

Trip Report

North-east India

March - May, 2016

Overview

Back in 2001, I spent six months traveling throughout India. However, the furthest east I was able to travel was to Sikkim and West Bengal. I had always wanted to return to India and explore areas further east, and I finally got around to it 15 years later, entering Meghalaya after spending one month in Bangladesh. For an area that is frequently visited by birding groups, there seemingly is little logistical information available online for some of the birding sites in the northeast. The Mandala Road and Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary certainly come to mind. With this report, I hope to provide some assistance to those who prefer to explore independently. Please feel free to contact me for any additional information.

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Itinerary

- Mar. 9 Bus from Sylhet in Bangladesh to border with India. Crossed border and was picked up by driver (Rs 2500) to take me to Cherrapunjee Holiday Resort. Stayed in dorm (Rs 500)
- Mar. 10 Cherrapunjee Holiday Resort - Pony Trail and Umkar Root Bridge
- Mar. 11 Cherrapunjee Holiday Resort - trek to Umonoi Root Bridge
- Mar. 12 Cherrapunjee Holiday Resort - walk from Mawmluh back to the resort
- Mar. 13 Cherrapunjee Holiday Resort - trek to Double Decker Root Bridge
- Mar. 14 Sumo (Rs 40) to Cherrapunjee town (Sohra) then another sumo (Rs 170) to Shillong. Room at Hotel Rainbow (Rs 1000)
- Mar. 15 Morning trip by sumo to Duwan Sing Syiem Bridge (Mawkdok viewpoint). Flagged down a bus back to Shillong. Night at Hotel Rainbow
- Mar. 16 Shillong Peak - followed trail back to Shillong. Night at Hotel Rainbow
- Mar. 17 Morning trip by sumo to Duwan Sing Syiem Bridge (Mawkdok viewpoint). Flagged down a bus back to Shillong. Night at Hotel Rainbow
- Mar. 18 Sumo to Guwahati. Night at Hotel Dreamland (Rs 500)
- Mar. 19 Guwahati. Night at Hotel Dreamland
- Mar. 20 Bus to Tezpur. Negotiated private taxi at Tezpur bus station to Nameri Ecocamp for Rs 800. Probably paid a little too much. Safari tent at Nameri Ecocamp

- Mar. 21 Morning visit to Nameri National Park. Walked the trail along the river to the duck ponds. Night at Nameri Ecocamp
- Mar. 22 Morning visit to Nameri National Park. Walked the loop trail. Night at Nameri Ecocamp
- Mar. 23 Around Nameri Ecocamp. Rafting trip in the afternoon. Night at Nameri Ecocamp
- Mar. 24 Around Nameri Ecocamp. Night at Nameri Ecocamp
- Mar. 25 Picked up by driver and left Nameri Ecocamp at about 7:00 am. Drove to border post to Arunachal Pradesh, then on to Sessa for roadside birding along the river and then to Dirang. Night at Hotel Pemaling
- Mar. 26 Day trip to Se La Pass. Late afternoon at Sangti Valley. Night at Hotel Pemaling
- Mar. 27 Mandala Road. Night at Hotel Pemaling
- Mar. 28 Mandala Road. Night at Hotel Pemaling
- Mar. 29 Early morning visit to crake marsh off Mandala Road. Drive to Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary and Lama Camp
- Mar. 30 Lama Camp and down to the Alubari trail. Night at Lama Camp
- Mar. 31 Early morning at Alubari trail. Left Lama Camp and had lunch at Eaglenest Pass. Drove to Bomphu Camp. Night at Bomphu Camp. Heavy rain in afternoon cancelled birding, but this was only significant rain during my entire stay at Eaglenest
- April 1 Early morning on steep trail above Bomphu Camp, then down to Sessni. Night at Bomphu Camp
- April 2 Bomphu Camp down to Khellong. Night at Bomphu Camp
- April 3 Early morning on steep trail above Bomphu Camp, then on the road above Bomphu camp up towards Sunderview covering about 12 km. Back to Bomphu Camp and road below camp (about 2 km below camp). Night at Bomphu Camp
- April 4 Road within a few km above Bomphu and below Bomphu. Night at Bomphu Camp
- April 5 Steep trail above Bomphu Camp early morning, then drive to Lama Camp. Afternoon on Alubari trail. Night at Lama Camp
- April 6 Early morning directly below Lama Camp (finally the Bugun Liocichla!), then departure for Wild Grass Lodge at Kaziranga where I had a special cottage for Rs 1500
- April 7 Kaziranga NP - central range in am. Night at Wild Grass Lodge
- April 8 Tea Garden near Wild Grass in am. Kaziranga NP - western range in pm. Night at Wild Grass Lodge
- April 9 Tea Garden near Wild Grass Lodge before breakfast. Kaziranga NP - central range - in am. Tea Garden again in pm. Night at Wild Grass Lodge
- April 10 Tea Garden near Wild Grass Lodge before breakfast. Kaziranga NP - eastern range - in am. Tea Garden again in pm. Night at Wild Grass Lodge

- April 11 Tea Garden in am. Flagged down bus on highway to Golaghat. Changed buses once and then hopped off bus at junction before Golaghat and got on a waiting bus at the junction for Dimapur. Night at Hotel De Oriental Dream (Rs 1000)
- April 12 Picked up by Angulie Meyase and drove to Khonoma. Birding around town in pm. Night at homestay
- April 13 Birding up main trail in Tragopan Reserve in am. Afternoon below guesthouse. Night at homestay
- April 14 Birding up main trail in Tragopan Reserve in am. Secondary growth around town in pm. Night at homestay
- April 15 Birding up the roads from town. Night at homestay.
- April 16 Share taxi to Kohima. Visited War Cemetery. Room at Hotel Aurora
- April 17 Rest day in Kohima. Night at Hotel Aurora
- April 18 Sumo to Dimapur. Night at Hotel de Oriental Dream (Rs 1000)
- April 19 Train to Barpeta Road. Share taxi to Bansbari. Night at Florican Cottages (Rs 1620)
- April 20 Manas National Park. Night at Florican Cottages
- April 21 Manas National Park. Night at Florican Cottages
- April 22 Manas National Park. Night at Florican Cottages
- April 23 Share jeep to Barpeta Road. Train to Kokrajhar. Night at Hotel Laxmi
- April 24 Morning visit to Chakarashila Wildlife Sanctuary. Night at Hotel Laxmi
- April 25 Kokrajhar. Late night train to Tinsukia
- April 26 Arrive Tinsukia. Taxi to Guijan. Night at Banashree Ecolodge (Rs 1500)
- April 27 Visit to Maguri Beel in am. Afternoon visit to birding spots downriver by boat. Night at Banashree Ecolodge
- April 28 Share jeep to Tinsukia. Bus to Digboi. Night at Digboi Tourist Lodge (Rs 1000)
- April 29 Three hour visit to Digboi Oilfields. Rest of day in secondary forest outside oilfields. Night at Digboi Tourist Lodge
- April 30 Walk to golf course in Digboi Oilfields. Night at Digboi Tourist Lodge
- May 1 Hired taxi to visit km 12-15 on highway through Digboi Oilfields in morning. Hired taxi to take me to Joypur. Night at Forest Inspection Bungalow.
- May 2 Namsang Road in am. Night at Forest Inspection Bungalow
- May 3 Namsang Road in am. Night at Forest Inspection Bungalow
- May 4 Namsang Road in am. Night at Forest Inspection Bungalow
- May 5 Bihu Festival in morning. Raj drove me to nearby town of Naharkatia. Share taxi to Tinsukia. Night train to Guwahati
- May 6 Arrive Guwahati in am. Night at Hotel Nice International.
- May 7 Fly home

Sites Visited

Cherrapunjee Holiday Resort

I had made arrangements for a driver to pick me up at the Indian border, after I had crossed from Bangladesh, and take me to the Cherrapunjee Holiday Resort which is beyond the town of Sohra (Cherrapunjee). The charge for the pickup was about USD 50, but there seemed to be a few freelance taxi drivers hanging around the border, so I'm sure one can bargain for a ride on site without having to arrange anything beforehand.

My motivation for coming here was part birdwatching and part culture, and seeing the root bridges which are quite unique in the world was a huge factor. The Cherrapunjee Holiday Resort is an ideal base for exploring the hills of Meghalaya, and hikes to the famous root bridges are easily accessed from here. I stayed in the dorm, which is actually a room with one bed (they put in another bed for another traveler for one night during my stay) at the basement of one of the chalet buildings. It was perfectly comfortable and had its own bathroom facilities, although there was only cold water coming from the shower. However, ample hot water was always available on demand for a bucket shower which I don't mind, and for Rs 500 per night, it was much less expensive than one of the chalets. To top it off, the staff was exceptionally friendly and the food in the restaurant was amazing. Highly recommended.

Now, about the birding. There is a reasonably detailed report, posted on the resort's website (www.cherrapunjee.com), by a Swedish fellow who birded around here in 2007, a copy of which is physically available at the reception as well. Now, I consider myself a decent birder, no expert, but reasonably accomplished. My experience would suggest that this report is wildly optimistic about what is likely to be seen since the birds here are extraordinarily shy, and will have quickly flown off before you even see them. The reasons behind this represent an interesting example of Darwinian evolution. The birds here are significantly harassed by the locals in the form of (a) trapping them for the cagebird trade; (b) capturing them for the cooking pot; and (c) shooting them with catapults (slingshots) for the fun of it, or for the previous two reasons. The only birds that have survived this onslaught have been the ones who are very shy, and they have passed on their "shyness" genes to the next generation so that this shyness behaviour has become well established in all forest bird populations.

Nevertheless, I did find some interesting species. My first site was what is called the Pony Trail. From the resort, if you walk out about 500 m along the entrance road, you will pass a little football pitch on the left and come to the intersection with the road to Siej and the Umkar Root Bridge to the right. Instead of taking this right hand turn, look forward down the entrance road and on the right side of the road there is a trail heading off into the forest. This trail very quickly splits, and I believe the trail on the left is called the Pony trail, and the trail on the right, which soon enters a cemetery and continues beyond, is the Ridge trail. The Pony trail is rather flat and wide, making for

easy walking. A Besra quickly flew in right over my head and landed nearby, all too briefly, but I got a decent look. I continued along the trail, which kind of parallels the entrance road to the resort, until I came to some concrete steps which led up to a ridge. It was while I was on the upper part of these steps that I had a flock of Dark-rumped Swifts just immediately above my head giving me a great look at them. Great relief in that I didn't have to go chasing after them at their known sites like Nohkalikai Falls outside the town of Sohra. This would theoretically have been easy to do since the staff at the resort had a working relationship with a taxi driver or two, but I didn't bother. I continued on to the crest of the ridge and the trail continued a short distance to an open viewpoint where there was not much of a view due to the heavy haze. I thought there was supposed to be a trail leading down to the town of Mawshamok (3 km down the entrance road from the resort), but I couldn't find any trace of it. Instead, I retraced my steps back to the Pony trail and continued along it for a short distance before it seemed to end at a huge treefall. Overall, a frustrating morning, and my return walk to the resort was entirely birdless save for a single Nepal Fulvetta.

In the afternoon, I walked back out the entrance road and turned right at the aforementioned junction towards Siej. The road passed through nice forest and I made a mental note to try this road the next morning. The road soon came to a junction, and the road to the right headed to and terminated at Siej Village, while the road to the left headed to the Laitkynsew viewpoint which I never did visit. There was a complete absence of life in the tiny village of Siej, but near the end of the village where the road ends, there is a trail on the left hand side of the road that leads to the Umkar Root Bridge which was nice, but the least interesting of the three root bridges easily accessible from the resort. I estimate that the walk was about 3 km from the resort to the root bridge. Incidentally, maps to all of the root bridges are readily available at the reception at the resort.

Over the next couple of days, I visited the other nearby root bridges, first the Umonoi Root Bridge, and then leaving the famous Double Decker Root Bridge for last. Guides are not really needed for either of these hikes, but they both do involve heart-pounding, sweaty hikes steeply down to the bridges and back up. Each can be undertaken over a morning and there is a small fee for visiting each bridge which is payable on site. I did take a guide for the double decker, mainly because beyond the double decker there is a great swimming hole which I had been told was tricky to find. This didn't prove to be the case, the hole being seen easily from the trail about 30-40 minutes beyond the double decker, but the guide was enjoyable and quite knowledgeable about the area. By the way, on the hike to the double decker you do in fact pass over another root bridge which is reputed to be the longest one in the area. All in all, I found these bridges fascinating. However, the birding to and from the bridges was not inspiring, although seeing a nice male Red-headed Trogon isn't to be scoffed at.

I did also walk along the Ridge trail, previously mentioned as an offshoot of the Pony trail. The area around the cemetery produced a good flock of Red-billed Leiothrix.

The trail soon reaches a few houses, but continues beyond and, if you explore enough, eventually links up with the concrete steps on which I had seen the swifts previously. Two visits to this trail failed to produce very much.

The only other birding excursion I made was to take a taxi very early in the morning from the resort out to the village of Mahmluh which is right along the main road back to the town of Sohra. The taxi was Rs 400, and from Mahmluh, I retraced the taxi ride with first a 7 km walk back downhill to Mawshamok, and then 3 km uphill to the Cherrapunjee Holiday Resort. Lots of birdlife just down from Mahmluh village with, amongst others, Pale-chinned Flycatcher, but my best species was Striated Yuhina seen on two occasions a little later in the morning. I also found a flock of Dark-rumped Swifts in a valley about 1 km below the resort, but they were distant and the views were not as good as on the ridge at the Pony trail.

Leaving the resort is fairly easy since sumos pass by regularly back to Sohra (Rs 40), and onward transportation (for example to Shillong - Rs 170) leaves from a couple of locations in the centre of town. Just ask around and someone will direct you.

Duwan Sing Syiem Bridge (Mawkdok Viewpoint)

You will pass over this long bridge on the way from Sohra (Cherrapunjee) to Shillong, and it is a well-known tourist site by the name of Mawkdok Viewpoint. I checked it out from the sumo as I traveled to Shillong, with the intention of re-tracing my steps back here to look for Tawny-breasted Wren-Babbler and other species. Arriving in Shillong is a bit crazy. Seemingly the vast majority of taxis in Shillong are share-taxis and unavailable for private hire. At the sumo station, I was completely unable to find any private taxis, and with no map at all, I just asked for Police Bazar where I knew there was a concentration of hotels. Everybody knows Police Bazar and I just kept asking directions and walking until I arrived, only about 15 minutes from the sumo station. Accommodation was a little difficult to come by, and it wasn't until enquiring at the fourth place, the Rainbow Hotel, that I found a room (Rs 1000). The hotel was on GS Road (and there are many others in the immediate vicinity), just down the street from what's known as Centre Point, which may be the peak of the hill in the city centre.

The next morning I wanted to go birding at the bridge. An early departure was stymied by the hotel being locked up good and tight. A word of warning - hotels in Shillong are locked up tight somewhat early in the evening, and you are essentially trapped (big fire hazard!) inside until someone, who can be difficult to find in the early morning, opens up the lock, raises the gate and allows you your freedom.

To get to the sumo station, I retraced my steps which I believe was the following route. After escaping my hotel in the early morning, I turned left on GS Road and walked down this road, following its twists and turns. After coming to a large intersection (not the first biggish one you come to) with a police circle for directing traffic, I continued along GS Road which actually heads off to the left at this point. I continued following GS Road which eventually came to another smaller intersection again with a police circle for

directing traffic. Turning left here put me on the street in Paltan Bazar (if I remember correctly) where the sumo station is, and the station itself is not too far along this street on the left hand side, a multi-level building that essentially is a big parking garage. The sumos for Cherrapunjee left from a rather isolated spot up on the second level of this building. The walk from my hotel took about 15 minutes. I actually did this twice: the first time I waited until the sumo filled up with the required 10 passengers which took about one hour. The second time I simply hired the sumo myself by paying the cost of the 10 fares (Rs 170 per person x 10 person capacity) and we set off immediately. Obviously this is a more expensive option than sharing the ride with other passengers, but it is cheaper than what a private taxi will charge, and finding transport back to Shillong is easy by flagging down a passing sumo or the occasional bus.

As far as birding at the bridge is concerned, I'd recommend getting off at the side of the bridge closest to Shillong. You will see some steep concrete steps heading down to a lower level, and a short path following a little stream. It was just after I started to walk down these steps the first time that I heard the call of the Tawny-breasted Wren-Babbler immediately in front of me. Unfortunately, it was elusive and remained hidden. I heard another one later in the day in a scrubby area at the back end of the playground which is observable to the left of the bridge where there are some concrete pools, but it also remained unseen. Unfortunately, I was unaware as to whether there was a specific spot here that was good for the bird as I could not find any detailed information from the web. Birders also come here for Crested Finchbill and Flavescent Bulbul, but I had no success. On my two visits here I did find single Grey Sibilias on each visit, and a pair of Assam Laughingthrushes on my second visit. There was a nice selection of warblers, and the *khasiana* form of Black-throated Prinia was found in the scrub.

At the far end of the bridge there is a little restaurant where food and drinks can be purchased (I didn't venture inside), and this is a convenient place to flag down a bus or sumo on the highway.

Shillong Peak

With no relevant information posted by birders on the web about the logistics of this birding site, I had to rely on Krys Kazmierczak's good (but dated) "A Birdwatchers' Guide to India". He briefly describes an option being to follow a ravine starting opposite the football field found along the road up to the peak, and although this did not seem overly promising, with visions of bushwhacking my way down the mountain, I decided to give it a try. The day before I had found a private taxi stand at Centre Point just up from my hotel in Shillong (see info in previous birding site) and negotiated with a taxi driver to pick me up at 6:00 am and take me to the football field on the road up to Shillong Peak for Rs 300. Of course, the next morning the guy didn't show up, but another fellow driving by saw me waiting and asked me where I wanted to go. Long story short, we settled on Rs 400 and off I went. Every driver should know how to get to this site which involves following the road back towards Cherrapunjee and then turning left on a road up towards

Shillong Peak which itself is off-limits to the public due to the Air Force station there. After turning on to this road, you will come to an obvious football pitch on the right hand side after about 1 km. Have the driver drop you here. On the left hand side of the road (roughly opposite the NW corner of the football pitch, there is a fairly wide jeep trail entering the forest which took a little bit of searching to locate, but is quite obvious when you see it. I wondered if this was what KK was referring to, and since the habitat looked promising, I followed the trail. In short, I managed to find my way back to Shillong, and I will now describe how I navigated my way back to the city according to the notes I made later in the day, and after that, a comment on the birds which were really great.

After entering the trail, it winds around for a bit, and eventually comes to a point where you will see two large logs appear on the ground in front of you along your line of sight. Just prior to reaching the logs, the trail will make a 90° turn to the right. Pine trees start to predominate along the trail and it fairly soon reaches another point where there is another 90° turn to the right where the trail becomes more mixed forest. All along I was thinking that I could always turn back if I had to as the forest became less "birdy", but then the forest would improve and I was always able to follow the trail pretty easily so I kept deciding to push on. Soon after making this second 90° turn, I realized I was following a ravine which was on my right and heading north in the direction of Shillong. I continued along with the trail being easy to follow, although I do remember coming to two forks in the trail where it wasn't obvious which way to go. In each case I went left figuring that the highway going back to Shillong was to the left of me, and that a left turn would most likely keep me along that direction. The forest became more open and more "piney", and I remember having to scramble over a couple of small ravines, but the trail was reliably continuous on the other side each time.

By now I figured I had come quite a distance down the mountain and I reached a point where two large bluish pipes (presumably carrying water) crossed the trail. You actually walk over the pipes and they cross the trail at an angle in roughly a northeasterly direction heading down presumably to Shillong. I continued over the pipes along the trail, but before long it ended in some thick, impenetrable brush. Not knowing what to do now, I went back to the pipes because I'd heard some voices coming from a little way below, the first evidence of human life I'd come across on the trail. I descended along the pipes and soon met a few fellows constructing a building. They really didn't speak English, but my enquiry about Shillong resulted in them pointing down along the pipeline. There was a sort of trail paralleling the pipes, and I thought that this might just lead back to the city. After a short distance down the pipes, I came to some concrete steps heading up to the left, and on inspection, a wide trail continued onwards after the steps. Not sure what to do, I kept following the pipes down, and very soon thereafter, I came across three guys cooking their lunch. They also didn't speak much English, but upon asking them about the way to Shillong, they pointed back up in the direction of the concrete steps, so I retraced my route back up to the steps and continued left along the trail I had previously seen. From here it was about 30-40 minutes to the edge of the city and I occasionally met

other people. The trail reaches a point where you have to search a bit for a way down to the level of the urban area, and I came out at a Hindu shrine/temple. I knew the Shillong/Cherrapunjee road would be somewhere to the left, so I headed in that direction and found the highway quickly. I figured I was several km from Police Bazar (called PB by everybody), and I easily found a share taxi back to the city centre for Rs 10. If all of this sounds complicated, it really wasn't, and it's possible to turn back at any time and return to the football pitch and back to the main road where I'm sure catching a share taxi or a bus back to Shillong would be easy. I was back in Shillong in the early afternoon, so the hike down essentially takes about a full morning.

The birding was great - the highlights are as follows in chronological order: Speckled Piculet (near the beginning of the trail); Blyth's Shrike-Babbler (male near the beginning of the trail); Grey Sibia (near the beginning of the trail); Russet Sparrow (small flock in secondary growth); Grey Peacock-Pheasant (just after the first 90° turn, I was standing still watching a male Little Pied Flycatcher when I heard loud rustling in the dry undergrowth and the sound of a bird on the ground coming towards me. I froze in place, trying to get a look through the undergrowth and caught a glimpse of a male just before he somehow saw me and disappeared quickly); Rufous (Rusty)-capped Fulvetta (I had read a report of some bird tour finding this apparent rarity somewhere on Shillong Peak, but with no other information, I figured that I would have to be lucky to see it, but sure enough, I found two flocks, the first of which was maybe a few hundred metres from where I saw the Grey Peacock-Pheasant. The flocks were very active and seemed to favour low areas or small ravines where there was undergrowth with large leaves); Stripe-breasted Woodpecker (one on the portion of the trail that paralleled a ravine to the right); Large Niltava (a nice male in a more open area quite a distance down the trail); Slaty-blue Flycatcher (one near the bottom).

A note about onward transportation. There is at least one company running sumos to Guwahati from Centre Point. Just walk up there and the touts will find you.

Nameri National Park

I took a bus from Guwahati in the morning to Tezpur from the Assam Transportation Corp. bus station, which is located in front of the train station. I wasn't exactly sure how I was going to get to the Nameri Ecocamp, and upon arrival in Tezpur, there wasn't much activity in the bus station. There was a little station manager's booth and I spoke to someone there who said I could first go to Balipara (roughly 15-20 km north of Tezpur) by bus and then take a taxi from there. Of course, there was no bus going to Balipara in the near future. He then told me to wait and he'd make a call. I checked around for any hint of a taxi, but the immediate area around the station was like a ghost town. Meanwhile, the bus station's police officer/security guard took an interest in my situation and found a share-autorickshaw going to Balipara that was already stuffed beyond full, but the driver offered me a ride anyway. At this point, the station manager called me over and said he'd found a taxi willing to take me and I eventually decided to take the easy way

out and negotiated a taxi direct to the Nameri Ecocamp for something like Rs 700-800. In passing the little town of Balipara, there was an obvious share-taxi stand with many taxis right on the highway through town, so it likely would have been easy and cheaper to arrive here first by share-rickshaw or taxi, and then on to Nameri Ecocamp, but certainly less convenient. At Balipara, the main highway turns right, but instead you continue straight which becomes the main road to Bhalukpong and the border to Arunachal Pradesh. Approximately 13 km from Balipara there is a turnoff to the right on to Nameri Ecocamp Road (there is a sign for Nameri National Park and/or Nameri Ecocamp). From the turnoff, it is maybe 2 km or so to the Nameri Ecocamp, and I seem to remember us taking an unsigned turn to the left before arriving at the ecocamp, but there will be people around to ask directions if necessary.

Contacting the Nameri Ecocamp in advance proved to be very challenging. Theoretically, they have an email address - ecocampnameri@gmail.com - but repeated information requests by email went unanswered. I didn't attempt phoning from home, but here are some apparent contact numbers: +913714292644/09854019932/08472800344. I ended up getting Bhuban Prabhan at the Hotel Pemaling in Dirang to make my reservation for me. He organized my jeep and driver for my birding trip in Arunachal Pradesh (see car rental below). I arrived one day early to the ecocamp to find that they were full, however a very comfortable worker's cabin was provided for me for one night before my reserved accommodation became available. The next day I was able to move to my walk-in tent with attached bath which was very nice (Rs 1550). During my stay, the food in the restaurant was excellent and the manager, Chowkhan was very attentive and helpful, as was the rest of the staff.

