Another magnificent country deserving of our attention, this diminutive Himalayan kingdom again provided a series of memorable spectacles rendering superlatives and such comparisons as may be made quite redundant. We recorded 377 bird species on the tour, 346 of these in Bhutan of which a mere 15 were heard only. The tour highlights, too many to recount all in a short paragraph did include great views of the critically endangered White-bellied Heron at one of its more regular haunts. We also enjoyed stunning views of several male and female Satyr Tragopans at Sengor feeding on the broad verges. On our first morning at Chele La we saw numerous magnificent Blood Pheasants and several Himalayan Monals. Elsewhere, other highlights included a superb Ward’s Trogon that put in an appearance early on, several magnificent Rufous-necked Hornbills, two pairs of the immaculate Long-tailed Broadbill, a superb Hooded Pitta that sang to us from high in a tree and a magnificent adult male Golden Bush Robin that sang in the snows at Thrumshing La, a stunning Beautiful Nuthatch that appeared at point blank range one wet morning below Morong and several pairs of Crimson-browed Finches. Although this was the fourteenth Birdquest tour to Bhutan we added seven species to the list, including a Brahminy Starling, a first for the country and a beautiful male Asian Paradise Flycatcher in his pearlescent attire.
The localised Yellow-rumped Honeyguide (EB).

The long list of other highlights included Pallas’s Fish Eagle, Indian Spotted Eagle, Black-tailed Crake, several Ibisbill, a Solitary Snipe, Ashy Woodpigeon, Asian Emerald Cuckoo, a couple of Yellow-rumped Honeyguides, White-browed Piculet, Tickell’s Thrush (apparently nest building), White-gorgeted Flycatcher, Sapphire Flycatcher, Indian Blue Robin, several groups of Spotted Laughing Thrushes, the electric Crimson-faced Liocichla, Coral-billed and several pairs of the extraordinary Slender-billed Scimitar Babblers, Golden-breasted and Yellow-throated Fulvettas, arms length views of Orange-eared, Fulvous and Brown Parrotbills, Scarlet and Gold-naped Finches, Dark-breasted and Dark-rumped Rosefinches, Fire-tailed Sunbird and several Slender-billed Orioles along with a continuous display of Collared and White-winged Grosbeaks and a pair of the rare Spot-winged Grosbeaks topped off with scope views of the rare Yellow-bellied Flowerpecker. On a more qualifying note we did suffer with the weather. Winter had been abnormally cold and long. Indeed it had not ended by the end of April and we were subjected to very low temperatures and heavy snow on several mornings including our days at Yotong La and Thrumshing La. As a result the subtropics were also cold with little or no vocal activity recorded at dawn on the Lingmethang road. As we descended it also became clear that the monsoon had arrived a month, or more, early as well making our stays at Morong and Samdrup Jongkhar very wet. This contrasts sharply with the year before when the monsoon more or less failed and winter was a rather mild affair. However, inspite of these bizarre conditions we managed to see practically all of our targeted species and enjoy a highly memorable trip.

After a spectacular flight from Delhi, passing the spectacular high Himalaya en route we began our birding around Paro: a setting that never fails to impress with its ornate airport buildings, pine clad valley sides, endless flowering apple orchards, spectacular Dzong and broad braided river channels. Accompanied by Tanden and our tireless driver ‘Lambo’ we explored the terraced hillsides and riverine habitats. Along the river we found numerous Himalayan Wagtails, Asian House Martins, Brown Dippers, Plumbeous Water Redstarts, White-capped River Chat and River Lapwing along with a magnificent pair of Ibisbill with chicks; a great start to the trip. As we moved on to search open farmlands and scrub there were plenty of Cinnamon and Eurasian Tree Sparrows, Hoopoes, a few Grey-backed Shrikes, Blue whistling Thrush, White-collared Thrush, Grey Bushchat, a flock of rather late Little Buntings and numerous pairs of Red-billed Chough along with our first Red-headed Laughing-Thrushes: a good introduction to Himalayan birding. After our long haul flights and the ensuing long day in the field we retired to plan the following day, pleasant meal and an early night.
The first of many early starts found us departing the Paro valley and climbing up to Chele La, the highest pass on the tour at 3988m. As we drove up, a couple of Grey Nightjars crossed the road in the pre-dawn gloom. Once at altitude and coincidentally at first light we spotted our first Kaleej Pheasants and shortly thereafter several stunning Blood Pheasants, the first of 12 seen. As we climbed higher still we found a pair of Himalayan Monal followed by another splendid male just short of the pass feeding on the roadside sward, shimmering in the bight early morning light; one of the most memorable moments of the tour. At the pass we enjoyed light refreshments before we began our descent to the tall pine forests in search of other high elevation species, primarily passerines. As it happens we enjoyed a spectacular selection of species during the course of the morning including Darjeeling Pied Woodpecker, Rosy and Olive-backed Pipits, Rufous-breasted Accentor, surprising numbers of Collared and White-winged Grosbeaks, several Himalayan White-browed Rosefinches, hundreds of Plain Mountain Finches, the pretty Himalayan Red-flanked Bluetail, several Blue-fronted Redstarts, a trio of the stunning Spotted Laughingthrush, several Red-headed and a few Black-faced Laughingthrushes. As we descended further into tall blue pine forest festooned with mosses and lichens we found Orange-barred and Blyth’s Leaf Warblers, a few Himalayan Treecreepers, Goldcrest, Rufous-vented and Grey Crested Tit, Long-tailed Minivet, more White-collared Blackbirds, Blue whistling Thrushes, Spotted Nutcracker and several Yellow-billed Blue Magpies.
After a simple field lunch we descended to the Paro valley and began the drive to the capital, Thimphu stopping briefly at the old sewage farm. Interestingly we saw a Great-crested Grebe and a White Wagtail of the form M.a.ocularis, both very rare in Bhutan. We then drove to our hotel where, after a short break, we headed to a nearby valley where a river cliff hosts a great many giant hives of Rock Bees. After a short wait we found a male Yellow-rumped Honeyguide in attendance, and watched as one fed on the wax on an old comb. We also found Long-tailed Minivet and Ultramarine Flycatchers before we retired, having found all of our targets so ending a thoroughly enjoyable bird packed day.

The stunning Blood Pheasant in the snow (Frank Hummel)

Early the following morning we departed, making the first of our eastward journeys on the short drive up to Dochu La. We began our birding in the spectacular mossy forest and magnificent flowering rhododendrons with a pair of Rufous-bellied Woodpeckers, Orange-gorgeted Flycatcher, Verditer Flycatcher, White-throated and more Spotted Laughing- Thrushes, Hoary-throated Barwing, Bar-throated and Red-tailed Minlas, White-browed Fulvettas, Rufous Sibias, Whiskered and Stripe-throated Yuhina, Green-tailed Sunbirds and a couple of female Crimson-browed Finches. We also found a Brahminy Starling in a flowering Rhododendron just below the pass which is probably a first for the country and a somewhat surprising find. We broke for breakfast at a spectacular restaurant where we were treated to yet more views of the high Himalaya. We then dropped to warmer broad leaved open woodland where we found several pairs Rufous-bellied Woodpeckers, Himalayan Cuckoo, Large Hawk Cuckoo and numerous Grey-winged Blackbirds. A walk through open woodlands produced the second find of the day; a female Tickell’s Thrush apparently nest building. This, it seems, is the first actual evidence for this species breeding in Bhutan. The area was excellent for mixed flocks and singing birds including a superb pair of the rare Spot-winged Grosbeak, Great Barbet, Long-tailed Minivet, Ultramarine Flycatchers, Grey-faced Leaf Warbler, Whistler’s Warbler, Rufous-fronted Tit, White-tailed Nuthatch, dozens of Plain Mountain Finches and numerous Common Rosefinches. It was interesting to see such numbers of Mountain Finches at these elevations so late in the spring and we were soon to find out why. It was colder than usual in the Himalaya as everywhere in the northern hemisphere this year. After another simple field lunch at the botanical gardens (here an area of montane forest with a wall around it) we headed to the Pho Chu river for some afternoon birding. Making for a stretch of the Pho Chu river near the Punakha Dzong, one of the most celebrated Buddhist temples in the Himalayas. We began our search and rather quickly we were watching one of the rarest birds in the world wading through the shallows: the White-bellied Heron. Along the river we also found high numbers of Ruddy Shelducks, Wigeon, more Ibisbill, a Little Egret and an Indian Pond Heron but little else, although having found and watched the heron for over an hour we were happy to head for our lodgings for a meal and a rest at our pleasant hill top hotel.
The following morning it was raining lightly as we headed to the forested Mo Chu valley which it continued to do more or less all day. However, inspite of this we managed to see a good number of species and had a fairly productive day. We began with three superb Kaleej Pheasants on the road followed by Wedge-tailed Green Pigeons, Great and Golden-throated Barbets and a single Yellow-vented Warbler. A Red-headed Trogon refused to budge from its hillside thicket in the rain and a Spotted Wren Babbler did not put on much of a show either as it moved through the undergrowth. Walking the thickly forested valley we found Speckled Wood Pigeon, Barred Cuckoo Doves, a couple of Himalayan Cuckoos, Himalayan Swiftlets, our first Blyth’s Swifts, Nepal House Martin, Black-winged Cuckoo-shrike, the diminutive Dark-sided Flycatcher, Small Niltava, Pale-blue Flycatcher, a rather shy Lesser Shortwing, our only Slaty-backed Forktail, numerous Striated Laughing Thrushes, Grey-hooded and Chestnut-crowned Warblers, Chestnut-bellied Nuthatch, Fire-breasted Flowerpecker, Grey Treepies, several pairs of Maroon Orioles, Black-breasted Sunbird, Scarlet and Grey-chinned Minivets. Although the hillsides did not warm up and indeed were, for most of the day, barely visible we did see a number of raptors including several Mountain Hawk Eagles, a Crested Serpent Eagle and an immature Pallas’s Fish Eagle. Along the raging torrent we found more Plumbeous Water Redstarts, White-capped Water Redstarts and Brown Dippers while lower down on the floodplains of a more sedate meandering river we found Long-tailed Shrike, Crested Buntings and one of few Hodgson’s Redstarts of the trip before we headed to the Punakha Dzong for a quick visit. We not only enjoyed seeing the spectacular Dzong with its impressive ramparts and decorated gateways but also found a pair of Asian Koel at one of few sites where they may be found on our route before we retired for the night.
The following morning the skies promised a more pleasant day as we contemplated our onward journey through the high mountains. Preceding our departure we searched the hotel gardens to find several superb Slender-billed Orioles, a pair of Chestnut-tailed Starlings, several Oriental White-eyes and a few Scaly-breasted Munias. We then worked our way along the east bank of the Mo Chu river before climbing up to Pele La. This did proved quite productive with good sightings of our only Crested Kingfisher, a large flock of Ruddy Shelduck, Gadwall, a female Goosander, an Osprey, a ringtail Hen Harrier, a Greater Coucal and several Long-tailed Shrikes. The river is often very good for migrants and well worth the time. As it happens we did find quite a number of migrants waiting for the weather to break at this very late stage in the spring.

