

*The increasingly rare White-browed Bush Chat showed well in Desert National Park (Frank Lambert)*

## WESTERN INDIA

**14 – 31 JANUARY 2016**

**LEADER: FRANK LAMBERT**

This was yet another successful Birdquest tour to the dry north western part of India involving an epic journey through the states of Punjab, Rajasthan and Gujarat with a short visit to the state of Maharashtra in Central India at the end. We found almost every bird specialty of the dry western and central regions of the subcontinent including a number of increasingly scarce species with highly restricted ranges, such as the impressive Great Indian Bustard (with a world population of only a hundred or so), the beautifully patterned White-naped Tit, White-browed (or Stoliczka's) Bush Chat and Critically Endangered Indian Vulture. Many Indian subcontinent endemics were seen, including Rock Bush Quail, Red Spurfowl, Indian Courser, Painted Sandgrouse, the highly-localised Forest Owlet, Indian Scops Owl, Rufous-tailed and Sykes's Larks, Ashy-crowned Sparrow-Lark, Indian Bush Lark, the lovely White-bellied Minivet, Brown-headed Barbet, White-naped Woodpecker, Indian Nuthatch, Marshall's Iora, Indian Black-lored (or Indian Yellow) Tit, Brahminy Starling, Streak-throated Swallow, the elusive Sirkeer Malkoha, Rufous-fronted and Rufous-vented Prinias, Green Avadavat, Red-naped (or Black) Ibis and Plum-headed Parakeet. Amongst many other highlights were the much sought-after Grey Hypocorax, highly-threatened Macqueen's Bustard, the amazing Demoiselle Crane spectacle at Khichan, Red-necked and Laggar Falcons, wintering Sociable Lapwing, Crab Plover, Yellow-eyed Doves, Desert Whitethroat, Sykes's Nightjar and Pallid (or Striated) Scops Owl, Sand and Desert Larks, Black-crowned Sparrow-Larks, all three forms of Variable Wheatear, Red-tailed Wheatear,

Striated Babbler, Sykes's, Booted and Sulphur-bellied Warblers, and Grey-necked, White-capped and Striolated Buntings. Then there were mammals, which included a superb Striped Hyena and Asiatic Wild Ass (or Onagers).



*Seeing Great Stone-curlews so well was a highlight of our visit to coastal Gujarat (Frank Lambert)*

The morning of our first full day in India began in the fog-like smog of Delhi Ridge, where we spent a couple of hours looking unsuccessfully for Brook's Leaf Warbler and familiarizing ourselves with some of the more common species. The habitat on Delhi Ridge is now almost exclusively introduced trees, rather than the native acacias that the warbler seems to favour. Nevertheless, we were able to find a number of commoner species included Shikra, Black-rumped Flameback, Brown-headed Barbet, Rose-ringed Parakeet, Collared Dove, Red-vented Bulbul, Red-breasted Flycatcher, Lesser Whitethroat, Oriental Magpie-Robin, Black Redstart, Jungle Babbler, Greenish and Hume's Leaf Warbler.

Later we flew to Amritsar in the Punjab, where we visited the famous Golden Temple, the holiest shrine of the Sikh religion. The temple was in fact built before the Sikh religion evolved, in 1499. The Golden Temple itself sits like a glowing golden barge on the still waters of a large artificial lake, surrounded on all sides by impressive white marble-clad buildings with their minaret-like towers. Pilgrims from all over the Sikh world visit the shrine, and we happened to visit during one of the most important festivals of the year. A huge original copy of the Sikh holy book the Granth Sahib is located on the second floor of the temple, and the high priest was sitting there, reading this to the public as we filed past, whilst a religious band played to the public via loud-speakers from the floor below. It was moving to see the devotion of the pilgrims, and we were impressed with the food hall that provides 100,000 free meals a day to visitors and is run entirely by volunteers. Eventually we heard a Rufous-vented Prinia, but it kept well back, and never showed itself during more than 40 minutes spent trying to see it. After giving up, however, we soon found another individual that showed itself briefly, and as the fog turned to mist, so that it was a bit brighter, we finally all got superb close views of another individual of this interesting, patchily-distributed species, now placed in its own genus, *Laticilla*. Striated Babblers were also fairly common in the same area, and more confiding than the prinias.

One area of water within the swamp held a few handsome Indian Spot-billed and Ferruginous Ducks, as well as Gadwall and Northern Pintail and a few Grey-headed Swamphens.



*Our visit to the spectacular Golden Temple at Amritsar was one of the tour highlights for some of the group (Ian Lewis)*

After lunch we briefly looked at the lake, since the mist was lifting a bit, but most ducks were very far off and difficult to see well. However, we managed to pick out three Red-crested Pochard and Tufted Ducks amongst the more common species. We next visited a small patch of woodland, hoping but failing to see Sind Sparrow, but here we found good numbers of Olive-backed Pipits, Red-breasted Flycatchers and numerous *Phylloscopus* warblers. Most of these were Common (Siberian) Chiffchaffs, but at least one bird was a Mountain Chiffchaff. A couple of people also had looks at a single Brooke's Leaf Warbler, and we all saw plenty of Hume's Leaf Warblers and a single Greenish.

Returning to the marshes south of the temple, Oriental Darters and the uncommon and localized Indian Cormorant (or Indian Shag) were perched in the waterside vegetation, while Brown-headed and Black-headed Gulls, along with River Terns. A Spotted Eagle gave us close but brief views as it flew over, but apart from this and one Shikra, the only other raptors we saw all day were small numbers of Western Marsh Harriers. Other good birds seen during the morning session included Hoopoe, Black-rumped Flameback and Dusky Warbler. Unfortunately, the forest department boat was apparently broken, meaning that we were unable to visit area where Birdquest found the "Sind" Jerdon's Babbler on the visit to this site in 2013.

The following day was a travel day, but we had time for a brief visit to the marshes south of the temple, arriving just at dawn, to try and find Sind Sparrows, and despite again searching the same areas where this species had been found on previous tours we did not locate any. It was still misty and dull, and we added no new species during two hours of birding in the area.





*Rufous-vented Prinia was seen well at Harike but proved to be difficult to photograph, unlike White-throated Kingfisher (Frank Lambert)*

Heading south for a 10-hour drive to Bikaner in Rajasthan, we picked up a few good birds on the way including our first Red-naped (or Indian Black) Ibises, White-eared Bulbul, Variable Wheatear, and a lonely Nilgai in one of the vast wheat fields that now dominate this part of the country, where there used to be good semi-desert habitat just a few years ago. Finally, after nearly eleven hours on the road from Harike, we arrived at our comfortable hotel in Bikaner.



*Hundreds of Steppe Eagles and other raptors winter around the Bikaner tip (Frank Lambert)*

We spent the next morning at the carcass dump in the outskirts of Bikaner, which now seems to be run by the Forest Department as a kind of reserve for wintering raptors. Raptors, however, were not the main reason for our visit, but rather the Yellow-eyed Dove, a species that spends the winter on the plains of north-western India. We found three large groups, numbering around 400 in total, feeding on the ground around the edge of the carcass dump. Although considerably less raptors seemed to be present compared to in 2013 and 2014, there were over a hundred Egyptian and twelve Griffon Vultures, about a hundred Steppe Eagles (mostly immature) and one immature Eastern Imperial Eagles. Several Southern Grey Shrikes and Variable Wheatears were also present along with a Rosy and four Common Starlings. From Bikaner we drove across the Thar Desert to the vicinity of Khichan, where we found about 6,000 Demoiselle Cranes around some lakes, along with several hundred Rock Doves. We also found our first Brown Rock Chat on one of the houses there. Later we headed to Jaisalmer for a three nights stay.