To visit the national park, you must make arrangements at the park office directly adjacent to the Nameri Ecocamp. Permits cost Rs 520 per visit (you have to pay separately for both morning and afternoon, although a very steep Rs 2000 allows you to stay in the park theoretically all day without having to exit). An additional Rs 100 fee is for the guide/ranger and there is a small fee as well for the boatmen to take you across the Jia Bholelli river to the entrance to the park. I visited the national park on two mornings. Departure was at about 7:00 from the park office and we first walked the 1 km or so down the road to the river where we were poled across by two boatmen. Then there is a longish walk up the beach to the ranger station where you must register. All of this takes about 1 hour so I never really did start serious birding until roughly 8:00. There are two trails to visit, and the guides seem quite adamant in only allowing you to do one of them per visit. On the first visit, I decided to go for the White-winged Duck. I had heard that the duck had been absent from Nameri for two years, but this year they were back. The trail parallels the river with two different side trails leading to two ponds. I was lucky in that the first pond held two ducks and I had wonderful prolonged views. Crested Kingfisher was along the river and the guide knew a particular small island that held Indian Thick-knee. A stunning Sultan Tit was a nice surprise. Make sure you linger around the sandy bank of the river on the national park side to look for Sand Lark at the point where

you cross the river.

I walked the Loop trail on my next visit which starts to the left of the ranger station. It's a diverse trail with ample grassland, forest and a couple of watchtowers to explore which are good for scanning for pigeons. Key birds for me were Large Woodshrike, Wedge-tailed Green Pigeon, Chestnut-bellied Nuthatch, Vernal Hanging-Parrot and Blue-bearded Bee-eater amongst many other species. We came across two elephants as well and cautiously walked passed them. The trail meets up with the "riverside" trail which I wanted to walk along a little before heading back to the ranger station, but my guide was getting a bit put out at me walking a "second" trail on the same visit so we headed back. After visiting the two trails, and seeing that the policy seems structured to kind of limit the experience to less than it could be, I decided that two visits to the park were enough.

Other than the White-winged Duck which I had great success with, my other major target was Ibisbill. The ecocamp offers a rafting trip which involves driving upriver to a launching point and then drifting downriver for a couple of hours, spotting birds along the way. The bird reports I had read before planning my trip seemed to suggest that Ibisbill was reliable up until maybe mid-April, so I figured a visit in the latter part of March was safe. The trip costs Rs 2100 and can be shared by up to 10 people. I was the only one on an afternoon trip (afternoons are apparently better for Ibisbill) as nobody else wanted to share, and perhaps as expected, there was no Ibisbill. Being rather disappointed, I enquired with the camp manager and he tracked down the top guide who informed me that due to the weather having been so unseasonably hot, Ibisbill hadn't been seen in over a week and had presumably already started migrating up to higher altitudes along the river. It seems that Ibisbill is going to be a nemesis bird with me having missed it on other trips as well. Still, the rafting was enjoyable with nice sightings of Great Thick-knee, Crested Kingfisher, River Lapwing, a probable Pallas's Fish-Eagle on a nest and a wonderful up close view of a flock of Small Pratincoles.

The walk to the river from the ecocamp can be an enjoyable way to spend some time birding for mainly common scrubland birds, although I had a good look at a perched Himalayan Buzzard and it was along here that I found a great troop of Assamese Macaques. Hanging around at the river for some time will likely deliver River Lapwing and Small Pratincole. There is a side-road to the right adjacent the ecocamp along which will be the ecocamp to your right and a pasture to your left. The pasture holds some tall, dead trees and roosting in one of these were up to three Spotted Owlets throughout the duration of my stay. Weavers and munias are conspicuous along here.

The grounds at the ecocamp can be very birdy with lots of parakeets for example, and there is usually a troop of Capped Langurs hanging around, or perhaps over by the ranger buildings. Brown Boobook (Hawk-Owl) is very common and vocal at night on the grounds, but very elusive and hard to see. In the parking lot there is a very tall, dead tree which is a mecca for cavity-nesting birds. There was an active Great Hornbill nest and the male occasionally would make food deliveries. In the morning there was constant loud

squabbling, presumably over nesting sites, by competing Indian Rollers, Dollarbirds and both Great and Jungle Mynas in this particular tree.

Sessa

Approximately 7 km north of the border at Bhalukpong you can pull off the road to park and on getting out of the car and walking in a few metres, a large Indian Coral Tree (otherwise known as Tiger Claw) will become visible which was flowering and attended by a few leafbirds and bulbuls and my only Spot-winged Starling of the trip. This location is a usual stop for birding tours apparently, but unfortunately I do not have GPS co-ordinates. Approximately 28 km from the border and 2 km before the little village of Sessa, the road reaches and parallels the Kameng River (there are km markers along the highway, including at the 2 km mark to Sessa). It is worthwhile stopping here and walking the 2 km to the village. Apparently this is a good spot for Blyth's Kingfisher. A good strategy would be to wait at one of the locations where the river is easily visible and hope it flies in. I stopped here twice but did not see the kingfisher. Nice birds were spotted such as Slaty-backed Forktail, Long-tailed Sibia, Black-throated Sunbird, Yellow-vented Warbler, Small Niltava and Mountain Bulbul.

Se La Pass

A two-hour drive from Dirang means a 3:00 departure time to arrive around the pass at sunrise. I was fortunate with the weather as the day was clear and sunny, but I was largely unsuccessful birdwise. This was due perhaps to bad luck, but also because this is the kind of birding I really don't like - driving from one spot to another and waiting for something to show up. I, rather irrationally, really dislike car-based road birding with lots of waiting at each site with little to no activity. The key birds to look for are Snow Partridge, Blood Pheasant, Himalayan Monal, Snow Pigeon and Grandala. I had seen the monal before, but I struck out with it and all of the others except Snow Pigeon, a flock of which was foraging on the road a few km from the pass. My information on where to find birds here was very spotty, but fortunately, my driver had driven for many birding groups in the past and knew a couple of spots. At about 5 km before the pass, there is a large curve to the left and a good-sized spot to park on the right that gives a look down into the valley, and this apparently is the first real birding stop. A look here didn't produce too much except for two Yellow-throated Martens up in a tree. Up towards the pass, it's simply a matter of stopping wherever it's possible and where there might be a view for some of the targets. I really would have benefitted from more eyes to find the key birds as you get the feeling you're trying to find a needle in a haystack. The pass itself is worth stopping at for awhile as the whole area is apparently good for Snow Partridge and Grandala, but all I saw were a couple of accentors. The area at the pass is quite large, and there is a sideroad that you can walk along too, but as you are up over 4000 m in altitude, your energy levels may be diminished somewhat. A largish lake at the pass held some waterfowl including my only Mallards of the trip. Birding continues for maybe 12-15 km

beyond the pass, and it's just a matter of stopping and scanning what appear to be good areas, or, if you're lucky, bumping into something along the road. Due to my lack of success, I considered making the long trip up here one more time two days hence, but since the Mandala Road was so good, I decided to spend a second day there. In retrospect, this was a good decision because on that day, there was a big snowstorm at the pass and it's debatable as to whether I would have even been able to make it to the pass at all.

Sangti Valley

A well-known historical site for Black-tailed Crake and Long-billed Plover and my driver knew the location. Using the Hotel Pemaling as a reference, drive back (south) for about 4 km and just before reaching the village of Dirang Basti there is a road to the left. There is a sign for this road (only visible if driving north) saying "Dirang Town ADC Office". If you turn left here, you will soon cross a bridge and immediately afterwards reach a fork where you will turn right (there is a sign saying Sangti Valley) and continue for about 7 km (the road does fork once - take the left fork) until you reach Sangti village which is very spread out along the road. At the far end of the village is the crake marsh on the right hand side. The best landmark is a blue sign on the left hand side of the road for a monastery (I can't remember the name of it). The marsh looked very unpromising and the birding site was being disturbed by two dogs running through the rather dry "marsh". They managed to flush nothing more than a Red-wattled Lapwing, and I question that, with the apparent disturbance here, whether the Black-tailed Crake is even found here anymore. I walked through the rather dry marsh myself seeing and hearing nothing. Regarding the plover, perhaps if you were to drive further along the road, the river itself would be close enough for a chance for a roadside view of the plover, but I didn't explore any further along the road. At the crake marsh, the river is a fair distance away, and my driver said this was the location where he'd taken groups before to find the plover. So, I walked over to the river and scanned for close to one hour for the plover. A little further upstream there was a big truck parked at the river and several men were loading it up with rocks. More human disturbance made me feel that finding the plover here was unlikely when a shorebird flew by quickly and landed out of sight downstream. I tracked it down to find that it was a Common Sandpiper much to my disappointment, and it was the only bird at all that I saw. Again, lots of apparent disturbance along the river makes me wonder whether the plover is likely to be seen here anymore.

Mandala Road

Lots of trip reports on the web mention this birding site, but every one of them was a guided group tour and nobody provided any logistical information whatsoever. In fact, this site is easy to visit with your own vehicle and is worthy of two full days in my opinion, especially since fog at higher altitudes can severely impact birding as it did on my second visit. The road is accessed by driving south from the Hotel Pemaling along the main

road for about 4 km to the village of Dirang Basti. Go through the village and just after the village there is a road to the right which goes to Mandala. Turn right here and this begins the Mandala Road. The habitat for the first couple of km doesn't appear to be great, but thereafter birds can be found anywhere on the way up to the pass which is 28 km from the previously mentioned turnoff (conveniently there are km markers along the road). My driver had taken many bird groups here before and here is what we did. We drove straight for the pass, stopping a few times for interesting species seen from the car (White-throated and Spotted Laughingthrushes, Crimson-browed Finch). At the pass there seems to be a small settlement which I think is actually the village of Mandala, and exactly at the pass there is a little road to the left. We took this road, passing by a few buildings, and parked maybe 500 m from where we had turned. From here I spent a few hours walking maybe 2-3 km along the road, Monu, my driver, following periodically behind. Monu said all the birding groups come to this section of road, and only walk about 3 km along it. The weather was great, as was the birding: Gold-billed Magpie, Rufous-vented Tit, Bar-winged Wren-Babbler, Black-faced Laughingthrush, Ludlow's Fulvetta and Beautiful Sibia amongst others. Unfortunately, no Red Panda which is apparently not uncommon here. I thought I had read accounts of birders taking the main road over the pass and beyond, but in asking Monu about this, he said he'd never taken a group any further than the pass so I didn't bother. Instead, I then worked my way back down the main road, stopping at different altitudes or when a bird party was roadside. Many good species were seen, and perhaps of special note were Eurasian (Hodgson's) Treecreeper at km 26, Rusty-flanked Treecreeper at km 27 and 20, Maroon-backed Accentor at km 20 and White-cheeked Partridge at km 19. I had read about an alternate marsh for the Black-tailed Crake near some schoolhouse and Monu knew the spot. It is accessed quite easily. Taking the turnoff on to the Mandala Road from the village of Dirang Basti as a reference point, proceed another 5 km along the Mandala Road to a very small community (you will have passed another tiny community along the way) and exactly here there will be a road to the right. About 1 km or so along this little road you will see a small schoolhouse (it was painted blue when I visited) on the right and the marsh is directly behind the schoolhouse. It is much better habitat than in the Sangti Valley. I spent time here before sunset hearing probably two Black-tailed Crakes but was unable to tease them out of the marsh.

I intended to repeat this pattern the following day, but the fog was so thick at the peak that birding the little sideroad at Mandala pass was pointless. I had wanted to look for Hume's Bush Warbler which I may have actually seen the day before, but my view was so poor as to be inconclusive. Instead we slowly worked our way down the road and some good sightings were as follows: Whistler's Warbler at km 21, Green Shrike-Babbler at km 21, Sikkim Treecreeper at km 21 and Fire-capped Tit at km 7. As yesterday, warblers were everywhere and nice flocks were quite commonly observed. Check my bird list for more details and a complete account.

On the morning of my departure to Lama Camp at Eaglenest, I decided to try the

crake marsh one more time for an hour or so. Again a crake was vocal and a short play of its call brought it out for a great view. Success! With a bit of time before we needed to make our departure, I walked from the school along the sideroad back to where it met the Mandala Road. It was a beautiful morning and there were lots of mostly common birds around until I found a small flock of Tibetan Serin feeding calmly at eye level. A nice surprise. We stopped at km 3 on the Mandala Road to have our packed breakfast and a great parting gift for me was my only Sapphire Flycatcher of the trip, a beautiful male.

Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary

What an amazing place. I could find very little logistical information for this incredible birding site online, so I will specify my experiences by first describing the layout of the sanctuary, then outline the relevant contact information to make reservations and finally summarize what I came to learn about seeing Eaglenest's target birds. The birding here really is incredible, although some of the major targets are difficult and I missed some, however this was more than compensated by an up close and very personal encounter with an Indochinese Clouded Leopard (see the mammal list).

Birding the Sanctuary

Eaglenest is accessible from the town of Tenga, and the road to Eaglenest begins on the west side of the river, accessed by driving through the many army barracks here. We made so many twists and turns amongst this maze of army barracks after crossing the bridge at Tenga from the east side that I couldn't possibly provide directions, although I imagine that all birders will have a driver who at least knows the way. I kept track of the kilometres on my vehicle's odometer, and the following list will start with a mark of 0 km at the very beginning of the Eaglenest road, and continue summing up an overall distance as far as Khellong:

Beginning of Eaglenest road	0 km
Official Check Point	5 km
Lama Camp	14 km
Eaglenest Pass	24 km
Sunderview	29 km
Chakoo	34 km
Bomphu Camp	45 km
Hornbill Viewpoint	50 km
Sessni	57 km
Khellong	67 km

Keep in mind that the odometer I was using was only reading to the nearest km, so I'd say the preceding distances are accurate to within +/- 1 km. A sign at Eaglenest Pass listed some distances which seemed to more or less match mine, and the following altitudes which may be of interest:

Eaglenest Pass	2780 m
Sunderview	2465 m
Chakoo	2400 m
Bomphu Camp	1945 m
Khellong	1200 m

All of these specific locations in Eaglenest are easy to find. Sunderview is marked by a building/watchtower on the left hand side as you are driving towards Bomphu, while further along, Chakoo is marked by a building/watchtower on the right hand side. Note that there are no other buildings along the way to cause confusion. Hornbill viewpoint is a very obvious spot with a wide view of the valley below on the right side of the road. Sessni was once another camp, but it has been abandoned primarily because of the cost of operating a camp so far from Tenga, and also because elephants kept causing significant damage. All that is left is the shell of one obvious building on the left. Khellong appears to be a ranger station and there are several buildings with a few rangers guarding the lower reaches of the sanctuary.

Not far from the start of the Eaglenest road from Tenga (perhaps within 1 km), I found a male Black-headed Shrike-Babbler, apparently a difficult bird to find in Eaglenest. Thus it may be worth having a close look around the lower reaches of the road for this species. It took about one hour to reach Lama Camp. Three km **before** Lama Camp, there is a pathway to the left which is called the Alubari trail. It's found right at a hairpin turn and is easy to spot as it's the only trail in the area. Birding around Lama essentially starts here and continues up to the camp and beyond. The Alubari trail itself does not appear to pass through particularly good habitat as it is quite disturbed, but the birding is very good here and it's known as a good place for Bugun Liocichla. I certainly heard it here twice, but always at a distance. The trail is flat and I estimate it passes for less than 2 km so it's not long. You will pass over some large fallen trunks and continue along until another more massive treefall. I scrambled over this one to explore beyond but could see no evidence of the trail continuing any further. I spent a lot of time on this trail for the Liocichla, and although I was unsuccessful here, many good birds were spotted like Bhutan Laughingthrush, Streak-breasted Scimitar-Babbler, White-breasted Parrotbill, Bay Woodpecker, Golden Bush-Robin and Scarlet Finch. From the beginning of the Alubari trail, it is 3 km up to Lama Camp and this stretch of road is very good as well for general birding and also the Liocichla which apparently can be found anywhere from Lama Camp down to and along the Alubari trail. The best strategy, other than hearing it call, is to thoroughly check every single flock of Rusty-fronted Barwings you encounter as the Liocichla tends to (although not exclusively) travel with these flocks. Since flocks of these barwings are very common, you will find yourself spending a lot of time sifting through barwing flocks in the hopes Bugun Liocichla is in attendance. Birding around Lama Camp can be very rewarding with bullfinch flocks (mostly Grey-headed and a single female Red-headed), Gold-naped Finch and my only sighting of Black-throated Tit, a wonderful flock

of which was immediately below camp along the road. It was also less than about 100 m below Lama Camp on my very last morning, literally minutes before my final departure, that I found yet another flock of barwings, and as I cursed my previous fruitless efforts, I was rewarded with an extended view in the open of a fantastic Bugun Liocichla. Once I reached Bomphu Camp, I was told by another group of a trail just a little bit above Lama Camp that was apparently good for Long-billed Wren-Babbler and a few other birds I can't remember now. Just a little bit above Lama Camp there were a couple (one and then another a little further on) of what appeared to be concrete foundations, with no real additional structures, on the left hand side of the road. The trail started on the right hand side of the road just a very short distance after the second of the foundations and it's relatively obvious if you're looking for it. I had intended to explore it once I returned to Lama, but I spent all of my time searching for Bugun Liocichla and thus had to give it a miss.

One last note about Lama Camp. There is a tiny camp cat that hangs around the dining area particularly at dinner time when it rubs up against your legs trying to entice you to drop a little food for its dinner. Well, during my very last dinner, the little cat decided to bare its fangs while I was eating and take a bite out of my left ankle, drawing blood. I did nothing to provoke it, except that perhaps it was angry that I hadn't yet dropped any food on to the floor for it. I told my driver Monu about the incident the next morning and we decided that it was going to be necessary to see a doctor about rabies. On our way to Kaziranga, we stopped in Monu's hometown of Balipara at a clinic to get a rabies shot and a prescription for four future doses over the coming month. What can be learned from all of this? Well, after my encounter with the clouded leopard a couple of days previously, I can safely say that the wild cats of Eaglenest pose no threat to the birdwatcher, but the tiny pussycat at Lama Camp is a dangerous beast to be avoided at all costs.

On the drive from Lama to Eaglenest Pass and down to Bomphu, I didn't stop to bird much until within a short distance of the pass itself. Of note was a troop of Arunachal Macaques noisily foraging quite a distance below me as seen from the road at a spot where there was a good view far down into the valley just a short distance (maybe less than 1 km) from the pass. I don't know how often these high altitude primates are spotted, but I found no reference in any of the birding reports I read. The pass itself is the spot for Fire-tailed Myzornis. The rhododendrons within a short distance (maybe 100 to 200 m) on either side of the pass should be searched. I had seen one male 15 years ago in India, but the view was quick and I was hoping for something more pleasing. A short look produced one bird, but the fog rolled in and the bird disappeared - my view was even worse than that male so long ago. I decided to spend a bit more time and eventually found a flock of four birds actively foraging in the rhododendrons at very close range. Magical!

From the pass it's about 20 km to Bomphu Camp with good birding all the way. Interestingly, there was plenty of fresh evidence of elephants from just below the pass, and further down towards Bomphu as well. I didn't know elephants reached that kind of

altitude at Eaglenest. I also heard them near Sessni and at Khellong, but never saw them during my time at Eaglenest. My arrival at Bomphu was dampened, quite literally, by a heavy downpour that put an end to birding for the afternoon. I can't complain however as these few hours were the only ones I lost to bad weather during my entire stay at Eaglenest where, according to other reports I read, the weather can be seriously nasty at times. I spent the next four full days birding above and below Bomphu. On three mornings (once by myself and twice with one of the workers at camp who was skilled finding Blyth's Tragopan), I hiked the steep trail up the hill behind the main, uppermost tents at Bomphu Camp. The trail starts right in back of them. Unfortunately, no luck in seeing the tragopan, but a noisy Slender-billed Scimitar-Babbler caught my attention and he gave me a great look, and Rufous-throated Wren-Babbler seemed common.

I'd obviously recommend spending time at different altitudes along the road while based at Bomphu by stopping at a good spot and walking the road, having your driver follow behind from time to time. I don't know that there are specific locations that are any better than others, but I will summarize what I learned about the targets later on, and the other more widespread species should be bumped into if spending enough time here. Really, it just comes down to time spent in the right habitat. There's no need to come on a big costly expedition with multiple guides or on a big birding tour to do Eaglenest properly. All that's needed is a car with a driver and time.

Hornbill viewpoint is a good obvious landmark on the right hand side about 5 km below Bomphu. I was told of a Rufous-necked Hornbill nest somewhere around this viewpoint by a birding group on its way out of Eaglenest when I was at Lama Camp, but I couldn't find it. Roadside birding immediately above and below Hornbill viewpoint was quite productive with good flocks. Sessni is another 7 km lower and again, good birding both above and below. Sessni is the spot for the multi-named Blackish-breasted Babbler (Himalayan/Sikkim Wedge-billed Babbler). It was also just below Sessni that while I was walking along the road, I encountered an Indochinese Clouded Leopard - see the account in the Mammal List near the end of this report for full details.

On one occasion, I made the long drive down to Khellong. It's hard not to stop from time to time on this drive, so I didn't get to Khellong as early as I would have liked. Also, it was a bright sunny day and thus very hot at this lower altitude. Khellong has a few special birds (White-hooded Babbler, Black-browed (Lesser Rufous-headed) Parrotbill, Pale-headed Woodpecker and Hodgson's Frogmouth), the first three being bamboo specialists. Along the road about 300 m above the buildings at Khellong, there is a stretch of road with lots of bamboo on the right hand side (while looking up the road). I found a big flock of White-hooded Babblers here with one Black-browed Parrotbill in attendance. This is also apparently the spot for Hodgson's Frogmouth, but I bumped into two birding groups that had failed to find it here, and I made no special effort to be there at dusk so I missed it. Unfortunately, I couldn't find the Pale-headed Woodpecker either. About 3 km along the road above Khellong there is also a very nice stretch of bamboo on both sides of the road. This patch of bamboo is quite extensive and would be difficult to drive

by without noticing. I decided to have lunch here and was rewarded with my only sighting of Rufous-faced Warbler.

Relevant Contact Information

First of all, Eaglenest is not possible to visit without your own vehicle and there are no vehicles to rent for day trips from either of the two camps. I suppose one could hire a taxi in Tenga and have it drop you at Lama Camp for a few days since all the birding sites around Lama are accessible on foot, but a private vehicle would be needed for anything further along the road.

Lama Camp and Bomphu Camp are each under separate management. I booked my accommodation in advance separately for each camp, although the group running Bomphu offered to book Lama for me as well, but the price was higher so I did it myself. For Lama Camp, the organization operating the camp is the following:

Phuarung Birding Holidays

Ramalingam, P.O. Tenga Market, District West Kameng, Arunachal Pradesh

phone: +91-94364-26781/+91-87299-15566

email: phuarang@gmail.com

I contacted Mr. Indi Glow at the above email address to make my booking. Accommodation at Lama was in simple but comfortable safari-style tents. Beds were supplied with lots of blankets for warmth since it is quite cold at Lama at night. A toilet was adjacent to my tent, and shower facilities were a short walk away. Hot water was supplied on demand for bucket showers. The food at Lama was very good and the small staff very pleasant and accommodating. Electricity is available for a few hours at night for charging batteries. Single accommodation (including food) was Rs 3500 per night, and there was a road maintenance fee of Rs 250 per day (applied only for my three days at Lama), community fees (Rs 250 per day x 3 days) and a miscellaneous fee of Rs 256.

For Bomphu Camp, the organization operating the camp is as follows:

Eaglenest Birding

47, Third Floor, Bharat Nagar

New Friends Colony, New Delhi-110025

website: www.eaglenestbirding.com

phone: 91-9999-030-46/91-9911-336-281

email: info@eaglenestbirding.com

I contacted a helpful fellow named Gaurav at the above email address to make my booking. The set-up at Bomphu is similar to Lama, although all toilets and wash facilities are in a block attached to the main building. The staff here is great also. Ask about having someone help you finding the tragopan above camp as there is actually a maze of trails, not just the main one going up. Single accommodation (including food) was Rs 4000 per night and there was a community fee of Rs 200 per day x 5 days for the time I was there. One thing to consider regarding costs when visiting Eaglenest is whether the cost for the driver is included in your booking arrangement with the car rental company. It's a good

idea to confirm this one way or another, especially if you are, like me, traveling alone, since the charge for the driver (accommodation and food) would be something like Rs 1000 per day. In my case, the driver's costs were included in the daily rate I paid for the vehicle.

Target Birds

Blyth's Tragopan

It's possible to bump into tragopans in the early morning along the road above Bomphu, but the most reliable spot is on the trails up the hill immediately behind Bomphu Camp. Although I heard the call on a few occasions, including once from only a few metres away, I never could get a glimpse of this bird. Enlist the help of one of the camp staff at Bomphu who can help you track it down, although I tried this on two mornings (once also on my own) with no success. Big disappointment.

Temminck's Tragopan

I believe the location for this species is the area around Eaglenest Pass. However, nobody I encountered at Eaglenest had seen this bird, and my limited time in the area did not produce any sightings. I didn't really make a concerted effort to track it down.

Ward's Trogon

This is a hard bird, although my driver may have seen it on two occasions when I was off elsewhere. The most likely locations seem to be from a bit above Bomphu Camp as far as about Sunderview, although there are sightings of it below Bomphu and over around Lama as well, but I believe the stretch of road above Bomphu is the best. That said, I spent a fair amount of time near the end of my stay in search of this bird with no luck. Not even a call was heard.

Rufous-necked Hornbill

I believe the most reliable area is from a couple of km above Hornbill viewpoint down towards Sessni. I heard them flying over several times, and fortunately had one perched in the open and calling about 2 km down from Hornbill viewpoint (5 km up from Sessni).

Blackish-breasted Babbler (Himalayan/Sikkim Wedge-billed Babbler)

The spot for this bird is in the thick undergrowth right around the building at Sessni and directly across the road from it.

