

Pokhara, Nepal

28th December 2011 – 2nd January 2012

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Background

Our budget trip to Pokhara was planned as a break from Dhangadhi, in the Far-West Terai region of Nepal, where we have been working for the last 6 months. I briefly visited Pokhara back in 2002, on a 2-week birding trip based around the 4-day Poon Hill circuit and a prolonged stay at Chitwan (due to a 1-week National Strike). However, during that visit, Pokhara was really just a stop-over and very few birds were added to that trip list. This time, I wanted to spend a few days birding in and around the town, whilst at the same time enjoying the 'luxuries' of a tourist spot with my non-birding wife - being starved of western food and amenities for the last several months, this was also important! Although I spent many hours each day out birding, I did not use tapes and only occasionally used pishing techniques, when trying to see skulkers. In total, I saw 123 species in and around Pokhara. If adding the bus journey to/from Pokhara, another 10 species can be added making a trip total of 133 species.

Logistics

At the time of writing (Jan 2012), £1 was worth 133NPR. This means, for example, that our 700 NPR Guest House accommodation cost just £5.25 per night.

Transport

We travelled by direct public bus from Dhangadhi to Pokhara for 1000 NPR each. Leaving Dhangadhi at 12:00 noon, it took a gruelling 19½ hours to reach Pokhara. The journey was broken up with stops for food and 'toilets' on the way, but it was impossible to get any sleep. The addition of 20 goats to the roof at an early stop, made opening the windows a definite no-no. The return journey, on the very same bus, cost 50 NPR more, left at 13:30 and took 20 hours. The views of the steep gorges as we left the valley were, at times, a little too close for comfort! 'Tourist' buses do ply the main highway and are apparently more comfortable (no goats on the roof or massive sacks of rice in the aisle) and stop less often, so if travelling from Kathmandu, this would probably be a much better option.

In Pokhara itself, we took a taxi to/from the local bus station to lakeside (200 NPR), but mainly walked elsewhere. We also caught a taxi to the start of the rough road that ascends the hill at the back of the Peace Pagoda for 300 NPR. We didn't haggle too much, but I would imagine we paid a little over the odds.

Accommodation

We stayed at Peace Eye Guest House (www.peaceeye.co.uk / +977 61461699) in South Lakeside. A double room cost 700 NPR per night. It had hot water, free Wi-Fi and was very clean. They also have dormitories and single rooms. A small restaurant served decent food and drinks, and the

British/Nepali owners were extremely welcoming and helpful. Pokhara can cater for all budgets, but this place came recommended and we weren't disappointed.

Food

Being a tourist destination, Pokhara can cater for pretty much every taste. Having been starved of western food for some time we ate a variety of meat products almost every day and had no 'issues' at all. On the bus, we stopped at local restaurants. Here we were more careful, but again had no problems. We drank bottled water at all times – keep an empty 1litre soft drink bottle with you, since most guest houses can refill it with bottled water for 10 NPR.

Birding References

I read several of the trip reports hosted on travellingbirder.com before leaving but couldn't really get anything specific about Pokhara, other than 'seen in Pokhara' or 'we explored the gardens at the lodge' type-thing. I put out a request to birders on the OB (Oriental Birding) Yahoo! groups forum and got some useful information back by email, particularly from Martin Naylor, Allen Holmes, Laxman Poudyal and Gandhiv Kafle. A couple of them directed me towards a local bird guide called Hari KC (harikc2@yahoo.com / +977 9846041669). He's the restaurant manager at Fishtail Lodge (see Birding Sites) and, although I didn't use his services, I met him a couple of times at the lodge and he seems very knowledgeable and friendly.

For everyday use, I had 'Birds of Nepal' by Grimmett, Inskipp & Inskipp, but I also used 'Raptors of the World' by James Ferguson-Lees & David Christie, and Birds of Thailand and South-east Asia by Craig Robson for further reference. Separating Himalayan and Griffon Vultures was my biggest challenge, and I'm still not entirely confident that I got it right. An article by Forsten and Lindholm at http://www.caluta.liitin.net/Linnut/pedot/gyps/gyps_himalayensis.html was useful in this respect and in it the authors mentioned Alström's 1997 paper in the Oriental Bird Club Bulletin (which I haven't yet read).

Bird names follow IOC World Bird Names (Version 2.9), though errors may have slipped in since it is 'Birds of Nepal' that I tend to flick through most often.

Birding Sites

Detailed tourist maps are easily available in town, though those in the second-hand Rough Guide to Nepal that we used were perfectly adequate. I restricted myself to sites within walking distance of the guest house in Lakeside. The best spots were:

Fishtail Lodge: In South Lakeside, on the 'other side' of the lake – accessed by free 'ferry' from near the cricket ground. A rubbish dump at the back right of the lodge was particularly productive, as was a guard post at the back left (use the ladder to climb onto the roof). Since this is an upmarket resort, it is probably best to check in at reception/see Hari KC and clear with them that it is OK to be there. I had no problems whatsoever.