We began our climb up to Pele La passing numerous sections of road being widened with attendant mess being made. However, we found a superb female Ward's Trogon and a pair of Cutia making for a very satisfying and productive morning. We also saw Great and Gold-throated Barbets, Square-tailed Drongo-cuckoo, Barred Cuckoo Doves, Grey-bellied Tesia, Grey-hooded and Whistler’s Warblers, Red-headed Tit, Fire-breasted Flowerpecker, hundreds of Plain mountain finches and a few Red-headed Bullfinches.
Up on the Pele La a single Slender-billed Scimitar Babbler entertained us but alas we found no Great Parrotbills at a site that is usually very good for them. The countrywide die back of bamboo had made seeing this species much more difficult this year. Indeed, along with quite a number of other groups we did not see any on the tour. Quite where they go when the bamboo does die back is something of a mystery but presumably they wander through suboptimal habitats until they find suitable areas of bamboo where they can breed. However, there were a lot of Stripe-throated and Rufous-vented Yuhinas more Red-headed Bullfinches, a Yellow-browed Tit, Red-tailed and Bar-throated Minlas and Grey-crested, Rufous-vented and Coal Tits. At the pass we also found a number of Himalayan Vultures soaring around over the snow bound forests. We then began our descent to Trongsa finding a number of Brown Parrotbills and a flock of Speckled Woodpigeons before the weather closed and it began to rain but not before we enjoyed stunning views of Trongsa Dzong resting precariously on its ridge high above a thickly forested gorge.

A pre-breakfast strike along a cool forested valley sides produced a Black-winged Cuckoo-shrike, Long-tailed Minivet, White-throated Fantail, Striated Bulbul, our first Large Niltava, Striated Laughing thrushes, Blyth’s Shrike babbler, Green-crowned warbler and several Brown Bullfinches. As it began to rain we returned to our lodgings for breakfast before we headed up to Yutong La. Stopping at various places on our ascent we found Russet Bush Warbler, Slaty-blue Flycatcher, hundreds, if not thousands of Plain Mountain Finches and large mixed flocks of tits and phylloscopus warblers, many of which would normally be holding territory higher up by this time. As we climbed to the pass rain turned to snow and our birding here was cut short and we were forced to descend very quickly as the road began to rapidly disappear under a carpet of snow. Lambo and Tanden both stared in disbelief, commenting that never in 23 years of driving these roads had they seen snow at the end of April! Winter had not ended at all.
We decided to cut our losses and head to Jakar and to do some birding in the open pastures along the river and near town. As we began to search the river we found another pair of Ibisbill and several River Lapwings. As we neared town we found our first Eurasian Magpies and in a wet pasture several Citrine Wagtails, a couple of Pintail Snipe, several Oriental Skylarks, dozens of Rosy Pipits, a couple of Siberian Stonechats, and yet more Plain Mountain Finches. We visited a nearby bamboo field to watch as many as twenty Brown Parrotbills, Long-tailed Minivets and a couple of Himalayan Buzzards. As the rain began again in earnest we headed to our hotel to dry out and warm ourselves by the roaring fire. The hotel provided a cosy warm ambience, reminding us of scenes from Lord of the Rings. The staff was quite used to the demands of birding groups and we were quickly planning our early departure the following morning. Exactly as planned we headed off pre-dawn, heading up hill towards the Black Mountains.

At Ura we found huge numbers of Plain Mountain Finches and Rosefinches and not far away good numbers of Snow Pigeons, Rufous-breasted Accentors, White-winged Grosbeaks, several pairs of Himalayan Beautiful and Himalayan White-browed Rosefinches and a single Greenish Warbler.
As we continued slowly uphill to Thrumshing La at 3700m, Frank found a Solitary Snipe that froze in wet roadside pastures for us to watch at our leisure. Higher up we were met with snow and swirling fog that again forced us to descend towards Sengor. As we worked our way down we found several superb male Satyr Tragopans. One of these walked around us while we sat quietly on the bus as it provided all of us with the highlight of the tour. We managed to see several more by the road but none performed quite such a spectacular display. As we descended we also found Red-flanked Bush Robins, more Spotted Laughing Thrushes, a pair of Slender-billed Scimitar Babbler, Himalayan and Rusty-flanked Treecreeper and a single Fire-tailed Sunbird. Camp was cold and wet and we took heart from our fantastic experience with the Tragopans and celebrating our success with tea and biscuits.

The following morning after a freezing night we took our breakfast before climbing back up to Thrumshing La to conclude our unfinished business there. Indeed there was some doubt that heading back to the snows would be very productive at all. Along the road we met with many more Blood Pheasants before we stopped just short of the pass. It was sunny and clear, maybe heralding the approach of a late spring? Hopeless optimism as it turned out. We were almost immediately treated to great views of the magnificent Fire-tailed Sunbird and our only Golden Bush Robin of which we enjoyed the best of views. We also found several Dark-breasted Rosefinches, Alpine Accentor and a couple of Winter Wrens. We quickly began our descent as cloud engulfed the pass stopping at bamboo thickets lower down to search for and find Dark-rumped Rosefinch and Fulvous Parrotbill, both rather uncommon species. The flock of Parrotbills also held Golden-breasted Fulvetta and numerous Rufous-fronted Tits. We then continued our descent seeing yet more Satyr Tragopans, a couple of Crimson-browed Finches and more Blood Pheasants. It began to rain as we reached camp; we took lunch and waited for the rains to stop. Once said rain abated we explored the roadside forests below camp where we saw a Black Eagle, Himalayan Griffon Vulture and a Himalayan Buzzard wheeling over us. Amongst a good list of species we also saw Rufous-bellied and Darjeeling Pied Woodpeckers, Yellow-bellied Fantail, Slaty-blue Flycatcher, Rufous-bellied Niltava and a superb Scaly-breasted Wren-Babbler, Hoary-throated Barwing, our first Green Shrike Babblers, Mrs Gould’s and a lot of Green-tailed Sunbirds.
The following morning we broke camp and worked our way down the Lingmethang road through the freezing forests with the threat of heavy rain as it got darker minute by minute until heavy rains ended our roadside stroll. However, our very productive journey started with a showy Chestnut-headed Tesia, Grey-sided Bush Warblers, Hume’s Leaf Warblers and Whistler’s, White-spectacled and Grey-cheeked Warblers. A little lower we found Rufous-necked Hornbills, Great Barbet, a Crimson-breasted Pied Woodpecker, dozens of Nepal House Martins, Dark-sided Flycatcher, Orange-gorgeted Flycatchers, Blue-fronted Redstart, the magnificent White-tailed Robin, Black-faced Laughing Thrushes, another Cutia and both Rufous-throated and Pygmy Wren Babblers. As we worked our way down a stop at an impressive waterfall produced our first and only Little Forktail and another male Yellow-rumped Honeyguide.
The next couple of days spent exploring the broad-leafed forests were somewhat tougher than usual as it had been and indeed was a lot cooler and drier than it should be at this time, giving us little or no vocal activity and few birds on territory. However, inspite of this we enjoyed some tremendous birding along what has been called a birding ‘superhighway’. The highway does indeed pass through a staggering range of forest from 3700 at Thrumshing La to 650m at the village of Lingmethang. As we had explored the higher elevations we began working the mid-elevation forests and bamboo understorey where we found a huge flock of Orange-eared Parrotbills, one of the prettiest Parrotbills. They were accompanied by a pair of Golden-breasted Fulvettas, one of the smartest babblers. Super! Our birding here was patchy but we did see a displaying Crested Goshawk that went down well with the troops. We also found Crested Serpent eagle, Mountain Hawk Eagle and Black Eagle.