Slender-billed Scimitar-Babbler

I don't think there is a particular hotspot for this species. It's probably best to learn it's call and hope to hear it or bump into it as I did along the trail above Bomphu Camp for my only encounter.

Bugun Liocichla

From Lama Camp down to and along the Alubari trail, search through every flock of Rusty-fronted Barwings with which it appears to frequent, although it has been seen on its own as well. That said, I looked through an awful lot of barwing flocks with no luck. I

had been told that the Alubari trail was the best location, and although I heard it there twice, it was always at a distance. After all the effort I put in around Lama, during my last 15 minutes as my driver was packing up the vehicle for us to leave for Kaziranga, I found another barwing flock maybe 100 m or so below Lama Camp and there was the Bugun.

Success at last!

Himalayan Cutia

I have the sense that this species can be found anywhere from about Lama Camp over to around Sessni. During my stay at Bomphu, it was found by others about 2 km below camp, but in all of my time in Eaglenest, I couldn't find it. Again, it may just be a matter of being in the right place at the right time and bumping into it. A nemesis bird of mine as I've failed with it now a couple of times.

Fire-tailed Myzornis

The rhododendrons within about 100-200 m on either side of Eaglenest Pass is the place for this species. I found an amazing flock of four foraging in rhododendrons for a good 10 minutes at eye level at close distance on the Bomphu side of the pass.

Beautiful Nuthatch

I was told that the road below Bomphu Camp down to about Hornbill viewpoint was the most reliable location for this species. However, neither I nor anybody else in Eaglenest during my stay was able to find this bird. Seemingly scarce and difficult.

Kaziranga National Park

After leaving Eaglenest, my driver dropped me at Wild Grass Lodge about 5 km beyond the village of Kohoro, this village being located at the road leading to the central range of the national park. Kohoro is pretty small, but there appeared to be a number of accommodation options (from luxury to budget) such that someone should be able to arrive without a reservation and find a place to stay. Keep in mind that weekends seemed to be extremely busy here with long lines of jeeps visiting the park. Jeeps can be hired to all of the park regions from the park office just a short distance off the road leading south from the middle of the village. I, however, decided to base myself at the rustic Wild Grass Lodge which is found about 5 km (this is at best only an estimate) east of Kohoro, along a little road off the main highway. There is no sign whatsoever to announce the existence of Wild Grass Lodge until you are metres away from it. If traveling east along the highway from Kohoro, you will find a small shop selling handicrafts with a sign on the right hand side of the road. Unfortunately, I forget the name of the shop, but this shop is right at the road you should take to the right from the main highway. You will need to make a couple of turns (unsignposted) to make it to Wild Grass, but after leaving the highway, it's probably no more than 1 km to the lodge so asking around should work if necessary.

Strangely, Wild Grass does not seem to have a website, but I managed to track down the following email address: wildgrasskaziranga@gmail.com and Mr. Manju Barua responded with a highly detailed information package. I had asked about budget

accommodation and was offered what turned out to be a wonderful little private cottage on the grounds but away from the main blocks of rooms. Accommodation and all meals came to Rs 1500 per night which I found to be a great deal since the price for a normal room with three meals would likely be double this. The food was wonderful, and the fellow who seemed to be the manager/receptionist/waiter, whose name I never did get, was the epitome of organization and had the place running smoothly. All in all, I really liked Wild Grass and would highly recommend it, especially for that slightly-faded, British colonial mystique. Of note, I found Indian Cuckoo and Oriental Scops-Owl on the grounds.

Additionally, an advantage of Wild Grass Lodge is that there is a nearby tea estate that offers great birding. If you walk out the main gate at Wild Grass, you will very soon find that the road splits. Stay left and you will walk along a straight stretch (with a small ditch/canal on your right) for a few hundred metres. You will then see a road to the left which passes over a bridge. Do not take this left, but continue along the "main" road. There will be another road to the left, but again, do not take it. Instead, the main road makes a sharp curve to the right and after it straightens out, there will be another road to the left. This time, take this road and very shortly you will pass the last house and the tea garden will open up in front of you. Take the main path straight up through the tea garden and you will come across what is essentially a grid of paths to the right and left. You will see the main path eventually rises at a little hill, but before you get that far, take the paths to the left and just wander around to find pockets of trees and most of the good birds can be found here. You can continue along the main path up over the hill as well and explore this area too. You will occasionally come across workers in the tea garden, although I tried to minimize my encounters with them. For the most part they were cordial, but one or two obviously didn't enjoy my presence, although an unpleasant glare was the extent of their displeasure.

I made four visits to the tea garden and it, amongst other things, was a mecca for members of the Cuculidae family with a total of eight species seen; Large Hawk-Cuckoo, Common (Eurasian) Cuckoo, Violet Cuckoo, Square-tailed Drongo-Cuckoo, Asian Koel, Green-billed Malkoha, Greater Coucal and Lesser Coucal. Other birds of note were Large Cuckooshrike, Lesser Necklaced Laughingthrush, Rufous-necked Laughingthrush, White-browed Piculet, Brown Boobook (Hawk-Owl), Puff-throated Babbler, Siberian Rubythroat, Bengal Bushlark and unfortunately, just one glimpse of a pair of White-browed Scimitar-Babblers flying across the path and out of sight. For the Bengal Bushlark, as you are entering the tea garden, instead of going left where the most "forested" habitat is found, go right instead and a bit of searching will turn up some short-grass fields that may in fact be mostly bare ground. The area to search is actually very small, and it was here I found a pair of bushlarks. They were totally absent from their usual spot which is around the elephant ride staging area immediately inside the central range gate. A guide had told me the bushlarks were very scarce this year. I had also hoped to bump into Blue-naped Pitta in the tea garden, but I heard no calls and I wasn't about to play a tape for two reasons: first, my own bias against using tapes to lure in birds, and secondly, it was

breeding season for the pitta and I didn't want to disturb it.

As far as the national park is concerned, there are three ranges to explore, and visits to each of them pretty much follow a standard route. By now, everyone is probably familiar with the well-known bureaucracy in place at Kaziranga. The gates only opened at 7:30 and all vehicles had to exit for lunch. Sunrise was around 5:00 leaving the park unavailable for some pretty prime birding hours. Not a bad strategy is to go to the tea garden for a couple of hours and come back, pick up a pre-arranged packed breakfast, and head off around 7:00 to go and get the necessary permits before entering the gates. Keep in mind that if using Wild Grass as your base, the drives to the eastern and western gates are more time consuming. From Wild Grass, the vehicle charges to visit the three ranges of the national park were as follows: central (Rs 1550), western (Rs 1650) and eastern (Rs 2050). These charges apply for each visit, so you pay for the morning and then also the afternoon if you make two visits. The cost for the jeeps can be shared by up to six people I think. I asked around at Wild Grass if there were any others wishing to share a jeep, but everybody was traveling in groups so I was on my own for each visit. Although being alone is much more expensive, at least you have complete freedom in terms of what you want to do. Not many other tourists care much about birds. It's all about the tiger at Kaziranga (which isn't a very good place to look for tiger at all), and having had great experiences with tigers in Kanha NP many years ago, tiger wasn't a top priority. In fact, while at one of the watchtowers, I overheard one rather annoyed and annoying western tourist quite loudly saying, as her group was looking out over the wetland, "I don't care about birds - I came here to see the big stuff"! Additionally, there was an entrance fee to the park of Rs 650 (for the whole day so you pay only once if you make multiple visits on the same day) and a camera fee of Rs 200 per visit. As I was on a long trip and in no rush, I decided to spend four days visiting the park (5 nights at Wild Grass Lodge) and go into the park once per day to manage my finances. The camera fee is a real annoyance, and I decided to be strategic by taking in my camera only once, choosing to take it to the western range since this was the place with the best opportunity to photograph rhinos. My strategy worked as there were plenty of opportunities for photos, and if this is a real priority, I'd recommend an afternoon visit to the western range for the Sun to be in the best spot for photos of rhinos. An afternoon visit to the western range also gives perhaps the best chance for Swamp Francolin as it comes out to the edges of the long grass, especially near watercourses, in this part of the park as the afternoon progresses.

On the whole, Kaziranga was great, despite the previously mentioned annoyances. I visited the central range twice, and both the eastern and western ranges once each. I believe I got fair value with the drivers at Wild Grass, as we stayed in the park at least three hours, if not a bit more, and the drivers were motivated to search for wildlife, including birds, as well. Guides were available for the park at Wild Grass, and one came along on one of my trips although I did not ask for one. In terms of birding sites within the park, there isn't much more information I can give other than what is found in the bird list found below. Have the driver drive slowly and keep the eyes and ears open. Long

grass is key for a few species, and time spent in this habitat may be rewarded, as it was for me with calling Chestnut-capped Babbler which popped out in the open, and a silent Slender-billed Babbler that flew out of the tall grass to land just opposite my position in the jeep for a good look. That one was a major target for me and I got lucky. Bengal Florican was not present during my visit, but I was mainly hoping for this species at Manas National Park.

Khonoma

I found out about this village in Nagaland by coming across a birding trip report online by Pritam Baruah. Almost 20 years ago, the local community members of Khonoma decided to ban hunting in its forests and create what's known as the Khonoma Nature Conservation and Tragopan Sanctuary, and there is a long list of special birds that are possible within a short distance of this wonderful little village.

I would strongly recommend organizing a birding visit through the local guide Angulie Meyase (email: anguliemeyase@yahoo.com; phone: +91 9436071046/9855834864). Angulie lives in Kohima but is from Khonoma and is definitely the go-to guy to bird the area. In my opinion, one should respect the local community and not come here to go birding alone. As outsiders, we should embrace the fact the villagers have had the foresight to protect their forests and provide an economic return by staying with families in the village and paying for local guiding services as well. On top of that, Angulie is a great fellow and a pleasure to go birding with as he made me feel like we were simply two friends going out birding together as opposed to him leading me around on a leash and simply pointing everything out to me. That kind of birding really annoys me. Angulie made all the arrangements for accommodation. I stayed with a really nice family at a homestay and had a private room with attached toilet/bathroom facilities. There was only cold water from the taps, but hot water was readily available for bucket showers. It was great to be able to get an insight into Naga culture, and my time in this idyllic little village was a definite highlight of my trip.

I arranged a plan with Angulie for four days and nights with a cost of Rs 7500 per day which included guiding services, accommodation with all meals, and transportation services starting from Dimapur where he picked me up and until the evening of our last birding day. Since this price included use of his car, if you have your own vehicle, the per day cost would be substantially less, especially if you have a small group to share costs. All in all it was good value and I enjoyed my time immensely.

After leaving Wild Grass Lodge after breakfast, I flagged down a bus going east along the main highway. The objective was to get to the town of Golaghat where the manager at Wild Grass said I could easily find onward transportation to Dimapur in Nagaland. The bus I flagged down stopped at a village down the highway, but there I found a bus going to Golaghat which took time to fill up, but eventually we were on our way. The road to Dimapur branches off several km before Golaghat, and upon reaching this intersection, I saw a couple of buses waiting by the side of the road sitting in the

direction of Dimapur. I quickly asked the driver if they were going to Dimapur - his answer was yes - so I jumped off my bus and found a spot on a Dimapur-bound bus. I arrived early in the afternoon. Angulie had made a reservation for me at the Hotel de Oriental Dream, and I finally found a rickshaw driver who could understand me and knew where the hotel was and we were off. The hotel is quite nice and I had a good, comfortable room (Rs 1000). Angulie picked me up the following morning at 9:00 and we were off to Khonoma which took a little under three hours if I remember correctly.

We birded that afternoon and the following three full days. Birding sites are largely within a short distance of the village, mainly in secondary habitats, with a great trail climbing up in the forest starting from a parking lot about 4 km up the road from town. This trail does reach primary forest and I believe this is the actual tragopan sanctuary. Details about my bird sightings are in the bird list, but as a summary, we were able to find virtually every major target possible during my stay such as: Mountain Bamboo-Partridge, Crested Finchbill, Flavescent Bulbul, Grey-crowned Warbler, Pygmy Wren-Babbler, Spotted Elachura (Wren-Babbler), Long-tailed (Naga) Wren-Babbler, Spot-breasted Scimitar-Babbler, Spot-breasted Laughingthrush, White-browed Laughingthrush, Striped Laughingthrush, Brown-capped Laughingthrush, Blue-winged Laughingthrush, Chestnut-vented Nuthatch and Black-breasted Thrush.

Manas National Park

After leaving Khonoma, I decided to relax for a couple of days around Kohima and then take a bus to Dimapur before connecting with the Brahmaputra Mail for Barpeta Road, the access town for the road to Manas National Park. In deciding how to structure the last three weeks of my trip, I wanted to make sure I made it to Manas NP sooner rather than later to maximize my chances to see Bengal Florican, and to ensure that my visit would be prior to the beginning of May when I have heard that in the past, the park has closed, especially if the rains have been heavy. My arrival at Barpeta Road was around mid-afternoon. It is possible to find public transportation to the village of Bansbari and the accommodations on the edge of Manas NP from just a short distance away from the train station. If you walk out the main entrance to the train station at Barpeta Road, at the bottom of the stairs, turn left. You will see a bridge used by passengers to reach other platforms at the station. Pass by this bridge and in the distance you will see a white metal overpass (flyover) for vehicular traffic to pass over the railway tracks. Walk towards this bridge, but don't use it. Instead, walk directly over the railway tracks to the other side just before this overpass where you will no doubt see dozens of other people doing the same thing as this is definitely a well-traveled route. Once you cross over the tracks, you'll go down about four steps and immediately come to a paved road. Turn right at this road and within about 50 m you will find a number of share taxis (often red in colour) for Bansbari. The fare is Rs 20, although if there is no space for a big backpack, you may have to pay for two fares. It takes just under one hour to travel the 20 km to Bansbari. The last stop is at the edge of the village. Once dropped off at this last stop,

continue walking straight ahead in the same direction you had been traveling. If you walk for about 750 m, you will come to the Bansbari Resort and the park entrance. There will be a road immediately before the entrance to the park, and if you turn left and walk maybe 500 m, you will reach the Florican Cottages where I stayed for four nights.

Florican Cottages is run by a really nice group of fellows, and in the early evening I met with their main guide to discuss plans for visiting the park and what birds and mammals I was hoping to see. The accommodations were very good and comfortable (Rs 1620), great food (three meals - Rs 635), and jeep hire was Rs 2800 per visit. Aside from two local tourists who came for one night (with whom I shared a jeep on one day), I was the only person staying as the season seemed to be winding down.

As expected, the guide told me my chances of seeing the very rare Hispid Hare and Pygmy Hog was virtually zero. However, he was optimistic about Bengal Florican and a few other targets. I decided to take a somewhat relaxed approach to visiting the park by going in for three morning visits since it appeared I'd get more time in the park than on afternoon visits for the same cost. I feel I got excellent value as we typically entered around 6:00 and stayed for four or more hours in the park on each visit. My most exciting species were as follows: Bengal Florican (on day 1 a male was seen flying in from the watchtower at Kuri Beel, a grassland area and **the** spot for florican. It landed and commenced foraging in the grass. The grass was a little bit tall, but he'd often come to a low area and be mostly visible. A visit on day 2 however produced no florican, so multiple visits may be necessary to track it down), Striated Babbler (two seen on each of day 2 and 3 - relatively common in grassland habitat, often perching conspicuously at the top of tall grass), Black-breasted Parrotbill (the place for this species is a marshy area called Charpoli - two birds were seen on day 2), Hodgson's Bushchat (a surprise was seeing a female in the grassland just before Kuri Beel), Pin-tailed (Green) Pigeon (one seen from one of the watchtowers as we waited out the heavy rain on day 3) and Yellow-eyed Babbler (fantastic looks at 4 or 5 birds in a marshy area with tall grass that my guide knew was a good spot for this species).

Compared to Kaziranga, the park is relatively empty of people which makes for a different experience, and was definitely to my liking for that reason. However, one does not visit Manas for the purpose of seeing lots of big mammals for they are very thinly distributed in the park. It is possible to wander around some scrubland outside the park, but hoped-for owls were totally absent with not a sound. There is also a tea garden near the main entrance to the park that is worth a small diversion if you can spare the time, but not worth it as a destination in and of itself. At this time of year, rain was an issue, but it was only a major problem on day three when it forced us to seek shelter numerous times during our morning visit. Worth noting is that I enquired about staying at the Mothanguri Forest Lodge in the park, but was quoted a ridiculous price so I declined. I drove by it once and stopped to have a look -it does have an idyllic setting. Perhaps also worth mentioning for mammal enthusiasts is that the guide at Florican Cottages offered a visit to a location (at least a half-day trip or more, I just can't remember) where Golden

Langur was, he said, guaranteed. As I had already booked a train to a place further west for the purpose of tracking down Golden Langur, I declined, but it should be mentioned as an option for planning purposes.

Chakrashila Wildlife Sanctuary

I took a share-jeep from Bansbari to Barpeta Road early in the morning and caught the Kamrup Express to Kokrajhar. When I was doing the logistical planning for this trip, an internet search turned up the Chakrashila Wildlife Sanctuary which was near the city of Kokrajhar, and the motivation for coming here was to find Golden Langur. Other than knowing this reserve existed and that it was set up to protect Golden Langur, I had no additional information other than Google Maps showing its location which of course turned out to be wrong. I found a room at the Hotel Laxmi not far from the railway station which was a reasonable place in this out-of-the-way city.

The next morning I found an autorickshaw driver who said he knew how to get to the sanctuary. I negotiated a fare and off we went. As is often the case when a driver tells you he knows where you want to go, he really doesn't, so this fellow enlisted directions from several people as we headed out of town. We ended up at a sort of Forest Office complex that was clearly signposted on the Bahalpur-Kokrajhar road (highway 14) perhaps something like 10 km outside of town, but this is at best a wild estimate. This is the road that passes right in front of the Hotel Laxmi heading out of town. Finding someone who spoke enough English for me to be understood was a challenge at first. I finally got the point across that I was here to try to find the Golden Langur. I was brought over to an office, given some tea and told to wait which I did for quite some time. Eventually a manager came by (his name and position I can't remember, but he spoke English well) and we had a chat about what I was hoping to do. By now the morning had become hot and I was thinking this was going to turn into a wild-goose chase. I asked why I had been told to wait for so long to make a visit to the sanctuary and was informed that the one vehicle (a pickup truck) they had to take me into the sanctuary did not have any gas in it and they had to seemingly try to acquire some somewhere which they eventually did. Since my visit was likely a bit of a novelty as few foreigners pass this way, several park workers, guards, rangers and the manager himself formed a team and we all set off in the pickup truck to mount a successful expedition to find Golden Langur. We drove further down the same highway until reaching another forest office and made an enquiry. The latest intelligence info suggested a troop a short distance further down the highway, and upon reaching the appropriate spot, my reconnaissance team spotted them quickly and I had wonderful sighting of this rare primate.

Oftentimes the most memorable experiences are those that are not planned out thoroughly in advance, but occur as a result of the willingness to hope that things will work out in the end if you just give it a try. This was one of those occasions as the park workers seemed to experience such joy at being able to locate Golden Langur for me, and we all shared our success. We stayed with the troop for maybe 20-30 minutes and then

left them in peace. We dropped off most of the crew back at the base, and then the manager and driver drove me back to town. The manager refused to take any payment at all for our adventure. I had budgeted two days to track down Golden Langur, but due to my immediate success, I now had to wait until the following night to catch my train out of Kokrajhar. Let's just say that there isn't much to do in Kokrajhar, but anyone used to multi-month independent travels knows that it's possible to pass time and enjoy being on the road just about anywhere.

Dibru-Saikowa National Park

After waiting patiently for more than a day to catch my train out of Kokrajhar, the NTSK Jivachh Link Express was a couple of hours late arriving, but I passed a comfortable night and arrived at New Tinsukia Station the next afternoon. I negotiated an autorickshaw right at the station to take me to Guijan, about 13 km away to the north. Once reaching the village, we took the very last road to the right before reaching the Brahmaputra River, and maybe 150 m away was the Banashree Ecocamp right on the riverbank - you have to veer a little left off the road to find the entrance. I had been in communication months previously (website is www.banashree.com and their email is banashree.eco@gmail.com), but had not made any kind of formal arrangement in advance to visit Dibru-Saikowa National Park. The key species people come here to see are Jerdon's Bushchat, Swamp Prinia, Jerdon's Babbler, Marsh Babbler and Black-breasted Parrotbill. Since I had already had great views of the parrotbill in Manas NP, I was wanting to focus on the other four. A comfortable cabin was Rs 1500 and since the owner Benu was out, I discussed a birding plan for the next day with his son. As I feared, being that I was visiting so late in the season, the water levels had risen making the park inaccessible. Thus Jerdon's Bushchat and Swamp Prinia were impossible. We made a plan for the following day to visit Maguri Beel in the morning, and then a few spots downriver by boat in the afternoon. The cost for the day (including food and accommodation) came to something like USD 150. This was beyond my daily budget this late in my trip, but I figured for one day I could absorb the cost. Of course, a group would be able to share the costs.

Maguri Beel is only about 5 km away and is clearly visible on google maps. A guide met me early in the morning and we drove to a small village on the edge of the beel where we found a boatman who took us out on to the beel for several hours. This trip might be difficult to arrange independent of any guiding services. First of all, it didn't appear to me that anybody in the village at the beel spoke English, so communication would be a big issue. Also, the beel is very large, and without local knowledge of where the key species are, it would be like looking for a needle in a haystack, and any specifics I could give would be useless for lack of any real landmarks. We heard Marsh Babbler twice, but did not get a look at it. Jerdon's Babbler was found on a little island a bit downstream of where we entered the beel, necessitating a strenuous act of poling to get us back upriver afterwards. Of note was a Smoky Warbler and heard-only Black-browed Reed-Warbler.

I was a bit surprised for our afternoon visit downstream on the Brahmaputra to board a huge tour boat with space for maybe 100 people, but with just me, the guide and two boatmen aboard, we set off. We visited a couple of grassland sites not that far downriver, but the birding was relatively quiet. However, we did find Black-breasted Parrotbill in a new location and apparently the first sighting of the year. My only new species was Spotted Bush-Warbler which I had an absolutely terrible look at, just enough to make the identification.

Having missed Marsh Babbler, I debated about trying for it for one more day, but I really dislike playing tapes to attract birds, and the only way to see this species is essentially to troll for it, or if you hear it, to try to tape it into view. Thus picturing myself sitting in a boat in the reeds and playing endless tapes, and the fact the cost of another visit was prohibitive for just me, I decided to leave the next morning.

Digboi Oilfields

After arriving to Tinsukia by share-taxi from Guijan, I asked a rickshaw driver to take me to where I could catch a bus for Digboi, and we soon found one almost ready to depart. It wasn't long and I was on the outskirts of Digboi, trying to get my bearings as I did not have any map. I was heading for the Digboi Tourist Lodge, the only accommodation I was aware of. It's fairly easy to find. Staying on the bus after passing through the majority of this spread-out town, the main gate to the Assam Oil Corporation will be obvious on your left. About 1 km further along the highway there is a smallish built-up urban area, and the Digboi Tourist Lodge is here on the left. There isn't much of a sign, but it's right beside a school. Rooms ranged from Rs 1000-1500 if I remember correctly, and I had a good discussion about birding the area with the very helpful owner/manager, Mr. Pankaj Baruah. Although I never used it, email contact for Mr. Baruah is as follows - guestlodge@rediffmail.com and cell: 9435137070. The rooms were very comfortable, and the food was good in the restaurant.

Permission is needed to gain access to the oilfields to look for the two most-wanted birds here: Collared Treepie and Chestnut-backed Laughingthrush. I walked back from the lodge to the oilfields and figured I'd look for the head office to see if I could speak to someone about access. There was good signage and I actually found my way only to be informed that the man I needed to speak to was not in, but he would be back in a couple of hours. I returned at the appropriate time and was ushered into the office of the assistant manager of security, Mr. B. Dihingia. He was a nice fellow, big on ceremony and we had a good chat and some tea before getting down to business. Long story short, I was given permission to visit the oilfields the next morning, however only for three hours. Mr. Dihingia offered to have his driver pick me up at 5:00 a.m. at the Digboi Tourist Lodge. We would then pick up a mandatory security guard, meant apparently for my protection, and then pass the entrance guard gate. I was thankful for the offer, although concerned that three hours wasn't going to give me much time, especially since I had no idea as to any particular locations for good birding in the oilfield forest.

Everything went as planned the next morning, although the gate at the tourist lodge was locked, so I had to find someone to unlock it before I could leave. Unfortunately, from a birding standpoint, it was a complete washout as I could not locate either of the targets, and nothing else really of note either aside from some elephants. See the mammal list for an interesting story about them. On our return to the offices, we passed along a highway going through the oilfields forest, and I noted a good stretch of forest between km 12-15, thinking that I could maybe hire a taxi to take me out here and I could bird along the road without having to worry about permission.

Back at the tourist lodge, Mr. Baruah told me of a trail on the other side of the road from the entrance to the oilfields. If you are at the entrance to the oilfields along the main highway, almost directly across the highway on the other side you will see some small houses and a walkway that passes between them for maybe 50 m. After passing the houses, you will see an open area a bit to your left and a trail entering some scrubby areas beyond. If you take this, it will lead to forest, but on my several visits here, I didn't see much other than Rufous-necked Laughingthrushes and some old elephant droppings.

