throated Warbler	05/11/2011	Gushaini to Rolla	1 and others on the way down
Lemon-rumped Warbler	05/11/2011	Gushaini to Rolla	1+, a common component of flocks
Hume's Warbler	06/11/2011	Rolla to Khorli Poi	1 and a few others
Whistler's Warbler	05/11/2011	Gushaini to Rolla	1
Grey-hooded Warbler	05/11/2011	Gushaini to Rolla	2 and small numbers subsequently over the Week
Striated Laughingthrush	05/11/2011	Gushaini to Rolla	1 and others on the way down
Streaked Laughingthrush	09/11/2011	Khorli Poi to GHNP entrance gate	1+
Variiegated Laughingthrush	05/11/2011	Gushaini to Rolla	1+
Chestnut-crowned Laughingthrush	05/11/2011	Gushaini to Rolla	3 and others on the way down
Scaly-breasted Wren-babbler	05/11/2011	Gushaini to Rolla	3 calling and others on the way down, responded well to pishing
Black-chinned Babbler	11/11/2011	Gushaini	1 at the homestay
Chestnut-tailed Minla	05/11/2011	Gushaini to Rolla	1+, a common component of flocks
White-browed Fulvetta	05/11/2011	Gushaini to Rolla	1 and 1 on 11 th
Rufous Sibia	05/11/2011	Gushaini to Rolla	3 and others seen over the week

Whiskered Yuhina	05/11/2011	Gushaini to Rolla	1+, a common component of flocks
Fire-breasted Flowerpecker	10/11/2011	GHNP entrance gate to Gushaini	1
House Sparrow	05/11/2011	Bhunter	1+
Russet Sparrow	05/11/2011	Gushaini to Rolla	5 and others seen over the week
White Wagtail	12/11/2011	Bhunter	1+
Grey Wagtail	12/11/2011	Bhunter	1+
Olive-backed Pipit	12/11/2011	Bhunter	3
Upland Pipit	11/11/2011	Nadhar	1
Altai Accentor	11/11/2011	Nadhar	3 and 2 on 13 th
Brambling	11/11/2011	Nadhar	1 near the village
Chaffinch	11/11/2011	Nadhar	c10
European Goldfinch	11/11/2011	Nadhar	c10, dramatically different to UK Goldfinches
Plain Mountain-finch	06/11/2011	Rolla to Khorli Poi	A small flock seemed to turn up at KP sometime every day and a large flock also seen on 13 th
Common Rosefinch	10/11/2011	GHNP entrance gate to Gushaini	M & F
Pink-browed Rosefinch	05/11/2011	Gushaini to Rolla	2M and others seen on the way down
Red-headed Bullfinch	07/11/2011	Khorli Poi	2F types associating with a forest flock, presumably Red-headed although Orange couldn't be firmly ruled out
Black-and-yellow Grosbeak	06/11/2011	Rolla to Khorli Poi	3M and several more around KP on subsequent days
Collared Grosbeak	06/11/2011	Rolla to Khorli Poi	1M & 1F
Rock Bunting	11/11/2011	Nadhar	1+

Closing words

I can't remember whose they were but -

On returning from the KP toilet tent one evening, well after dark:

"Well if it wasn't a bear sniffing round the tent, then it must have been a mouse. It was one or the other..."

During Day 3 of outrageous scrambling up and down the treacherous, wooded slopes at KP:

"I'd have really enjoyed this when I was eight."

Sat beside the fire at KP under a star-filled, inky sky (Jupiter showing well); pale light falling between the boughs of massive pines and flooding out across the meadow; cradling cups of hot chocolate, our backs rapidly freezing, our faces slowly roasting:

"I think we're quite privileged to be up here..."

Whilst decamping from KP:

"There's a mouse in the tent!" "Are you sure it's not a bear?!"



Ollie and Chris at the entrance gate with Andys M & R