The primary birdsong was a chorus of cuckoo including Himalayan, Eurasian, and Indian *Cuculus* species as well as Large and Whistling Hawk Cuckoos and Plaintive and Banded Bay Cuckoos. Cuckoos aside we also managed reasonable views of Rufous-necked Hornbill, Bay Woodpecker, a superb pair of Long-tailed Broadbills, four species of Minivet, Orange-bellied Leafbird, Pygmy Blue Flycatcher, White-crested, Greysided and Scaly Laughing Thrushes, Rusty-cheeked Scimitar Babblers, Blue-winged Minla, White-naped Yuhina, a large mixed flock holding Rusty-fronted Barwing and Greater Rufous-headed Parrotbills, Black-faced Warbler, Maroon Orioles, Lesser Racket-tailed Drongos, a small group of Common Green Magpies and numerous Grey Treepies. Our searches for Wren Babblers proved rather more difficult: the Long-billed Wren Babbler came very close but never showed inspite of considerable perseverance on our part. The Sikkim Wedge-billed Wren Babbler did much the same; an individual called a couple of times but and had no interest in our invitations and went quiet after a while.

The following morning we began to descend from Yongkola towards Lingmethang on our way to Mongar, exploring the patches of dry woodlands below camp and it was here we discovered many species normally holding territory higher up at this time. As we left camp we found a group of Rufous-necked Laughing Thrushes, a White-browed Piculet and a pair of Little Pied Flycatchers. A little lower Hill Prinia and Striated Prinias were found in the roadside scrub as well as a small group of Himalayan Greenfinches. The dry woodlands held Blue-throated Flycatchers, Ultramarine Flycatcher, more family groups of White-crested Laughing Thrushes, while overhead several White-throated Needletails soared past us.
In a small woodlot three Blue-bearded Bee-eaters performed superbly well hawking for insects while in another patch of forest there were numerous Blue-throated Barbets, Pied Flycatcher-Shrike, our first Himalayan Bulbuls, Mountain and Ashy Bulbuls, Nepal Fulvettas, Black-chinned Yuhinas and our first Bronzed Drongos and a large family group of Capped Langurs. Lower down at a small wetland we found Rufescent Prinia and Common Tailorbird along with more Crested Buntings. A Black-tailed Crake called from a paddy field while a Crested Serpent Eagle looked on but we failed to lure the crake into the open. That would have to wait for another day. We headed for Mongar finding only a few Barn Swallow in town.

After an evening of listening to the dogs sleep seemed a hopeless ambition but a mid-night session from those wretched canids did wake me for a short moment, although long enough to hear a female Himalayan Tawny Owl calling from across the valley. The following morning working our way up to Kori La we kicked off with Bhutan Laughing Thrush, Wedge-tailed green Pigeon, Greater Yellownape, Grey-throated Babbler, Red-billed Leiothrix and, for some, a male Scarlet Finch, Ultramarine Flycatcher and a male Blue rock thrush for Daniel. Feeding by the road we found quite a number of wintering Gold-naped Finches which we managed to approach to within a few meters. These birds are normally at 3000m or more at this time. Crossing the passing and working our way down to another site we found the stunning Crimson-faced Liocichla, a very cooperative White-tailed Blue Robin and the elusive White-gorgeted Flycatcher. Meanwhile we found a Greater Yellownape that had taken up residence right next to our lunch stop and a number of Streaked Spiderhunters. We then headed off to Trashigang through the Chir Pine forests reaching the small town in the remote eastern province in the late afternoon. Another paradise for dogs!

On leaving Trashigang we headed up to an area of terraced fields near town where we were treated to a Black-tailed Crake and a White-breasted Waterhen parading along the padi bunds in the morning light. As usual Lambo and Tanden our driver and local guide were equally excited. It is a truism in the running of bird tours that having drivers and local guides on side and helping out really helps make for great trips. After this we headed south along a spectacular forested ridge that sinks towards the Brahmaputra floodplain in Assam. A scenic drive punctuated with numerous stops where we searched for and found the pretty Indian Blue Robin. In some of the taller forest patches we also found more Brown Bullfinches and Black-spotted Yellow-Tits.
The chorus of cuckoos was accompanied by numerous Small Cuckoos as well as the usual Himalayan, Eurasian and Indian Cuckoos giving four species of *Cuculus* species. As a point of interest, these species separate out by parasitizing different host species. The Indian Cuckoo parasitizes Ashy Drongos in Bhutan, while the Eurasian Cuckoo parasitizes babblers, warblers and flycatchers. The Himalayan Cuckoo parasitizes *Phylloscopus* and *Siecercus* warblers while the Small Cuckoo parasitizes *Phylloscopus* warblers, Shortwings and Wren babblers thereby separating the four species. This does not entirely deal with parasitism in Bhutan as there are ten other brood-parasite cuckoos found in the country!

As we worked down the ridge we were horrified to see endless monumental roadworks where the once ‘lovely roadside forest’ had been severely degraded as that above the road had been ripped from the hillside and dumped below the road so flattening and burying the thick undergrowth there. This scar traverses the landscape and will for sometime make birding these areas rather difficult. That said, many areas have regenerated very quickly and the Lingmethang road will not be widened at all as it is too valuable for the country as a tourist resource.
We reached camp in thick fog and pouring rain which continued until late afternoon. The torrential rains abated, while the thunder rumbled on around the hills and the thick cloud broke to reveal a dense multi-layered bank of cloud beneath us stretching away to the lowlands. It had begun to rain in earnest and the monsoon had clearly arrived nearly two months early this year having almost failed the year before.

The following morning thick heavy cloud and light rain threatened another disrupted day for us and so we wasted no time heading to thicker forest visible from camp and below the roadworks. Our friends travelling in the opposite direction had told us that they had only managed to glimpse Beautiful Nuthatch poorly and at some distance and given that this was our main target species there was no time to waste. We could hear Rufous-throated and Chestnut-breasted Hill Partridges calling from several hundred meters away down the bare scree slopes below us knowing there was no chance of seeing them. We did see Wedge-tailed Green Pigeons, Plaintive Cuckoo and several Large hawk Cuckoos, numerous Barbets, Small Niltava, numerous Silver-eared Mesias, more Rusty-fronted Barwings and Blue-winged Minlas, the elegant Long-tailed Sibia and White-naped Yuhina. A Streaked Spiderhunter drew my attention and while looking at this species a large bird was spotted creeping down the trunk of the same tree. It was a Beautiful Nuthatch and it just kept on getting closer to us until eventually it was more or less at eye level where it remained foraging for a good long time allowing lengthy looks at one of Asia’s star birds. It is fair to say we were all elated at finding this species so early on in our search of the area. It then got darker and darker and began to rain hard forcing us to return to camp for a celebratory tea and biscuits. Our subsequent birding added a surprising number of species in the drizzle including a pair of Coral-billed Scimitar Babblers along with a pair of Streak-breasted Scimitar Babblers. These species are always favourites and both posed for us giving quite stunning views.