Mr. Dihingia said that I did not need permission to walk the road to the golf course in the oilfields, so the next day I decided to give it a try. The road to the golf course is signed and starts to the right as you come along the main road through the oilfields and before Mr. Dihingia's office. I did come to a security checkpoint and was delayed there a short while before being allowed to proceed. The road passed by a number of houses of presumably some of the oilfields' "bigwigs" and there were pockets of secondary growth, but only common birds were seen.

The main road that passes through the oilfields complex after you turn off the main highway actually continues beyond (I think it becomes highway 215) and I hired a taxi to take me out to the forest along the road between km 12 and 15 (there are roadside km markers), and I spent a morning hoping to bump into my key targets, but although I found treepies, they were Grey, and although I found two species of laughingthrushes, they were not the Chestnut-backed I was looking for. My efforts in Digboi turned up only one new "trip species", the Rufescent Prinia seen along this stretch of highway.

In retrospect, Digboi turned out to be a disappointment and virtually a complete waste of time, although the sight of the abandoned oil wells in the forest is a very surreal experience. However, one comes to realize that this happens from time to time when traveling alone and without guides to help out. My recommendation would be to come here only if you have someone handling the logistics or have been able to work out a plan in advance and know where to go for the key birds. For what it's worth, Mr. Dihingia's email address is: dihingiab@indianoil.in and his mobile number is 9435138692. Of note, Benu at the Banashree Ecocamp offered to take me to the Digboi forest, so if you are traveling independently, this may be a way to go to get some firsthand knowledge. I do not know the cost of the day trip, but with a group to share costs, I imagine it would be reasonable.

Namsang Road (Joypur Reserve Forest)

I had read about this birding site in a trip report by Pritam Baruah (accessed on www.cloudbirders.com) referencing a visit he made to this area in December, 2010. In it he described a road running through good forest leading to a village or tea resort by the name of Namsang; thus he named this site the Namsang Road. As his birdlist contained a number of species I was interested in and the fact it was close to Digboi, I thought I would try to arrange a visit to finish off my trip.

Public transport to Joypur from Digboi was non-existent. I would, at a minimum, have to go back to Tinsukia and then try to find something to get me out to Joypur, and Mr. Baruah at the Digboi Tourist Lodge wasn't optimistic. Instead, he found a driver for me and we set off following the back roads of this forgotten corner of Assam, and about 90 minutes or so later, we arrived in Joypur. Mr. Baruah had telephoned the forest office in Joypur to make an inquiry about accommodation at the Forest Inspection Bungalow. He was told initially that due to renovations, I would not be able to stay there. I knew of one alternative accommodation relatively nearby, the Tai-Phakey Eco-tourism Camp, but it apparently is now out of business due to storm damage to its infrastructure. Mr. Baruah called back and, long story short, I was granted permission to stay at the bungalow.

Let's see if I can give decent directions. Upon entering Joypur (some of its many alternative spellings are Jaipur, Jeypore) along highway 215 from the west, you will make a 90° turn to the right and, if I remember correctly, there was a school nearby. Essentially the first road to the left you come to afterwards should be taken and this leads a short distance to the edge of the Dehing River, and it is right here that the forest inspection bungalow is found on the left. I was dropped off here with nobody in sight aside from the workers dealing with the renovations, but a short time later, a great fellow by the name of Rituraj met me. He's an interesting fellow - what his title is I could never really figure out, but suffice to say he's in charge of organizing anything that the rare foreigner to visit these parts would need. He took care of making sure the room was sufficient, that the ongoing repairs would take place so as not to interfere with my need for water and electricity, and his wife prepared all of my meals which he would drop off at our pre-determined time - his house was a short distance away. The Forest Inspection Bungalow is set up in an idyllic location with great views out over the Dehing River. It's actually a two-storey structure with a few large rooms on the second floor with unattached bathrooms. There is a kitchen too I believe, but it was locked up during my stay, although those wishing to cook for themselves could likely use it. The second floor had a nice open-air lounge ideal for relaxing. The ground floor was being completely renovated so I don't know exactly what it will be once complete. Suffice to say it was a very comfortable place. And Rituraj's wife is a fabulous cook - the food was mouth-watering. Great variety too during my three-day stay.

I made an inquiry with Rituraj about the Namsang Road since I didn't know where it was. I was told that regulations required that I walk the road with a forest guard which the forest office would provide for me. I had hoped I'd be able to walk the road at my

pleasure without having to be accompanied, but anyone who has traveled in India for long knows that the freedom to do what you want is often not possible. Anyway, I made arrangements to walk the Namsang Road over the following three mornings and was assigned a nice fellow whose name escapes me at the moment. He came to pick me up on his motorcycle and we set off through town on highway 215, made a 90° turn to the left and shortly thereafter, another 90° turn to the right and followed highway 215 out of town for a couple of km along the Dehing River to, I believe, the first large left hand road, a jeep trail leading to Namsang, which was signposted with a big sign.

As far as the birding went, it was much slower than I had hoped. I think this was largely due to the time of year, May likely not being the optimal time. I estimate we walked about 4 km or so along the road and back each day, and my final new trip birds were as follows: Yellow-bellied Warbler, White-tailed Robin, Blue-throated Flycatcher, Brown Hornbill and Asian Paradise-Flycatcher. Mammal sightings compensated for this with lots of Asian Elephants and a fantastic family of Hoolock Gibbons.

Anyone with time and a little sense of adventure would find this rarely visited corner of India a real treat. I have no contact information for the Forest Department, but arrangements could be made through Rituraj or a local guide I spoke to briefly. The guide seemed to know his stuff (but was unavailable during my stay), and assured me he knew locations for good birds beyond Namsang, such as the two species I missed at Digboi. Contact information is as follows:

Rituraj

cell: 09954450526/08811812004

email: atithya.jpr@gmail.com

Mridu Phukan (guide)

email: mriduphukan@gmail.com

At the end of my stay, the Bihu Festival was beginning, and Rituraj went out of his way to take me to some of the events on my last evening and morning before I had to leave. This was a wonderful experience, and as the only foreigner around, I was treated as an extra-special guest, undeservedly so I must admit. However, a claim for which I will always be proud is that on my last morning, before Rituraj drove me to the nearby town of Naharkatia where I could catch transportation back to Tinsukia, I became the egg fighting champion of Joypur in the initial activity after the opening ceremonies for the Bihu Festival. The little trophy I received is a treasured reminder of a fantastic visit to India.

Car Rental

The only time I hired a private vehicle was for my exploration of Arunachal Pradesh from March 25 to April 6 (13 days), during which I visited birding areas within reach of Dirang and also the amazing Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary. I got in contact with Mr. Bhuban Pradhan at the Hotel Pemaling in Dirang, and he offered to set me up with a car and driver. Although internet service may be a little problematic at times, Bhuban was

always quick to respond to my questions, and I feel he's a very honest and reliable fellow. Our arrangement worked out really well as my driver Monu was experienced with birding groups and helped out quite a bit with locating birding spots I had little to no information about. He was good company as well from the time he picked me up at the Nameri Ecocamp to the time he dropped me off at Wild Grass Lodge.

As I was traveling alone, the cost of my trip to Arunachal Pradesh was always going to be a significant component of my entire trip budget since I had nobody with whom to share costs. However, Bhuban's charges for vehicle rental were very reasonable. I was charged a per day rate (including all charges) of Rs 3180. Fuel was extra and I paid as I went. For planning purposes, I had asked Bhuban for an estimate of what the fuel costs might be for my trip and he thought Rs 10000 might be about right, and sure enough, this was pretty much what I paid.

Bhuban can take care of the necessary arrangements for permits for Arunachal Pradesh as well, which all foreigners need, and this was a huge plus for me. All in all, I can definitely recommend Bhuban's services for organizing a trip in Arunachal Pradesh, and Monu would be an ideal driver as well. Contact information is as follows:

Hotel Pemaling website: www.hotelpemaling.com

Bhuban Pradhan email: hotelpemaling@gmail.com

Monu (driver) cell: 8399963376

References

All birds species in the bird list follow the taxonomy as per "The Clements Checklist of the Birds of the World". Included in brackets are alternative names to species as indicated in the field guide I used on my trip which was "Birds of India", published by Princeton and authored by Grimmett, Inskipp and Inskipp. All mammals in the mammal list follow the taxonomy in the volumes of the "Handbook of the Mammals of the World" that have been published to date. For species not yet covered, a decision was made regarding the use of a seemingly common name. Several trip reports, mainly found on www.cloudbirders.com helped in preparing a list of what birds I should see and where. Calls of a large number of bird species were downloaded from www.xenocanto.org to an iPod, and these were occasionally good references for identifying calls. Generally, I dislike playing recordings to attract birds and abhor what I deem to be the lazy tendency of trolling for birds by incessantly playing the call of a particular species until a response is obtained. I will not play a call until I note, in some way, the presence of a bird, and even then, usually as a last resort to actually see a species. I realize that this is my own bias and that the potential harm to any individual bird by playing tapes is far from having been conclusively proven scientifically. With that said, and at the risk of appearing to be an absolute hypocrite, the following species on my trip were observed, in reality, only by playing a tape, albeit reluctantly: Black-tailed Crake, Bar-winged Wren-Babbler, Blackish-breasted Babbler and Spot-breasted Laughingthrush.

Bird List

ANATIDAE (Ducks, Geese and Waterfowl)

Lesser Whistling-Duck

Dendrocygna javanica

More than 50 were spotted in the eastern range in Kaziranga National Park on April 10. On April 21, six birds landed in the wetland in Manas National Park where the Black-breasted Parrotbills are found. One more bird was found in Manas NP on April 22. More than 30 were seen on Maguri Beel on April 27. A flyover of two birds at the Digboi Oilfields on April 29 and two more over the Namsang Road on May 2.

Bar-headed Goose

Anser indicus

At Kaziranga National Park, more than 30 were seen in the central range on both April 7 and 9.

Ruddy Shelduck

Tadorna ferruginea

Two birds flew over while I was at the Nameri Ecocamp on March 21, while four flew over the Jia Bhorelli river just up from the ecocamp late in the afternoon the following day on the 22nd. On my afternoon rafting trip on the Jia Bhorelli river, I found a flock of eight birds on March 23. Four birds were found on the lake at Se La pass on March 26. In Kaziranga National Park, six were seen in the central range on April 7, five in the western range on April 8, six at Daphlong in the central range on April 9 and nine in the eastern range on April 10.

White-winged Duck

Cairina scutulata

Two amazing birds were found on the first of the two ponds on the trail that follows the river at Nameri National Park on March 21. We crept up very quietly to find them - one flew back a little deeper and out of sight, but one remained for the twenty minutes or so I spent there. It knew I was there and was acting warily, but it was comfortable enough to swim around and forage for plants. What an amazing sight! Apparently White-winged Duck had not been seen for the last two years at Nameri, but this year it seems to have returned.

Cotton Pygmy-Goose

Nettapus coromandelianus

A surprise seeing one in flight at Maguri Beel on April 27. I found a big pond as I wandered through the tea garden behind the Banashree EcoLodge and saw one Cotton Pygmy-Goose on the morning of April 28 before leaving for Tinsukia.

Eurasian Wigeon

Anas penelope

In Kaziranga National Park, ten were seen in the central range on April 7, six in the western range on April 8 and a huge flock of more than 200 in the eastern range on April 10. Two were on Maguri Beel on April 27.

Gadwall

Anas strepera

In Kaziranga National Park, four were seen in the central range on April 7, and about 10 at Daphlong in the central range on April 9.

Green-winged Teal***Anas carolinensis***

Two were found on a pond in Nameri National Park on March 21. Four birds were seen in the central range in Kaziranga National Park on April 7, with four more in the eastern range on April 10.

Mallard***Anas platyrhynchos***

Two were on the lake at Se La pass on March 26.

Indian Spot-billed Duck***Anas poecilorhyncha***

In Kaziranga National Park, about 30 birds were seen in the central range on April 7, 12 in the western range on April 8, 70+ in the central range on April 9, and 20+ in the eastern range on April 10. Several were on Maguri Beel on April 27.

Northern Pintail***Anas acuta***

Two birds were seen at Daphlong in the central range in Kaziranga National Park on both April 7 and 9. Another two were in the eastern range on April 10.

Northern Shoveller***Anas clypeata***

Two birds were found at Daphlong in the central range of Kaziranga National Park on April 9, followed by 20 birds in the eastern range on April 10. Two were on Maguri Beel on April 27.

Tufted Duck***Aythya fuligula***

About eight were on the lake at Se La pass on March 26.

Common Merganser***Mergus merganser***

Four females were spotted during my rafting trip on the Jia Bhorelli river on March 23.

PHASIANIDAE (Pheasants, Grouse and Allies)**Swamp Francolin*****Francolinus gularis***

I was told Swamp Francolin was not an easy bird at Kaziranga and the best way to see it is to go to the western range in the afternoon and try to get it as it emerges from the tall grass into the open, particularly around ponds. This strategy proved successful as I saw a total of three birds in the western range on April 8. I also had a great look at a pair with four chicks in wet grassland in Manas National Park on April 22.

Rufous-throated Partridge***Arborophila rufogularis***

A small partridge emerged from the roadside brush just below Khellong in the Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary on April 2. It quickly saw me and disappeared rapidly. My brief look was good enough to make the identification.

White-cheeked Partridge***Arborophila atrogularis***

While walking the Mandala Road around km 19 on March 27, I heard the rustling of a bird scratching in the undergrowth a little downslope of my position. There were a few gaps in the foliage and luckily, a White-cheeked Partridge paused long enough in one of the gaps for me to get a good look at its face, the white cheek being very prominent.

Mountain Bamboo-Partridge***Bambusicola thoracicus***

Quite common around the village of Khonoma as you drive up through the alder jhum plantation. Decent views of two birds in this same area on April 13, and five birds on each of April 14 and 15, both in the alder jhum plantation and the dirt roads further above the town up to the trailhead.

Blyth's Tragopan***Tragopan blythii***

The place to get the Blyth's Tragopan is on the steep trail above the tents at Bomphu Camp in the Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary. I went up this trail on three mornings, once alone and twice with one of the camp guys who's a good tracker. Heard it each morning and got very close one morning with the tracker, but it wouldn't emerge from the thick bamboo. Although I never climbed high enough to reach Blyth's Tragopan's normal habitat, nevertheless we came across one calling just off the main trail on April 14 at Khonoma, but it remained frustratingly out of view.

Red Junglefowl***Gallus gallus***

One male was spotted on the Pony trail at the Cherrapunjee Holiday Resort on March 10. Four males in total were in the western range in Kaziranga National Park on April 8. In the tea garden near Wild Grass Resort at Kaziranga, I saw one male and two hens in a tree on April 10. Presumably they were wild birds. Two were found in Manas National Park on April 21, with two more in the Digboi Oilfields on April 29. A final bird, a female, was spotted on the Namsang Road on May 3.

Kalij Pheasant***Lophura leucomelanos***

I flushed two birds on the road just below Lama Camp in Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary on March 30. A poor look, but the white markings on their backs were visible in flight as they disappeared downslope clinching the identification. We saw a male on the road as we descended from Bomphu to Sessni on April 2. A pair was seen very well in Manas National Park on the way to Kuri Beel on April 21.

Grey Peacock-Pheasant***Polyplectron bicalcaratum***

On March 16, I was walking along the trail down from Shillong Peak and at one point, stopped to watch a male Little Pied Flycatcher. I then heard rustling in the undergrowth indicating something on the forest floor coming in my direction and moving at a decent pace. As it approached, I caught an all-too-brief look through the low branches of a Grey Peacock-Pheasant. Although I was motionless and silent, it somehow spotted me and took off quickly and out of sight before emerging into the open. I was very lucky to spot this difficult bird, but regrettably, it could have been so much better.

Indian Peafowl***Pavo cristatus***

Very common in Manas National Park from April 20 to 22.

PODICIPEDIDAE (Grebes)

Little Grebe

Six were found at Maguri Beel on April 27.

Tachybaptus ruficollis

Great Crested Grebe

One was found on Maguri Beel on April 27.

Podiceps cristatus

CICONIIDAE (Storks)

Asian Openbill

About seven birds were at the Kanchenjuri viewpoint of Kaziranga National Park on April 6 where we stopped on the drive from Eaglenest to Wild Grass Lodge. Also at Kaziranga, more than 20 were seen in the western range on April 8 and around 20 in the central range on April 9. About six birds were around Maguri Beel on April 27. One was spotted in a paddyfield near the village of Joypur on May 3.

Anastomus oscitans

Black Stork

One was spotted from the trail along the Jia Bhorelli River in Nameri National Park while it was soaring over the river on March 22.

Ciconia nigra

Wooly-necked Stork

About eight were seen at the Kanchenjuri viewpoint of Kaziranga NP on April 6 where we stopped on the drive to Wild Grass Lodge. One was also seen in the central range of Kaziranga on April 9, and seven in the eastern range on April 10.

Ciconia episcopus

Black-necked Stork

Rather common at Kaziranga National Park with five birds seen in the central range on April 7, two in the western range on April 8, four in the central range on April 9 and four in the eastern range on April 10.

Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus

Lesser Adjutant

Relatively common in small numbers at Kaziranga National Park where two birds were seen in the central range on April 7, one in flight in the western range on April 8, three in the central range on April 9 and about 10 in the eastern range on April 10.

Leptoptilus javanicus

Greater Adjutant

One bird was at the Kanchenjuri viewpoint of Kaziranga National Park on April 6 where we stopped on the drive from Eaglenest to Wild Grass Lodge. Two were found in the central range at Kaziranga on April 9.

Leptoptilus dubius

PHALACROCORACIDAE (Cormorants and Shags)

Indian Cormorant

One was perched on the edge of a watercourse in the central range of Kaziranga National Park on April 9.

Phalacrocorax fuscicollis

Great Cormorant***Phalacrocorax carbo***

Two were spotted from the trail following the Jia Bhorelli River in Nameri National Park on March 21. One was seen in the same area the next day on the 22nd. About 10 were seen during my rafting trip on the Jia Bhorelli river on March 23. One bird was in breeding plumage in the central range of Kaziranga National Park on April 7.

Little Cormorant***Phalacrocorax niger***

Two were spotted from the trail following the Jia Bhorelli River in Nameri National Park on March 21. About 10 were seen during my rafting trip on the Jia Bhorelli river on March 23. Common in good numbers in all ranges at Kaziranga National Park from April 7-10. About 20 birds were found flying over the fields near the Florican Cottages at Manas National Park on April 20. A small flock was found in Manas National Park itself on April 21. Birds were common at Maguri Beel on April 27.

ANHINGIDAE (Anhingas)**Oriental Darter*****Anhinga melanogaster***

Six birds were seen in the central range of Kaziranga National Park on April 7, six in the western range on April 8, about 12 in the central range on April 9 and about 20 in the eastern range on April 10. One was seen flying over the fields adjacent to the Florican Cottages at Manas National Park on April 20. Four were soaring over the Digboi Oilfields in the afternoon on April 29, with one more as well on May 1.

PELECANIDAE (Pelicans)**Spot-billed Pelican*****Pelecanus philippensis***

More than 40 birds were seen in the central range of Kaziranga National Park on April 7, more than 20 in the western range on April 8, more than 50 in the central range on April 9 and very large numbers in the eastern range on April 10.

ARDEIDAE (Hérons, Egrets and Bitterns)**Grey Heron*****Ardea cinerea***

At Kaziranga National Park, one bird was seen in the central range on April 7 and four in the eastern range on April 10.

Purple Heron***Ardea purpurea***

One bird was at the Kanchenjuri viewpoint of Kaziranga National Park on April 6 where we stopped on the drive from Eaglenest to Wild Grass Lodge. One was then seen in flight in the central range in Kaziranga on April 9.

Great Egret***Ardea alba***

One was found in the central range at Kaziranga National Park on April 9 and two in the eastern range on April 10. A couple of birds were seen at Maguri Beel on April 27.

Intermediate Egret*Mesophoyx intermedia*

A couple of birds were seen at Maguri Beel on April 27.

Little Egret*Egretta garzetta*

One was at the Jia Bhorelli River up from the Nameri Ecocamp on March 20. Two were spotted from the trail following the Jia Bhorelli River in Nameri National Park on March 21. One was seen in the same area the next day on the 22nd. About 12 were seen during my rafting trip on the Jia Bhorelli River on March 23. At Kaziranga National Park, more than 10 birds were seen in the central range on April 7, five in the western range on April 8, more than 10 in the central range on April 9 and at least 10 in the eastern range on April 10. Six birds flew over the Florican Cottages at Manas National Park on April 20, and one more was in the park itself on April 22.

Indian Pond-Heron*Ardeola grayii*

Two were spotted from the trail following the Jia Bhorelli River in Nameri National Park on March 21. One was seen in the same area the next day on the 22nd. Common at Kaziranga National Park where two were seen in the central range on April 7, two in the central range on April 9 and five in the eastern range on April 10. Four birds were seen at Maguri Beel on April 27.

Cattle Egret*Bubulcus ibis*

Birds were very common in all ranges of Kaziranga National Park from April 7-10. About 10 flew over the tea garden near the Wild Grass Lodge on April 11. Common at Maguri Beel and around Guijan on April 27. About 10 birds were around the Digboi area on April 30, with three more the following day on the 31st. Six were in a paddyfield around the village of Joypur on May 3.

Striated Heron*Butorides striata*

Two were spotted from the trail following the Jia Bhorelli River in Nameri National Park on March 21. Two were seen along the Brahmaputra river at the Banashree Ecocamp on April 27.

Yellow Bittern*Ixobrychus sinensis*

One was seen in reeds at Maguri Beel on April 27.

Cinnamon Bittern*Ixobrychus cinnamomeus*

One was flushed from the reedbeds at Maguri Beel on April 27.

THRESKIORNITHIDAE (Ibises and Spoonbills)**Black-headed Ibis***Threskiornis melanocephalus*

Two birds were seen in the central range of Kaziranga National Park on April 7, as well as two in the eastern range on April 10.

PANDIONIDAE (Osprey)

Osprey

Pandion haliaetus

One was spotted at the Jia Bhorelli river just up the road from the Nameri Ecocamp on March 22, and one more on the river during my rafting trip the next day on the 23rd. One was found in the eastern range of Kaziranga National Park on April 10.

ACCIPITRIDAE (Hawks, Eagles and Kites)

Oriental Honey-Buzzard

Pernis ptilorhynchus

On the way to the entrance to the eastern range of Kaziranga National Park on April 10, one was perched in a roadside tree. Two birds were found in Manas National Park on April 22.

Black-shouldered (Black-winged) Kite

Elanus caeruleus

One was finally sighted in the western range of Kaziranga National Park on April 8. A single bird was found perched in Manas National Park on April 20. One was seen at Maguri Beel on April 27.

Black Kite

Milvus migrans

Four birds were around the Nameri Ecocamp on March 23. A flock of about 50 birds of the subspecies *lineatus* was spotted circling near the Nameri Ecocamp on March 24. Quite possibly they were migrating through. A total of seven birds were seen in Manas National Park on April 22.

Pallas's Fish-Eagle

Haliaeetus leucoryphus

Two birds were seen at a distance on a nest during my rafting trip on the Jia Bhorelli River on March 23. Two birds were found in the western range of Kaziranga NP on April 8, two in the central range on April 9 and one in the eastern range on April 10.

Grey-headed Fish-Eagle

Ichthyophaga ichthyaetus

Common in Kaziranga National Park around watercourses where a total of five were found in the central range on April 7, one in the western range on April 8, three in the central range on April 9 and three in the eastern range on April 10.

Slender-billed Vulture

Gyps tenuirostris

Two birds were on a nest feeding a chick in a tree directly above the track through the central range in Kaziranga National Park on April 7. Two more were found in the western range in Kaziranga on April 8, one in the central range on April 9 and one in the eastern range on April 10.

Himalayan Griffon

Gyps himalayensis

One was seen just below Se La pass on March 26.

Eurasian Griffon

Gyps fulvus

My only sighting was of three birds in flight in the central range of Kaziranga National Park on April 9.

Crested Serpent-Eagle***Spilornis cheela***

On my trek down to the Umonoi root bridge at the Cherapunjee Holiday Resort on March 11, I found one perched bird and saw two others soaring. Two more were soaring near the resort the next day on the 12th, and a pair was seen soaring on my trek to the double decker root bridge on the 13th. One was spotted soaring at Khellong in the Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary on April 2. In Kaziranga National Park, I found one in the central range on April 7, one soaring over the highway on the way to the western range on April 8 and three in the central range on April 9, one of which was in flight carrying a snake in its talons. Two were seen in Manas National Park on April 20 and three on April 21.

Eastern Marsh-Harrier***Circus spilonotus***

One male was spotted in flight in the central range in Kaziranga National Park on April 7.

Northern (Hen) Harrier***Circus cyaneus***

A female was hunting over the grassland at Kuri Beel in Manas National Park on April 21.

Pied Harrier***Circus melanoleucos***

One male was spotted in flight in the central range in Kaziranga NP on April 7.

Crested Goshawk***Accipiter trivirgatus***

At the Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary, one was found on the Alubari trail on March 30, one the next day on the 31st on the way up to Eaglenest Pass and one over the forest halfway between Khellong and Sessni as I was returning to Bomphu Camp on April 2.

Shikra***Accipiter badius***

On the edge of Manas National Park on the afternoon of April 20, I saw one flying over, seemingly with a snake in its talons.