*The cryptic female of Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse (Frank Lambert)*

The new day saw us heading to Desert National Park, home to the last viable population of the Critically Endangered Great Indian Bustard, a species that seems destined to go extinct within the next decade (almost no breeding has been reported for many years, so the population is mainly of aging adults). We spent all of the morning searching for the bustards, and along the way watched whatever we could find. Our first stop, a viewpoint within the Sudarsi Enclosure, where there were no cattle and subsequently good grasslands stretching for 2-3 miles in each direction, quickly produced our other main target – a confiding pair of White-browed Bush Chats.

The bustard, however, despite its large size, proved to be a difficult bird to find and despite all our efforts, it was only in the mid-afternoon, and after a tip-off from some park staff, that we finally found this species. Incredibly, we saw nine birds, feeding in a strung-out line and covering the ground quickly. They allowed us to approach to within about 300m at the closest approach (from behind a wall), but any nearer and they would certainly have flown off. Other interesting birds we saw during our search included Eurasian Griffon and a single Cinereous Vulture, Tawny Eagle, small numbers of Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse, Desert, Isabelline and Variable Wheatears,, Black-crowned Sparrow-Lark and thousands of Greater Short-toed and



Bimaculated Larks, as well as a single Desert Whitethroat. We also saw two pairs of the so-called Punjab Raven, a possible future split from Northern Raven. On the way back to Jaisalmer we saw a nice pair of Laggar Falcons at a nest site.

Next morning we headed to the Fossil Park, where we spent an enjoyable couple of hours birding in very pleasant weather – not the usual freezing cold of recent years. Here we found several Red-tailed Wheatears, Desert Larks, Trumpeter Finch, Rufous-fronted Prinia and Striolated Bunting, all new for the trip. Next we returned to Jaisalmer for a brief tour of the Citadel, and a walk through the wonderful back-streets with a knowledgeable local guide. After lunch, as it cooled down, we returned to Desert National Park and quickly found Asian Desert Warbler, a species we had missed the previous day. Our search for another missing species, Cream-coloured Courser, took the rest of the afternoon but we eventually found six that gave us wonderful views in the last sun of the day.



*The subtly-marked Red-tailed Wheatear winters in areas of barren rocks in north-west India (Frank Lambert)*

Leaving Jaisalmer behind, we headed south to the remote village of Siana, seeing very few birds on the way, with the only notable species being a group of five Eurasian Griffon and one Cinereous Vulture. Siana has now become a regular place for bird tour groups to spend 1-2 days because it offers an opportunity to see some fairly difficult species in the relatively remote and sparsely inhabited area of dry hills and plains that surround the village. We arrived at our lovely lodge, run by an aristocratic Rajput family in time for some afternoon birding. We headed to an area that is well-known for Rock Bush Quail, and were surprised to find a male White-bellied Minivet here – one of our main target species and a bird that usually takes some considerable effort to find. Shortly afterwards the bush quails put in an appearance and we were able to watch six birds at fairly close range on the other side of a narrow valley. After leaving this area we then had the incredible luck of seeing a group of seven Indian Thick-knees, followed at dusk by at least three Painted Sandgrouse visiting a drinking pool at dusk. This is yet another difficult Indian endemic that can be tricky.

The following day after watching Spotted Owlet and a day-roosting Indian Scops Owl, we headed out to various sites near Siana. We first visited a breeding site for Indian Vulture, where two birds were sitting on the rocks – considerably fewer of this rapidly declining species than last year. This area also produced superb views of our first Sulphur-bellied Warbler, Bay-backed Shrikes, Small Minivets, Yellow-crowned Woodpecker and two new raptors for the tour; Bonelli's Eagle and Short-toed Snake Eagles. During our two late evening drives were not successful in locating any Leopards, which are now only sighted a couple of times per year, but we did see a superb Striped Hyenas and an Indian Eagle-Owl.



*We found our first wintering Sulphur-bellied Warblers at Siana (Frank Lambert)*

After Siana the next stop was Mount Abu, a mountain rising from the surrounding plains to reach 1,722 meters above sea level, where our main target was the rare and range-restricted Green Avadavat. Although it took a few hours to locate a party of this particularly attractive finch, we had fantastic views as they fed on the ground nearby. Other birds noted in the area included White-capped and Crested Buntings, White-spotted Fantail, Blue Rock-thrush, Tawny-bellied Babbler, Sulphur-bellied Warbler, Indian Black-lored (or Indian Yellow) Tits, Indian Robins and a rather unexpected Blyth's Reed Warbler.

Next morning we searched various forested areas on the mountain, where we picked up a couple of foraging Indian Scimitar Babblers, a confiding pair of Red Spurfowl, two Brown-capped Pygmy Woodpeckers, and more Green Avadavats, Indian Black-lored Tits and an Ashy Drongo.

Then we left Rajasthan behind, dropping down into the plains of Gujarat, bordering the Arabian Sea. After arriving at our rustic lodge at Zainabad on the edge of the Little Rann of Kutch, again run by local aristocratic landowners, we had excellent views of a well-hidden Pallid Scops Owl, one of several that winter in the lodge grounds. We then headed into the Rann late in the afternoon, where we saw both Pallid and Montagu's Harriers, Common Cranes and had brief views of a Macqueen's Bustard in flight. We watched the red sun disappear below the flat horizon over the salt flats and then started our search for nightjars. It wasn't long before we found the first of two Syke's Nightjars, which gave us excellent views in their open, barren habitat.





*Crested Bunting and Indian Jungle Crow were fairly common on Mt Abu (Frank Lambert)*



*Roosting Pallid Scops Owl is extremely well camouflaged (Frank Lambert)*

As the sun rose the following morning we headed out into the open saline flats of the Little Rann of Kutch. The main target birds in this habitat were Macqueen's Bustard (which most of us had seen briefly the day before) and Greater Hoopoe Lark. Despite an intense search for several hours, we failed to find both species, and then our vehicle broke down in the middle of the salt flats, and we wasted a couple of hours of search time. Other observations during our dusty search for our targets included a small number of handsome Asiatic Wild Ass (Onagers), a few harriers, a nice Peregrine Falcon and about fifteen Crested Larks. Returning for lunch in a different vehicle, we relaxed briefly and then headed out to some local wetlands. Here we found that the usual huge lake had dwindled to a fifth of its "normal" size, but it was still teeming with birds and we spent a couple of exciting hours scanning the lake. Great White and Dalmatian



Pelicans, good numbers of Lesser and Greater Flamingos, and Common Cranes and a few Eurasian Spoonbills fed alongside an assortment of waders and ducks, as well as Nilgai at the waters' edge. Later we scanned a few ploughed fields and quickly located five gorgeous Indian Coursers. We headed to another area, seeing our first Rufous-tailed Lark on route, and then did a brief night drive before dinner, soon finding a confiding Indian Nightjar displaying at very close range. The last morning at Zainabad we made an attempt to get better views of Macqueen's Bustard and in the end obtained very good flight views of one. It was now time to head for the Bhuj region of western Gujarat, where yet another set of special birds awaited us. We reached Nakhatrana, our base for the next three nights, late in the afternoon, and after dumping our gear, headed straight out to the field with our local guide and host, Jugal. After an hour we reached an area where Sociable Plover's regularly winter, and within minutes we were watching seven of these globally threatened waders.