Lower down along the verges we saw Himalayan Greenfinches and in a thick gulley we eventually obtained a brief view of Crimson-faced Liocichla and a pair of Blue-winged Laughing Thrushes. In between rain showers we saw some northbound Oriental Honey Buzzards, a couple of Eurasian Hobbies and a single Oriental Hobby; the latter a rare sight in Bhutan. These birds were undoubtedly held up by the weather in the high mountains and would remain in the lowlands some time yet. As we worked our way downslope we found several pairs of Scarlet Finches and a pair of Rufous-necked Hornbills that sat and preened while we watched. We also managed views of a Small Cuckoo, several Striated Yuhinas and brief views of a pair of Sultan Tits nest building. In fact as we descended the birdlife was more prolific and we enjoyed some great flocks on our way to the foothills. Presumably these birds were held up at lower elevations waiting for the weather to warm up and food to become more plentiful. The plains of Assam, normally visible over the remaining forested slopes were completely lost in the thick swirling fog and clouds of the advancing monsoon but scenery aside a very different avifauna awaited us here and we headed to a narrow side valley to make the most of a break in the rains.
At this site over the next couple of days we found a good many species commonly associated with assam and the Brahmaputra flood plains. These included Crimson Sunbird, Plain Flowerpecker, Red-whiskered, White-throated and Black-crested Bulbuls, Golden-fronted Leafbird, Green-billed Malkoha, numerous Thick-billed Green Pigeons, both Lesser and Greater Yellownape, a stunning pair of Rufous Woodpeckers, a Large Woodshrike, numerous pairs of Black-naped Blue Monarchs, Common Iora and a pair of Greater Racket-tailed Drongos. The area was to give us much more and working a short side trail produced one of the most memorable sessions of birding on the whole tour. While watching a stunning male Asian Fairy Bluebird and a pair of White-throated Bulbuls a magnificent pearlescent male Asian Paradise Flycatcher appeared in front of us. This bird gave us great views for a while until it backed off into the forest. At this moment a Hooded Pitta called and with but a little encouragement the bird showed itself. We had great scope views of the Pitta which ended a splendid afternoon. That evening a brief vigil on the balcony gave a few of us a pair of Dark-rumped Swift amongst the House Swifts and Himalayan Swiftlets. Unfortunately these birds did not reappear for the rest of the group. The following morning as we climbed back above town we saw three Wreathed Hornbills, Red Junglefowl, Grey-capped Pygmy Woodpecker, the rare Yellow-bellied Warbler, Pin-striped Tit Babbler and a pair of Sapphire Flycatchers. Although not much in evidence early on we did enjoy brief views of a Jerdon’s Baza and a distant immature Rufous-bellied Eagle that circled up over the valley. Those of us who persisted and climbed further up into the valley enjoyed spectacular views of a pair of Long-tailed Broadbills and a stunning male Asian Emerald Cuckoo. Outstanding.

One of very few pairs of Rufous-necked Hornbills we found (Frank Hummel).

Later on in the afternoon we visited town to see House Swift, Red-rumped Swallow, a pair of Coppersmith Barbets, a Striated Heron, several Asian Pied Starlings, Eastern Jungle Crow and Asian Koel. We then returned to our vantage point looking down over the forested valleys above town to see a couple of Dollarbirds, more Grey-capped Pygmy Woodpeckers and a Crested Serpent Eagle but little else. Lower down in the same valley a little later on we found an adult Palla’s Sea Eagle, another Crested Goshawk, Mountain Imperial Pigeon, Taiga Flycatcher, a family group of Jungle Babblers, a late Dusky Warbler and a Yellow-vented Warbler, several Common Hill Mynas, White-rumped and Scaly-breasted Munias but little more of note, although suffice to say there was little else to look for.
Our final moments of birding in Bhutan gave us Cinereous Tit at the border post before we entered the chaos, noise and stench of India with its crowded roads packed with women, children, goats, cattle, bicycles, trucks, cars, motorbikes and all other means of transport. We wove our way through the thronging mass of humanity towards the Brahmaputra searching the paddy fields for yet another suite of birds and one most of the group were familiar with from elsewhere. These included numerous Little Cormorants, Great Egret, Purple Heron, Eastern Cattle Egret, Asian Openbills, a few Lesser Adjutants, Bronze-winged Jacana, Lesser Whistling Ducks, Cotton Teal and a few Black Kites. We stopped at a small marsh to see magnificent Stork-billed Kingfisher, several Bronze-winged Jacanas, a few Common Gallinules and more herons. Walking a narrow lane nearby gave us a smart Black-hooded Oriole, Crow-billed Drongo and a pair of Green-billed Malkohas. The Oriole being a hit with the photographers as the light was good but little else presented itself for such attention. We moved on to another site where a brief scan of pools and marshes revealed numerous Whiskered Terns and a Pied Kingfisher before we headed to Deepur Beel for some very productive birding. Crossing some dry fields toward the marsh we found Bengal Bushlark, numerous Striated Grassbirds, Zitting Cisticola, Plain Prinia, numerous Blue-tailed Bee-eaters and both Jungle and White-vented Mynas along with Baya Weaver, more Whiskered Terns and a spectacular Indian Spotted Eagle to end the tour. We headed to our hotel for a quick wash and a light lunch before heading to Guwahati airport for our flights to Delhi where the tour ended.

Hooded Pitta (Frank Hummel).

This tour, the fourteenth Birdquest to the country, continues to produce ever more great birding and offers the best of Himalayan birding, especially when placed in the context of this delightful country making for a very special experience.

Excellent photographs by Frank Hummel with others by Eustace Barnes and many others who have accompanied me on tours to Bhutan over the years and who have kindly allowed me to use their photos for trip reports.

TOP TEN
1 Satyr Tragopan 6 Himalayan Monal
2 Golden Bush Robin 7 Hooded pitta
3 White-bellied Heron 8 Ward’s trogon
4 Slender-billed Scimitar Babbler 9 Beautiful nuthatch
5 Solitary Snipe 10 Blood Pheasant
SYSTEMATIC LIST

Species which were heard but not seen are indicated by the symbol (H).
Species which were not personally recorded by the leader are indicated by the symbol (NL).
Species which were only recorded by the leader are indicated by the symbol (L).
Species marked with the diamond symbol (◊) are either endemic to the country or local region or considered ‘special’ birds for some other reason (e.g. it is only seen on one or two Birdquest tours; it is difficult to see across all or most of its range; the local form is endemic or restricted-range and may in future be treated as a full species).
Species which were recorded only in India are indicated by the symbol (A)

Common Hill-partridge (◊) Aborophila torqueola  Heard at numerous sites and glimpsed below Sengor.
Rufous-throated Hill-partridge (◊) Arborophila rufogularis  (H) Heard along the lower Lingmethang road.
Chestnut-breasted Hill-partridge (◊) Arborophila mandelli  (H) Heard on the Lingmethang road and below Morong.
Blood Pheasant (◊) Ithaginis cruentus  Good numbers seen in the crisp light of dawn on Chele La and elsewhere.
Satyr Tragopan (◊) Tragopan satyra  Several stunning males and a few females seen above Sengor.
Himalayan Monal (◊) Lophophorus impejanus  Two males seen on Chele La.
Red Junglefowl Gallus gallus  A couple heard and one bird seen above Samdrup Jongkhar
Kaleej Pheasant ♦ Lophura leucocephalans Seen on Chele La and along the Mo Chu valley.
Lesser Whistling-Duck Dendrocygna javanica (A) Common in Assam.
Ruddy Shelduck Tadorna ferruginea Large numbers seen along the Mo Chu valley. Unusually late this year..
Cotton Teal Nettapus coromandelianus (A) Seen near Guwahati and at Depur Beel where only glimpsed.
Gadwall Anas strepera Up to nine seen along the Mo Chu valley.
Eurasian Wigeon Anas Penelope Seen at several sites throughout the tour.
Common Merganser Mergus merganser A single female seen along the Mo Chu river.
Great Crested Grebe Podiceps cristatus A rather tired looking bird seen at the Thimphu sewage ponds.
Asian Openbill Anastomus oscitans (A) Common in Assam where up to 40 seen..
Lesser Adjutant Leptoptilos javanicus (A) Up to 20 seen in Assam.
Striated Heron Butorides striata Rather unusually one seen in Samdruptungkhar.
Indian Pond Heron Ardeola grayii One bird seen at Punakha and common in Assam.
Eastern Cattle Egret Bubulcus coromandus (A) Common in Assam.
White-bellied Heron Ardea insignis One superb adult watched at length along the Pho Chu river.
Purple Heron Ardea purpurea (A) Several seen in Assam.
Great Egret Ardea alba (A) A good number recorded along the highway to Guwahati in Assam.
Little Egret Egretta garzetta Up to five seen near Punakha and many others in Assam..
Little Cormorant Microcarbo niger (A) A common bird in Assam
Great Cormorant Phalacrocorax carbo One near Punakha.
Western Osprey Pandion haliaetus One seen near Punakha
Jerdon’s Baza ♦ Accipiter jerdoni A single bird seen very briefly just north of Samdruptungkhar.
Crested Honey Buzzard Pernis ptilorhynchus Several birds seen at Morong and Samdruptungkhar.
Black Kite Milvus migrans (A) Fairly common in Assam.
Pallas’s Fish Eagle Haliaeetus leucoryphus One along the Mo Chu and another at Samdruptungkhar.
Himalayan Vulture (H Griffon) Gyps himalayensis Up to ten seen at Pele La and another near Morong.
Crested Serpent Eagle Spilornis cheela Seen at several forested sites from Tashitang onwards.
Hen Harrier Circus cyaneus One ringtail seen along the Mo Chu.
Crested Goshawk Accipiter trivirgatus One displaying male seen below Sengor and others seen elsewhere..
Shikra Accipiter badius (L) (A) One seen in Assam.
Besra Accipiter virgatus One male seen
Eurasian Sparrowhawk Accipiter nisus Numerous individuals seen throughout.
Himalayan Buzzard ♦ Buteo burmanicus A few seen at widespread sites throughout.
Black Eagle Ictinaetus malayensis A few birds seen at widely scattered sites. A magnificent raptor.
Indian Spotted Eagle ♦ Aquila hastate (A) One adult bird seen at Deepur Beel in Assam.
Rufous-bellied Hawk-eagle Lophotriorchis kienerii One immature bird seen near Samdruptungkhar.
Mountain Hawk-eagle Nisaetus nipalensis Commonly recorded throughout.
Common Kestrel Falco tinnunculus Seen in small numbers at widely scattered sites throughout.
Eurasian Hobby Falco subbuteo Several noted near Morong.
Oriental Hobby Falco orientalis One seen at Morong was a surprise and a write in .
White-breasted Waterhen Amaurornis phoenicurus One seen near Trashigang and another in Assam.
Black-tailed Crane ♦ Porzana bicolor A single adult bird watched at length near Trashigang.
Common Moorhen Gallinula chloropus (A) Several individuals seen in Assam.
Bronze-winged Jacana Metopidius indicus (A) Common in Assam.
Ibisbill Ibidorhynchus struthersii Several pairs noted with a pair seen on our first day near Paro with chicks.
Red-wattled Lapwing Vanellus indicus (A) Common in Assam.
Solitary Snipe ♦ Gallinago solitaria One spotted by Frank above Ura.
Pintail Snipe (Pin-tailed S) Gallinago stenura Several noted in the marsh near Bumthang.
Green Sandpiper Tringa ochropus A few seen near Thimpu and Punakha.
Common Sandpiper Actitis hypoleucos One seen near Punakha.
Whiskered Tern Chlidonias hybrid (A) Up to 25 seen near Guwahati.
Rock Pigeon (R Dove) Columba livia An abundant syn-anthropic.
Snow Pigeon ♦ Columba leuconota A fairly high numbers seen near Ura and above Bumthang.
Speckled Wood Pigeon Columba Hodgsonii Seen in large winter flocks at several locations.
Ashy Woodpigeon Columba palumbrosa A pair seen north of Thimpu represents a good record for this rare species.
Oriental Turtle Dove Streptopelia orientalis Abundant throughout.