Besra***Accipiter virgatus***

One flew rapidly right over my head and landed in a nearby tree on the Pony trail at the Cherapunjee Holiday Resort on March 9. Unfortunately, I was only able to get my binoculars on it briefly before it disappeared in a flash.

Eurasian Sparrowhawk***Accipiter nisus***

On March 28, after getting glimpses at probable Eurasian Sparrowhawks on the Mandala Road over two days, one dived by me from behind, scattering the Fire-capped Tits I was looking at, and fortunately landed in the distance where I could get a decent scope look at it.

Himalayan Buzzard***Buteo burmanicus***

I found one perched bird on the little road between the Nameri Ecocamp and the Jia Bhorelli river on the morning of March 23, followed by a soaring bird over the river later in the day. On March 26, I saw one about 7-8 km below Se La pass, and one other bird on the other side of the pass. Two birds were seen on March 27 in the area of the Mandala Road, including one down the sideroad to the crane marsh.

Upland Buzzard***Buteo hemilasius***

At a roadside stop not far before reaching Dirang, I found one perched deep below in a valley on March 25.

Black Eagle***Ictinaetus malayensis***

One was seen on the Alubari trail below Lama Camp on March 30. One also was found while walking an old, abandoned road just outside of Khonoma on April 15.

Greater Spotted Eagle***Clanga clanga***

My only sighting was of a perched juvenile in the central range of Kaziranga National Park on April 7.

Steppe Eagle***Aquila nipalensis***

I spotted one on the Loop trail in Nameri National Park on March 22.

Booted Eagle***Hieraaetus pennata***

One dark morph was found in the central range of Kaziranga National Park on April 9.

Changeable Hawk-Eagle***Nisaetus limnaeetus***

One dark morph was found in the central range of Kaziranga National Park on April 9. On April 20, a total of two birds, one on a nest, were seen in Manas National Park. Two birds were also found in Manas National Park on April 22.

OTIDIDAE (Bustards)**Bengal Florican*****Houbaropsis bengalensis***

While scanning the grassland from atop the observation tower at Kuri Beel in Manas National Park on April 20, a male flew in, the white on his wings remarkable in flight, and proceeded to begin foraging, first in shorter grass, and then in longer grass where he would periodically disappear. Very good scope views from the tower.

RALLIDAE (Rails, Gallinules and Coots)**Brown Crake*****Amaurornis akool***

One was flushed in wet grassland on the loop trail in Nameri National Park on March 22.

White-breasted Waterhen***Amaurornis phoenicurus***

My first sighting was of two birds in the pasture behind Wild Grass Lodge, and then two more in the central range of Kaziranga National Park later the same day on April 7. On April 8, I found two in the tea garden near Wild Grass Lodge and two in the western range of Kaziranga, followed by one in the central range on April 9. Four birds were seen in Manas National Park on both April 21 and 22. One was seen on a small trail on the opposite side of the highway from the entrance to Digboi Oilfields on April 29, and one more was spotted on the highway through the oilfields on May 1.

Black-tailed Crake***Amaurornis bicolor***

My first visit to the crake marsh behind a small school on a sideroad off the Mandala Road on the afternoon of March 27, produced two vocal birds that failed to show. I decided to give it one more try on the morning of March 29 before heading to Lama Camp. I gave myself an hour to find the crake, and this time, after hearing it call, a quick play of a tape brought one in for a great look.

Grey-headed Swamphen***Porphyrio indicus***

Split from Purple Swamphen. Four birds were seen at Maguri Beel on April 27.

Eurasian Moorhen***Gallinula chloropus***

One was at Maguri Beel on April 27.

BURHINIDAE (Thick-knees)**Indian Thick-knee*****Burhinus indicus***

In Nameri National Park, there is a trail that follows the Jia Bhorelli River to a couple of ponds for the White-winged Duck. It was along this trail that two Indian Thick-knees were found on a small, grassy island in the river on March 21.

Great Thick-knee***Esacus magnirostris***

A pair was seen on the shore along the Jia Bhorelli River during my rafting trip on March 23.

CHARADRIIDAE (Plovers and Lapwings)**Northern Lapwing*****Vanellus vanellus***

My only sighting was a close-up view of one bird in the eastern range in Kaziranga National Park on April 10.

River Lapwing***Vanellus duvaucelii***

One was first seen along the Jia Bhorelli River in Nameri National Park on March 21. Five were seen on the river during my rafting trip on March 23. At Kaziranga National Park, six were found in the central range on April 7, one in the central range on April 9 and one in the eastern range on April 10.

Red-wattled Lapwing***Vanellus indicus***

My first sighting was of four birds around the Nameri Ecocamp on March 20. Two were found on the loop trail in Nameri National Park on March 22. In the Dirang area on March 26, one was the only bird found at the traditional crake marsh in the Sangti Valley, and one also was at the newer crake marsh at a school on a sideroad off the Mandala Road on March 26. At Kaziranga National Park, four were seen in the central range on April 7, three in the western range on April 8, two in the central range on April 9 and three in the central range on April 10. Single birds were seen on April 20 and 22 in Manas National Park. Common in the areas around Maguri Beel and the Banashree Ecocamp. My final sighting was of one bird in a paddyfield near the Namsang Road on May 3.

Little Ringed Plover

Charadrius dubius

At the Jia Bhorelli River just up the road from the Nameri Ecocamp, I saw three birds on the afternoon of March 20.

JACANIDAE (Jacanas)

Pheasant-tailed Jacana

Hydrophasianus chirurgus

One bird was seen in breeding plumage at Maguri Beel on April 27. Nice to finally see its long tail.

Bronze-winged Jacana

Metopidius indicus

At Kaziranga National Park, two were seen in the central range on April 7.

SCOLOPACIDAE (Sandpipers and Allies)

Common Sandpiper

Actitis hypoleucos

One was found along the Jia Bhorelli River in Nameri National Park on March 21 and 22. Three were seen on the shore during my rafting trip on the Jia Bhorelli River on March 23. While I was on the rocky shore, scanning the river in the Sangti Valley for Long-billed Plover, a shorebird flew by and landed a bit out of sight. My hopes up, I tracked it down only to find that it was a Common Sandpiper. At Kaziranga National Park, two were seen in the western range on April 8 and one in the central range on April 9. One was found at Maguri Beel on April 27.

Common Greenshank

Tringa nebularia

One was spotted on the shore during my rafting trip on the Jia Bhorelli River on March 23. At Kaziranga National Park, one was seen in the western range on April 8.

Marsh Sandpiper

Tringa stagnatilis

At Kaziranga National Park, one was seen in the western range on April 7.

Wood Sandpiper

Tringa glareola

At Kaziranga National Park, one was seen in the central range on April 7 and one in the western range on April 8.

Common Redshank

Tringa totanus

At Kaziranga National Park, one was seen in the western range on April 8, one in the central range on April 9 and one in the western range on April 10.

Temminck's Stint

Calidris temminckii

Three were spotted in the eastern range of Kaziranga National Park on April 10.

GLAREOLIDAE (Pratincoles and Coursers)

Small Pratincole

Glareola lactea

A flock of about 30 birds was seen along the Jia Bhorelli River near Nameri Ecocamp on March 21. Only one in the same area the next day on the 22nd. A big flock was spotted during my rafting trip on the Jia Bhorelli River on March 23. They landed on the edge of the shore and we guided the raft to within a metre or two. Fantastic. A flock of about 20 birds was spotted in Manas National Park on the morning of April 20, and then many were seen flying by the river just past the Florican Cottages later in the afternoon. The next day on the 21st, five birds were seen at Kuri Beel inside the park. April 22 saw a large flock flying over the river down the road from the Florican Cottages.

LARIDAE (Gulls, Terns and Skimmers)

Black-headed Gull

Chroicocephalus ridibundus

One was found at Maguri Beel on April 27.

River Tern

Sterna aurantia

Four birds were seen along the Jia Bhorelli River on the border of Nameri National Park on March 21, with just one the following day on the 22nd. Three were seen during my rafting trip on the Jia Bhorelli River on March 23. At Kaziranga National Park, one was seen in the central range on April 7.

COLUMBIDAE (Pigeons and Doves)

Rock Pigeon

Columba livia

Spotted in the city of Shillong on March 16. Several were seen on the drive from Dirang to Lama Camp on March 29.

Snow Pigeon

Columba leuconota

A flock of about 15 birds was found foraging on the road just before reaching Se La pass on March 26. They flushed to land further up the road a couple of times, and I tried to get close on foot without success.

Oriental Turtle-Dove

Streptopelia orientalis

Anywhere from one to four birds were found daily around Nameri Ecocamp or in Nameri National Park from March 21-24. One was along the Mandala Road on March 28. Three were around the village of Khonoma on April 14, with two more the next day on the 15th. Common in small numbers around Manas National Park from April 20-22.

Red Collared-Dove

Streptopelia tranquebarica

I found two birds at the tea garden near Wild Grass Lodge on April 7, and one in the pasture behind Wild Grass Lodge on April 10. Perhaps the same two birds were found again in the tea garden on April 11. Small numbers were spotted in Manas National Park from April 21-22.

Spotted Dove***Streptopelia chinensis***

Common in open areas around the Nameri Ecocamp from March 20-24. About six birds were found along the road to Se La pass on March 26. Common in and around Kaziranga National Park from April 7 to 11. Common around Manas National Park from April 20-22. Common in and around the Digboi Oilfields from April 29 to May 1. Common around the village of Namsang from May 2-4.

Emerald Dove***Chalcophaps indica***

One was flushed on the ridge trail at the Cherrapunjee Holiday Resort on March 11. Two were seen nicely as they foraged on the road through Manas National Park in the early morning of April 21. Two were seen as they walked on the surface of the Namsang Road on the morning of May 3, and on May 4, at least five were spotted on the main highway as we drove out of the village of Joypur to the elephant lick a few km out of town.

Ashy-headed Green-Pigeon***Treron phayrei***

Two birds were scoped along the loop trail in Nameri National Park on March 22.

Thick-billed Pigeon***Treron curvirostris***

On April 10 in the tea garden near Wild Grass Lodge, I found a pair in a fruiting tree attended by many feeding birds both in the morning and afternoon, and probably the very same pair was seen the next morning as well on the 11th. Ten or more birds were in a large fruiting tree along the Namsang Road on May 3.

Yellow-footed Pigeon***Treron phoenicopterus***

In Kaziranga National Park, three birds were in the central range on April 7, three in the western range on April 8, one in the tea garden near Wild Grass Lodge in a fruiting tree on April 10 and one in the tea garden near Wild Grass Lodge on April 11. Up to two birds were seen daily in Manas National Park from April 20-22. A final bird was seen from the Forest Inspection Bungalow on May 2.

Pin-tailed Pigeon***Treron apicauda***

While waiting out another shower on a very rainy April 22, I found one bird high up in a fruiting tree, spotted from one of the small towers in Manas National Park. Four birds were in a large fruiting tree along the Namsang Road on May 3.

Wedge-tailed Pigeon***Treron sphenurus***

Two birds were scoped along the loop trail in Nameri National Park on March 22.

Green Imperial-Pigeon***Ducula aenea***

About 50 birds were seen on the loop trail in Nameri National Park on March 22. Over the Nameri Ecocamp, there were flybys of one bird on March 23, and three on the 24th. In and around Kaziranga National Park, four birds were seen in the central range and one in the tea estate near Wild Grass on April 7, and on April 10, one in the tea garden and two in the eastern range. Up to six birds were seen in Manas National Park from April 21-22. A final two birds were found along the Namsang Road on May 3.

Mountain Imperial-Pigeon***Ducula badia***

Four were seen at Hornbill viewpoint below Bomphu Camp in the Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary on April 1. One was then seen at Khellong on April 2, with a flyover of one bird about two km below Bomphu Camp on April 3. Lastly, one was seen on the trail above Bomphu Camp on April 5.

CUCULIDAE (Cuckoos)**Large Hawk-Cuckoo*****Hierococcyx sparveroides***

Commonly heard in the Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary. A great close-up look at one in the tea garden near Wild Grass Lodge in the early morning of April 8. It was unconcerned by my presence, and was even seen to drop down from a small tree to catch a large caterpillar in the tea bushes.

Common Hawk-Cuckoo***Hierococcyx varius***

A male co-operatively perched quietly in the open along the road about eight km up from Bomphu Camp on April 4.

Indian Cuckoo***Cuculus micropterus***

A calling male was heard and finally spotted high up in a leafless tree at the back of the Wild Grass Lodge property on the afternoon of April 6. Probably the same male was spotted again on April 9. Another calling male was found in the tea garden behind the Banashree Ecocamp on April 26. I saw one on the grounds of the Forest Inspection Bungalow in Joypur on May 4.

Common (Eurasian) Cuckoo***Cuculus canorus***

A good look at one in the tea garden near Wild Grass Lodge on April 10. The identification was clinched by hearing its voice.

Plaintive Cuckoo***Cacomantis merulinus***

A male was at the Nameri Ecocamp on March 20. A male was seen in the rice paddies below my homestay in the village of Khonoma on April 14. On April 22, a male and hepatic female were spotted in Manas National Park from one of the little towers as I waited out the rain.

Violet Cuckoo***Chrysococcyx xanthorhynchus***

A great look at a male in the tea garden near Wild Grass Lodge on April 10.

Fork-tailed Drongo-Cuckoo***Surniculus dicruroides***

A nice look at one in the tea garden near Wild Grass Lodge on April 8.

Asian Koel***Eudynamys scolopaceus***

Extremely vocal at this time of year. One was found in the garden at the Nameri Ecocamp on March 24. One was in the western range of Kaziranga National Park on April 8. On April 10, I saw one in the tea garden near Wild Grass Lodge, and another in the scrubby area around the houses on the short walk back to Wild Grass from the tea garden. One was seen well in Manas National Park on April 21. On my walk along the road to the golf course in the Digboi Oilfields, I saw a female and male on April 30.

Green-billed Malkoha***Phaenicophaeus tristis***

A pair was spotted from the road as I walked back from Mahmluh to the Cherrapunjee Holiday Resort on March 12, and one on the hike to the double decker root bridge on March 13. Three were found in the Nameri National Park on March 21, and one on the 22nd. One was spotted in the tea garden near Wild Grass Lodge on April 9, another on the 10th, and one more in the eastern range of Kaziranga National Park also on the 10th. Three were spotted in Manas National Park on April 21. On my walk along the road to the golf course in the Digboi Oilfields, I found one bird on April 30, followed by one more on the highway through the oilfield on May 1. A final bird was seen along the Namsang Road on May 3.

Greater Coucal***Centropus sinensis***

One was in the tea garden near Wild Grass Lodge on April 10.

Lesser Coucal***Centropus bengalensis***

One was found in Nameri National Park on March 21. Common in and around Kaziranga National Park with one bird in the tea garden near Wild Grass Lodge, five in the western range on April 8, and one in the tea garden on April 9. Very common in Manas National Park where a maximum of eight birds were found on April 22.

STRIGIDAE (Owls)**Mountain Scops-Owl*****Otus spilocephalus***

Commonly heard in the evenings at both Lama and Bomphu camps in the Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary, but it remained unseen.

Oriental Scops-Owl***Otus sunia***

A pair was seen on the grounds at the Wild Grass Lodge on April 6.

Brown Fish-Owl***Ketupa zeylonensis***

A decent look at one at its day roost hidden in the foliage in the western range of Kaziranga National Park on April 8.

Collared Owlet***Glaucidium brodiei***

A fantastic look at a perched bird about 1 km up from Hornbill viewpoint in the Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary on April 1. Initially, it flew past me and I was able to track it to its roadside perch. I initially could only see it from behind, its two "eyespot" on the back of its head looking just like the real thing. It allowed me a close approach and I even walked right past it to get a great look from the front of the bird as well.

Asian Barred Owlet***Glaucidium cuculoides***

Commonly heard on the grounds of the Nameri Ecocamp, and I saw two birds there on March 20 and one on the 21st. One was in the tea garden near Wild Grass Lodge on April 8. My last sighting was of one bird as I walked the road from the entrance to the Digboi Oilfields to the golf course on April 30.

Spotted Owlet***Athene brama***

Up to three birds had a favoured day roost in a dead tree in a pasture adjacent to the Nameri Ecocamp where I saw them from March 22-24.

Brown Boobook (Brown Hawk-Owl)***Ninox sumbaensis***

One or two birds were very vocal on the grounds of the Nameri Ecocamp, but they were very elusive, such that one would call from a tree, giving you a target, and then move to another tree without being seen only to call again. I was frustrated for two nights before finally getting a brief look at one on March 23 as it returned just before dawn to what I presumed to be its day roost deep and high up in a large tree. Luck was with me in the tea garden near Wild Grass Lodge where I found two birds before first light and ultimately had great looks on April 8. A great look at one bird during the day in Manas National Park on April 21. Another was found in the tea garden next to the Banashree Ecocamp on April 27.

CAPRIMULGIDAE (Nightjars and Allies)**Jungle (Grey) Nightjar*****Caprimulgus indicus***

After hearing it the previous day, I saw one at the Hotel Pemaling in Dirang on March 27. Commonly heard, but never seen, at Lama Camp in the Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary

Large-tailed Nightjar***Caprimulgus macrurus***

Heard calling from a pasture adjacent to the Nameri Ecocamp at dusk on March 21. Also heard at Florican Cottages on April 21 and I managed to see one in flight the next day on the 22nd.

APODIDAE (Swifts)**Himalayan Swiftlet*****Aerodramus brevirostris***

Numerous over the Nameri Ecocamp from March 22-24. About five were seen on the way up to Eaglenest Pass on my way to Bomphu Camp on March 31.

Dark-rumped Swift***Apus acuticauda***

About 12 birds soared just overhead giving great views as I walked along a little ridge on the Pony trail at the Cherrapunjee Holiday Resort on March 10. As I walked back from Mawmluh to the resort on March 12, I found six birds soaring in a little valley just before the resort itself. Nice to not have to make special trips to the waterfalls outside of town to see this species.

House Swift***Apus nipalensis***

Four birds were found at the Duwan Sing Syiem Bridge (Mawkdok viewpoint) on March 15.

TROGONIDAE (Trogons)

Red-headed Trogon

Harpactes erythrocephalus

My first sighting was of a male, its head partially hidden in the foliage, as I hiked down to the double decker root bridge on March 13. I bumped into birds in the Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary rather frequently with a male in the morning and a pair below Bomphu on April 1, a male on the drive from Bomphu to Sessni and a pair halfway between Sessni and Khellong on April 2 and two males about 2 km below Bomphu on April 3. One male was seen in flight along the Namsang Road on May 4.

HOOPOES (Hoopoes)

Eurasian Hoopoe

Upupa epops

One was seen as I walked from Mawmluh back to the Cherrapunjee Holiday Resort on March 12. A single bird was seen three out of five days around the Nameri Ecocamp. Two were spotted at the crane marsh off the Mandala Road on March 27. One was seen on the road around Lama Camp in the Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary on March 30. Two were in the western range at Kaziranga National Park on April 8 and one in the tea garden near Wild Grass Lodge on both April 10 and 11. Just one bird was spotted during my stay at Manas National Park which was on April 20 around the Florican Cottages.

BUCEROTIDAE (Hornbills)

Oriental Pied-Hornbill

Anthracoceros albirostris

At Kaziranga National Park, one was seen in the central range on April 7, one in the western range on April 8 and two by the main highway as we drove back from the eastern range to Wild Grass Lodge on April 10. Just a single bird was found in Manas National Park, that being on April 20. Two birds were seen along the Namsang Road on May 4.

Great Hornbill

Buceros bicornis

A pair had a nest high up in a dead tree right at the reception at the Nameri Ecocamp. The male occasionally would fly in to bring food to the female and I saw him do so four times, once on each of March 20, 23, 24 and 25. At Kaziranga National Park, I saw one in the western range on April 8 and one in the eastern range on April 10. On April 20 in Manas National Park, I had great looks at two different birds, and one was also spotted over the forest in Bhutan as I gazed across the river at Mothanguri.

Brown Hornbill

Anorrhinus austeni

On the Namsang Road on May 3, two birds were initially seen poorly in flight, but then I found another one perched giving me a much better look.

Rufous-necked Hornbill***Aceros nipalensis***

I had good success on April 1 with initially a pair in flight about 2 km up from Sessni in the Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary, while later in the day, I heard and then saw a fantastic male perched high up in a tree by the side of the road about 5 km up from Sessni, and then one more was found a little up the road from Hornbill viewpoint.

ALCEDINIDAE (Kingfishers)**Common Kingfisher*****Alcedo atthis***

Singles were seen in Manas National Park on April 20 and 22. One was at Maguri Beel on April 27. One was seen along the little trail across the road from the entrance to the Digboi Oilfields on April 29.

Stork-billed Kingfisher***Pelargopsis capensis***

One was found in the eastern range of Kaziranga National Park on April 10. Seemingly more common in and around Manas National Park where I found one outside the park as I walked to the Florican Cottages on April 19 and three inside the park on the 21st. A good look at two birds along the paved road to the golf course inside the Digboi Oilfields on April 30.

White-throated Kingfisher***Halcyon smyrnensis***

Three were seen from my raft on the Jia Bharelli River on March 23. One was seen calling from a small tree along the little road adjacent to Nameri Ecocamp on March 24. Common in Kaziranga National Park and in the tea garden near the Wild Grass Lodge. Common at Manas National Park. Two birds were seen along the little trail across the road from the entrance to the Digboi Oilfields on April 29. One was found along the paved road to the golf course inside the Digboi Oilfields on April 30.

Crested Kingfisher***Megaceryle lugubris***

Poor looks at single birds from the riverside trail in Nameri National Park on March 21 and 22. Finally, out of two birds seen during my rafting trip on the Jia Bharelli River on March 23, I got a great look at one.

Pied Kingfisher***Ceryle rudis***

Six birds were spotted on the Jia Bharelli River during my rafting trip on March 23. In Kaziranga National Park, singles were seen in the western range on April 8 and in the central range on April 9, followed by three in the eastern range on April 10. On April 27, four birds were at Maguri Beel and two more on the Brahmaputra River.

MEROPIIDAE (Bee-eaters)

Blue-bearded Bee-eater

Nyctyornis athertoni

A nice pair was near the end of the loop trail in Nameri National Park on March 22. One male was found in the eastern range at Kaziranga National Park on April 10.

Green Bee-eater

Merops orientalis

In Manas National Park, a pair was found on April 20, and just one on the 22nd.

Blue-tailed Bee-eater

Merops philippinus

My only sightings were in and around Kaziranga National Park with two birds in the eastern range on April 10 and two in the tea garden near Wild Grass on the 11th.

Chestnut-headed Bee-eater

Merops leschenaulti

Common around the Nameri Ecocamp and in the national park as well from March 20-24. Common in Kaziranga National Park and in the tea garden near the Wild Grass Lodge. Two birds were seen on April 20, 21 and 22 in Manas NP.

CORACIIDAE (Rollers)

Indian Roller

Coracias benghalensis

A pair was resident around the Nameri Ecocamp parking area, very vocal and seemingly in competition with Dollarbirds and several mynas for nesting sites. Common in Kaziranga National Park and in the tea garden near the Wild Grass Lodge. Of special note was two birds hawking for insects at a controlled fire in the western range on April 8. Single birds were seen in Manas National Park on April 21 and around the Florican Cottages on the 22nd. A pair had a nest cavity in a tree on the grounds of the Forest Inspection Bungalow in Joypur from May 2-4.

Dollarbird

Eurystomus orientalis

A pair, and once up to five birds, was occasionally seen around the Nameri Ecocamp parking area. A pair and another single were spotted on the loop trail in Nameri National Park on March 22. On March 23 there was much squabbling between a pair of Dollarbirds, one Indian Roller and several Great Mynas presumably over nesting sites in the huge dead tree at the parking lot at Nameri Ecocamp.

MEGALAIMIDAE (Asian Barbets)

Great Barbet

Psilopogon virens

My first sighting was of one bird at a distance in a fruiting tree as I walked down the path to the Umonoi root bridge on March 11. Another was heard and then seen the next day on the 12th as I walked backed from Mahmluh to the Cherrapunjee Holiday Resort, and one more on the 13th on my hike down to the double decker root bridge. One was at km 8 on the Mandala Road on March 28. Commonly seen along the Alubari trail below Lama Camp in the Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary with four on March 29, three on the 30th and two on the 31st. Three birds were along the road below Bomphu Camp on April 1. Two were found on the drive to Khellong on April 2, and one below Bomphu on April 3. One was more along the Alubari trail on April 5.

Lineated Barbet***Psilopogon lineata***

Three birds were found in the Nameri National Park on both March 21 and 22, and two were around the Nameri Ecocamp on March 24. Two were in the eastern range of Kaziranga National Park on April 10. Just two birds were spotted in Manas National Park on April 21. Three birds were seen along the Namsang Road on May 3.

Blue-throated Barbet***Psilopogon asiatica***

Singles were seen on three different days around the Cherrapunjee Holiday Resort. One was spotted on the Shillong Peak trail on March 16. Small numbers were in Nameri National Park on March 21 and 22, and around the Nameri Ecocamp on March 23. Single birds were found on each of April 20, 21 and 22 in Manas National Park. On April 29, two were seen in the Digboi Oilfields and then one along a little trail across the road from the main entrance to the oilfields. Four birds were found along the paved road to the golf course inside the Digboi Oilfields on April 30. Birds were occasionally spotted at the Forest Inspection Bungalow in Joypur and along the Namsang Road.