*Sociable Plovers usually winter near Zainabad (Frank Lambert)*

Afterwards we headed to a nearby lake, littered with thousands of Eurasian Coots, and with many other birds around the edges. Here we found wintering Paddyfield Warblers and a selection of waders, including Temminck's Stints, as well as eleven White-tailed Plovers, Painted Storks and a Western Reef Egret far from the coast. Just before leaving a Red-necked Falcon landed nearby and then proceeded to fly off low at terrific speed some 500m where it caught a small bird which it then returned to eat within 70m of where we were standing. Superb! As we left the area the first waves of Common Cranes that roost around the lake were passing noisily overhead, providing a wonderful end to what had been a long but very memorable day.

Early the next morning we found ourselves waiting in front of a berry-bearing bush where Grey Hypocolius had been regularly feeding, and within an hour about six birds, including at least two males, gave us all really excellent views. After a pair of Barred Buttonquail, we drove to "Conical Rock" for a late breakfast, where Rufous-tailed Larks and Red-tailed Wheatear were seen well. We then moved to an area of dry thorn forest, stopping for Sykes Lark and Yellow-wattled Lapwings on route. Once in the thorn forest we very quickly came across yet another important target – a pair of stunning White-naped Tits.



*Yellow-wattled Plover – one of the endemic waders of the Indian Subcontinent (Frank Lambert)*

In the afternoon, we searched a new area, where there were large fig trees, and soon found three Marshall's loras. Next we searched for Indian Bush Lark, which took some time to find, followed by Sirkeer Malkoha. Incredibly, the malkoha was seen within meters of the road before we even reached the area that we had intended to search for this species. Since Tom had missed Sykes Warbler earlier in the trip, our last call of the day was to find one of these, and within twenty minutes that had been accomplished so we retired to the hotel for an early evening meal.

Early the next morning we drove in the dark to arrive at the shoreline near Mandvi in the Gulf of Kutch as the sun rose over the sea. Here, after a field breakfast on a beautiful section of beach, we spent a very pleasant four hours walking along the sandy beach, which provided a good selection of shorebirds, many of which were new for our trip list. These included many Western Reef Herons, Great Stone-curlew (Thick-knee), Grey, Lesser Sand, Greater Sand and Kentish Plovers, Terek Sandpiper, Sanderling, Dunlin, 25 Red Knot, 13 Great Stone-curlews, Lesser Black-backed (Heuglin's and Steppe), Pallas's (or Greater Black-headed), Slender-billed, Black-headed and Brown-headed Gulls, Gull-billed, Caspian, Little and Lesser Crested Terns, Whimbrel, Eurasian Curlews, Eurasian Oystercatcher, Bar-tailed Godwit and Ruddy Turnstone. Our main target took several hours to find, but as the tide came in we managed to find at least seven Crab Plovers – one of the world's most fascinating waders - feeding at the edge of the surf.

In the afternoon, after lunch at a local restaurant, we searched a large area for the highly-localised, prominently streaked *krishnakumarsinhji* subspecies of Sand Lark. It took a while to find them, but eventually we came across flocks totaling around 100 individuals in a sandy field not far from the coast. Next morning, after an early breakfast, our visit to Gujarat ended and we headed for Nagpur in the state of Maharashtra in west-central India. After two internal flights we reached the city of Nagpur in the late afternoon and checked into our luxury hotel near the airport.





*Crab Plovers at Mandvi Beach (Frank Lambert)*

From Nagpur we headed westwards to the huge Melghat Tiger Reserve, stopping off on route at a large wetland, where we enjoyed excellent views of wintering Booted Warblers and resident Clamorous (or Indian) Reed Warblers. Other interesting observations here included a good variety of ducks including Lesser Whistling Ducks, Cotton Pygmy Geese, Indian Spot-billed Duck and huge numbers of Red-crested Pochard, as well as Pheasant-tailed Jacanas and Purple Heron.

The main reason for a visit to the remote Melghat Tiger Reserve is to see the rare Forest Owlet. Rediscovered by Pamela Rasmussen and others in northwest Maharashtra as recently as 1997, there had been a gap of over 100 years since a few specimens were taken in the late 19th century from various points along the Satpura range. Within an hour of arrival in the area where this diurnal species is regularly seen we were watching one in the mid-canopy, from which it occasionally called before flying to another perch to begin hunting. We did some general birding in the owlet area before heading off, and quickly found a superb Indian Nuthatch. Other birds included Crested Treeswifts, Alpine Swifts, a White-eyed Buzzard, Large Cuckooshrike and Brown-capped Pygmy Woodpeckers. As dusk approached we searched for Mottled Wood Owl in a known territory but only heard one briefly in the far distance. Although it was rather late in the evening when we finally reached our hotel at Chikhaldara, we were up early again the following day and searching for the owl before dawn – again, however, none were seen and none were calling.

Our full day in the vicinity of the Tiger Reserve produced some excellent birds, however, including a pair of Bonelli's Eagle, four confiding Jungle Owlets, Malabar Whistling Thrush, Yellow-crowned and White-naped Woodpeckers, Black-rumped Flameback, Common House Martins, the recently split Indian Paradise Flycatcher, Black-naped Monarch, Ultramarine Flycatchers, Velvet-fronted Nuthatch, Tickell's Thrush, Black-hooded Oriole of the vocally distinct Peninsular Indian form *maderaspatanus*, Grey Hornbills, Greater Racket-tailed Drongos and a. The following morning, before heading back to Nagpur we had a couple of hours to spare, and used these to find Brown-cheeked Fulvetta, Golden-fronted Leafbird and, unexpectedly, two Orange-headed Thrushes. Reaching Nagpur, it was time to say our goodbyes, and to thank everyone for their great company, which, together with all the excellent birds and exciting places, made this such a memorable trip.



*We had excellent views of Forest Owlet at Melghat Tiger Reserve (Frank Lambert)*

**'BIRDS OF THE TRIP' WINNERS 2016:**

- 1st: Great Indian Bustard
- 2nd: Grey Hypocolius
- 3rd: Forest Owlet
- 4th: Painted Sandgrouse
- 5th: White-bellied Minivet
- 5th: Orange-headed Thrush



*The group at Mandvi and Bikaner Tip (Frank Lambert)*





*Red-wattled Lapwing, a common but stunning wader (Frank Lambert)*

## SYSTEMATIC LIST OF SPECIES RECORDED DURING THE TOUR

The species names and taxonomy used in the report follows Gill, F & D Donsker (Eds). **IOC World Bird Names**. This list is updated several times annually and is available at <http://www.worldbirdnames.org>.

Names of the subspecies follow Rasmussen, P.C. & Anderton J.C. (2012): *Birds of South Asia, The Ripley Guide* and Ali, S. & Ripley, S.D. (1987): *Compact Handbook of the Birds of India and Pakistan*.

Species which were heard but not seen are indicated by the symbol (H).

Species which were only recorded by the leader are indicated by the symbol (LO).

Species which were not personally recorded by the leader are indicated by the symbol (NL).

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 has only been 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).