18 Birdquest Tour Report: Bhutan 2013  www.birdquest-tours.com
Red Turtle Dove  *Streptopelia tranquebarica* (A) A few seen in Assam.

Spotted Dove  *Spilopelia chinensis* Common from Punakha onwards in open agricultural lands.

Barred Cuckoo-dove  *Macropygia unchall* Common at Tashitang where good numbers recorded during our wet stay.

Yellow-footed Green-pigeon  *Treron phoenicoptera* (A) Several noted at Durranga near Samdrup Jongkhar.

Thick-billed Green Pigeon  *Treron curvirostra* Up to five found near Samdrup Jongkhar.

Wedge-tailed Green Pigeon  *Treron sphenurus* Common at Tashitang and others noted at Morong.

Mountain Imperial Pigeon  *Ducula badia* Very uncommon this year with only a couple of sightings near Morong.

Rose-ringed Parakeet (Ring-necked P)  *Psittacula krameri* (A) A couple noted in Assam.

Greater Coucal  *Centropus sinensis* One heard and found at one of its few sites in Bhutan along our route.

Green-billed Malkoha  *Phaenicophaeus tristis* One seen twice near Samdrup Jongkhar. A pair also seen in Assam.

Asian Koel (Common K)  *Eudynamys scolopaceus* A pair at Punakha Dzong and another in Samdrup Jongkhar.

Asian Emerald Cuckoo  *Chrysococcyx maculatus* A single male seen singing near Samdrup Jongkhar.

Banded Bay Cuckoo  *Cacomantis sonneratii* (H) Heard on the Lingmethang road.

Plaintive Cuckoo  *Cacomantis merulinus* Commonly heard and up to five seen below Morong.

Square-tailed Drongo-Cuckoo  *Surniculus [lugubris] lugubris* Commonly heard with many seen throughout.

Large Hawk-Cuckoo  *Hierococcyx sparverioides* Several seen and many heard throughout.

Whistling Hawk-Cuckoo (Hodgson's H-C)  *Hierococcyx nisicolor* Heard and seen on the Lingmethang road.

Small Cuckoo (Lesser C)  *Cuculus poliocephalus* Commonly heard and a couple seen below Morong.

Indian Cuckoo  *Cuculus microperus* (H) A commonly heard song.

Himalayan Cuckoo  *Cuculus saturatus* Another commonly heard species with a couple seen at Tashitang.

Common Cuckoo (Eurasian C)  *Cuculus canorus* Several seen at Yongkola.

Himalayan Wood-owl (Chinese Tawny O)  *Strix nivicola* (H) A female heard in Mongar during the night.

Collared Owlet  *Glaucidium brodiei* (H) Heard below Morong but not seen despite its call being played every day.

Asian Barred Owlet  *Glaucidium cuculoides* (H) Heard at several sites below Yongkola.

Grey Nightjar  *Caprimulgus jotaka* A couple seen on our climb up to Chele La.

Himalayan Swiftlet  *Apus nipalensis* Common at many sites from Punakha on.

White-throated Needletail  *Hirundapus caudacutus* Seen in small numbers from Punakha to Deothang.

Asian Palm-Swift  *Cypsiurus balasiensis* Common at Samdrup Jongkhar.

Blyth's Swift  *Apus leuconyx* Commonly recorded throughout.

Dark-rumped Swift  *Apus acuticauda* Two seen by a couple of us but not seen again despite a concerted effort.

House Swift  *Apus nipalensis* Common in Samdrup Jongkhar and Assam.

Red-headed Trogon  *Harpactes erythrocephalus* (H) Heard only at Tashitang where it would not be moved in the rain.

Ward’s Trogon  *Harpactes wardi* A female found above Nobding but not recorded elsewhere.

Oriental Dollarbird  *Eurystomus orientalis* Maybe two seen above Samdrup Jongkhar.

White-throated Kingfisher (W-breasted K)  *Halcyon smyrnensis* Seen throughout.

Common Kingfisher  *Alcedo atthis* Seen at Paro and along various rivers up to Samdrup Jongkhar.

Crested Kingfisher  *Ceryle lugubris* A couple seen near Wangdi along the Mo Chu river.

Lesser Pied Kingfisher (Pied K)  *Ceryle rudis* (A) A single bird seen near Guwahati.

Stork-billed Kingfisher  *Pelargopsis capensis* Three in Assam & a write in. Arrived with the early monsoon maybe?

Blue-bearded Bee-eater  *Nyctyornis athertoni* Three seen only below Yongkola.

Blue-tailed Bee-eater  *Merops philippinus* (A) Common near Guwahati at Deepur Beel.

Common Hoopoe (Eurasian H)  *Upupa epops* Seen in small numbers throughout.

Great Pied Hornbill (Great H)  *Buceros bicornis* (L) One seen very briefly near Samdrup Jongkhar.

Rufous-necked Hornbill  *Aceros nipalensis* Several pairs noted, especially below Morong.

Wreathed Hornbill  *Aceros undulatus* Three seen near Samdrup Jongkhar.

Great Barbet  *Megalaima virens* Common to abundant from Tashitang onwards.

Golden-throated Barbet  *Megalaima franklinii* Commonly seen and heard throughout the lower sub-tropics.

Blue-throated Barbet  *Megalaima asiatica* Seen and heard in tropics below Yongkola and Morong.

Coppersmith Barbet(Crimson-breasted B)  *Megalaima haemacephala* A pair noted in Samdrup Jongkhar.

Yellow-rumped Honeyguide  *Indicator xanthonotus* Seen near Thimpu and Namlingchu bridge.

White-browed Piculet  *Sasia ochracea* One seen rather briefly below Yongkola.

Rufous-bellied Woodpecker  *Dendrocopos hyperythrus* Several pairs below Dochu La.

Grey-capped Pygmy Woodpecker  *Dendrocopos canicapillus* Several pairs noted above Samdrup Jongkhar.

Crimson-breasted Woodpecker  *Dendrocopos caphtharius* Seen on the Lingmethang road.

Darjeeling Woodpecker  *Dendrocopos darjellensis* Seen in temperate forests from CheleLa on.
Greater Yellownape *Chrysophlegma flavinucha* Seen at Korila and near Samdrup Jongkhar.