Lakeside: A small section in South Lakeside near the cricket ground wasn't bad, but the main stretch along Lakeside itself was better, particularly if you keep going as far as the road at the north end, passing flooded land to the right.

Phewa Tal Lake: For ducks, the northern end of the lake is where you need to be. We hired a paddle boat (4 hours for 900 NPR) to get there and explored the western shoreline on the way back. From Google Earth, it appears as though you can get to another pool, north of the main lake, but when we were 'on the ground' this proved harder. However, it should be possible to 'land', get out and scope the pool from the northern bank (if the water hyacinth doesn't stop you).

Peace Pagoda: I did this twice, first time taking a taxi to the rough dirt road on the west side of the hill and walking up it, returning by the eastern forest trail down to the lake, and boat (300 NPR) back to lakeside. I did this in the hope of Wallcreeper, but unfortunately the road had just been 're-graded', and any exposed rock along the road had been recently cut.

The second time, I walked south from Lakeside to the dam and crossed a suspension bridge just downstream from it (itself a great spot). Here, I followed the main track between the fields and the forest until reaching a small red 'temple'. Next to the concrete water/washing area are some steps leading into the woods. The first 50 metres or so are a maze of small trails but keep heading up and you'll soon reach a proper trail which is easy to follow all the way to the top. Turning left at the top (rather than right to the Peace Pagoda), takes you to a hill with prayer flags, which is good for Spiny Babbler.

Guest House Roof Top: Great for raptors!

Daily Log

Tuesday 27th December 2011: Left Dhangadhi, in the Far-Western Terai, on the midday bus. Taking the window seat, this allowed 6 hours of 'birding' before nightfall. Highlights within the first hour were Western Osprey and a very obliging sub-adult White-rumped Vulture. An enforced stop shortly after this due to a running competition on the main road, added Cinereous Tit, White-throated Kingfisher and Little Egret. Continuing through the Terai towards Karnali added Red-wattled Lapwing, Indian Roller, Black Drongo, Common, Jungle and Pied Myna, Large-billed Crow and Rhesus Macaque.

After Karnali, the highway took us through Bardia National Park. At the first checkpoint, I got good views of Taiga Flycatcher, Alexandrine Parakeet, Red-vented Bulbul and Shikra. Crossing the Babai River, 3 enormous Gharial were seen sunning on the bank. With only maybe 2000 believed to be still in the wild, this critically endangered reptile was a real treat. Nearby were also 4 Marsh Muggers crocodiles, giving a great comparison.

As night fell, a few 'bus ticks' were added to the list, including Red-rumped Swallow, Spotted Dove, Pied Bush Chat, House Crow and Eastern Cattle Egret.

Wednesday 28th December 2011: With very little sleep, the dawn brought relief knowing that within an hour or so, we'd be in Pokhara. Rubbing my eyes, the first birds of the day were 2 Himalayan Vultures, attempting to catch some non-existent early morning thermals. Great views of the majestic 6993m Machhapuchre (Fishtail) Mountain were also enjoyed before the bus dropped down into the valley. Large-billed Crow (ssp *intermedius*) were noticeably different from my usual lowland variety and initially had me thinking Common Raven.

Having been dropped off, we caught a taxi to the Guest House where we dumped our bags and set off for breakfast on Lakeside. Walking along the lake, common species noted were Himalayan Swiftlet, Barn Swallow, House and Eurasian Tree Sparrow, White Wagtail, Common and Jungle Myna and Indian Pond Heron. Then, before breakfast, my first lifer – a male *citreola* Citrine Wagtail in full breeding plumage. Great bird and one that has been avoiding my efforts for many years! Over breakfast, Pale-throated (Plain) Martin, Grey Wagtail, Common Sandpiper, Paddyfield Pipit and Rose-ringed Parakeet were all easy additions.

A walk into the main town after breakfast was actually quite productive. Both Dusky and Greenish Warbler were easy – Greenish very common and calling constantly from the trees, and Dusky more skulking but also chacking away. Two White-rumped Vultures circled directly overhead, followed soon after by what I believe to be a Griffon Vulture.

After a brief rest back at the Guest House, we ventured out to Fishtail Lodge, really to just check it out, before hopefully returning the next day. The place was somewhat quiet and it was clear that the 'dump' had recently been added to with vast quantities of building rubble. However, a cracking male Snowy-browed Flycatcher and Yellow-bellied Fantail added a splash of colour to the drab greyness of concrete rubble. Both Plumbeous Water Redstart (far more females than males) and Grey-headed Canary-flycatcher were to become regular sightings here in Pokhara.

So with my first lifer under my belt, I sat with my wife later that night at Caffé Concerto enjoying a fantastic Rosemary Steak and my first Gorkha Beer of the evening. It only took a couple of beers though before the lack of sleep the night before finally caught up and sent us back to the Guest House.