**Lesser Whistling Duck** *Dendrocygna javanica* 30 at a reservoir near Nagpur.

**Greylag Goose** *Anser anser* [*rubrirostris*].

**Ruddy Shelduck** *Tadorna ferruginea* Three at Mandvi Beach.

**Cotton Pygmy Goose (Cotton Teal)** *Nettapus coromandelianus* 30 at a reservoir near Nagpur.

**Gadwall** *Anas strepera*

**Eurasian Wigeon** *Anas penelope*

**Indian Spot-billed Duck (Burmese S-b D)** *Anas poecilorhyncha* Noted at Harike, Zainabad and Nagpur.

**Northern Shoveler** *Anas clypeata*

**Northern Pintail** *Anas acuta*

**Garganey** *Anas querquedula* A few sightings.

**Eurasian Teal** *Anas crecca*



*Indian Peafowl remains common in the Indian countryside, and very tame! (Frank Lambert)*

**Red-crested Pochard** *Netta rufina* Three at Harike and at least 500 near Nagpur.  
**Common Pochard** *Aythya ferina* A few widely distributed.  
**Ferruginous Duck (F Pochard)** *Aythya nyroca* 20 at Harike.  
**Tufted Duck** *Aythya fuligula* 20 near Zainabad and a few elsewhere.  
**Grey Francolin** *Francolinus pondicerianus* Common and widespread [*interpositus*].  
**Jungle Bush Quail** ♦ *Perdica asiatica* (H) Mt Abu.  
**Rock Bush Quail** ♦ *Perdica argoondah* Group of six at Siana [*meinertzhageni*].  
**Red Spurfowl\*** ♦ *Galloperdix spadicea* A pair seen well on Mt Abu.  
**Indian Peafowl (Common P)** *Pavo cristatus* Common and widespread. The national bird of India.  
**Little Grebe** *Tachybaptus ruficollis* Widespread [*albescens*].  
**Great Crested Grebe** *Podiceps cristatus* Four near Zainabad.  
**Greater Flamingo** *Phoenicopterus roseus* 100 near Zainabad.  
**Lesser Flamingo** *Phoeniconaias minor* 300 near Zainabad.  
**Painted Stork** ♦ *Mycteria leucocephala* Scattered records of small numbers.  
**Asian Openbill\*** ♦ *Anastomus oscitans* Seven at a reservoir near Nagpur.  
**Woolly-necked Stork** *Ciconia episcopus* One in the Melghat area.  
**Black-headed Ibis** *Threskiornis melanocephalus* Scattered records, up to 22 in a day.  
**Red-naped Ibis** ♦ (Indian Black Ibis) *Pseudibis papillosa* Widespread, up to 25 in a day.  
**Glossy Ibis** *Plegadis falcinellus* 60 at Harike, and a few elsewhere  
**Eurasian Spoonbill** *Platalea leucorodia* [*nominate*].  
**Black Bittern** *Dupetor flavicollis* one at Harike  
**Black-crowned Night Heron** *Nycticorax nycticorax* Seven were noted.  
**Indian Pond Heron** *Ardeola grayii* Widespread.  
**Eastern Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus coromandus* Widespread, often in good numbers.  
**Grey Heron** *Ardea cinerea* Widespread in small numbers.  
**Purple Heron** *Ardea purpurea* A few widely scattered records.  
**Great Egret** *Ardea alba* Locally common [*modesta*].



Intermediate Egret *Egretta intermedia* Only three were noted [*nominate*].

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* [*nominate*].

Western Reef Heron (W R-Egret) *Egretta gularis* Good numbers on route to Bhuj and at Mandvi [*schistacea*].



We were able to study two morphs of Western Reef Egret at Mandvi Beach (Frank Lambert)

Great White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus* Only six seen, at Harkie and in the Zainabad area.

Dalmatian Pelican ♦ *Pelecanus crispus* Seen on four dates, with a maximum of 26.

Little Cormorant *Microcarbo niger* Fairly numerous at suitable wetlands.

Indian Cormorant ♦ (I Shag) *Phalacrocorax fuscicollis* At least 80 at Harike.

Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo* Good numbers at Harike, and near Nagpur [*sinensis*].

Oriental Darter *Anhinga melanogaster* 15 at Harike.

Black-winged Kite (B-shouldered K) *Elanus caeruleus* Widespread [*vociferus*].

Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus* 150 at Bikaner [*nominate*] and a few elsewhere [*ginginianus*]. Note

Crested Honey Buzzard (Oriental H B) *Pernis ptilorhynchus* Three noted [*ruficollis*].

White-rumped Vulture (Indian White-b V) *Gyps bengalensis* One at Bikaner. See Note.

Indian Vulture *Gyps indicus* A total of 4-6 at Siana. See note.

Griffon Vulture (Eurasian G V) *Gyps fulvus* 12 at Bikaner and a few around Jaisalmer.

Cinereous Vulture (Eurasian Black V) *Aegypius monachus* Three sightings around Jaisalmer.

Short-toed Snake Eagle (S-t Eagle) *Circaetus gallicus* A total of three were observed.

Changeable Hawk-Eagle *Nisaetus cirrhatus* Observed twice at Melghat

Black Eagle *Ictinaetus malaiensis* (NL) One seen by clients at Melghat

Greater Spotted Eagle *Clanga clanga* One at Harike.

Booted Eagle *Hieraetus pennatus* One near Zainabad.

Tawny Eagle *Aquila rapax* One in Desert National Park [*vindhiana*].



Small numbers of Griffon Vultures were seen at Bikaner, here with Steppe Eagles (Frank Lambert)

**Steppe Eagle** *Aquila nipalensis* 100 at Bikaner, also noted around Jaisalmer and Siana [*nominata*].

**Eastern Imperial Eagle (Imperial E)** *Aquila heliaca* One at Bikaner.

**Bonelli's Eagle** *Aquila fasciata* One at Siana [*nominata*].

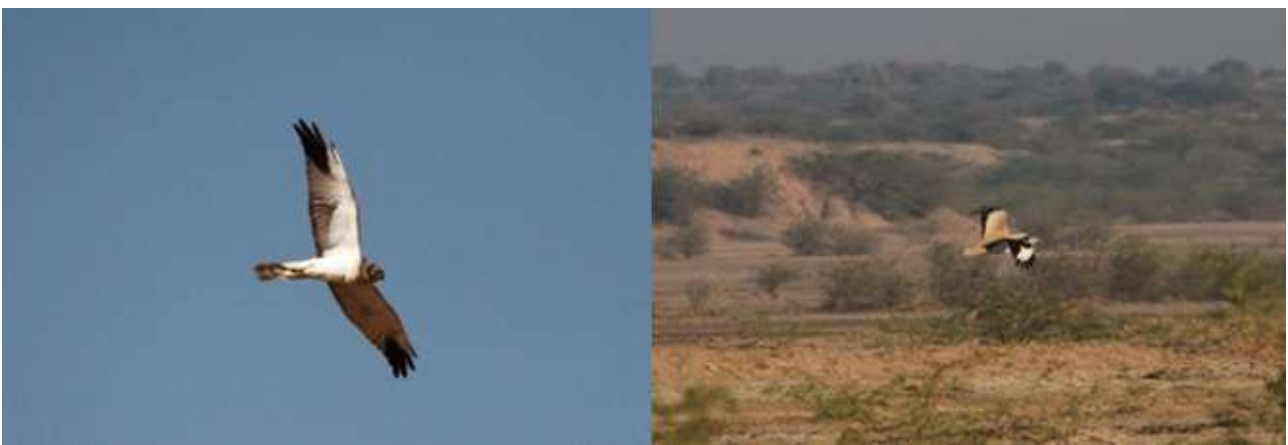
**Shikra** *Accipiter badius* Small numbers were noted [*dussumieri*].