Lesser Yellownape *Picus chlorolophus* Seen near Mongar and Samdrup Jongkhar.

Grey-faced Woodpecker (Grey-headed W) *Picus canus* (H) Heard only at Tashitang, inspite of repeated taping..

Bay Woodpecker *Blythipicus pyrrhotis* Commonly heard with a few seen at Lingmethang.

Rufous Woodpecker *Micropterus brachyurus* A pair seen near Samdrup Jongkhar.

Long-tailed Broadbill *Psaromus dalhousiae* Two on the Lingmethang road and a pair near Samdrup Jongkhar.

Hooded Pitta *Pitta sordida* A single bird seen twice near Samdrup Jongkhar.

Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrike *Hemipus picatus* Several pairs noted below Yongkola.

Large Woodshrike *Tephrodornis virgatus* A single bird seen near Samdrup Jongkhar.

Common lora *Aegithina tiphia* Several pairs found near Samdrup Jongkhar. A pretty lowland species.

Large Cuckooshrike *Coracina maei* (L) (A) One seen near Guwahati.

Black-winged Cuckooshrike *Coracina melaschistos* Seen at many sites throughout,

Grey-chinned Minivet *Pericrocotus solaris* Commonly seen at mid-elevation sites.

Long-tailed Minivet *Pericrocotus etholus* Common in the pine forests and elsewhere.

Short-billed Minivet *Pericrocotus brevirostris* Seen throughout at quite a number of sites.

Scarlet Minivet *Pericrocotus speciosus* Also a common species seen throughout.

Brown Shrike *Lanius cristatus* Seen at Samdrup Jongkhar and in Assam.

Long-tailed Shrike *Lanius schach* Small numbers seen throughout.

Grey-backed Shrike *Lanius tephonotus* Very common.

Black-headed Shrike-babbler ☠ *Pteruthius rufiventer* (H) Only heard despite a huge effort to lure one into view.

Blyth's Shrike-babbler *Pteruthius aeralatus* Seen at many sites.

Green Shrike-babbler ☠ *Pteruthius xanthochlorus* Several seen below Sengor.

Black-eared Shrike-babbler *Pteruthius melanotis* Fairly common on the Lingmethang road and below Morong.

Slender-billed Oriole ☠ *Oriolus tenuirostris* Several singing males seen near Punakha.

Black-hooded Oriole *Oriolus xanthornus* (A) Seen in Assam where it put on a great display.

Maroon Oriole *Oriolus trailii* Numerous pairs found from Tashitang to Morong.

Black Drongo *Dicrurus macrocerus* (A) Common in Assam.

Ashy Drongo *Dicrurus leucophaeus* Common to abundant throughout.

Bronzed Drongo *Dicrurus aeneus* Common below Morong.

Lesser Racket-tailed Drongo *Dicrurus remifer* A couple seen on the Lingmethang road.

Hair-crested Drongo *Dicrurus hortentottus* Fairly numerous at Tashitahang

Greater Racket-tailed Drongo *Dicrurus paradiseus* A pair seen above Samdrup Jongkhar.

Crow-billed Drongo One seen in a small woodlot in Assam.

White-throated Fantail *Rhipidura albicollicis* Not uncommon throughout.

Black-naped Monarch *Hypothymis azurea* Common at Samdrup Jongkhar.

Asian Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone paradisi* One superb male above Samdrup Jongkhar. Almost bird of the trip.

Eurasian Jay *Garrulus glandarius* Seen in the higher mountains.

Yellow-billed Blue Magpie ☠ *Urocissa flavirostris* Commonly seen in the higher forests.

Common Green Magpie *Cissa chinensis* Seen on the Lingmethang road where very vocal in the cold forests.

Grey Treepie *Dendrocitta formosa* Common at Tashitang and below Morong.

Eurasian Magpie *Pica pica* Common aroundJakar and Ura.

Spotted Nutcracker (Eurasian N) *Nucifraga caryocatactes* Fairly numerous in upland coniferous forests.

Red-billed Chough *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax* Another numerous corvid associated with human settlement.

House Crow *Corvus splendens* Now commonly seen in Thimphu. Also common in Assam.

Large-billed Crow *Corvus japonensis* Common to abundant throughout Bhutan except Samdrup Jongkhar.

Eastern Jungle Crow *Corvus levaillanti* A few in Samdrup Jongkhar, but abundant in Assam.

Yellow-bellied Fantail *Cheilidornyx hypoxantha* A few seen in mixed flocks from Sengor on through the highlands.

Grey-headed Canary-flycatcher (G-H Flycatcher) *Culicicapa ceylonensis* Commonly recorded throughout.

Rufous-vented Tit *Periparus rubidiventris* A common species in high elevation coniferous forests.

Coal Tit *Periparus ater* Abundant in high elevation coniferous forests.

Grey Crested Tit ☠ *Lophophanes dichrous* Commonly seen in high elevation in coniferous forests.

Cinereous Tit (Grey) *Parus cinereus* A single bird seen very briefly at Samdrup Jongkhar border post.

Green-backed Tit *Parus monticolus* Very common throughout Bhutan.

Yellow-cheeked Tit (Black-spotted Yellow T) *Parus splotootus* A stunning species commonly recorded throughout.

Yellow-browed Tit ☠ *Sylviparus modestus* A few seen in mixed flocks at higher elevation.
Sultan Tit *Melanochlora sultanea* A pair seen very briefly below Morong carrying nest material.

Bengal Bushlark *Mirafra assimatica* (A) Several seen at Deepur Beel near Guwahati.

Oriental Skylark *Alauda gulgula* Common at Jakar on open grassy lands on the edge of town.

Striated Bulbul *Pycnonotus striatus* Commonly seen in tall forest

Black-crested Bulbul *Pycnonotus flaviventris* Commonly recorded at Samdrup Jongkhar.

Red-whiskered Bulbul *Pycnonotus jocosus* Several pairs noted near Samdrup Jongkhar.

Himalayan Bulbul *Pycnonotus leucogenys* Commonly recorded in the dry intermontane valleys of the east.

Red-vented Bulbul *Pycnonotus cafer* Common to abundant throughout.

White-throated Bulbul ◊ *Alophoixus faveolus* A number of pairs along a narrow river valley near Samdrup Jongkhar.

Mountain Bulbul *Ixos mcalliandii* Several pairs noted along the highway near Morong.

Ashy Bulbul *Hemixos flava* Seen below Yongkola and at Samdrup Jongkhar.

Himalayan Blackbulbul *(Black B)* *Hypsipetes leucocephalus* Common to abundant throughout.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* Seen at Mongar and in Assam.

Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica* Common at Samdrup Jongkhar and Assam.

Nepal House Martin ◊ *Delichon nipalense* Large numbers recorded above Yongkola.

Asian House Martin *Delichon dasypus* Very common in the Paro valley. A few also noted near Jakar.

Scaly-breasted Wren-babbler *Pnoeopyga albiventer* Several heard and one seen superbly well at Sengor.

Pygmy Wren-babbler *Pnoeopyga pulsula* A single bird seen above Yongkola.

Yellow-bellied Warbler *Abroscopus superciliaris* A single bird found near Samdrup Jongkhar.

Black-faced Warbler ◊ *Abroscopus schisticeps* A few seen in the east in mixed flocks.

Strong-footed Bush-warbler *(Brownish-flanked B-w)* *Cettia fortipes* Common by voice. Several seen throughout.

Buff-throated Warbler *Horornis flavolivaceus* Seen below Thrumshingla.

Yellow-browed Tesia ◊ *(Grey-bellied T)* *Tesia cyaniventris* Many heard and one seen above Nobdong.

Slaty-bellied Tesia ◊ *Tesia olivae* (H) Heard at numerous sites but not one gave us more than a glimpse.

Grey-sided Bush Warbler ◊ *Cettia brunnifrons* Commonly seen above Yongkola.

Chestnut-headed Tesia ◊ *Tesia castanecoronata* Many heard and one superb individual seen at Sengor.

Red-headed Tit *(Black-throated T)* *Aegithalos concinnus* Very common.

Rufous-fronted Bushtit ◊ *Aegithalos iouschistos* Surprisingly numerous this year.

Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus* A single bird found near Samdrup Jongkhar. A very late migrant.

Tickell's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus magnirostris* A single bird seen above Yongkola.

Orange-barred Leaf-warbler *(Buff-barred W)* *Phylloscopus pulcher* Some on territory but many still in mixed flocks.

Grey-faced Leaf-warbler *(Ashy-throated W)* *Phylloscopus maculipennis* Seen at many sites.

Lemon-rumped Leaf-warbler *(L-r Warbler)* *Phylloscopus chloronotus* Most seen in mixed flocks with few singing.