Golden-throated Barbet***Psilopogon franklinii***

Acceptable views of a pair in poor light at Hornbill viewpoint in the Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary on April 1. At Khonoma, we found a pair on the road above the village and then one finally give a great, close-up view along the main trail in the forest on April 13.

Blue-eared Barbet***Psilopogon australis***

Heard in Nameri NP on March 22.

Coppersmith Barbet***Psilopogon haemacephala***

One was spotted in the central range of Kaziranga National Park on April 9.

PICIDAE (Woodpeckers)**Speckled Piculet*****Picumnus innominatus***

I found one bird very early in the morning on Shillong Peak as I tried to find the location of the start of the trail back to town on March 16. While I was walking the road about halfway between Sessni and Khellong, I found one bird on April 2. One was spotted along the main highway at the edge of the forest at Digboi on April 30.

White-browed Piculet***Sasia ochracea***

A fabulous male was heard tapping on a thin stalk of bamboo and then tracked down for a great look in the tea garden near Wild Grass Lodge on April 9.

Grey-capped Woodpecker***Dendrocopos canicapillus*****(Grey-capped Pygmy-Woodpecker)**

Pairs were seen along the riverside trail in Nameri National Park on March 21 and along the loop trail on the 22nd. A pair performed an elaborate mating ritual in the tea garden near Wild Grass Lodge on April 10. One was around the Florican Cottages on April 22. Singles were in the forest along the Namsang Road on May 3 and 4.

Fulvous-breasted Woodpecker***Dendrocopos macei***

A male was found along the riverside trail in Nameri National Park on March 21 and along the loop trail on the 22nd. One was in the tea garden near Wild Grass Lodge on April 9.

Stripe-breasted Woodpecker***Dendrocopos atratus***

A very nice male was seen well on the hike from Shillong Peak back to town on March 16.

Rufous-bellied Woodpecker***Dendrocopos hyperythrus***

Four birds were spotted along the Alubari trail below Lama Camp on March 30, but only one was seen well. As I walked up the road from Alubari towards Lama Camp on March 31, I found one more.

Crimson-breasted Woodpecker***Dendrocopos cathpharius***

Supposedly rather common at Eaglenest, however my only sighting was of one bird on March 31 near Chakoo as it flew over the car and landed in a nearby tree, giving me a good look after we managed to stop.

Darjeeling Woodpecker***Dendrocopos darjellensis***

Just one male was spotted along the Alubari trail below Lama Camp on March 31.

Rufous Woodpecker***Celeus brachyurus***

One was found in Manas National Park on April 21. I also saw one along the stretch of highway through the Digboi Oilfields about 15 km from town on May 1.

Lesser Yellownape***Picus chloropus***

A good look at one along the loop trail in Nameri National Park on March 22. One was seen well along an apparently abandoned road/jeep trail just outside Khonoma on April 15. One was in the forest along the Namsang Road on May 4.

Greater Yellownape***Picus flavinucha***

One was found in Manas National Park on April 21. I found two along the stretch of highway through the Digboi Oilfields about 15 km from town on May 1. One was in the forest along the Namsang Road on May 4.

Streak-throated Woodpecker***Picus xanthopygaeus***

In Kaziranga National Park, a male was found in the western range on April 8, and in the tea garden near Wild Grass Lodge, one was seen on April 10 and a pair on the 11th. A pair was spotted in Manas NP on April 20 and a single on the 21st.

Grey-faced (Grey-headed) Woodpecker***Picus canus***

A male was spotted as I hiked back up from the Umonoi root bridge on March 11. One was found around the Nameri Ecocamp on March 23. One was in the forest along the Namsang Road on both May 2 and 3.

Greater Flameback (Greater Goldenback)***Chrysocolaptes guttacristatus***

Two birds were seen along the riverside trail in Nameri National Park on March 21 and two more on the loop trail on the 22nd. Around the Nameri Ecocamp there was one on March 23 and a pair on the 24th. Three very active and noisy birds were spotted in Manas National Park on April 21.

Bay Woodpecker***Blythipicus pyrrhotis***

On the Alubari trail below Lama Camp on March 31, a very loud, unfamiliar call alerted me to the presence of something interesting which turned out to be a Bay Woodpecker once it fortunately hopped out from hiding on to a stump and gave me a great look.

FALCONIDAE (Falcons and Caracaras)**Eurasian (Common) Kestrel*****Falco tinnunculus***

One was at the crake site in the Sangti Valley on March 26.

Peregrine Falcon***Falco peregrinus***

At the ranger station in Nameri National Park, just across the river from the Nameri Ecocamp, one bird was seen high up in a tree as we returned from seeing the White-winged Duck on March 21. Perhaps it was resident in this area as I spotted it in the same place the next day on the 22nd. One was at the crake marsh behind a school along a road just off the Mandala Road on March 29. One was seen around Eaglenest Pass as we drove from Bomphu Camp back to Lama Camp on April 5. One was spotted along the Brahmaputra River at the tea estate next to Banashree Ecocamp as we arrived back to camp from just downriver on the afternoon of April 27.

PSITTACULIDAE (Old World Parrots)**Alexandrine Parakeet*****Psittacula eupatria***

In Kaziranga National Park, five were spotted in the western range on April 8, six in the central range on April 9 and three in flight in the tea garden near Wild Grass Lodge on both April 10 and 11. In Manas National Park, my only sighting was of five birds in flight on April 20.

Blossom-headed Parakeet***Psittacula roseata***

Amongst all the Red-breasted and Rose-ringed Parakeets at the Nameri Ecocamp, I did manage to pick out at least three Blossom-headed Parakeets on March 21.

Rose-ringed Parakeet***Psittacula krameri***

Commonly seen in small numbers daily around the Nameri Ecocamp and on my walks in the national Park from March 20-24. Common throughout Kaziranga National Park from April 8-10. Two were in the tea garden near Wild Grass Lodge on April 11. Common on the grounds of the Forest Inspection Bungalow in Joypur from May 2-4.

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

Extremely common in the garden at the Nameri Ecocamp and during my walks in the national park from March 20-24. Common throughout Kaziranga National Park from April 8-10. Less common at Manas National Park with just pairs seen on two days, April 20 and 21. My walk along the road to the golf course in the Digboi Oilfields produced two birds on April 30.

Vernal Hanging-Parrot***Loriculus vernalis***

My only sighting was of one bird along the loop trail in Nameri National Park on March 22.

EURYLAIMIDAE (Asian and Grauer's Broadbills)**Long-tailed Broadbill*****Psarisomus dalhousiae***

Two were seen at dusk at the top of a tree on the edge of a clearing just down the road from the Cherrapunjee Holiday Resort on March 9. On my trek down to the Umonoi root bridge, three birds were found across the valley in a large flowering tree in the presence of a Great Barbet on March 11.

TEPHRODORNITHIDAE (Woodshrikes and Allies)**Large Woodshrike*****Tephrodornis gularis***

My first sighting was of one bird in flight over open grassland along the loop trail in Nameri National Park on March 22. It landed on a distant tree and was seen well enough to be sure of the identification. The next day on the 23rd, I had a much better look at one bird on the dirt road from Nameri Ecocamp to the river. Two more were seen well below Khellong on April 2. One was found around km 15 on the highway through the Digboi Oilfields on May 1. One was seen along the Namsang Road on May 2.

Common Woodshrike***Tephrodornis pondicerianus***

One was found in Manas National Park on April 20.

ARTAMIDAE (Woodswallows)**Ashy Woodswallow*****Artamus fuscus***

Two birds were in the central range of Kaziranga National Park on April 7. A pair was nest building in the tea garden near Wild Grass Lodge on April 9. In the eastern range of Kaziranga, two birds were found on April 10. One more in the tea garden on the 11th. Common around the Florican Cottages and a pair was found in Manas National Park on April 21.

AEGITHINIDAE (Ioras)**Common Iora*****Aegithina tiphia***

On March 10, a yellow bird was first very confusing once spotted on the Pony trail at the Cherrapunjee Holiday Resort due to its apparent largish size, but it proved to be a Common Iora. During my rest at the Umonoi root bridge while preparing for the trek back up on March 11, one was seen in the large fig. One was along the road near the Cherrapunjee Holiday Resort on March 13. Common in small numbers along both trails in Nameri National Park on March 21 and 22. On April 10, two birds were found in the tea garden near Wild Grass Lodge, and one more in the eastern range of Kaziranga NP. Up to two birds were found in Manas NP on April 20 and 21.

CAMPEPHAGIDAE (Cuckooshrikes)

Large Cuckooshrike

Coracina macei

Three were in the tea garden near Wild Grass Lodge on both April 8 and 9. One was found in Manas National Park on April 20.

Black-winged Cuckooshrike

Coracina melaschistos

One was seen on the Shillong Peak hike back to the city on March 16. Common in small numbers along both trails in Nameri National Park on March 21 and 22. Two were found around the Nameri Ecocamp on March 23. One was in the open woodland/paddyfield below my homestay in Khonoma on April 15.

Rosy Minivet

Pericrocotus cantonensis

Fairly common in small numbers in Manas National Park from April 20-22.

Long-tailed Minivet

Pericrocotus ethologus

Three females were found on the walk from Mawmluh back to the Cherrapunjee Holiday Resort on March 12. A flock of five birds was found along the dirt road adjacent to the Nameri Ecocamp on March 23. Two females were in the same area on the 24th. Three were in the open woodland/paddyfield below my homestay in Khonoma on April 15.

Short-billed Minivet

Pericrocotus brevirostris

About seven birds were seen on the Shillong Peak hike back to the city on March 16. Two birds were around km 8 on the Mandala Road on March 28. A pair was below Lama Camp on March 30.

Scarlet Minivet

Pericrocotus speciosus

A single female was seen at the Cherrapunjee Holiday Resort on March 9. Quite common in Nameri National Park on March 21 and 22. A pair was seen between Hornbill viewpoint and Sessni in the Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary on April 1, with the male chasing a male Grey-chinned Minivet. A female was along the road between Bomphu and Khellong on April 2. Two were in the tea garden near Wild Grass Lodge on April 9. A pair was found along the Namsang Road on May 2.

Grey-chinned Minivet

Pericrocotus solaris

One male was found along the Pony trail at the Cherrapunjee Holiday Resort on March 10. Two females were around the Nameri Ecocamp on March 20. One female was seen along the riverside trail in Nameri National Park on March 21. A male was chased by a male Scarlet Minivet on the road between Hornbill viewpoint and Sessni in the Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary on April 1.

Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrike

Hemipus picatus

One was found between Bomphu and Sessni on April 1, with singles seen first at Khellong and then later at Sessni on April 2. One was observed along the main trail into the forest above Khonoma on April 13.

LANIIDAE (Shrikes)

Brown Shrike

Lanius cristatus

One was found in the open pasture adjacent to the Nameri Ecocamp on March 24. One was at the crake marsh by the little school on a sideroad off the Mandala Road on March 27. One was in the tea garden near Wild Grass Lodge on April 9. One was in the open woodland/paddyfield below my homestay in Khonoma on April 15. One was around the Florican Cottages on April 21.

Long-tailed Shrike

Lanius schach

One was seen along the road above Khonoma on April 14, with two the next day in the same general area. One was found in Manas National Park on April 20.

Grey-backed Shrike

Lanius tephronotus

One was seen in the vicinity of the Nameri Ecocamp on March 20. One was found along the dirt road adjacent to the Nameri Ecocamp on March 24. Two were in the tea garden near Wild Grass Lodge on both April 8 and 9. On April 10, one was in the tea garden and one in the eastern range of Kaziranga National Park. One more in the tea garden on the 11th. One was in the grassland at Kuri Beel in Manas National Park on April 22. Single birds were spotted in and around the Digboi Oilfields from April 29-May 1. One was found along the Namsang Road on May 4.

VIREONIDAE (Vireos, Shrike-Babblers and Erpornis)

Black-headed Shrike-Babbler

Pteruthius rufiventer

A nice surprise was finding a male just after making the turn on to Eaglenest Road from the town of Tenga on March 29.

Blyth's Shrike-Babbler

Pteruthius aeralatus

A stunning male was seen well near the beginning of the trail down from Shillong Peak to the city on March 16. Another male was at km 3 on the Mandala Road on March 29.

Green Shrike-Babbler

Pteruthius xanthochlorus

Typically found in mixed-species flocks with my first sighting on March 28 around km 21 on the Mandala Road. A pair was in a large flock just below Lama Camp on March 30. A pair was in a big flock on our way up to Eaglenest Pass on March 31.

Black-eared Shrike-Babbler

Pteruthius melanotis

One was in a flock near Chakoo in the Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary on March 31. Another was found up the steep trail behind Bomphu Camp on April 5.

White-bellied Yuhina (Erpornis)

Erpornis zantholeuca

One was seen poorly on March 9 just a little ways down the road to the Umkar root bridge which starts about 500m below the Cherrapunjee Holiday Resort. Two were found along the Namsang Road on May 4.

ORIOLIDAE (Old World Orioles)

Black-hooded Oriole

Oriolus xanthornus

A very vocal species. Fairly common around the Nameri Ecocamp where birds were found in the gardens on three days. Relatively common in the tea garden near Wild Grass Lodge where spotted on two out of my four visits, and one was in the western range of Kaziranga National Park on April 8. Just one bird in Manas National Park on April 22. Singles were seen in and around the Digboi Oilfields on April 29 and 30. A final bird was along the Namsang Road on May 4.

Maroon Oriole

Oriolus trailii

Two were seen quickly in flight on the loop trail in Nameri National Park on March 22. A female was spotted just below Lama Camp on March 30. At Khonoma, one was found along an abandoned road just up from the town on April 15. One more was along the Namsang Road on May 3.

DICRURIDAE (Drongos)

Black Drongo

Dicrurus macrocercus

Common and widespread in most if not all non-forested areas. Occasionally seen in some more forested areas such as at the forest edge in a few areas of the Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary. An interesting sighting was of two birds hawking at a small fire in the western range of Kaziranga National Park on April 8.

Ashy Drongo

Dicrurus leucophaeus

Relatively common around the Cherrapunjee Holiday Resort where seen on three of my five days in the area. One was found along the hike from Shillong Peak to the city on March 16. One was spotted on the loop trail in Nameri National Park on March 22 and around the Nameri Ecocamp on the 24th. A pair was below Lama Camp on March 30. At least one was seen on the drive from Bomphu down to Khellong on April 2. Found both above and below Bomphu Camp on April 4. One was up the steep trail above Bomphu Camp on April 5. Relatively common in forested areas around the village of Khonoma where seen on two of my four days.

Bronzed Drongo

Dicrurus aeneus

Three were seen as I walked the road near Sessa on my way to Dirang on March 25. Two were found along the road down from Bomphu towards Sessni on April 1. Four birds were seen on the drive down from Bomphu to Khellong on April 2, and three more below Bomphu on April 4. One was in the tea garden near Wild Grass Lodge on April 10, followed by two the next morning on the 11th. Three birds were seen in Manas National Park on April 22. Two were found at a nest as I walked the main highway through the Digboi Oilfields from km 12-15 on May 1. Quite common along the Namsang Road from May 2-4.

Lesser Racket-tailed Drongo***Dicrurus remifer***

In Nameri National Park, single birds were found along the riverside trail on March 21 and on the loop trail on the 22nd. Three were seemingly leading various flocks along the road down from Bomphu towards Sessni on April 1. Three more were seen the next day on the 2nd on the drive from Bomphu down to Khellong. One was about 1 km below Bomphu on April 3 and 4. One was found in Manas National Park on April 20. I found one as I walked the main highway through the Digboi Oilfields from km 12-15 on May 1.

Hair-crested (Spangled) Drongo***Dicrurus hottentottus***

Three were in a distant Indian Coral tree with a Great Barbet and three Long-tailed Broadbills on the trek down to the Umonoi root bridge on March 11. Two were seen on the trek to the double decker root bridge on March 13. One was spotted near the Nameri Ecocamp on March 22 and 24. Three were in the tea garden near Wild Grass Lodge on each of April 8, 9 and 10. Small numbers were seen in Manas National Park on April 21 and 22. Two birds were seen as I walked the main highway through the Digboi Oilfields from km 12-15 on May 1. Single birds were found on the Namsang Road on May 2 and 3.

Greater Racket-tailed Drongo***Dicrurus paradiseus***

In Nameri National Park, single birds were found along the riverside trail on March 21 and on the loop trail on the 22nd. Along the Namsang Road, I found three birds on May 3 and just one on the 4th.

RHIPIDURIDAE (Fantails)**White-throated Fantail*****Rhipidura albicollis***

One was found on my hike down from Shillong Peak to the city on March 16. One was low down on the Mandala Road on March 27, two at km 8 on March 28 and one at km 3 on March 29. Common at Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary from below Lama Camp to Bomphu Camp and below, although not seen on the lower reaches of the Eaglenest road towards Khellong. One was seen on the main trail into the forest at Khonoma on April 14. One was found in Manas National Park on April 20.

MONARCHIDAE (Monarch Flycatchers)**Black-naped Monarch*****Hypothymis azurea***

One was found in the Digboi Oilfields on April 29.

Indian Paradise-Flycatcher***Terpsiphone paradisi***

My only sighting was of one bird along the Namsang Road on May 4.

CORVIDAE (Crows, Jays and Magpies)

Eurasian Jay

Garrulus glandarius

One was seen from the road as we drove to Dirang on March 25. One was near km 25 on the Mandala Road on March 27.

Gold-billed Magpie (Yellow-billed Blue Magpie)

Urocissa flavirostris

Four were seen about 3 km down the sideroad at Mandala Pass on March 27, and then one more low down on the Mandala Road itself later in the day. Two were on the ground at a small water spout immediately below Lama Camp first thing in the morning on March 30.

Green Magpie

Cissa chinensis

My only sighting was of one bird near Hornbill viewpoint in the Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary on April 4. Fortunately, it was vocal, actively foraging and showed very well.

Rufous Treepie

Dendrocitta vagabunda

In the garden at the Nameri Ecocamp, one was spotted on March 22 and two on the 24th. Common with up to three birds seen daily in the tea garden near Wild Grass Lodge from April 8-11. Three were on the grounds at the Banashree Ecocamp on April 27. Common on the grounds of the Forest Inspection Bungalow at Joypur from May 2-4.

Grey Treepie

Dendrocitta formosae

Six birds were found along the main highway through the Digboi Oilfields forest from km 12-15 on May 1.

Eurasian (Spotted) Nutcracker

Nucifraga caryocatactes

Three were found about 2 km down the sideroad from Mandala Pass on March 27. Two were seen around km 25 on the Mandala Road on March 28. On March 31, I found one on the way up to Eaglenest Pass, and one just a bit down from the pass.

Red-billed Chough

Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax

Only two were found along the road a little beyond Se La Pass on March 26.

House Crow

Corvus splendens

A few were seen near the Banashree Ecocamp on April 27.

Large-billed Crow

Corvus macrorhynchos

Some authors split the lowland subspecies as Eastern Jungle Crow, *Corvus levaillantii*, although Clements does not accept this split. Common in lowland areas in northeast India. The highland subspecies *tibetosinensis* was common at high altitudes around Se La Pass on March 26. About five were also found high up on the Mandala Road on March 27 and 28.

ALAUDIDAE (Larks)

Bengal Bushlark

Mirafra assamica

The usual site at the elephant ride station just inside the entrance of the central range at Kaziranga National Park proved completely unproductive. I was told by a guide that they were very scarce this year, but he tipped me off to having seen them in the open field near the entrance to the tea garden near Wild Grass Lodge. On my last visit on the morning of April 11, I walked a little bit to the right of the main track up through the garden where there was better habitat with open, barren fields and as luck would have it, two Bengal Bushlarks flew in and landed.

Sand Lark

Calandrella raytal

The far side of the Jia Bhorelli River at the entrance to Nameri National Park has a rocky, sandy bank and it was here that I saw a displaying male and two others on the morning of March 21 after crossing the river to enter the park. Just one was spotted the next day on the 22nd in the same area.

Oriental Skylark

Alauda gulgula

One was seen in the same field as the Bengal Bushlarks to the right of the main track up through the tea garden near Wild Grass Lodge on April 11.

HIRUNDINIDAE (Swallows)

Grey-throated Martin

Riparia chinensis

Split from Plain Martin. Commonly seen over the Jia Bhorelli River at Nameri National Park from March 20-23. Common over the watercourses in the central and western sections of Kaziranga National Park from April 7-9. About 10 birds were seen over the river near Florican Cottages outside Manas National Park on April 20.

Barn Swallow

Hirundo rustica

One was seen at the Nameri Ecocamp on March 20. Birds were common in the central range of Kaziranga National Park on April 7.

STENOSTIRIDAE (Fairy Flycatchers)

Grey-headed Canary-Flycatcher

Culicicapa ceylonensis

I spotted two birds on my hike down from Shillong Peak to the city on March 16. On March 27, two were seen at km 19 on the Mandala Road, and two more at the crane marsh near the school on a sideroad. Two were around km 21 on the Mandala Road on March 28. Common throughout the Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary, often seemingly leading flocks. Two were seen on the main trail through the forest at Khonoma on April 13. One bird was along the Namsang Road on May 4.

Yellow-bellied Fairy-Fantail

Chelidorhynx hypoxantha

Three were found around km 19 on the Mandala Road on March 27. Common at Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary from below Lama Camp to Bomphu Camp and below, although not seen on the lower reaches of the Eaglenest road towards Khellong. Up to two birds were spotted on the main forest trail at Khonoma on April 13 and 14.

PARIDAE (Tits, Chickadees and Titmice)

Rufous-vented Tit

Periparus rubidiventris

About five birds in total were seen just before and beyond Se La Pass on March 26. Very common along the sideroad at Mandala Pass where observed on March 27. Four were found around Eaglenest Pass on March 31.

Grey-crested Tit

Lophophanes dichrous

Three or four birds were found around km 27 on the Mandala Road on March 27.

Cinereous Tit

Parus cinereus

Split from Grey Tit. Two were in the garden at the Nameri Ecocamp on March 22, and one the next day on the 23rd. Two were in the garden at the Wild Grass Lodge on April 7. One was in the tea garden near Wild Grass Lodge on April 9 and 10. Just one in Manas National Park on April 20, but I did see two in the tea garden by the park entrance on the 22nd. Small numbers seen in and around the Digboi Oilfields on April 29 and 30.

Green-backed Tit

Parus monticolus

One was seen on the hike from Shillong Peak down to the city on March 16. One was found in a mixed-species flock at a roadside stop on the way to Dirang on March 25. Two were seen about 3 km down the sideroad at Mandala Pass on March 27. One was around km 7 on the Mandala Road on March 28. Commonly seen in flocks from below Lama Camp and along the road as far as Chakoo from March 29 to 31, but not recorded below Chakoo during my stay. One was along the Alubari trail on April 5 and two just below Lama Camp on April 6. Relatively common around Khonoma where small numbers were seen on three of my four days there.

Yellow-cheeked Tit

Parus sibilans

One was seen on the hike from Shillong Peak down to the city on March 16. Six birds were found in two different flocks below Lama Camp on March 30. Two were in a flock near Chakoo on March 31.

Yellow-browed Tit

Sylviparus modestus

Two were members of a mixed-species flock around km 19 on the Mandala Road on March 27. Two were in a flock around km 21 on the Mandala Road on March 28. Common in flocks below Lama Camp on March 30. Three birds were found below Eaglenest Pass on March 31. One was in a flock below Bomphu Camp on April 1, and two were seen about 5 km above Bomphu on April 3. Four more were above Bomphu on April 4, and two around Chakoo on the 5th.

Sultan Tit

Melanochlora sultanea

In Nameri National Park, I found one male along the riverside trail on March 21. Quite common on the lower reaches of the Eaglenest road where on April 2, I found two below Khellong, and then on my way back up to Bomphu, two were seen about halfway between Khellong and Sessni and two more above Sessni. Common along the Namsang Road from May 2-4 with up to five birds daily actively leading small flocks.

REMIZIDAE (Penduline-Tits)

Fire-capped Tit

Cephalopyrus flammiceps

A flock of about 10-12 was seen actively foraging in a flowering tree at km 7 on the Mandala Road on March 28. Initially confusing to identify as this subspecies, *olivaceus*, is not pictured in the guidebook and is much darker with very little red on the forehead or throat. I nevertheless got to study them well, that is until a Eurasian Sparrowhawk flew in and flushed the flock down into the valley.

SITTIDAE (Nuthatches)

Chestnut-bellied Nuthatch

Sitta cinnamomeiventris

Two pairs, the first seen very well, were found on the loop trail in Nameri National Park on March 22. Nice views of a pair in a large flock below Khellong on April 2. One was found along the main highway through the Digboi Oilfields between km 12 and 15 on May 1. On the Namsang Road, a single bird was found on May 2 and two on May 4.

Chestnut-vented Nuthatch

Sitta nagaensis

Initially a poor look at one bird along the main road just above Khonoma on April 13 as it flew off shortly after getting my binoculars on it, but it eventually returned giving a great look. A brief look at one along an abandoned jeep trail just above Khonoma on April 15.

White-tailed Nuthatch

Sitta himalayensis

One was in a mixed-species flock at km 21 on the Mandala Road on March 28. A pair was found at the crane marsh behind the school along a sideroad just off the Mandala Road on March 29. I found one along the Alubari trail below Lama Camp on April 5.