**Western Marsh Harrier** *Circus aeruginosus* [*nominata*].

**Pallid Harrier** *Circus macrourus* Small numbers at scattered localities.

**Montagu's Harrier** *Circus pygargus* Two in the Little Rann of Kutch.

**Black Kite** *Milvus [migrans] govinda* Rather widespread in good numbers.



Pallid Harrier and Macqueen's Bustard at the Little Rann of Kutch (Frank Lambert)



**Black-eared Kite** *Milvus [migrans] lineatus* Numerous at the carcass dump near Bikaner  
**White-eyed Buzzard** ♦ *Butastur teesa* Only one, at Melghat.  
**Long-legged Buzzard** *Buteo rufinus* Small numbers in the arid west.  
**White-breasted Waterhen** *Amaurornis phoenicurus* Common at Harike and one near Nagpur [*nominate*].  
**Ruddy-breasted Crake** *Porzana fusca* Two confiding birds at Harike. A write-in!  
**Grey-headed Swamphen** *Porphyrio poliocephalus* Widespread in small numbers. See note.  
**Common Moorhen** *Gallinula chloropus* Common at suitable wetlands [*indica*].  
**Eurasian Coot (Common C)** *Fulica atra* Common at suitable wetlands [*nominate*].  
**Great Indian Bustard** ♦ (Indian B) *Ardeotis nigriceps* A group of nine at Desert National Park.  
**Macqueen's Bustard**\*♦ *Chlamydotis macqueenii* Two at Little Rann of Kutch.  
**Demoiselle Crane** ♦ *Grus virgo* We estimated 6,000 at Khichan.  
**Common Crane** *Grus grus* A few thousand near Zainabad and frequent flocks of 5-100 in the Bhuj region



Thousands of Demoiselle Cranes spend the winter at Khichan (Frank Lambert)

**Barred Buttonquail** *Turnix suscitator* A pair near Nakhatrana [*taigoor*].  
**Indian Stone-curlew (I Thick-knee)** *Burhinus indicus* Seven at Siana.  
**Great Stone-curlew** ♦ (G Thick-knee) *Esacus recurvirostris* 13 at Mandvi.  
**Eurasian Oystercatcher** *Haematopus ostralegus* 15 at Mandvi.  
**Crab Plover** *Haematopus ostralegus* 7 at Mandvi.  
**Black-winged Stilt** *Himantopus himantopus* Widespread [*nominate*].  
**Pied Avocet** *Recurvirostra avosetta* 15 near Zainabad.  
**Yellow-wattled Lapwing** ♦ (Y-w Plover) *Vanellus malabaricus* Good numbers in the Nakhatrana-Bhuj region  
**Red-wattled Lapwing (R-w Plover)** *Vanellus indicus* [*nominate*].  
**Sociable Lapwing (Sociable Plover)** ♦ *Vanellus gregarius* Seven near Zainabad.  
**White-tailed Lapwing** ♦ (W-t Plover) *Vanellus leucurus* Eleven near Zainabad.  
**Grey Plover (Black-bellied P)** *Pluvialis squatarola* Five at Mandvi.  
**Little Ringed Plover** *Charadrius dubius* Two near Nagpur [*jerdoni*].  
**Kentish Plover** *Charadrius alexandrinus* Common on the coast at Mandvi [*nominate*].  
**Lesser Sand Plover** *Charadrius mongolus* 60 on the coast at Mandvi.  
**Greater Sand Plover** *Charadrius leschenaultia* One noted on the coast at Mandvi.  
**Pheasant-tailed Jacana** *Hydrophasianus chirurgus* Four at the reservoir near Nagpur.  
**Common Snipe** *Gallinago gallinago* 40 near Zainabad.  
**Black-tailed Godwit** *Limosa limosa* At least 30 near Zainabad [*limosa*].  
**Bar-tailed Godwit** *Limosa lapponica* Twenty on the coast near Mandvi.  
**Whimbrel (Eurasian W)** *Numenius phaeopus* Two on the coast near Mandvi.  
**Eurasian Curlew** *Numenius arquata* Small numbers were noted.  
**Common Redshank** *Tringa tetanus* ..Four on the coast near Mandvi.  
**Marsh Sandpiper** *Tringa stagnatilis* Two near Zainabad.  
**Common Greenshank** *Tringa nebularia*



Little Ringed Plover at Nagpur - this race (*jerdoni*) is unusual in not having a distinct non-breeding plumage (Frank Lambert)

- Green Sandpiper** *Tringa ochropus* Fairly widespread in small numbers.
- Wood Sandpiper** *Tringa glareola* A total of three were noted.
- Terek Sandpiper** ♦ *Xenus cinereus* Two on the coast near Mandvi.
- Common Sandpiper** *Actitis hypoleucos* Surprisingly, only two were noted
- Red Knot** *Calidris canutus* A flock of 25 on the beach at Mandvi.
- Sanderling** *Calidris alba* 20 on the coast near Mandvi.
- Little Stint** *Calidris minuta* 15 near Zainabad and fifty on the coast near Mandvi.
- Temminck's Stint** *Calidris temminckii* Six near Zainabad.
- Dunlin** *Calidris alpina* Six on the coast near Mandvi.
- Ruff** *Philomachus pugnax*
- Cream-colored Courser** ♦ *Cursorius cursor* Six at the Desert National Park near Jaisalmer.
- Indian Courser** ♦ *Cursorius coromandelicus* A flock of five near Zainabad and five in the Rann of Kutch.
- Slender-billed Gull** *Larus genei* 60 on the coast near Mandvi.
- Brown-headed Gull** *Chroicocephalus brunnicephalus* Noted at Harike and on the coast.
- Black-headed Gull (Common B-h G)** *Chroicocephalus ridibundus* Ten at Harike and one on the coast
- Pallas's Gull (Great Black-headed G)** *Ichthyaetus ichthyaetus* 50 on the coast including some nice adults.
- Lesser Black-backed Gull** ♦ (Heuglin's G) *Larus [fuscus] heuglini* At least ten on the coast. See note
- Lesser Black-backed Gull** ♦ *Larus [fuscus] barabensis* One at Harike and a few on the coast.
- Gull-billed Tern** *Gelochelidon nilotica* Noted at Zainabad and on the coast.
- Caspian Tern** *Hydroprogne caspia* 25 on the coast.
- Lesser Crested Tern** *Thalasseus bengalensis* 25 on the coast.
- Little Tern** *Sterna albifrons* At least 50 on the coast.
- River Tern** *Sterna aurantia* Ten at Harike, and four near Nagpur.
- Whiskered Tern** *Chlidonias hybrid* 20 at Harike and 30 near Zainabad [*nominate*].
- Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse** *Pterocles exustus* Small numbers in suitable dry habitat [*hindustani*].
- Painted Sandgrouse** ♦ *Pterocles indicus* At least three coming to drink at Siana.