Hume’s Leaf-warbler *Phylloscopus humei* Common, with many pairs nesting.

Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides* Several migrants still passing through.

Large-billed Leaf-warbler *Phylloscopus magnirostris* Common by voice. Seen in small numbers from Sengor.

Blyth’s Leaf-warbler *Phylloscopus reguloides* Fairly common.

Yellow-vented Warbler ◊ *Phylloscopus cantator* Seen at Tashitang and Samdrup Jongkhar.

Grey-hooded Warbler *Phylloscopus xanthochistos* Commoner further east where seen in good numbers.

White-spectacled Warbler ◊ *Seicercus affinis* A few seen above Yongkola.

Green-crowned Warbler ◊ *Seicercus burkii* A few noted at widely scattered at lower elevations.

Whistler’s Warbler ◊ *Seicercus whistleri* Common at higher elevations.

Grey-cheeked Warbler ◊ *Seicercus poliogenys* Quite numerous at Yongkola and Morong.

Chestnut-crowned Warbler *Seicercus castaneiceps* Easily seen in forested valleys from Tashitang to Morong.

Himalayan Blackbulbul *(Black B)* *Hypsipetes leucocephalus* Common to abundant throughout.

Common at Morong.

Russet Bush Warbler ◊ *Locustella mandelli* One heard and seen very poorly above Trongsa.

Zitting Cisticola *Cisticola juncidis* (A) Several heard and seen near Guwahati.

Striated Grassbird *Megalurus palustris* (A) Common at Deepur Beel near Guwahati.

Striated Prinia *Prinia crinigera* Common in drier intermontane valleys.

Black-throated Prinia *Prinia atrogularis* A few seen with the best performance at morong.

Rufescent Prinia *Prinia rufescens* Seen below Yongkola at a new location for your leader.

Plain Prinia *Prinia inornata* (A) Fairly common at Deepur Beel.

Common Tailorbird *Orthotomus sutorius* Common in the lowlands.

Rustysided Scimitar Babbler *Pomatorhinus erythrogenys* Seen first at Yongkola and thereafter at Mongar.

White-browed Scimitar Babbler *Pomatorhinus schisticeps* (H) Inspite of several efforts none put in an appearance.

Streak-breasted Scimitar Babbler *Pomatorhinus ruficollis* Heard at many sites. A pair seen at Morong.
Coral-billed Scimitar Babbler *Pomatorhinus ferruginosus* A pair seen below Morong.

Slender-billed Scimitar Babbler *Pomatorhinus supercilii* Several pairs seen of this superb creature.

Rufous-throated Wren-babbler *Spelaeornis caudatus* Many heard and one seen at Yongkola.

Spotted Wren-babbler *Spelaeornis formosus* Several heard throughout and one seen poorly at Tashitang.

Sikkim Wedge-billed Wren Babbler *Sphenochilcha humei* (H) Heard only inspite of a big effort to see it.

Grey-throated Babbler *Stachyris nigricaps* Seen near Monger and below Morong.

Rufous-capped Babbler *Stachydospis ruficeps* Common to abundant.

Golden Babbler *Stachyris purniceps* Fairly common at Yongkola.

Pin-striped Tit-babbler *Macronus gularis* Several pairs seen near Samdrup Jongkhar.

Yellow-throated Fulvetta *Alcippe cinerea* Common in roadside scrub above Yongkola.

Rufous-winged Fulvetta *Alcippe castaneiceps* Small numbers seen throughout.

Nepal Fulvetta *Alcippe nipalensis* Surprisingly uncommon this year.

Long-billed Wren-Babbler *Rimator malacoptilus* (H) Again a big effort made to see this bird without success.

Jungle Babbler *Trochalopteron striatum* A noisy family at our Samdrup Jongkhar hotel.

White-crested Laughingthrush *Garrulax leucolophus* Large roving flocks noted at Yongkola and Morong.

Spotted Laughingthrush *Garrulax ochelatus* Three at Chelela, two at Pelela and three at Thrumshingla.

White-throated Laughingthrush *Garrulax albogularis* Commonly seen throughout.

Rufous-necked Laughingthrush *Garrulax ruficollis* Common in dry scrub in cleared areas.

Grey-sided Laughingthrush *Garrulax caerulatus* A pair glimpsed at Yongkola and another above Morong.

Striated Laughingthrush *Garrulax striatus* Common.

Butan Laughingthrush *Trochalopteron imbricatum* Common in the east where seen along the highway.

Blue-winged Laughingthrush *Trochalopteron squamatum* Heard at several places and seen at Morong.

Scaly Laughingthrush *Trochalopteron subunicolor* A pair at Yongkola worked their way through vegetation.

Black-faced Laughingthrush *Trochalopteron affino* Common at many upland sites.

Chestnut-crowned Laughingthrush *Trochalopteron erythrocephalum* Seen in small numbers throughout.

Himalayan Cutia *Cutia nipalensis* Seen above Nobding and at Yongkola.

Blue-winged Minla *Minla cyanouroptera* Quite numerous, especially in the east.

Bar-throated Minla *Minla strigula* A common constituent of mixed flocks.

Red-tailed Minla *Minla ignotincta* Another, very pretty, species found in many mixed flocks.

Red-faced Liocichla *Liocichla phoenicea* A stunning pair seen at Kori La. Another found at Morong.

Rusty-fronted Barwing *Actinodura egertoni* Remarkably numerous this year.

Hoary-throated Barwing *Actinodura nipalensis* A couple of pairs seen at Dochu la.

Silver-eared Mesia *Leiothrix argentauris* Very numerous below morong.

Red-billed Leiothrix *Leiothrix lutea* Rather numerous at Korila.

Rufous Sibia *Heterophasia capistrata* Abundant throughout.

Long-tailed Sibia *Heterophasia picaoides* Only seen at all below Morong in the sub-tropics.

Golden-breasted Fulvetta *Lioparus chrysotis* Seen in small numbers above yongkola.

White-browed Fulvetta *Fulvetta vinipuctus* Common and seen in many mixed flocks.

Brown Parrotbill *Paradoxornis unicolor* Surprising numbers found in bamboo fields below Pelela.

Fulvous Parrotbill *Suthora fulvifrons* Eventually a large group found below Thrumshingla.

Orange-eared Parrotbill *Suthora nipalensis* A large flock noted above Yongkola.

Greater Rufous-headed Parrotbill *Suthora parvifrons* Several flocks at Yongkola.

Striated Yuhina *Yuhina castaneiceps* Several noted below Morong. Very scarce this year.

White-naped Yuhina *Yuhina bakeri* Seen at Yongkola and Morong.

Whiskered Yuhina *Yuhina flavicollis* Abundant.

Stripe-throated Yuhina *Yuhina gularis* Common at higher altitudes in Rhododendron forests.

Rufous-vented Yuhina *Yuhina occipitalis* Fairly common at higher altitudes.

Black-chinned Yuhina *Yuhina nigrimenta* Seen in small numbers below Yongkola.

Oriental White-eye *Zosterops palpebrosus* Common. Several pairs seen with chestnut foreheads near Trashigang.

Asian Fairy-bluebird *Irena puella* Fairly numerous near Samdrup Jongkhar.

Goldcrest *Regulus regulus* Seen at Chelela And Thrumshingla.

Eurasian Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes* Several seen and other heard at Thrumshingla.

Chestnut-bellied Nuthatch *Sitta cinnamoventris* Seen at Tashitang and near Samdrup Jongkhar.

White-tailed Nuthatch *Sitta himalayensis* Seen in small numbers at higher elevations

Beautiful Nuthatch *Sitta Formosa* One superb adult seen below Morong between heavy showers.
Himalayan Treecreeper (Hodgson’s T) *Certhia hodgsoni* Seen in small numbers throughout.

Rusty-flanked Treecreeper ♦ *Certhia nipalensis* Seen at Chelela and recorded elsewhere.

Common Hill Myna *Gracula religiosa* Seen in small numbers around Samdrup Jongkhar.

Jungle Myna *Acridotheres fuscus* (A) Common in Assam.

White-vented Myna *Acridotheres grandis* (A) A few in Assam.

Common Myna *Acridotheres tristis* As the name implies rather numerous.

Grey-headed Starling (Chestnut-tailed S) *Sturnia malabarica* A pair at Punakha and common at Samdrup Jongkhar.

Brahminy Starling *Temenuchus pagodorum* One seen at Dochu La. A real surprise and a new species for Bhutan.

Asian Pied Starling *Gracupica contra* A few Samdrup Jongkhar and common in Assam.

Blue Whistling Thrush *Myophonus caerules* Common to abundant throughout.

Tickell’s Thrush *Turdus unicolor* A female seen nest building below Dochula.

White-collared Blackbird ♦ *Turdus albocinctus* Common to abundant at upland sites.