Thursday 29th December 2011: Out of the Guest House by 6:30, I had already arrived and settled in at the dump at Fishtail Lodge by 6:50. Great views of the sun striking the Annapurna Range across the misty lake were being enjoyed before the birds started to show themselves. As is often the case, a stake-out can be somewhat slow but over the next 3 hours, persistence paid off with a pair of Small Niltava, a single female Rufous-bellied Niltava, several Grey-bellied Tesia, a female White-tailed Robin, and yesterday's Yellow-bellied Fantail and Snowy-browed Flycatcher. To be honest, I was also rather hoping for thrushes and wren-babblers but neither were seen (in fact, I didn't see a single wren-babbler on the entire trip). A quick look at the guard post before I left was rewarded however with brief but conclusive views of a Long-billed Thrush perched on a wall after being accidentally flushed. My second lifer of the trip – and a thrush at that; aren't they good! An extra half an hour here added Blue Whistling Thrush and Grey Treepie but no further views of the Long-billed.

We had planned to take a boat out to the northern shores of the lake later that morning but since my wife was still feeling tired, I took off to the roof and had a fantastic time ticking off the raptors. Over the next 2 hours a total of 9 Egyptian Vultures, numerous Black Kites, 3 White-rumped Vultures, 1 Himalayan Vulture, 3 Steppe Eagles, 1 pale morph Booted Eagle, a female Eurasian Sparrowhawk and a couple of Black-eared Kites were all enjoyed. Many more Eurasian/Himalayan Vultures were visible over the distant hills but they were exactly that – too distant!

Early afternoon saw us strolling along Lakeside once again, where summer plumage Little Grebes were putting on a bit of a show. Oriental White-eye and Large Cuckooshrike were picked up in the gardens of a local Lakeside restaurant, along with Common Tailorbird and Oriental Magpie-Robin. A

sunbird buzzing around in the treetops wouldn't settle long enough to ID but may well have been female Crimson.

So, later in the afternoon, I was back again at Fishtail Lodge. A new addition at the dump was a rather obliging male White-browed Shortwing. He spent a couple of minutes in the undergrowth before coming out to the edge of the foliage and posing for a while – wish I'd brought the camera attachment for my scope! Hoping for further views of the Long-billed Thrush, I went back to the guard post and within 20 minutes, had managed to get a much better look at a bird digging around in the edge of a damp pool (sewage?) behind the resort. A very curious Whistler's Warbler allowed conclusive viewing to round off the day's birding.

A hearty tuna pasta back at the Guest House rounded off another great day, and was of course washed down with the now obligatory Gorkha Beer. Because we'd met up with a friend, a couple of bottles of red wine were merrily consumed too.

Friday 30th December 2011: The plan today was to head off to the back of the Peace Pagoda (by taxi) and walk up the hill looking for another blocker of mine, Wallcreeper. However, Terri wasn't feeling too great (wine maybe?) so by 7:00am, I had set off again to Fishtail Lodge. No thrush today, but most of the previous day's suspects were viewed again, this time the White-tailed Robin providing even better views. 'New' species for the lodge were a small flock of Scarlet Minivet flicking between the treetops, a handful of superb Blue-throated Barbet, a stunning male Crimson Sunbird singing just a couple of metres away, a Green-crowned Warbler and a small flock of noisy White-crested Laughingthrushes.

After a late breakfast/early lunch, we walked back along Lakeside and hired a boat for half a day. We chose a more expensive, but somewhat slower, paddle-boat (900 NPR rather than 500 NPR for the wooden 'canoes') since it was more stable. As we set off, a dark morph Booted Eagle started to circle directly above us, white shoulder patches clearly visible. Reaching the northern side of the lake, the waterfowl began to reveal their identities. Good numbers of Eurasian Wigeon, Eurasian Teal, Eurasian Coot, Tufted Duck, Mallard and Gadwall were observed as well as about 20 Northern Pintail, 2 'pairs' of Common Merganser, and a pair of Ferruginous Ducks. Grebes included about 25 Black-necked and just 2 Great Crested. Scanning the banks on the northern shore revealed numerous Purple Swamphen but we couldn't get in close enough to search for jacanas, waders or other ducks. Surprisingly, no Red-headed or Common Pochards were seen. A slow paddle back, following the banks of the west shore added a couple of newbies – a single White-throated Fantail and my third lifer of the trip, Spotted Forktail, the latter allowing relatively close views as it flitted around on rocks near a small stream.

Three lifers in three days meant another night out 'on the town', this time treating ourselves to the more upmarket, but still comparatively cheap, Canadian-owned Moondance Restaurant for meals of Grilled Rainbow Trout and Beef Ala Kiev. Best meal either of us had had for quite some time!

Saturday 31st December 2011: Today we set off early by taxi to the far side of the Peace Pagoda and started to walk the rough, but driveable, dirt road to the summit in the hope of seeing Wallcreeper. However, it was evident right away that the road had recently been re-graded, with the existing rock walls taken back and added to the road surface – so no Wallcreepers. It was also the Nepali weekend, so a number of motorbikes and a few buses trundled by kicking up the dust. The habitat

along this road is open/lightly forested terraced hills and as such provided a few different species. Common birds on these hills were Oriental Turtle Dove, Grey Treepie, Large Cuckoo-shrike, Red-vented and Himalayan Bulbul, Scarlet Minivet and Blue-throated and Great Barbet. We also managed Grey Bush Chat, Hair-crested, Ashy and Bronzed Drongo, a pair of Grey-headed Woodpeckers and Himalayan Black-lored Tit. All-in-all though it was somewhat slow, birding-wise, on this trail. One surprise though was a distant but clearly identifiable Black-headed Gull following the river down in the valley.