*Lesser Black-backed (heuglini), Pallas's, Brown-headed and Slender-billed Gulls at Mandiv Beach (Frank Lambert)*

**Rock Dove (R Pigeon) *Columba livia* [intermedia].**

**Yellow-eyed Pigeon ♦ (Y-e Dove) *Columba eversmanni* 400 at Bikaner.**

**Oriental Turtle Dove (Rufous T-D) *Streptopelia orientalis* A few at Mt Abu and at Melghat [meena].**

**Eurasian Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto* Common and widespread**

**Spotted Dove *Spilopelia chinensis* Fairly common at Melghat [suratensis]. See note**

**Laughing Dove *Spilopelia senegalensis* Common and widespread [cambayensis].**

**Yellow-footed Green Pigeon ♦ *Treron phoenicopterus* Two at Melghat [chorigaster].**

**Greater Coucal *Centropus sinensis* Widespread in small numbers [parroti]. See note.**

**Sirkeer Malkoha ♦ *Taccocua leschenaultia* Good views of one near Nakhatrana [sirkee].**



*Spotted Dove of the race suratensis is a likely future split (Frank Lambert)*

**Asian Koel (Common K) *Eudynamys scolopacea*** Noted on five days [*nominata*].  
**Western Barn Owl *Tyto alba*** One briefly near Harike [*stertens*]. See note.  
**Pallid Scops Owl ◇ (Striated S-O) *Otus brucei*** Great views of one roosting bird at Zainabad.  
**Indian Eagle-Owl ◇ (Rock E-O) *Bubo bengalensis*** One at Siana.  
**Mottled Wood Owl ◇ *Strix ocellata*** (H) Heard in the distance at Melghat [*nominata*].  
**Jungle Owlet ◇ *Glaucidium radiatum*** Good views of several at Melghat [*radiatum*].  
**Spotted Owlet *Athene brama*** Seen at Siana and near Zainabad [*indica*].  
**Forest Owlet ◇ *Heteroglaux blewitti*** We found this MEGA at Melghat during the day.  
**Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus*** One near Zainabad.  
**Jungle Nightjar ◇ *Caprimulgus indicus*** One at Melghat.  
**Sykes's Nightjar ◇ *Caprimulgus mahrattensis*** Two with some excellent views at Zainabad.  
**Indian Nightjar ◇ (Indian Little N) *Caprimulgus asiaticus*** One with excellent views at Zainabad.  
**Crested Treeswift *Hemiprocne coronata*** At least 20 at Melghat [*legerli*].  
**Alpine Swift *Tachymarptis melba*** At least 50 at Melghat  
**Little Swift *Apus affinis*** Indian Roller ***Coracias benghalensis*** [*benghalensis*]. Common and widespread  
**White-throated Kingfisher (W-breasted K) *Halcyon smyrnensis*** [*fusca*].  
**Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*** [*bengalensis*].  
**Pied Kingfisher (Lesser Pied K) *Ceryle rudis*** [*leucomelanurus*]  
**Green Bee-eater (Little Green B-e) *Merops orientalis*** Common and widespread [*orientalis and beludschicus*].



*The delightful Green Bee-eater was a very widespread species in Western India (Frank Lambert)*

**Eurasian Hoopoe (Common H) *Upupa epops***  
**Indian Grey Hornbill *Ocyrocus birostris*** Several at Delhi Ridge and Harike.  
**Brown-headed Barbet *Megalaima zeylanica*** Two seen well in Delhi, heard elsewhere [*caniceps*].  
**Coppersmith Barbet *Megalaima haemacephala*** Only few were noted [*indica*].  
**Brown-capped Pygmy Woodpecker ◇ *Dendrocopos nanus*** Two on Mt Abu and two at Melghat [*hardwickii*].  
**Yellow-crowned Woodpecker ◇ (Y-fronted Pied W) *Dendrocopos mahrattensis*** Seen on 7 dates [*nominata*].  
**Black-rumped Flameback *Dinopium benghalense*** [*nominata*].



**White-naped Woodpecker** ♦ (W-n Flameback) ♦ *Chrysocolaptes festivus* One at Melghat.  
**Common Kestrel** *Falco tinnunculus*  
**Red-necked Falcon** ♦ *Falco chiquera* One seen catching a bird near Nakhatarana.  
**Laggar Falcon** ♦ *Falco jugger* Up to six in the Jaisalmer area, including at a nest.  
**Peregrine Falcon** *Falco peregrinus* One in the Little Rann of Kutch [*pelegrinoides*].  
**Alexandrine Parakeet** ♦ *Psittacula eupatria* Noted at Melghat [*nominate*].  
**Rose-ringed Parakeet (Ring-necked P)** *Psittacula krameri* Everywhere [*manillensis*].  
**Plum-headed Parakeet** ♦ *Psittacula cyanocephala* Fairly common at Melghat.  
**Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrike** *Hemipus picatus*. Several at Melghat



*Plum-headed Parakeets were fairly common in Melghat Tiger Reserve (Frank Lambert)*

**Common Woodshrike** *Tephrodornis pondicerianus* [*nominate*].  
**Common lora** *Aegithina tiphia* Only two were noted [*humei*].  
**Marshall's lora** ♦ *Aegithina nigrolutea* Three in the Nakhatarana area.  
**Large Cuckooshrike** *Coracina macei* A couple at Melghat [*nominate*].  
**Small Minivet** *Pericrocotus cinnamomeus*  
**White-bellied Minivet** ♦ *Pericrocotus erythropygius* A lovely male near Siana.  
**Long-tailed Minivet** ♦ *Pericrocotus ethologus* A couple at Harike.  
**Long-tailed Shrike** *Lanius schach* [*erythronotus*].  
**Isabelline Shrike** ♦ *Lanius isabellinus* [*arenarius*].  
**Bay-backed Shrike** *Lanius vittatus* [*nominate*].  
**Southern Grey Shrike** *Lanius meridionalis* [*lahtora*].  
**Black-hooded Oriole** *Oriolus xanthornus* Several at Melghat [*maderaspatanus*].  
**Black Drongo** *Dicrurus macrocercus* [*albirictus* & *macrocercus*].  
**Ashy Drongo** *Dicrurus leucophaeus* Two on Mt Abu, others at Melghat [*longicaudatus*].



*White-bellied Miniver and Marshall's lora, two of many Indian endemics seen on the tour (Frank Lambert)*

**White-bellied Drongo** *Dicrurus caeruleus* Noted on Mt Abu and Melghat [*nominata*].  
**Greater Racket-tailed Drongo** *Dicrurus paradiseus* Fairly common at Melghat [*rangoonensis*].  
**White-spotted Fantail** ♦ (Spot-breasted F) *Rhipidura albogularis* Two on Mt Abu and two at Melghat.  
**White-browed Fantail** *Rhipidura aureola* [*nominata*].  
**Indian Paradise Flycatcher** ♦ ++ (Asian P F) *Terpsiphone paradisi* One at Melghat. See note.  
**Rufous Treepie** *Dendrocitta vagabunda* [*vagabunda* & *pallida*]  
**House Crow** *Corvus splendens* [*nominata*].  
**Indian Jungle Crow** ++ *Corvus culminates*



*Desert Lark near Jaisalmer, at the eastern edge of its range (Frank Lambert)*

**Northern Raven (Common Raven)** *Corvus corax* Rather common in the Jaisalmer area [*subcorax*]. See note  
**Grey Hypocolius** ♦ *Hypocolius ampelinus* A total of six with some great views near Nakhatrana.  
**Grey-headed Canary-flycatcher (G-h Flycatcher)** *Culicicapa ceylonensis* Four at Melghat.