Grey-winged Blackbird ♦ *Turdus boulboul* Very common below Dochula.

Lesser Shortwing *Brachypteryx leucophrys* Many heard and one seen at Tashitang.

White-browed Shortwing *Brachypteryx montana* (H) Several heard inspite of some effort being made to see one.

Indian Blue Robin *Luscinia brunea* Seen near Trashiogang.

White-browed Bush Robin ♦ *Tarsiger indicus* Several seen at Thrumshingla.

Himalayan Bluetail *Tarsiger rufilatus* Common at Chelela and Thrumshingla.

Golden Bush Robin ♦ *Tarsiger chrysaeus* A superb male watched at length at Thrumshingla.

Oriental Magpie-robin *Copsychus saularis* Common throughout.

Hodgson’s Redstart ♦ *Phoenicurus hodgsoni* Surprisingly rare this year.

Blue-fronted Redstart ♦ *Phoenicurus frontalis* Small numbers seen throughout.

Plumbeous Water Redstart *Rhacornis fuliginosa* Commonly seen along all water courses.

White-capped Redstart *Chaimarrornis leucocephalus* Likewise very frequently seen along all rivers.

White-tailed Robin *Myiolum leucura* Several superb adults seen. A magnificent species.

Little Forktail ♦ *Enicurus scouleri* Several pairs noted at widely scattered sites.

Slaty-backed Forktail *Enicurus schistaceus* A single bird noted at Shatem Camp.

Siberian Stonechat *Saxicola maura* Several pairs noted throughout.

Grey Bush Chat *Saxicola ferreus* Common throughout, in dry scrubby secondary habitats.

Blue Rock Thrush *Monticola solitarius* (NL) One seen near Mongar.

Chestnut-bellied Rock Thrush *Monticola rufiventris* Seen at many sites throughout.

Blue-capped Rock Thrush *Monticola cinclorhynchos* Common along the highway from west to east.

Dark-sided Flycatcher *Musciaca sibirica* Small numbers from Tashitang to Morong.

Taiga Flycatcher (Red-throated F) *Ficedula albicilla* One see at Samdrup Jongkhar. Another late migrant.

Little Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula westermannii* A few seen in the east. A pretty species.

Ultramarine Flycatcher *Ficedula superciliaris* Several pairs noted at widely scattered sites

Slaty-blue Flycatcher *Ficedula tricolor* A few noted at widely scattered sites.

Sapphire Flycatcher ♦ *Ficedula sapphire* A couple of pairs noted at samdroup jongkhar.

Verditer Flycatcher *Eumyias thalassinus* Common to abundant throughout.

Pale Blue Flycatcher *Cyornis unicolor* Several pairs noted at Tashitang and Morong.

Blue-throated Flycatcher *Cyornis rubeculoides* Found in the drier woodlands below Yongkola..

White-gorgeted Flycatcher ♦ *Anthipes monileger* A single bird taped in and watched at length at Korila

Rufous-bellied Niltava *Niltava sundara* Several pairs noted at sites from Yongkola.

Large Niltava *Niltava grandis* Quite numerous at Yongkola where many more heard..

Small Niltava *Niltava macgrigoriae* Numerous at Tashitang and many more seen at Morong.

Pygmy Blue Flycatcher *Muscipalla hodgsoni* A pair seen at Yongkola and a well known spot for the species.

Brown Dipper *Cinclus pallasii* Not uncomon along the bigger rivers.

Golden-fronted Leafbird *Chloropsis aurifrons* A pair seen near Samdrup Jongkhar.

Orange-bellied Leafbird *Chloropsis hardwickii* Fairly common in the eastern lowlands and Samdrup Jongkhar.

Yellow-bellied Flowerpecker *Dicaeum melanoanthus* At least three seen near Deothang. A rarely seen species.

Plain Flowerpecker *Dicaeum minullum* Several pairs found at Samdroup Jongkhar.

Fire-breasted Flowerpecker (Buff-bellied F) *Dicaeum ignicectus* A fairly common species in the lower sub-tropics.

Mrs Gould’s Sunbird ♦ (Gould’s S) *Aethopyga gouldiae* A lovely looking species.

Green-tailed Sunbird *Aethopyga nipalensis* Very common in the temperate forests.

Black-breasted Sunbird (Black-throated S) *Aethopyga saturate* Another lovely looking species.
Crimson Sunbird *Aethopyga siparaja* Common in the foothills above Samdrup Jongkhar.

Fire-tailed Sunbird ◊ *Aethopyga ignicauda* The most spectacular Asian Sunbird. We saw them on Thrumshingla.

Streaked Spiderhunter *Arachnothera magna* Common below Morong.

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* A few seen at Samdrup Jongkhar border post.

Cinnamon Sparrow (Russet S) *Passer rutilans* Very common.

Eurasian Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus* Slightly less common than the above species.

Baya Weaver *Ploceus philippinus* (A) One seen at Deepur Beel.

White-rumped Munia *Lonchura striata* Small numbers seen near Samdrup Jongkhar.

Scaly-breasted Munia *Lonchura punctulata* Seen at several locations throughout.

Alpine Accentor *Prunella collaris* Seen at Thrumshingla.

Rufous-breasted Accentor ◊ *Prunella strophiata* Commonly recorded throughout.

Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* Several seen in the open grasslands at Jakar.

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea* Seen at Paro, tashitang and Samdrup Jongkhar.

Himalayan Wagtail *Motacilla [alba] alboides* Common along all water courses.


Paddyfield Pipit *Anthus rufulus* A few seen in Bhutan and Assam.

Olive-backed Pipit (Olive Tree P) *Anthus hodgsoni* Commonly seen and heard throughout.

Rosy Pipit *Anthus roseatus* Common in the highlands.

Blyth’s Pipit *Anthus blythii* One seen near Jakar was a late migrant.

Himalayan Greenfinch (Yellow-breasted G) *Carduelis spinoides* Seen at Yongkola and others at Morong.

Plain Mountain Finch *Leucosticte nemoricola* Thousands. Very late to climb up to their breeding grounds.

Dark-breasted Rosefinch *Carpodacus nipalensis* A couple of pairs at a favoured location on Thrumshingla.

Common Rosefinch (Scarlet R) *Carpodacus erythrinus* Common, if late, migrant.

Himalayan Beautiful Rosefinch ◊ *Carpodacus pulcherrimus* Still hanging about in the highlands.

Dark-rumped Rosefinch ◊ *Carpodacus edwardsii* A pair at a favoured locality.

Himalayan White-browed Rosefinch ◊ *Carpodacus thura* Still hanging about in wintering flocks.

Crimson-browed Finch ◊ *Propyrrhula subhimachala* Several birds noted from Dochu La to Sengor.

Scarlet Finch ◊ *Haematospiza sipahi* Seen below Morong at their favoured valley.

Red Crossbill (Common C) *Loxia curvirostra* Seen and heard below Chelela.

Brown Bullfinch *Pyrrhula nipalensis* Seen at Yongkola and near Worong.

Red-headed Bullfinch ◊ *Pyrrhula erythrocephala* Sseen at Dochula and Sengor.

Collared Grosbeak ◊ *Mycerobas affinis* Remarkably numerous this year at Chelela.

Spot-winged Grosbeak ◊ *Mycerobas melanozanthos* A pair below Dochula.

White-winged Grosbeak *Mycerobas carnipes* Dozens seen at many locations. Very numerous at Chelela.

Golden-naped Finch ◊ *Pyrrophlepsis epaulette* Seen in good numbers on Korila.

Crested Bunting ◊ *Melophus lathami* seen in the open valleys from Tashitang to Trashigang.

Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla* A flock of five seen near Paro were late migrants.

White-bellied heron along the Pho Chu river (Frank Brummel)

**MAMMALS**

**Moupin Pika**  *Ochotona thibetana*  Common in the forested alpine zone.

**Black Giant Squirrel (Malayan G S)**  *Ratufa bicolor*  One located near Worong.

**Orange-bellied Himalayan Squirrel**  *Dremomys lokriah*  Common in the higher elevation broadleaf forests.

**Irrawaddy Squirrel**  *Callosciurus pygerythrus*  A few found lower down.

**Himalayan Striped Squirrel**  *Tamiops mcclellandii*  Commonly seen.

**Yellow-throated Marten (Himalayan Y-t M)**  *Martes flavigula*  Fantastic views of three individuals.

**Nepal Grey Langur**  *Semnopithecus schistaceus*  Seen near Thimphu.

**Capped Leaf Monkey (C Langur)**  *Trachypithecus pileatus*  Common

**Assam Macaque**  *Macaca assamensis*  Very numerous.

**Indian Muntjac (Barking Deer)**  *Muntiacus muntjak*  One seen above Yongkola.

**Indian Elephant**  *Elephas maximus*  Many signs of Elephant activity near Samdrup Jongkhar of this now rare animal.