As well as providing crippling views of the Annapurna Range, the Peace Pagoda itself was far more birdy. Despite the number of people, the Pagoda was obviously at that moment creating thermal updrafts and stunning views of 2 Egyptian Vultures, 9 Himalayan Vultures, 1 White-rumped Vulture, a couple of Griffon Vultures, 3 Steppe Eagles and several Black Kites, all over a 20-minute period, were obtained. To round it off a single adult Red-headed Vulture put in an appearance – a splendid Nepal tick for me. A supporting cast of Grey-hooded Warbler, Grey-bellied Tesia, Crimson Sunbird, White-throated Fantail and Velvet-fronted Nuthatch were available in the bushes and small trees around the Pagoda itself, though the walk down to the lake was disappointing with only Red-billed Blue Magpie added to the tally.

A late afternoon visit to Fishtail Lodge proved worthwhile with my fourth lifer of the trip, Chestnut-headed Tesia. In fact, I saw three birds, all very well, and it became a species I saw every day from then on. Not much else was seen, though a male White-browed Shortwing again put on a bit of a show.

So New Year's Eve, and a full 5-course meal at Olive Café was spent in the company of friends, followed by a shockingly poor firework display at the stroke of midnight down by the lake. Four lifers in 4 days. What would the New Year bring?

Sunday 1st January 2012: Waking up surprisingly fresh after the New Year celebrations, I headed out at 6:45 to begin a walk back to the Peace Pagoda by a different route. However, the weather had turned and it was now overcast and spitting with light rain – what a change to the cloudless days we'd enjoyed so far. Not put off (I was starting my 2012 Year List after all), I walked to Damside, following the lake shore as much as possible. On the way, I picked up another pale morph Booted Eagle flying low overhead, Common Chiffchaff, Long-tailed Shrike, and a personal surprise, Aberrant Bush Warbler. Passing the dam, I crossed the suspension bridge, where I also added a superb White-capped Redstart and more Plumbeous Water Redstarts. In the fields below the forest were the usual mix of egrets, as well as a lone female Common Kestrel.

Heading up into the forest, the trail was at first a little confusing, but very quickly I picked up the correct route and set off for the top. It was an easy climb and the birding, as usual, came in waves – a particularly good one revealed both Buff-barred and Lemon-rumped Warblers, Grey-hooded Warbler, Grey-headed Canary-flycatcher, Velvet-fronted Nuthatch, Yellow-bellied Fantail and a single male Small Niltava. Independent of the wave, but seen at the same time, were a pair of Wedge-tailed Green Pigeons feeding silently on fruit. Nearby, and having been 'unblocked' yesterday, were a couple more Chestnut-headed Tesias bouncing around in the undergrowth.

Reaching the top, I went to an area of scrub on a nearby hill covered with prayer flags and was rewarded straight away with a skulking Grey-sided Bush Warbler and a pair of very inquisitive Spiny

Babbler that performed wonderfully. Heading over to the Pagoda was again very productive – the low trees around the sides and back giving up such gems as Great and Blue-throated Barbets, Scarlet Minivet, Himalayan Bulbul, Grey-capped Pygmy Woodpecker, Chestnut-bellied Nuthatch and Himalayan Black-lored Tit. I also had the bizarre experience of seeing Santa waving from a low-flying light aircraft as it buzzed the Pagoda – pretty surreal!

Heading back towards the trail, I had a real magpie feast with not only Red-billed Blue Magpie but also a couple of Yellow-billed, as well as Common Green Magpie and Grey Treepie – all on show for a good 15 minutes or so. Walking back through the forest was less birdy than earlier, but I did manage to see both Grey-headed Woodpecker and Greater Yellownape, as well as another male Snowy-browed Flycatcher. A recently tilled field just the other side of the suspension bridge had several Olive-backed Pipits, Taiga Flycatcher and a cracking male Hodgson's Redstart. Not a bad start to the Year.

Last night's celebrations were starting to take their toll, so after a brief snooze I took a damp walk north along Lakeside, onto the road and followed that round a headland where I snuck across the fields to get a look at some waterfowl out on the lake. Before getting there however, I'd already logged both Paddyfield and Rosy Pipit (both down to just a couple of metres), Pied Bush Chat, Brown Shrike and a single White-browed Wagtail – not sure how regular the latter are at the lake, so a nice addition to the list. The waterfowl were represented by just Eurasian Coot, Tufted Duck and a couple of Little Grebe. However, a Common Kingfisher and Common Sandpiper added variety as did a handful of Black-crowned Night Herons as I headed back in the approaching dusk. End of the 'first' day and I was up to 74 species on my year list.