**Cinereous Tit (Grey Tit) *Parus cinereus*** [stupae].

**White-naped Tit** ♦ *Parus nuchalis* Two with great views near Nakhatrana.

**Indian Black-lored Tit** ♦ (I Yellow Tit) *Parus aplonotus* Seen on Mt Abu and Melghat [nominate].



*Indian Bush Lark and Rufous-tailed Lark (Frank Lambert)*

**Desert Lark *Ammomanes deserti*** A few at Jaisalmer [phoenicuroides].

**Rufous-tailed Lark** ♦ *Ammomanes phoenicura* Eight in the Nakhatrana area and one near Nagpur [nominate].

**Black-crowned Sparrow-Lark** ♦ (B-c Finch-L) *Eremopterix nigriceps* Good views at Jaisalmer.

**Ashy-crowned Sparrow-Lark** ♦ (A-c Finch-L) *Eremopterix griseus* Around Zainabad and in Nakhatrana.

**Indian Bush Lark *Mirafr erythroptera*** Seen near Nakhatrana [nominate].

**Sykes's Lark** ♦ *Galerida deva* Small numbers near Nakhatrana.

**Crested Lark *Galerida cristata*** [chendoola].

**Greater Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla*** Abundant, sometimes in huge flocks.

**Bimaculated Lark** ♦ *Melanocorypha bimaculata* Abundant in some areas, sometimes in large flocks

**Sand Lark** ♦ *Alaudala raytal* About 100 at Mandvi [krishnakumarsinhji].

**Red-whiskered Bulbul *Pycnonotus jocosus*** Noted on Mt Abu and at Melghat.

**Red-vented Bulbul *Pycnonotus caffer***

**White-eared Bulbul *Pycnonotus leucotis*** [humayuni].



*The intricately-patterned Red-vented Bulbul is a common species in India (Frank Lambert)*

**Grey-throated Martin** *Riparia chinensis* A few seen at wetlands near the beginning of the tour  
**Barn Swallow** *Hirundo rustica* **Wire-tailed Swallow** *Hirundo smithii* (LO)  
**Eurasian Crag Martin** *Ptyonoprogne rupestris* Ten at Melghat.  
**Dusky Crag Martin** *Ptyonoprogne concolor*  
**Common House Martin (Northern H-M)** *Delichon urbicum*  
**Red-rumped Swallow** *Cecropsis daurica* [rufula].  
**Streak-throated Swallow** ◇ (Indian Cliff S) *Petrochelidon fluvicola* 300 at a colony near Zainabad.  
**Cetti's Warbler (C's Bush-Warbler)** *Cettia cetti* One at Harike.  
**Common Chiffchaff** *Phylloscopus collybita* Common at Harike, few elsewhere [tristis]. See note.  
**Mountain Chiffchaff** *Phylloscopus sindianus* 1-2 at Harike.  
**Dusky Warbler** *Phylloscopus fuscatus* several at Harike.  
**Tickell's Leaf Warbler** *Phylloscopus affinis* Three at scattered localities.  
**Sulphur-bellied Warbler** ◇ *Phylloscopus griseolus* Up to ten a day on five dates.  
**Brooks's Leaf Warbler** ◇ *Phylloscopus subviridis* Brief views of one at Harike.  
**Hume's Leaf Warbler (H's Warbler, Buff-browed W)** *Phylloscopus humei* Widespread [humei].  
**Greenish Warbler** *Phylloscopus trochiloides* Some in Delhi and Harike and several in Maharashtra [viridanus].  
**Clamorous Reed Warbler** ◇ *Acrocephalus stentoreus* One gave excellent views near Nagpur. See note.  
**Paddyfield Warbler** *Acrocephalus agricola* Great views in reedbeds near Zainabad.  
**Blyth's Reed Warbler** ◇ *Acrocephalus dumetorum* Only one seen, on Mt Abu.  
**Booted Warbler** ◇ *Iduna caligata* Great views of one at a reservoir near Nagpur.  
**Sykes's Warbler** ◇ *Iduna rama* Small numbers were noted.  
**Rufous-fronted Prinia** ◇ *Prinia buchanani* Fairly common from Jaisalmer to Siana.  
**Grey-breasted Prinia** *Prinia hodgsonii* [nominata].  
**Graceful Prinia** *Prinia gracilis* Observed at several localities [lepida].  
**Yellow-bellied Prinia** *Prinia flaviventris* Rather common at Harike [sindiana].  
**Ashy Prinia** *Prinia socialis* [socialis].  
**Plain Prinia** *Prinia inornata* [inornata & terricolor].



Blyth's Reed Warbler and Striated Babbler (Frank Lambert)

**Common Tailorbird** *Orthotomus sutorius*  
**Indian Scimitar Babbler** ◇ *Pomatorhinus horsfieldii* Excellent views on Mt Abu, heard at Melghat.  
**Tawny-bellied Babbler** ◇ *Dumetia hyperythra* A small flock on Mt Abu [nominata].  
**Rufous-vented Prinia** ◇ *Laticilla burnesii* Excellent views at Harike. See note.  
**Brown-cheeked Fulvetta** *Alcippe poiocephala* A pair at Melghat [brucei].  
**Common Babbler** ◇ *Turdoides caudatus* [caudata].  
**Striated Babbler** ◇ *Turdoides earlei* Common at Harike.  
**Large Grey Babbler** ◇ *Turdoides malcolmi*  
**Jungle Babbler** *Turdoides striata* [orientalis & sumnervillei].  
**Lesser Whitethroat** *Sylvia curruca*  
**Desert Whitethroat** ◇ (D Lesser W) *Sylvia minula* One, possibly two, in Desert National Park.



Hume's Whitethroat ◇ (H Lesser W) *Sylvia althaea* One near Jaisalmer.  
 Eastern Orphean Warbler *Sylvia crassirostris* Several were noted.  
 Asian Desert Warbler ◇ *Sylvia nana* Two at Jaisalmer.  
 Yellow-eyed Babbler *Chrysomma sinense* A few at Harike [*hypoleucum*].  
 Oriental White-eye *Zosterops palpebrosus* [*amabilis*].  
 Indian Nuthatch ◇ *Sitta castanea* Two at Melghat [*nominata*].  
 Velvet-fronted Nuthatch *Sitta frontalis* Observed on several occasions at Melghat.  
 Bank Myna *Acridotheres ginginianus*  
 Common Myna *Acridotheres tristis* [*nominata*].  
 Pied Myna (Asian P Starling) *Gracupica contra* [*nominata*].  
 Brahminy Starling ◇ *Sturnia pagodarum*  
 Rosy Starling ◇ (Rose-coloured S) *Pastor roseus*



*The beautiful Brahminy Starling (Frank Lambert)*

Tickell's Thrush *Turdus unicolor* ◇ One seen well at Melghat.  
 Orange-headed Thrush *Geokichla citrina* ◇ Two seen well at Melghat [*cyanota*]  
 Indian Robin ◇ (Indian Black R) *Copsychus fulicatus* [*cambaiensis*].  
 Oriental Magpie-Robin *Copsychus saularis* [*nominata*].  
 Tickell's Blue Flycatcher *Cyornis tickelliae* Two at Melghat [*nominata*].  
 Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica* Two at Harike and others near Zainabad.  
 Malabar Whistling Thrush ◇ *Myiophonus horsfieldii* One at Melghat  
 Red-breasted Flycatcher *Ficedula parva*  
 Ultramarine Flycatcher ◇ *Ficedula superciliaris* Two at Melghat.  
 Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*  
 Blue Rock Thrush *Monticola solitarius* One on Mt Abu.  
 White-browed Bush Chat ◇ (Stoliczka's B) *Saxicola macrorhynchus* A pair in Desert National Park.  
 Siberian Stonechat *Saxicola maurus* [*indicus*].  
 Pied Bush Chat *Saxicola caprata*

Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina*

Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti* [nominate].

Brown Rock-Chat ♦ *Oenanthe fusca* [nominate].

Variable Wheatear ♦ (Eastern Pied W) *Oenanthe picata* [picata, capistrata and opistholeuca].

Red-tailed Wheatear ♦ *Oenanthe chrysopygia* Seen on two dates

Golden-fronted Leafbird (Gold-f L) *Chloropsis aurifrons* One at Melghat [nominate].



Brown Rock Chat and Desert Wheatear (Frank Lambert)

Pale-billed Flowerpecker ♦ *Dicaeum erythrorhynchos* (H) One heard at Melghat .

Purple Sunbird *Cinnyris asiatica* [sola].