Velvet-fronted Nuthatch

Sitta frontalis

One was found on my trek down to the double decker root bridge on March 13, and then two more along the roadway near the Cherrapunjee Holiday Resort the next morning before I left for Shillong. Two were seen on the hike from Shillong Peak back to the city on March 16. A flock of five birds was seen in the tea garden at the entrance to Manas National Park on April 22. On the Namsang Road, a single bird was found on May 2 and two on May 4.

AEGITHALIDAE (Long-tailed Tits)

Black-throated Tit

Aegithalos concinnus

At least three were in a mixed-species flock at a roadside stop on the way to Dirang on March 25. About three different flocks were seen below Lama Camp on March 30. Two birds were found on the way up to Eaglenest Pass on March 31. Four were along the Alubari trail on April 5. Relatively common around Khonoma where small numbers were seen on three of my four days there.

Black-browed (Rufous-fronted) Tit***Aegithalos iouschistos***

On March 28 on the Mandala Road, there were eight in a flock at km 21, and two around km 9. Four were seen well on the Alubari trail below Lama Camp on March 29. Two were spotted on the steep trail above Bomphu Camp on April 5.

CERTHIIDAE (Trecreepers)**Eurasian Trecreeper*****Certhia familiaris***

Split by some as Hodgson's Trecreeper, *Certhia hodgsoni*, a decision not yet supported by Clements. One was seen in a mixed-species flock at a roadside stop beside a small stream about 5 km beyond Se La Pass on March 26. One was around km 26 on the Mandala Road on March 28.

Rusty-flanked Trecreeper***Certhia nipalensis***

During my time on the upper reaches of the Mandala Road on March 27, single birds were found at km 27 and another at km 20.

Sikkim Trecreeper***Certhia discolor***

Split from Brown-throated Trecreeper. One was found in a flock at km 21 on the Mandala Road on March 28. A great look at a vocalizing bird immediately below Lama Camp on March 30.

PYCNONOTIDAE (Bulbuls)**Crested Finchbill*****Spizixos canifrons***

Five birds were found on the roads above Khonoma on April 12, although my views were not great. Fortunately we found two birds up from town on April 14, one of which was seen very well. One was also spotted along the abandoned jeep trail above Khonoma on the 15th.

Striated Bulbul***Pycnonotus striatus***

Common in the Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary with sightings around Lama Camp and the Alubari trail and as far along the road as Hornbill viewpoint.

Black-crested Bulbul***Pycnonotus flaviventris***

Two birds were seen in the large fig at the Umonoi root bridge on March 11, and two on my trek to the double decker root bridge on March 13. Single birds were seen in Nameri National Park on the riverside trail on March 21 and the loop trail on the 22nd. I found one in the Digboi Oilfields on the morning of April 29, and two on the highway through the oilfields between km 12 and 15 on May 1. Two birds were on the Namsang Road on May 2 and one on the 3rd.

Red-whiskered Bulbul***Pycnonotus jocosus***

Common in open areas around the Nameri Ecocamp from March 21-23. Found in the tea garden near Wild Grass Lodge from April 8-10, while birds were only seen in the eastern range of Kaziranga NP on April 10. Four birds were in the scrub below my homestay in Khonoma on April 15. Common in and around Manas NP from April 20-22. Common in and around Digboi from April 29-May 1.

Red-vented Bulbul***Pycnonotus cafer***

Common in open areas around the Cherrapunjee Holiday Resort from March 10-12. Two were seen upon emerging from the forest on the Shillong Peak hike down to the city on March 16. One was in the open areas around the Duwan Sing Syiem bridge on March 17. Common around the Nameri Ecocamp and the national park from March 20-24. Two were spotted on the drive to Dirang on March 25. Small numbers were seen daily along the lower reaches of the roads around Dirang from March 26-29. Common in and around Kaziranga National Park from April 7-11. Common in open areas around Khonoma from April 12-15. Abundant in and around Manas National Park from April 20-22. Common in and around the Digboi Oilfields from April 29-May 1. Just one was seen at the Forest Inspection Bungalow at Joypur on May 3.

Flavescent Bulbul***Pycnonotus flavesceus***

A bird seen in poor light at the soccer pitch just down from the Cherrapunjee Holiday Resort at dusk on March 9 had the general shape and appearance of this species, but I can't be confident. The best local site for this species around Khonoma is the hillside forest at a stop about 5 km along the road from town back towards Kohima and it was here that we found three birds on April 13. Birds seemed to keep their distance as this location is outside the protected area where hunting is banned.

White-throated Bulbul***Alophoixus flaveolus***

One was found along the road to the Umkar root bridge on March 10. Two birds were seen in the large fig at the Umonoi root bridge on March 11, and one on the trek to the double decker root bridge on March 13. Four were found below Khellong in the Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary on April 2. I found two in the Digboi Oilfields on the morning of April 29, and two on the highway through the oilfields between km 12 and 15 on May 1. There were two birds on the Namsang Road on May 2 and four on the 4th.

Mountain Bulbul***Ixos mcclllandii***

One was seen as I walked along the road by the river at Sessa on March 25. Two birds were found along the road just up from the village of Khonoma on April 12.

Ashy Bulbul***Hemixos flavala***

Up to four birds were seen daily on the roads and trails around the Cherrapunjee Holiday Resort from March 10-14. Singles were found on the Namsang Road daily from May 2-4.

Black Bulbul***Hypsipetes leucocephalus***

On the drive to Dirang on March 25, two birds were in an Indian Coral tree at a roadside stop before Sessa, and two were found later in the day as well. On March 29, one was at the crake marsh just off the Mandala Road, and one was found in the forest before reaching Lama Camp. Along the roads a little up from the village of Khonoma, I found four birds on April 12 and at least six on the 15th.

REGULIDAE (Kinglets)

Goldcrest

Regulus regulus

A nice surprise with two birds seen at km 26 on the Mandala Road on March 27.

PNOEPYGIDAE (Cupwings)

Pygmy Wren-Babbler

Pnoepyga pusilla

Seemingly quite common by voice in the forests around Khonoma, I did get a good look, albeit brief, at one bird up the main trail into the forest on April 13.

CETTIIDAE (Bush-Warblers and Allies)

Brownish-flanked (Brown-flanked) Bush-Warbler

Horornis fortipes

One was found at the Duwan Sing Syiem bridge on March 17. Common by voice in the shrubbery around both Lama and Bomphu Camps in the Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary, I finally got a look at one bird at Bomphu on April 4 followed by one at Lama on the 5th. One was seen in the growth below my guesthouse in Khonoma on April 13, and two in the same area on the 14th.

Aberrant Bush-Warbler

Horornis flavolivacea

My only sighting was of one bird about 12 km above Bomphu on April 3.

Rufous-faced Warbler

Abroscopus albogularis

There is a nice, large patch of bamboo about 3 km above Khellong and it was here that I found three birds during my early lunch on April 2.

Yellow-bellied Warbler

Abroscopus superciliaris

Rather scarce with just one bird found along the Namsang Road on May 2 being my only sighting.

Black-faced Warbler

Abroscopus schisticeps

Three were spotted in a mixed-species flock along the road to Dirang on March 25. Two were found around km 18 on the Mandala Road on March 27. I saw three birds at our breakfast stop at km 3 on the Mandala Road on March 29 after visiting the crane marsh, and three more along the Alubari trail below Lama Camp later in the day. About seven birds were found in flocks below Lama Camp on March 30. Two were seen a little up the main road from the junction to the Alubari trail on March 31. About six birds were found along the Alubari trail below Lama Camp on April 5.

Broad-billed Warbler

Tickellia hodgsoni

I found one about 10 km above Bomphu Camp on April 3, and another somewhere above Bomphu on April 4.

Chestnut-headed Tesia

Tesia castaneocoronata

Common by voice at the right elevation in Eaglenest. A good look at one not too far below Chakoo on March 31. One was seen above Bomphu on April 4.

Slaty-bellied Tesia***Tesia olivea***

Common by voice at the right elevation in Eaglenest. Two or three continued to frustrate me within about 1 km up from Sessni because I could never get a look at them, but one was seen about 2 km below Bomphu on April 3.

Grey-bellied Tesia***Tesia cyaniventer***

Common by voice at the right elevation in Eaglenest. Two were seen about 5 km above Bomphu on April 3. Single birds were seen on the main trail up through the forest at Khonoma on both April 13 and 14.

PHYLLOSCOPIDAE (Leaf Warblers)**Dusky Warbler*****Phylloscopus fuscatus***

Two were seen along the road from the Nameri Ecocamp to the Jia Bhorelli River on March 21.

Smoky Warbler***Phylloscopus fulgiventor***

A decent, albeit brief look at one bird in the reeds at Maguri Beel on April 27.

Tickell's Leaf-Warbler***Phylloscopus affinis***

My first sighting was of one bird along the road past Nameri Ecocamp towards the Jia Bhorelli River on March 22. Another was seen in the tea garden at the Bansbari entrance to Manas National Park on April 22.

Buff-barred Warbler***Phylloscopus pulcher***

One was first observed in the forest at the Duwan Sing Syiem bridge on March 15. One was seen in a large flock at km 21 on the Mandala Road on March 28. I saw one bird at our breakfast stop at km 3 on the Mandala Road on March 29 after visiting the crane marsh, and then two more were seen on the Alubari trail below Lama Camp later in the day. Two were seen below Eaglenest Pass but before Chakoo on March 31. One was seen on the main trail up through the forest at Khonoma on April 14.

Ashy-throated Warbler***Phylloscopus maculipennis***

One was seen in forest at the Duwan Sing Syiem bridge on March 17. Two were spotted along the road to Dirang on March 25. About four birds were seen in different flocks at various spots along the Mandala Road on March 27, and four birds were seen in a single mixed-species flock at km 21 on the Mandala Road on the 28th. I saw one bird at our breakfast stop at km 3 on the Mandala Road on March 29 after visiting the crane marsh. About 10 birds were in flocks below Lama Camp on March 30. About 10 birds were found from Lama Camp to just below Chakoo on the drive to Bomphu Camp on March 31. Two were near Eaglenest Pass on April 5. Two were seen on the main trail up through the forest at Khonoma on April 13.

Pale-rumped (Lemon-rumped) Warbler***Phylloscopus chloronotus***

My first sighting was of a single bird on the trek from Shillong Peak back to the city on March 16. One was seen at about km 19 on the Mandala Road on March 27, and two in a mixed-species flock at km 21 on the 28th. I saw one bird at our breakfast stop at km 3 on the Mandala Road on March 29 after visiting the crake marsh and then two more along the Alubari trail below Lama Camp later in the day. Three were in flocks below Lama Camp on March 30. One was found on the drive from Lama Camp to Bomphu Camp on March 31. One was above Bomphu Camp on April 3. Two were seen in the morning around Lama Camp on April 6 before leaving for Kaziranga.

Yellow-browed Warbler***Phylloscopus inornatus***

Difficult to separate from other *Phylloscopus* warblers, especially Blyth's Leaf Warbler. One was seen on the trek from Shillong Peak back to the city on March 16. A *Phylloscopus* warbler with a very yellow supercilium on the Alubari trail below Lama Camp was determined to be this species.

Greenish Warbler***Phylloscopus trochiloides***

A warbler seen along the road just outside the grounds of the Cherrapunjee Holiday Resort on March 13 was determined to be this species.

Hume's Warbler***Phylloscopus humei***

Split by some as Mandelli's Leaf Warbler, *Phylloscopus mandellii*; however, Clements does not accept this split. As I walked to the intersection about 500 m from the entrance to the Cherrapunjee Holiday Resort and then took the road in the direction of the Umkar root bridge early in the morning of March 14, I soon found a warbler that I suspected was this species, and the identification was confirmed when it vocalized and the song matched my recording. One may also have been seen on the abandoned jeep trail just above Khonoma on April 15.

Blyth's Leaf-Warbler***Phylloscopus reguloides***

After much deliberation, a warbler found along the ridge along the Pony trail at the Cherrapunjee Holiday Resort on March 10 was determined to be this species. At least two were seen on my walk from Mawmluh back to the resort on March 12. Several were seen in forest at the Duwan Sing Syiem bridge on March 17. On March 29, I saw two birds at the crake marsh early in the morning and three birds at our breakfast stop at km 3 on the Mandala Road. One was found below Lama Camp on March 30. One was seen at Khellong on April 2. Two were seen below Bomphu Camp on April 4. At least one was seen on the main trail up through the forest at Khonoma on April 13, and one on the 14th.

Yellow-vented Warbler***Phylloscopus cantator***

I found one near Sessa while walking the road along the river on March 25.

Grey-hooded Warbler***Phylloscopus xanthoschistos***

One was seen very early in the morning at Mawmluh village on March 12. One was in the forest at the Duwan Sing Syiem Bridge on March 15. Two were seen on the hike from Shillong Peak back to the city on March 16. Two were found in forest at the Duwan Sing Syiem bridge on March 17. Two were spotted near Sessa as I walked along the road paralleling the river on March 25. Two birds were found at the crake marsh behind the school just off the Mandala Road on March 29. A couple of pairs were below Lama Camp on March 30. Two were found at Khellong on April 2. One was about 1 km below Bomphu Camp on April 3. One was seen on the main trail up through the forest at Khonoma on April 14, and one along the abandoned jeep trail above town on the 15th.

Golden-spectacled (Green-crowned) Warbler***Seicercus burkii***

Two birds were at Khellong on April 2.

Grey-crowned Warbler***Seicercus tephrocephalus***

Not uncommon around Khonoma with one bird found in the alder jhum plantation just above town on April 12, and one along the abandoned jeep trail just above town on the 15th.

Whistler's Warbler***Seicercus whistleri***

One was found in a large mixed-species flock at km 21 on the Mandala Road on March 28. A great view of one below Lama Camp on March 30. Two were seen a little bit above Hornbill viewpoint on April 2. Three birds were found both above and below Bomphu Camp on April 3, while two were seen above Bomphu on the 4th. While driving from Bomphu Camp to Lama Camp in the Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary on April 5, one was seen around Sunderview and another at Eaglenest Pass.

White-spectacled Warbler***Seicercus affinis***

One was in the forest at the Duwan Sing Syiem Bridge on March 15. One was found somewhere above Bomphu Camp on April 4. While driving from Bomphu Camp to Lama Camp in the Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary, one was seen in the area around Sunderview on April 5. One was seen on the main trail up through the forest at Khonoma on April 14.

Grey-cheeked Warbler***Seicercus polioegenys***

One was seen on the road just outside the Cherrapunjee Holiday Resort on March 13, and a flock of about five was in the same area on the morning of March 14. One was in the forest at the Duwan Sing Syiem Bridge on both March 15 and 17. About 10 were found between Bomphu Camp and Sessni on April 1. One was a little bit up from Hornbill viewpoint on April 2. Four were a little below Bomphu Camp on April 3. While driving from Bomphu Camp to Lama Camp in the Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary, two were seen in the area around Sunderview on April 5. Two were seen on the main trail up through the forest at Khonoma on April 14.

Chestnut-crowned Warbler***Seicercus castaniceps***

One was in the forest at the Duwan Sing Syiem Bridge on March 15 and three on the 17th. Two were seen on the hike from Shillong Peak back to the city on March 16. One was found in a large mixed-species flock at km 21 on the Mandala Road on March 28. I saw one bird at our breakfast stop at km 3 on the Mandala Road on March 29 after visiting the crake marsh. Three were in flocks below Lama Camp on March 30. Two were a little below Bomphu Camp on April 3. While driving from Bomphu Camp to Lama Camp in the Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary, one was seen in the area around Sunderview on April 5. One was seen on the main trail up through the forest at Khonoma on April 13, followed by two on the 14th.

ACROCEPHALIDAE (Reed-Warblers and Allies)**Black-browed Reed-Warbler*****Acrocephalus bistrigiceps***

Two separate individuals were heard in the reeds at Maguri Beel on April 27, but they refused to show.

Blyth's Reed-Warbler***Acrocephalus dumetorum***

A pair of birds was found in the scrub directly across from the Florican Cottages during my stay and posed a definite identification challenge, but I believe they were this species.

Thick-billed Warbler***Iduna aedon***

Two were seen in the bushes adjacent to the Nameri Ecocamp on March 24.

LOCUSTELLIDAE (Grassbirds and Allies)**Spotted Bush-Warbler*****Locustella thoracicus***

A terrible look at one bird in the Koliapani grassland a bit downriver from the Banashree Ecocamp on April 27.

Russet Bush-Warbler***Bradypterus mandelli***

One bird was seen skulking in the bushes a little below Lama Camp on March 30.

Striated Grassbird***Megalurus palustris***

One was found atop a large bush in a field near the Florican Cottages at Manas National Park on April 20. On April 27, one was seen at Maguri Beel and another at the Koliapani grassland a bit downriver from Banashree Ecocamp.

CISTICOLIDAE (Cisticolas and Allies)**Zitting Cisticola*****Cisticola juncidis***

Two or three birds were seen both perched and in display in the grassland at Kuri Beel in Manas National Park on April 20. Two were also found in the park the next day on the 21st.

Golden-headed Cisticola***Cisticola exilis***

Two perched birds were seen very well in the grassland at Kuri Beel in Manas National Park on April 20.

Black-throated Prinia*Prinia atrogularis*

All birds seen were of the subspecies *khasiana* which is a possible future split. Two birds were seen in dry scrub in an adjacent pasture at the Duwan Sing Syiem bridge on March 17. Four were in secondary growth below my homestay in Khonoma on April 15.

Rufescent Prinia*Prinia rufescens*

One was seen between km 12 and 15 on the highway through the Digboi Oilfields on May 1.

Grey-breasted Prinia*Prinia hodgsonii*

One was found in secondary growth below my homestay in Khonoma on April 14, and one was in a bush right at my homestay on the 15th. One was seen in Manas National Park on April 22. One was spotted in the tea estate just after leaving the Namsang Road on May 3.

Yellow-bellied Prinia*Prinia flaviventris*

One was spotted in the grassland on the approach to Kuri Beel in Manas National Park on April 21.

Ashy Prinia*Prinia socialis*

One was found along the road to the Umkar root bridge on March 10. One was seen in Manas National Park on April 22.

Plain Prinia*Prinia inornata*

Two were found in the tall grass near the tower at Daphlong in the central range of Kaziranga National Park on April 7.

Common Tailorbird*Orthotomus sutorius*

Two were on the grounds at the Wild Grass Lodge on April 7, and one in the nearby tea garden on the 8th. A pair was commonly seen in the scrub across from the Florican Cottages at Manas National Park. Two birds were found on the road to the golf course in the Digboi Oilfields on April 30, followed by two more between km 12 and 15 on the highway through the Digboi Oilfields on May 1.

Dark-necked Tailorbird*Orthotomus atrogularis*

Three birds were seen around Khellong on April 3.

SYLVIIDAE (Sylviid Babblers)**Yellow-eyed Babbler***Chrysomma sinense*

Five birds were found in a single marshy wetland spot in Manas National Park on April 22.

Jerdon's Babbler*Chrysomma poecilotis*

A great look at one bird at Maguri Beel on April 27.

Golden-breasted Fulvetta*Lioparus chrysotis*

Much more scarce than expected in the Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary with my only sighting being of one bird about 10 km above Bomphu Camp on April 3.

Yellow-throated Fulvetta***Schoeniparus cinerea***

A very large and active flock of about 25 birds was found up from Hornbill viewpoint towards Bomphu Camp on April 1, and a smaller flock was seen a little further up the road later the same day. Two were seen halfway between Khellong and Sessni later in the day on April 2. A total of 25 birds were seen in flocks above and below Bomphu Camp on April 3. Twenty birds were in flocks below Bomphu Camp on April 4.

Rufous-winged Fulvetta***Schoeniparus castaneiceps***

Two birds were seen on my hike from Shillong Peak back to the city on March 16. About seven birds were found in a mixed-species flock at km 19 on the Mandala Road on March 27, and about 10 in a large flock at km 21 the next day on the 28th. Quite common in the Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary from the Alubari trail up to Lama Camp and from around Chakoo down to below Bomphu Camp from March 30-April 1. A total of about eight birds were seen in flocks above and below Bomphu Camp on April 3. Three were in a flock below Bomphu Camp on April 4. Two were seen around Sunderview on April 5. Three were seen along the main trail up through the forest at Khonoma on April 14.

Ludlow's (Brown-throated) Fulvetta***Fulvetta ludlowi***

Common and very confiding on the sideroad at Mandala Pass on March 27. One was at km 15 on the Mandala Road on March 28. One was at Eaglenest Pass on April 5.

Rufous-capped (Rusty-capped) Fulvetta***Schoeniparus dubia***

A great sighting. Two birds were seen well in two different flocks along the Shillong Peak trek back to the city on March 16. Birds seemed to like the undergrowth in low-lying areas and were reasonably vocal. One was flushed along the abandoned jeep trail above Khonoma on April 15.

Nepal Fulvetta***Alcippe nipalensis***

One was seen very well on the Pony trail at the Cherrapunjee Holiday Resort on March 10. Four were found around Khellong on April 2. One was seen in the Digboi Oilfields on April 29. Fairly common along the Namsang Road with a few seen on both May 3 and 4.

Fire-tailed Myzornis***Myzornis pyrrhura***

Spectacular! I stopped at Eaglenest Pass around late morning on March 31 to search the rhododendrons of either side. About 100m on the far side of the pass, I initially got a brief look at one bird before it disappeared. Somewhat dejected, I kept searching and later, in the same area, I found a flock of four active birds foraging in the rhododendrons a few metres away. Unlike the first bird, these four stayed in the same bush for quite some time giving me one of the great birding experiences in the Himalayas.

PARADOXORNITHIDAE (Parrotbills, Wrenit and Allies)

Black-breasted Parrotbill

Paradoxornis flavirostris

On April 21, on my second attempt in a well-known marshy wetland area in Manas National Park, we succeeded in getting a great look at two birds. After striking out in several usual locations for this species, we found one bird in some grassland just a bit upriver from the Banashree Ecocamp. Apparently this was the first sighting of the season for this species as it had abandoned its normal locations.

Black-throated Parrotbill

Paradoxornis nipalensis

An active flock of about 25 birds was found in bamboo on the steep trail above Bomphu Camp on April 3., with four birds in the same area on the 4th.

Black-browed (Lesser Rufous-headed) Parrotbill

Paradoxornis atrosuperciliaris

About 300 m up the road from Khellong in a large bamboo patch, one bird was seen briefly but well in a large flock of White-hooded Babblers on April 2. It had a definite black brow above its eye indicating the subspecies *atrosuperciliaris*.

White-breasted Parrotbill

Psittiparus ruficeps

Split from Greater Rufous-headed Parrotbill. One bird, amongst a larger active flock, was seen well along the Alubari trail below Lama Camp on March 29. A flock of six was found just up the road from Alubari towards Lama Camp on March 31. On April 1, about five birds were in a flock with Rusty-fronted Barwings at Hornbill viewpoint and later, another flock was seen further down towards Sessni and three birds at Sessni itself. On April 4, three birds were found on the steep trail above Bomphu Camp and then about six a little below Hornbill viewpoint.

ZOSTEROPIDAE (Yuhinas, White-eyes and Allies)

Striated Yuhina

Yuhina castaniceps

Seemingly a rather scarce bird in northeast India. On my walk from Mawmluh back to the Cherrapunjee Holiday Resort on March 12, I first found a single bird and then a pair later on. One was also found in the big bamboo patch about 3 km up from Khellong on April 2.

White-naped Yuhina

Yuhina bakeri

After many days of searching at Eaglenest, I finally found an active flock of about 20 birds about 2 km below Bomphu Camp on April 3. Then a flock of six birds was seen just below Hornbill viewpoint on the 4th.

Whiskered Yuhina

Yuhina flavicollis

Common at the Duwan Sing Syiem bridge on both March 15 and 17. Several birds in flocks were found on my hike down from Shillong Peak to the city on March 16. Two were in a mixed-species flock at a roadside stop on the way to Dirang on March 25. Two were observed at km 7 on the Mandala Road on March 28. Three were seen halfway between Sessni and Khellong on April 2, three above Bomphu Camp on April 3, four below Bomphu on April 4 and four at Chakoo on April 5. I found two birds on the main trail up into the forest at Khonoma on April 13.

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

Three were seen along the sideroad at Mandala Pass on March 27. One was in a flock at km 21 on the Mandala Road on March 28. Three were below Lama Camp on March 30, and about six birds at Eaglenest Pass on the 31st. Four were above Bomphu Camp on April 4 and three at Sunderview on the 5th.

Rufous-vented Yuhina***Yuhina occipitalis***

Very common on March 27 at the higher reaches of the Mandala Road and along the sideroad at the pass. On March 28, the upper reaches of the Mandala Road were shrouded in a thick fog, but I still saw two birds in a flock at km 21. Common at Eaglenest Pass and down as far as Chakoo on March 31. Several flocks were found from Chakoo to Sunderview and up to the pass on my return to Lama Camp on April 5.

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

After starting to walk down the road from Lama Camp on March 29, I quickly found a great flock of about 12 birds actively foraging just above eye level.

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

One was seen on the riverside trail in Nameri National Park on March 21. Two were found on the Mandala Road at km 7 on March 28. Two were seen on the grounds of the Wild Grass Lodge on April 7. One was in the tea garden at the Bansbari entrance to Manas National Park on April 22. Along the main highway through the Digboi Oilfields on May 1, I saw four birds between km 12 and 15.