Tomorrow, we would be leaving just after lunch on the return trip to Dhangadhi, so we returned to Caffé Concerto for a farewell Italian dinner in front of an open fire to celebrate the first day of 2012 and our last evening in Pokhara.

Monday 2nd January 2012: Looking out of the window in the pre-dawn, it was clearly another overcast day and I toyed with the idea of having a lie-in. However, I'm glad that I didn't as the weather quickly improved and my last morning at Fishtail Lodge provided yet another lifer. On arrival, the usual cast put on a pretty good show at the dump but within 20 minutes a Scaly Thrush added that something extra with both flight and ground views in superb light. However, it was back over at the guard post that I got my lifer in the form of Maroon Oriole. Several birds came through the canopy with a mixed wave of Large Cuckooshrike, Scarlet Minivet and various warblers. With patience, good views were had, and their distinctive rattling trill memorised.

With the skies now blue once again and the thermals rising, I wanted to get some raptors onto my year list, so it was back to the roof. And what a show I had. In total I recorded 6 species of vulture, including for the first time on this trip, Cinereous Vulture, as well as 3 Steppe Eagles, a sub-adult Golden eagle and another Booted Eagle. In the far distance, I could see many Himalayan/Griffon Vultures circling above the hills and counted, on one occasion, 42 birds spread across 3 different peaks.

Making the bus with just 5 minutes to spare, we found ourselves seated one row from the back which, combined with the already cramped space (4 massive drums of phenyl this time), provided a very bumpy ride. Other than a small troop of Tarai Gray Langur, nothing else was logged before dark.

Tuesday 3rd January 2012: Snuck a cheeky one onto the list as we passed Bardia National Park in the form of Red-naped Ibis. Having stopped at the northern Ambassa Checkpoint, their distinctive calls could be heard from a known breeding colony I'd visited just a couple of months before. Other than a lone Greater Coucal as we pulled into Dhangadhi nothing new was added to the trip after that.

Summary: Nepal is a great country to explore and, having such a diversity of habitats, is fantastic for birds and other wildlife. Our trip to Pokhara was very enjoyable, producing 5 lifers, great scenery and, of course, a break from the routine of work. It was done on a budget, and really didn't cost too much at all (our splurge on western cuisine was the biggest expense). The biggest consideration though is definitely transport. Private jeeps cost somewhere in the region of 5-6,000 NPR per day, so if in a group this could begin to be cost-effective, particularly if you want to get around somewhat at your destination. The travel times would also be reduced to some extent, but it is the condition of the roads, and the number of people, bikes, cows, goats, dogs, tractors and other hazards that slow you down. A jeep would also be far more comfortable.

For further information, please feel free to contact me at markdread@gmail.com

Systematic List

Birds annotated with a star '*' were NOT recorded in the Pokhara Valley, but instead in the Far-Western Terai.

Anatidae

Gadwall (*Anas strepera*) Up to 70 birds seen on Phewa Tal Lake – 30/12/11

Eurasian Wigeon (*Anas penelope*) An estimated 250-300 birds on Phewa Tal Lake – 30/12/11

Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*) Approximately 400 on Phewa Tal Lake – 30/12/11

Northern Pintail (*Anas acuta*) 18-20 individuals on Phewa Tal Lake – 30/12/11

Eurasian Teal (*Anas crecca*) Approximately 400 on Phewa Tal Lake – 30/12/11

Ferruginous Duck (*Aythya nyroca*) A single pair on Phewa Tal Lake – 30/12/11

Tufted Duck (*Aythya fuligula*) Approximately 200 on Phewa Tal Lake, 30/12/11 and 45 closer to southern shore on 01/01/12

Common Merganser (*Mergus merganser*) Two males and two females on Phewa Tal Lake – 30/12/11

Podicipedidae

Little Grebe (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*) Common in small numbers on Phewa Tal Lake

Great Crested Grebe (*Podiceps cristatus*) Two seen on Phewa Tal Lake – 30/12/11

Black-necked Grebe (*Podiceps nigricollis*) Approximately 25 on Phewa Tal Lake – 30/12/11

Threskiornithidae

Red-naped Ibis* (*Pseudibis papillosa*) Heard only at known breeding site near Ambassa, Bardia National Park on 03/01/12

Ardeidae

Black-crowned Night Heron (*Nycticorax nycticorax*) Small breeding colony in South Lakeside, plus individuals seen most evening heading out over Phewa Tal Lake

Indian Pond Heron (*Ardeola grayii*) Common throughout

Eastern Cattle Egret (*Bubulcus coromandus*) Seen daily in small numbers but more common in the Terai

Great Egret (*Ardea alba*) Seen daily in small numbers – more common at northern end of Phewa Tal Lake

Intermediate Egret (*Egretta intermedia*) Seen daily in small numbers – more common at northern end of Phewa Tal Lake

Little Egret (*Egretta garzetta*) Common throughout

Phalacrocoracidae

Great Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*) A large colony at South Lakeside near Fishtail Lodge