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* [indicus].

Yellow-throated Sparrow ♦ (Chestnut-shouldered Petronia) *Gymnoris xanthocollis*

Baya Weaver *Ploceus philippinus* A couple seen near Nagpur [philippinus].

Red Avadava (R Munia) *Amandava amandava* Ten at Harike and 40 near Nagpur [nominate].

Green Avadavat ♦ (G Munia) *Amandava formosa* Around 12 on Mt Abu.

Indian Silverbill *Euodice malabarica* [nominate].

Chestnut Munia *Lonchura atricapilla*. One at Harike.

Sykes's Wagtail *Motacilla [flava] beema* only one identified

Black-headed Wagtail *Motacilla [flava] feldegg* the commonest form.

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*

White Wagtail *Motacilla [alba] alba* the commonest form observed.

Masked Wagtail ♦ *Motacilla [alba] personata* Only one observed

White-browed Wagtail *Motacilla madaraspatensis* Only seen at Harike.

Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris* [griseus].

Long-billed Pipit ♦ *Anthus similis* Several in Desert National Park and others at Little Rann of Kutch [jerdoni].

Olive-backed Pipit (Olive Tree P) *Anthus hodgsoni* [yunnanensis].

Trumpeter Finch *Bucanetes githagineus* One at Fossil Park, Jaisalmer.

Common Rosefinch (Scarlet R) *Carpodacus erythrurus* One at Harike [roseatus].

Crested Bunting ♦ *Emberiza lathami* 10 on Mt Abu.

White-capped Bunting ♦ *Emberiza stewarti* Three on Mt Abu.

Grey-necked Bunting ♦ *Emberiza buchanani* Three near Siana.

Striolated Bunting ♦ *Emberiza striolata* Up to five a day around Siana [nominate].





*Nilgai, one of the commoner antelopes seen on this tour (Frank Lambert)*

## MAMMALS

**Golden Jackal (Common J) *Canis aureus*** One seen well in the Bhuj region.

**Bengal Fox (Indian F) *Vulpes bengalensis*** Seen in the Desert National Park and Little Rann of Kutch.

**Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes*** only one sighting, in Desert National Park. Also called Desert Fox.

**Jungle Cat *Felis chaus*** One at Harike was seen by several of the group.

**Indian Grey Mongoose (Common M) *Herpestes edwardsii*** Eight were noted.

**Striped Hyena *Hyaena hyaena*** One after dark at Siana.

**Nilgai (Blue Bull) *Boselaphus tragocamelus***

**Indian Gazelle (Chinkara) *Gazella bennettii***

**Four-horned Antelope *Tetracerus quadricornis*** ..One at Melghat



*Indian Flying Fox and Northern Plains Grey Langur (Frank Lambert)*





*Asiatic Wild Ass (or Onager) and Nilgai (Frank Lambert)*

**Indian Flying Fox** *Pteropus giganteus*

**Indian Hare** *Lepus nigricollis*

**Asiatic Wild Ass (Onager, Indian Wild Ass)** *Equus onager* Rather common at Little Rann of Kutch.

**Northern Plains Grey Langur (Hanuman L, Common L)** *Presbytis entellus*

**Rhesus Macaque** *Macaca mulatta*

**Indian Desert Jird (I D Gerbil)** *Meriones hurrianae* Two at Siana.

**Northern Palm Squirrel** *Funambulus pennantii* Common and widespread.

**Indian Palm Squirrel (Southern P S)** *Funambulus palmarum* A few at Melghat.

**Indian Giant Flying Squirrel** *Petaurista philippensis* Two observed at night at Melghat



*Searching for White-naped Tit (Frank Lambert)*





*Egyptian Vulture of subspecies percnopterus at Bikaner Tip (Frank Lambert)*

## NOTES TO THE SYSTEMATIC LIST

### **Black-eared Kite** *Milvus [migrans] lineatus*

Whilst some authors treat this northern, migratory form of Black Kite as a separate species, IOC does not recognise this split.

### **Egyptian Vulture** *Neophron percnopterus*

Like several other Indian vultures this species has suffered an extremely rapid population reduction in the recent past which is likely to continue into the near future. Birds at Jaisalmer showed characters of the resident subspecies *ginginianus*. According to preliminary results of an on-going research this form is a potential split from the more northern nominate subspecies occurring in lowland India during the winter months. Stay tuned!

**White-rumped Vulture (Indian White-backed Vulture)** *Gyps bengalensis* As recently as 1985 the species was described as “possibly the most abundant large bird of prey in the world”. Since the mid-1990s, it has suffered a catastrophic decline (over 99%) across the Indian Subcontinent. Now the population is estimated to be less than 10 000 individuals and the species is classified as **Critically Endangered** by Birdlife International. The population crash has been caused by the massive misuse of veterinary drugs in India in recent years. Hopefully the recent ban of the drug will help this and the following species to recover.

### **Indian Vulture** *Gyps indicus*

An Indian Subcontinent endemic following the splitting of the threatened *tenuirostris* (Slender-billed Vulture, occurring from the Himalayas to SE Asia). It is listed as globally **Critically Endangered** by Birdlife International for the same reasons as the previous species.

### **Grey-headed Swamphen (Purple Gallinule)** *Porphyrio poliocephalus*

Previously treated as Purple Swamphen *P. porphyrio* but the form *poliocephalus* encountered on this tour is treated as a separate species Grey-headed Swamphen in the most recent IOC list.

**Lesser Black-backed Gull (Heuglin's G) *Larus [fuscus] heuglini* and *L. [fuscus] barabensis***

The taxonomy of some of the larger gulls has been regularly revised in recent years, with different authors' recognising different forms as species. IOC presently treats *heuglini* as part of the Lesser Black-backed Gull complex, and does not even mention *barabensis*. Whilst not actually splitting these, Rasmussen (2012) gives both these forms a separate species account - with *L. f. heuglini* as Heuglin's Gull and *L. f. barabensis* as Steppe Gull. These two taxa can be safely separated in the field in India and may well be recognised as different in future taxonomies.

**Greater Coucal *Centropus sinensis***

The form *parroti* encountered on this tour is sometimes split off as a separate species Southern Coucal.

**Spotted Dove *Spilopelia chinensis***

Spotted Doves endemic to the Indian subcontinent of the subspecies *suratensis* were recently recognized as a separate species – **Western Spotted Dove** – in the HBW/BirdLife International check-list. IOC has not yet adopted this split, but this taxon is very distinctive and it may only be a matter of time before it is recognized by IOC.

**Indian Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone paradisi***

IOC recently split Asian Paradise Flycatcher into three species, *paradisi* now being endemic to the Indian subcontinent.

**Common Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita***

The form *tristis* encountered on this tour is sometimes split off as a separate species Siberian Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus tristis*.

**Clamorous Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus stentoreus***

The form *brunnescens* encountered on this tour is sometimes split off as a separate species Indian Reed Warbler.

**Rufous-vented Prinia *Laticilla burnesii***

Recently transferred from Prinia (Cisticolidae) to genus *Laticilla*, which belongs to Pellorneidae (Fulvettas & ground babblers).

**Northern Raven (Common Raven) *Corvus corax* [subcorax]**

The distinctive isolated population in the semi-desert regions of western India to eastern Afghanistan is tentatively split by Rasmussen as Punjab Raven – Rasmussen notes that it is intermediate between Northern and Brown-necked Ravens (*C. ruficollis*). For unknown reasons, IOC does not mention this form at all.



*"Punjab Raven in Desert National Park and one of the many amazing sunsets that we enjoyed (Frank Lambert)"*