Pandionidae

Western Osprey* (*Pandion haliaetus*) A single bird near Dhangadhi – 27/12/11

Accipitridae

Black-winged Kite* (*Elanus caeruleus*) A single sighting near Bardia National Park – 27/12/11

Black Kite (*Milvus migrans*) Common in Pokhara itself and around the Valley

Black-eared Kite (*Milvus lineatus*) A couple of individuals seen near the Peace Pogoda on 31/12/11, and a single in South Lakeside on 29/12/11

Egyptian Vulture (*Neophron percnopterus*) Seen almost daily, with maximum count of 9 birds on 29/12/11 from Guest House roof

White-rumped Vulture (*Gyps bengalensis*) Single bird in Terai on 27/12/11, and regular in small numbers in Pokhara

Himalayan Vulture (*Gyps himalayensis*) The commonest vulture, with a count of 42 Himalayan/Griffon on 02/01/12

Griffon Vulture (*Gyps fulvus*) Good views of 2 birds at Peace Pogoda on 31/12/11, otherwise quite tricky to separate

Red-headed Vulture (*Sarcogyps calvus*) A single adult bird at Peace Pagoda on 31/12/11 and a sub-adult from Guest House on 02/01/12

Cinereous Vulture (*Aegypius monachus*) Just a single sighting from Guest House roof – 02/01/12

Shikra (*Accipiter badius*) Singles on 27/12/11 in Bardia National Park and 02/01/12 from Guest House roof

Eurasian Sparrowhawk (*Accipiter nisus*) Seen almost daily throughout the Valley

Steppe Eagle (*Aquila nipalensis*) Almost daily, with maximum of 3 from Guest House – 02/01/12

Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*) A single immature bird from Guest House roof – 02/01/12

Booted Eagle (*Hieraaetus pennatus*) Both pale and dark morph individuals seen daily at various sights

Falconidae

Common Kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*) Singles near Peace Pagoda on 31/12/11 and 01/01/12

Rallidae

White-breasted Waterhen (*Amaurornis phoenicurus*) Very skulking but seen daily at Fishtail Lodge

Purple Swamphen (*Porphyrio porphyria*) At least 20 birds seen at northern end of Phewa Tal Lake – 30/12/11

Common Moorhen (*Gallinula chloropus*) Single bird(s) most days at Fishtail Lodge

Eurasian Coot (*Fulica atra*) Approximately 250 at northern end of Phewa Tal Lake 30/12/11, with a further 60 closer to Lakeside on 01/01/12

Charadriidae

Red-wattled Lapwing* (*Vanellus indicus*) Two birds near Attariya (Terai) – 27/12/11

Scolopacidae

Common Sandpiper (*Actitis hypoleucos*) Singles seen on Phewa Tal Lake – 28/12/11 and 01/01/12

Laridae

Black-headed Gull (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*) A single bird flying upstream in valley to east of Peace Pagoda – 31/12/11

Columbidae

Rock Dove (*Columba livia*) Feral birds common throughout

Oriental Turtle Dove (*Streptopelia orientalis*) Only 1 sighting, near Peace Pagoda – 31/12/11

Spotted Dove* (*Spilopelia chinensis*) Common in Terai – 27/12/11

Wedge-tailed Green Pigeon (*Treron sphenurus*) A pair on forested trail to Peace Pagoda – 01/01/12

Psittacidae

Alexandrine Parakeet* (*Psittacula eupatria*) A single bird seen (and heard) near Bardia National Park – 27/12/11

Rose-ringed Parakeet (*Psittacula krameri*) Fairly common in Lakeside

Cuculidae

Greater Coucal* (*Centropus sinensis*) A single in Dhangadhi – 03/01/12

Apodidae

Himalayan Swiftlet (*Aerodramus brevirostris*) Very common throughout Pokhara Valley

House Swift (*Apus nipalensis*) Half a dozen birds over Phewa Tal Lake – 30/12/11

Coraciidae

Indian Roller* (*Coracias benghalensis*) Single sighting in Terai – 27/12/11

Alcedinidae

White-throated Kingfisher (*Halcyon smyrnensis*) Seen daily, as individuals, in small numbers

Common Kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*) Singles at Fishtail Lodge, 29/12/11 and Lakeside, 01/01/12

Megalaimidae

Great Barbet (*Megalaima virens*) Common near Peace Pagoda – 31/12/11 & 01/01/12

Blue-throated Barbet (*Megalaima asiatica*) Common near Peace Pagoda – 31/12/11 & 01/01/12, also fairly regular in gardens at Fishtail Lodge

Picidae

Grey-capped Pygmy Woodpecker (*Dendrocopos canicapillus*) Single at Peace Pagoda – 01/01/12

Greater Yellownape (*Chrysophlegma flavinucha*) A male on forested trail to Peace Pagoda, 01/01/12 and a pair at Fishtail Lodge 02/01/12

Grey-headed Woodpecker (*Picus canus*) Almost daily at Fishtail Lodge

Campephagidae

Large Cuckooshrike (*Coracina macei*) Very common, particularly in more open countryside near Peace Pagoda

Scarlet Minivet (*Pericrocotus speciosus*) Very common, particularly in more open countryside near Peace Pagoda, also regular at Fishtail Lodge

Laniidae

Brown Shrike (*Lanius cristatus*) Just a single sighting on Lakeside – 01/01/12

Long-tailed Shrike (*Lanius schach*) Seen daily on Lakeside

Oriolidae

Maroon Oriole (*Oriolus traillii*) 5-6 birds at Fishtail Lodge – 02/01/12

Dicruridae

Black Drongo (*Dicrurus macrocercus*) Common in the Terai but just one (?) sighting on Lakeside – 29/12/11

Ashy Drongo (*Dicrurus leucophaeus*) Single bird on terraced hills below Peace Pagoda – 31/12/11

Bronzed Drongo (*Dicrurus aeneus*) Single bird on terraced hills below Peace Pagoda – 31/12/11

Hair-crested Drongo (*Dicrurus hottentottus*) Single bird on terraced hills below Peace Pagoda – 31/12/11

Rhipiduridae

White-throated Fantail (*Rhipidura albicollis*) Two sightings, 1 at Phewa Tal Lake, 30/12/11 and 1 at Peace Pagoda 31/12/11

Corvidae

Yellow-billed Blue Magpie (*Urocissa flavirostris*) A couple of birds with following species at Peace Pagoda – 01/01/12

Red-billed Blue Magpie (*Urocissa erythroryncha*) Common in the forest behind Fishtail Lodge and at Peace Pagoda

Common Green Magpie (*Cissa chinensis*) Single bird seen at Peace Pagoda – 01/01/12

Rufous Treepie (*Dendrocitta vagabunda*) Common in the Terai, with singles in Pokhara Valley on 28/12/11 and Peace Pagoda 31/12/11

Grey Treepie (*Dendrocitta formosae*) Common throughout the valley at all sites

House Crow (*Corvus splendens*) Very common

Large-billed Crow (*Corvus macrorhynchos*) Common, with larger *intermedius* form seen in the valley – will need to check taxonomy for lowland spp in Terai.

Stenostiridae

Yellow-bellied Fantail (*Chelidorhynch hypoxantha*) Daily at Fishtail Lodge, as well as at Peace Pagoda – 31/12/11 & 01/01/12

Grey-headed Canary-flycatcher (*Culicicapa ceylonensis*) Very common both in and on edge of any forested area

Paridae

Cinereous Tit (*Parus cinereus*) Single at Attariya (Terai), 27/12/11, Fishtail Lodge 30/12/11 and Peace Pagoda 31/12/11 & 01/01/12

Himalayan Black-lored Tit (*Parus xanthogenys*) Common at Fishtail Lodge and Peace Pagoda

Pycnonotidae

Himalayan Bulbul (*Pycnonotus leucogenys*) Common on terraced hillside below Peace Pagoda – 31/12/11 & 01/01/12

Red-vented Bulbul (*Pycnonotus cafer*) Very common throughout

Hirundinidae

Pale-throated Martin (*Riparia chinensis*) Small numbers on Phewa Tal Lake daily. Not sure of the current taxonomy, but I'm actually referring to Plain Martin (*Riparia paludicola*) in 'Birds of Nepal'

Barn Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*) Very common throughout Valley and on Phewa Tal Lake

Red-rumped Swallow* (*Cecropis daurica*) Recorded in Terai – 27/12/11

Cettiidae

Grey-bellied Tesia (*Tesia cyaniventer*) Very regular at Fishtail Lodge, as well as along forested trails to/from Peace Pagoda

Chestnut-headed Tesia (*Tesia castaneocoronata*) 3 birds at Fishtail Lodge 31/12/11 and 2 on trail to Peace Pagoda, 01/01/12

Aberrant Bush Warbler (*Cettia flavolivacea*) Single bird just above dam on Phewa Tal Lake – 01/01/12

Grey-sided Bush Warbler (*Cettia brunnifrons*) 2 singles; one on 'Prayer-flag Hill' and the other at the Peace Pagoda – 01/01/12

Phylloscopidae

Common Chiffchaff (*Phylloscopus collybita*) A single bird just above dam on Phewa Tal Lake – 01/01/12

Dusky Warbler (*Phylloscopus fuscatus*) Single sighting on Lakeside – 28/12/11

Buff-barred Warbler (*Phylloscopus pulcher*) A lone bird on forested trail to Peace Pagoda – 01/01/12

Lemon-rumped Warbler (*Phylloscopus chloronotus*) Seen on forested trail to Peace Pagoda – 01/01/12

Greenish Warbler (*Phylloscopus trochiloides*) Fairly common around lakeside

Grey-hooded Warbler (*Phylloscopus xanthoschistos*) Singles at Peace Pagoda, 31/12/11, and Lakeside 01/01/12

Green-crowned Warbler (*Seicercus burkii*) One sighting at Fishtail Lodge – 30/12/11

Whistler's Warbler (*Seicercus whistleri*) Regular at Fishtail Lodge

Cisticolidae

Common Tailorbird (*Orthotomus sutorius*) Common in town and edge of forest

Leiothrichidae

Spiny Babbler (*Turdoides nipalensis*) 2 birds on 'Prayer-flag Hill' – 01/01/12

White-crested Laughingthrush (*Garrulax leucolophus*) Small flocks at Fishtail Lodge, 30/12/11 and in forest below Peace Pagoda 01/01/12

Zosteropidae

Oriental White-eye (*Zosterops palpebrosus*) Fairly common throughout

Sittidae

Chestnut-bellied Nuthatch (*Sitta cinnamoventris*) 3-4 birds at Peace Pagoda – 01/01/12

Velvet-fronted Nuthatch (*Sitta frontalis*) Singles at Peace Pagoda, 31/12/11 and on forested trail 01/01/12

Sturnidae

Jungle Myna (*Acridotheres fuscus*) Fairly common around Lakeside

Common Myna (*Acridotheres tristis*) Very common around Lakeside

Pied Myna* (*Gracupica contra*) Fairly common in Terai – 27/12/11

Turdidae

Blue Whistling Thrush (*Myophonus caeruleus*) Common at Fishtail Lodge and Peace Pagoda, occasional on Lakeside

Scaly Thrush (*Zoothera dauma*) Single sighting at Fishtail Lodge – 02/01/12

Long-billed Thrush (*Zoothera monticola*) Two sightings (same bird?) at Fishtail Lodge – 29/12/11

White-browed Shortwing (*Brachypteryx montana*) Single male birds at Fishtail Lodge – 29/12/11 & 30/12/11

Muscicapidae

Oriental Magpie-Robin (*Copsychus saularis*) Fairly common alongside Lakeside

Hodgson's Redstart (*Phoenicurus hodgsoni*) A single male near Phewa Tal Dam – 01/01/12

Plumbeous Water Redstart (*Rhyacornis fuliginosa*) Daily at Fishtail Lodge and along Lakeside

White-capped Redstart (*Chaimarrornis leucocephalus*) At least 2 birds from suspension bridge below dam on Phewa Tal Lake – 01/01/12

White-tailed Robin (*Myiomela leucura*) Female seen at Fishtail Lodge – 29/12/11 & 30/12/11

Spotted Forktail (*Enicurus maculatus*) One bird on Phewa Tal Lake – 30/12/11

Siberian Stonechat (*Saxicola maurus*) Recorded in Terai, 27/12/11 and on Lakeside 30/12/11

Pied Bush Chat (*Saxicola caprata*) Seen in Terai, 27/12/11 and on Lakeside 28/12/11 & 01/01/12

Grey Bush Chat (*Saxicola ferreus*) Singles on terraced hills below Peace Pagoda on 31/12/11 and on Lakeside, 01/01/12

Taiga Flycatcher (*Ficedula albicilla*) One at Bardia National Park, 27/12/11 and Lakeside 01/01/12

Snowy-browed Flycatcher (*Ficedula hyperythra*) Single males regular at Fishtail Lodge, with 1 on forested trail to Peace Pagoda, 01/01/12

Rufous-bellied Niltava (*Niltava sundara*) Single female at Fishtail Lodge 29/12/11

Small Niltava (*Niltava macgrigoriae*) Single males at Fishtail Lodge, 29/12/11 and on forested trail to Peace Pagoda, 01/01/12

Nectariniidae

Crimson Sunbird (*Aethopyga siparaja*) Birds at Fishtail Lodge, 30/12/11, Peace Pagoda 31/12/11 and Lakeside 01/01/12

Passeridae

House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) Very common throughout

Eurasian Tree Sparrow (*Passer montanus*) Regular in small numbers on Lakeside

Motacillidae

Citrine Wagtail (*Motacilla citreola*) A single male on Lakeside 28/12/11

Grey Wagtail (*Motacilla cinerea*) Regular in small numbers on Lakeside

White Wagtail (*Motacilla alba*) Common on Lakeside

White-browed Wagtail (*Motacilla maderaspatensis*) Single bird on Lakeside 01/01/12

Paddyfield Pipit (*Anthus rufulus*) Singles on Lakeside, 28/12/11 and 01/01/12

Olive-backed Pipit (*Anthus hodgsoni*) 10-12 birds near dam on Phewa Tal Lake 01/01/12

Rosy Pipit (*Anthus roseatus*) Single bird on Lakeside 01/01/12

Other Wildlife

Mammals

Tarai Gray Langur (*Semnopithecus hector*) Small troop as we left Pokhara Valley – 02/01/12.

Rhesus Macaque (*Macaca mulatta*) Small numbers along roadside in Terai – 27/12/11

Reptiles

Gharial (*Gavialis gangeticus*) 3 on Babai River, Bardia National Park – 27/12/11

Marsh Mugger (*Crocodylus palustris*) 4 on Babai River, Bardia National Park – 27/12/11