TIMALIIDAE (Tree-Babblers, Scimitar-Babblers and Allies)**Rufous-throated Wren-Babbler*****Spelaeornis caudatus***

A great look at one on the steep trail above Bomphu Camp on April 3, and two in the same area on the 4th.

Bar-winged Wren-Babbler***Spelaeornis troglodytoides***

After I heard it sing, a brief play of its call brought one in for a great view about two km along the sideroad at Mandala Pass on March 27.

Long-tailed (Naga) Wren-Babbler***Spelaeornis chocolatinus***

A poor look at one bird along the main trail through the forest above Khonoma on April 13. Wanting a better look, we returned the next day on the 14th and found a co-operative male.

Tawny-breasted Wren-Babbler***Spelaeornis longicaudatus***

Heard only. The only site I knew of for this species was at the Duwan Sing Syiem bridge. Right after my arrival on the morning of March 15, I heard one near the top of the steep stairs leading down on the side of the bridge closest to Shillong. It moved through the undergrowth and although I got close, it disappeared. I later heard it calling from the hillside scrubby forest on the far side of the playground, but again, not views. Further exploration proved fruitless and I left at about noon. I came back on the 17th in hopes of tracking it down, but not a sound was heard.

Blackish-breasted Babbler***Sphenocichla humei*****(Himalayan/Sikkim Wedge-billed Babbler)**

A dark babbler flew across a small opening in the thick undergrowth just to the left of the one remaining building at Sessni on April 2. I knew it was this bird, but it was impossible to see. A quick play of the tape got it agitated and it emerged into the open on a couple of occasions over the next several minutes. What a fantastic bird.

Rufous-capped Babbler***Stachyridopsis ruficeps***

Two mouse-like birds were found in the undergrowth at km 20 on the Mandala Road on March 27. Singles were seen the next day on the 28th at km 15 and then km 8, and also two on the 29th at km 3. Common in the Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary from the Alubari trail, to Lama Camp, beyond to the pass and down to a little below Bomphu. One was found on the main trail through the forest above Khonoma on April 13.

Golden Babbler***Stachyridopsis chrysaea***

One was found in a large flock below Lama Camp on March 30, one at Hornbill viewpoint on April 1, one about 1 km below Bomphu Camp on April 3 and five below Bomphu near Hornbill viewpoint on April 4.

Grey-throated Babbler***Stachyris nigriceps***

A brief look at two birds in with a single Puff-throated Babbler in a small flock along the Pony trail at the Cherrapunjee Holiday Resort on March 10. Small numbers were seen daily on the Namsang Road from May 2-4.

Pin-striped Tit-Babbler***Macronous gularis***

One was seen on my walk to the Umkar root bridge on March 10, and another on the 11th at the ridge on the Pony trail. Three were found along the riverside trail in Nameri National Park on March 21, and three on the loop trail the next day on the 22nd. One was found in the tea garden near Wild Grass Lodge on April 9. Three were spotted in the Digboi Oilfields on April 29, and four on the edge of the forest on the 30th. Common on the Namsang Road on May 2 and 3.

Chestnut-capped Babbler***Timalia pileata***

A very good look at a singing bird luckily perched at the top of some reeds in a large marshy area along the main road just past Daphlong in the central range of Kaziranga National Park on April 7. I also had a brief look at one bird in Manas National Park on April 20, and a better look at one on the 22nd.

Large Scimitar-Babbler***Pomatorhinus hypoleucos***

Heard only. One was loudly calling from an inaccessible area about 500 m along the Namsang Road on May 4. I was later told by a guide that this is the spot for this species along the road.

Spot-breasted Scimitar-Babbler*Pomatorhinus mccllellandi*

A good look at two birds in secondary growth below my homestay at Khonoma on April 13. On April 15, two were found along the abandoned jeep trail above Khonoma, and again two birds below my homestay.

White-browed Scimitar-Babbler*Pomatorhinus schisticeps*

A less-than-satisfactory view of two birds flying across the path and quickly disappearing in the tea garden near Wild Grass Lodge on April 8. This species is much scarcer than I was hoping, and despite many repeated returns to the tea garden, I never did see it again.

Streak-breasted Scimitar-Babbler*Pomatorhinus ruficollis*

A great flock of about five birds was found in the undergrowth along the Alubari trail below Lama Camp on March 29. Two were in a mixed flock with one Bugun Liocichla and many Rusty-fronted Barwings about 100m below Lama Camp on the morning of April 6. A good look at two birds in secondary growth below my homestay at Khonoma on April 13, and one on the road above Khonoma on the 15th.

Coral-billed Scimitar-Babbler*Pomatorhinus ferruginosus*

On April 1, two birds were in a flock with Rusty-fronted Barwings at Hornbill viewpoint, and then a large flock of about 12 birds was seen about 1 km above Sessni. Two birds were seen about halfway between Sessni and Khellong on April 2. Two were in a mixed-species flock near Hornbill viewpoint on April 4.

Slender-billed Scimitar-Babbler*Xiphirhynchus superciliaris*

While stumbling up the steep trail above Bomphu Camp on the morning of April 1, my curiosity was piqued by a strange call and luckily a fantastic Slender-billed Scimitar-Babbler flew in and sang from an exposed perch giving a great view.

PELLORNEIDAE (Ground Babblers and Allies)**Marsh Babbler***Pellorneum palustre*

Heard only. Two different calling birds were located in the reeds at Maguri Beel on April 27, but they refused to show and were unresponsive to tape.

Puff-throated Babbler*Pellorneum ruficeps*

My first sighting was of a briefly-seen bird in a flock with Grey-throated Babblers on the Pony trail at the Cherrapunjee Holiday Resort on March 10. A very confiding bird popped into the open just a few hundred metres down the road from the Cherrapunjee Holiday Resort on March 13. Two were seen well in the tea garden near Wild Grass Lodge on April 10.

White-hooded Babbler*Gampsorhynchus rufulus*

A large flock of adults and immatures was found in the big patch of bamboo about 300m up the road from Khellong on April 2.

Eyebrowed Wren-Babbler*Napothera epilepidota*

Heard only. One bird was calling within the first km of the Namsang Road near the bridge on May 2.

LEIOTRICHIDAE (Laughingthrushes and Allies)

White-throated Laughingthrush

Garrulax albogularis

On my first morning up the Mandala Road on March 27, the first thing I saw was a noisy, active flock of about 10 birds. On March 28, a big flock was found in the rhododendrons at km 21 on the Mandala Road. A flock of about 10 birds was seen on my way up to Eaglenest Pass on March 31. A big flock was above Bomphu Camp on April 3, and another flock of about 10 was about 3 km below Bomphu on the 4th.

White-crested Laughingthrush

Garrulax leucolophus

On April 2, I found two birds just above Sessni and two more about halfway between Sessni and Khellong.

Lesser Necklaced Laughingthrush

Garrulax monileger

At least one was seen on the Pony trail at the Cherrapunjee Holiday Resort on March 10. Several were found in a bird party on my hike to the Umonoi root bridge on March 11. Two were seen in the tea garden near Wild Grass Lodge on both April 8 and 11. I found six birds on the main highway through the Digboi Oilfields between km 12 and 15 on May 1.

Greater Necklaced Laughingthrush

Garrulax pectoralis

At least one was seen on the Pony trail at the Cherrapunjee Holiday Resort on March 10. Several were found in a bird party on my hike to the Umonoi root bridge on March 11, and one flock was along the road on my hike from Mawmluh back to the resort on March 12. Another flock was seen near the resort on March 13. One was associating with a pair of White-crested Laughingthrushes about halfway between Sessni and Khellong on April 2. I found one bird on the main highway through the Digboi Oilfields between km 12 and 15 on May 1.

Striated Laughingthrush

Garrulax striatus

On March 28 along the Mandala Road, two were seen at km 15 and four at km 8. At least 10 birds, mainly singles and pairs, were found below Lama Camp and along the Alubari trail on March 30. Two were spotted along the Alubari trail on the 31st. One was seen just up from Sessni on April 1. Several were both above and below Bomphu Camp on April 3. Two were at Bomphu camp on April 4, and one at Chakoo on the 5th.

Rufous-necked Laughingthrush

Garrulax ruficollis

Common in the tea garden near Wild Grass Lodge on all of my visits. Common also in Manas National Park where up to six birds were seen daily from April 20-22. Relatively common in scrubby areas around the Digboi Oilfields where I had sightings on both April 29 and 30.

Spotted Laughingthrush

Garrulax ocellatus

My only sighting was of one bird accompanying a large flock of White-throated Laughingthrushes a few kilometres up the Mandala Road early in the morning on March 27.

Spot-breasted Laughingthrush*Garrulax merulinus*

We heard one singing on a scrubby hillside along the road above the town of Khonoma on April 15. We played the tape, but it seemed unresponsive, and the vantage point was terrible as the hillside was very steep and plateaued such that it was impossible to see beyond the top. However, magically, the bird hopped into a bush in the open and paused there for a few seconds, enough time to take note of its overall dark appearance and the obvious supercilium behind its eye. Angulie said this was probably the best sighting of this species anyone has ever had in India as it is a notorious skulker.

White-browed Laughingthrush*Garrulax sannio*

After much frustration over the three previous days, we finally found and saw two birds at a distance below my homestay at Khonoma on April 15.

Bhutan Laughingthrush*Garrulax imbricatus*

Two were seen well on the Alubari trail below Lama Camp on March 29. I found one at the junction of the main road and the Alubari trail on the 30th.

Striped Laughingthrush*Garrulax virgatus*

A fantastic sighting of three birds singing in the early morning in scrubby growth just up from the village of Khonoma on April 13. What a stunning laughingthrush. I sense that in the right habitat, this species is not hard to find around Khonoma, but as I had a perfect sighting on my first full day, we never tried for them again.

Brown-capped Laughingthrush*Garrulax austeni*

On April 14 on my way up the main forest trail at Khonoma, a laughingthrush flew right past me down the trail and landed right beside Angulie who was a good 10 m at least behind me. I was 95% sure it was this species, and Angulie confirmed it, but when it landed, the bird was obscured from my vantage point, and then it disappeared. Rather discouraged, later on during our descent, I flushed another and this time it landed on a dead stump right in the open and miraculously stayed there for about 30 seconds. Incredible!

Blue-winged Laughingthrush*Garrulax squamatus*

A good look at one bird along the dirt road above Khonoma on April 13. One was also seen along a small trail off the main road up above Khonoma on April 14.

Black-faced Laughingthrush*Garrulax affinis*

Two birds were seen on my way up the Mandala Road on March 27, followed by one more along the sideroad at Mandala Pass later in the morning. Two were observed in flight on the Alubari trail below Lama Camp on March 29. Two were seen very well below Lama Camp on March 30. This species seems to have a habit of foraging on or near the road through Eaglenest, allowing for nice views as it doesn't necessarily flush easily as was the case on March 31 when we had one bird near Eaglenest Pass and two just below Chakoo. One was foraging on the road about 10 km above Bomphu Camp on April 3, and three more above Bomphu on the 4th. On the 5th, I saw one at Chakoo and one a little before Eaglenest Pass.

Chestnut-crowned Laughingthrush*Garrulax erythrocephalus*

On March 28 along the Mandala Road, four were spotted at km 15 and one at km 21. One was seen just below Lama Camp and one on the Alubari trail on March 29. On the 30th, about five birds were seen below Lama Camp. On the morning of the 31st, one was found on the Alubari trail and two just up the road from Alubari. I found two birds up the steep trail behind Bomphu Camp on April 1. One gave a nice view as it hopped along on the road above Sessni on April 2. Two were above Bomphu on April 3, and one at Chakoo on the 4th.

Assam Laughingthrush*Garrulax chrysopterus*

A poor look at one bird of a pair spotted in scrub near the playground at the Duwan Sing Syiem bridge on March 17. Two were seen very well on a little trail off the main road up above Khonoma on April 14.

Bugun Liocichla*Liocichla omeiensis*

Heard at the junction of the main road and the Alubari trail on March 30 and on the 31st further along the trail. After striking out with this species for so long at Eaglenest, I had to leave Lama early in the morning on April 6 to get to Kaziranga. After a quick breakfast, I threw my stuff into the car. Monu, my driver wasn't quite ready so he suggested I just walk down the road and he'd pick me up in a short while. It was a nice, sunny morning and I got about 100 m below the camp and found another flock of Rusty-fronted Barwings. By now I was fed up with checking through these flocks hoping for a Bugun Liocichla which can associate with the Barwings. Nevertheless, I gave it another go and soon saw two Streak-breasted Scimitar-Babblers and then, finally, a Bugun Liocichla right out in the open with the morning sun shining right on it. It stayed for about 15 seconds and then disappeared. Great joy!

Red-faced Liocichla*Liocichla phoenicea*

Two birds were seen in the open and associating with a flock of Rusty-fronted Barwings about 4 km below Sessni on April 2. Although difficult to see well, this species is rather common around Khonoma where I had many sightings over my four-day stay.

Striated Babbler*Turdoides earlei*

Not difficult to find in tall grassland in Manas National Park. On April 21, I saw one bird at a distance in the grassland from the watchtower at Charpoli, and then a much better view of one elsewhere in the park later in the day. Two more were found in Manas on the 22nd. On April 27, two were spotted at Maguri Beel, one in the Koliapani grasslands and one more in grassland closer to Banashree Ecocamp.

Slender-billed Babbler*Turdoides longirostris*

I was very fortunate when, while in the western range of Kaziranga National Park on April 8, one bird flew out of the tall grassland and across the road to land on a low perch in the open just opposite me where it paused for a good 10 seconds at least before disappearing.

Jungle Babbler***Turdoides striata***

Two birds were seen in Manas National Park on April 20. On the 22nd, two more were found in the park, and five in the tea garden at the Bansbari entrance to the park later in the day.

Silver-eared Mesia***Leiothrix argenteauris***

Three large, monospecific flocks were seen around Sessni and up towards Bomphu Camp on April 1. Very common between Sessni and Khellong on April 2. Two birds were seen around Khonoma on April 12, and three were in the secondary growth below my homestay on the 14th. Six more were seen around Khonoma on the 15th.

Red-billed Leiothrix***Leiothrix lutea***

A good look at several birds in a flock at the little cemetery just after the start of the Ridge trail at the Cherrapunjee Holiday Resort on March 10. A flock was seen at the village of Mawmluh early in the morning on March 12. Another flock was seen near the resort on March 13.

Rusty-fronted Barwing***Actinodura egertoni***

Two flocks were seen well in the scrubby forest at the Duwan Sing Syiem bridge on March 17. Common with about four flocks seen below Lama Camp and along the Alubari trail on March 30. A flock of eight birds was on the Alubari trail on March 31. Flocks were seen at Hornbill viewpoint and at Sessni on April 1. One flock was about 4 km below Sessni on April 2. A big flock was near Hornbill viewpoint on April 4. Eight birds were at Lama Camp on April 4. A flock of about eight birds, this time with a Bugun Liocichla, was spotted about 100 m below Lama Camp on April 6. A flock of five birds was spotted along the main forest trail above Khonoma on April 14.

Streak-throated Barwing***Actinodura waldeni***

A flock of eight was found below Chakoo on March 31. A flock of five was found below Bomphu on April 1.

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

Two were seen at the Duwan Sing Syiem bridge on March 15. Two flocks were spotted on my hike down from Shillong Peak to the city on March 16. On April 2, four birds were first seen below Khellong, and then two more about halfway between Khellong and Sessni on the way back up. Two were found along an abandoned jeep trail above Khonoma on April 15.

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

Common on the sideroad at Mandala Pass on March 27, and two were found in a flock at km 21 on the Mandala Road on the 28th. Two were seen below Lama Camp on March 30. Seven birds were in a big flock below Chakoo on March 31. Three were above Bomphu Camp on April 3. One was found along the Alubari trail below Lama Camp on April 5.

Red-tailed Minla***Minla ignotincta***

After striking out for so long at Eaglenest, I finally found two big flocks near Hornbill viewpoint on April 4. On April 5, three birds were seen at Sunderview and three more on the Alubari trail below Lama Camp.

Rufous-backed Sibia***Heterophasia annectens***

One was seen well about 1 km below Hornbill viewpoint on April 4.

Grey Sibia***Heterophasia gracilis***

Single birds were seen well on each of my visits to the Duwan Sing Syiem bridge on March 15 and 17. Two were spotted on my hike down from Shillong Peak to the city on March 16. Four birds were seen around Khonoma on April 12, two up the main forest trail on the 13th, two along a small trail off the road above Khonoma on the 14th and six more around town on the 15th.

Beautiful Sibia***Heterophasia pulchella***

On March 27, two were seen along the sideroad at Mandala Pass and one around km 20 on the Mandala Road later in the day. Two were found at km 15 on the Mandala Road on the 28th. One was on the Alubari trail on March 29. Five birds in total were seen below Lama Camp and along the Alubari trail on March 30. During my drive from Lama Camp to Bomphu Camp on March 31, I saw about 10 birds in total from Lama as far as Chakoo. Three were below Bomphu Camp on April 1, and one was along the steep trail above Bomphu on the 2nd. Two more above Bomphu on the 4th, and two at Chakoo on the 5th. One was spotted along a little trail off the main road above Khonoma on April 14.

Long-tailed Sibia***Heterophasia picaoides***

Three were seen in the high treetops as I walked along the highway at the river just before the village of Sessa on March 25. Two were found at Sessni on April 1 and four at Khellong on the 2nd. Six were found just below Hornbill viewpoint on April 4.

IRENIDAE (Fairy-bluebirds)**Asian Fairy-bluebird*****Irena puella***

A male was seen very well at the swimming spot about 20-30 minutes beyond the double decker root bridge on March 13. One was found in Manas National Park on April 21 and one in the Digboi Oilfields on April 29. One was seen on the Namsang Road on May 3.

MUSCICAPIDAE (Old World Flycatchers)**Chestnut-bellied Rock-Thrush*****Monticola rufiventris***

One female was spotted up the main forest trail above Khonoma on April 13.

Blue Rock-Thrush***Monticola solitarius***

A female was in one of the shade trees at the tea garden adjacent to the Banashree Ecocamp on April 27.

Blue Whistling Thrush***Myophonus caeruleus***

One flew right through camp as I was sitting at my tent on the grounds of the Nameri Ecodge on March 21. Probably the same bird was seen in camp the next two days. One was at km 15 on the Mandala Road on March 28. One was seen below Bomphu Camp on April 1, and another on the Alubari trail below Lama Camp on the 5th. Two were seen around Khonoma on April 12 and one on the 13th.

Dark-sided Flycatcher***Muscicapa sibirica***

One was found in secondary growth below my homestay in Khonoma on April 15.

Rufous-gorgeted Flycatcher***Ficedula strophciata***

A female was seen at the Duwan Sing Syiem bridge on March 15. One was at km 21 on the Mandala Road on March 27. A female and then one male were seen along the road a little bit up from Hornbill viewpoint on April 1. On April 2, one was found at Khellong, and another just up from Sessni. One was found about 1 km below Bomphu Camp on April 3. A male was spotted up the main forest trail above Khonoma on April 13 and 14.

Taiga Flycatcher***Ficedula albicilla***

Quite common, its presence usually given away by the buzz of its wings on its typically short flights from one perch to the next. Small numbers were seen daily around the Nameri Ecocamp and occasionally in the national park as well from March 21-24. One was on the grounds at the Wild Grass Lodge on April 7 and one in the nearby tea garden daily from the 8th to the 10th. One was seen in the tea garden at the Bansbari entrance to Manas National Park on April 22.

Little Pied Flycatcher***Ficedula westermanni***

Common on the Shillong Peak hike back to the city on March 16 with first a pair, then a female, then another male. Two were found along an abandoned jeep trail above Khonoma on April 15.

Ultramarine Flycatcher***Ficedula superciliaris***

A good but very brief sighting of a male just a short distance along the road to the Umkar root bridge starting at the junction about 500m below the entrance to the Cherrapunjee Holiday Resort on March 13.

Slaty-blue Flycatcher***Ficedula tricolor***

A male was seen in a eucalyptus grove quite low down on the hike from Shillong Peak back to the city on March 16. On April 14, a female was spotted along the main forest trail above Khonoma, and then a male later in the day along the dirt road above town.

Sapphire Flycatcher***Ficedula sapphira***

After leaving the crake marsh on March 29, we stopped to have breakfast roadside at km 3 on the Mandala Road, and it was here that I had my only sighting, a nice male.

Verditer Flycatcher***Eumyias thalassinus***

Commonly seen along the trails and on the grounds at the Cherrapunjee Holiday Resort from March 10-12. A pair was observed on the hike from Shillong Peak back to the city on March 16. On March 22, two were found on the loop trail in Nameri National Park, and one along the road from the ecocamp to the river. On March 29, pairs were seen at the crake marsh on a sideroad off the Mandala Road, and on the Alubari trail below Lama Camp. Two were below Lama Camp on the 30th. One was in Bomphu Camp on April 4. One was seen along the main road above Khonoma on both April 13 and 14, and one on an abandoned jeep trail above town on the 15th.

Large Niltava***Niltava grandis***

One male was seen very well on the hike from Shillong Peak back to the city on March 16. A female was found at Sessni on April 1.

Small Niltava***Niltava macgrigoriae***

A nice male was spotted as I walked the main highway along the river just before Sessa on March 25. A male was found as we drove along below Bomphu Camp on April 1. On April 2, one male was at Khellong and two females were seen somewhere else along the road. A male was near Hornbill viewpoint on April 4.

Rufous-bellied Niltava***Niltava sundara***

A male was seen at the Duwan Sing Syiem bridge on March 15. Two males were spotted on the hike from Shillong Peak back to the city on March 16. Two males were found along the main forest trail above Khonoma on April 13 and one on the 14th.

Pale-chinned Blue-Flycatcher***Cyornis poliogenys***

A male was spotted early in the morning in some scrub just outside the village of Mawmluh on March 12.

Pale Blue-Flycatcher***Cyornis unicolor***

A female was seen very well at km 8 on the Mandala Road on March 28.

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

Quite common on the Namsang Road with five seen on May 2 and three on the 4th.

Pygmy Blue-Flycatcher***Muscicapella hodgsoni***

One male, easily mistaken for a flowerpecker, was seen well, but in the canopy, about 3 km above Bomphu Camp on April 3.

Siberian Rubythroat***Calliope calliope***

A nice male was singing in the tea garden near Wild Grass Lodge on April 8.

White-tailed Rubythroat***Calliope pectoralis***

One scurried through an opening in the reeds almost at my feet at Maguri Beel on April 27.

Bluethroat***Luscinia svecica***

Two birds were seen on the ground from the observation tower at Kuri Beel in Manas National Park on April 20.

Indian Blue Robin*Larvivora brunnea*

Two birds were seen on the lower reaches of the main forest trail above Khonoma on April 14.

Himalayan Bluetail*Tarsiger rufilatus*

A female was spotted at forest edge at the Duwan Sing Syiem bridge on March 17. One was found at km 20 on the Mandala Road on March 27. A female was along the Alubari trail below Lama Camp on March 30. A female was at Bomphu Camp on April 5. One was seen around Khonoma on April 12.

Golden Bush-Robin*Tarsiger chrysaeus*

I was fortunate when a great male popped into the open in the undergrowth on the Alubari trail below Lama Camp on March 31.

Oriental Magpie-Robin*Copsychus saularis*

Common in open areas around Nameri National Park, including the Ec lodge. Common in Kaziranga National Park and in the tea garden near Wild Grass Lodge. Also common in and around Manas National Park. Common in and around the Digboi Oilfields from April 29 to May 1. Four birds were seen along the Namsang Road on May 2, but just one on the 4th.

White-rumped Shama*Copsychus malabaricus*

In Kaziranga National Park, three birds were seen in the western range on April 8, one of which put on quite a show as it sang from an eye-level perch just a few metres from the vehicle. It remained in the exact same position long enough for us to see it again once we turned around at our furthest incursion into the park and began our return to the park entrance. One was spotted in the tea garden near Wild Grass Lodge on April 10. One was found hopping on the road through Manas National Park on April 20. One was seen along the road to the golf course in the Digboi Oilfields on April 30. Up to two birds were seen daily from May 2-4 on the Namsang Road.

Black Redstart*Phoenicurus ochruros*

One male was seen roadside just a few kilometres before Se La Pass on March 26. A female was found in the western range in Kaziranga National Park on April 8. On April 9, a female was in the tea garden near Wild Grass Lodge and a male was in the central range. A pair was at Kuri Beel in Manas National Park as seen from the observation tower on April 20, and a female was found in the park on the 22nd.

Blue-fronted Redstart*Phoenicurus frontalis*

A male was seen at the Duwan Sing Syiem bridge on March 17. Very common around Se La Pass on March 26. Two birds were seen about 3 km down the sideroad at Mandala Pass on March 27. One or two were at the crane marsh by the school on the sideroad off the Mandala Road on March 29. One was at Lama Camp on March 31. One was seen around Khonoma on April 12.

White-capped Redstart*Phoenicurus leucocephalus*

One was at one of the reservoirs at the playground at the Duwan Sing Syiem bridge on March 17. One was spotted as we drove up towards Se La Pass on March 26. Two birds were at a bridge just up from the village of Khonoma on April 13 with just one in the same spot on the 15th.

Plumbeous Redstart (Water-Redstart)*Phoenicurus fuliginosa*

A pair favoured one of the little reservoirs at the playground at the Duwan Sing Syiem bridge on both March 15 and 17. A total of three birds were found at different stops on the drive to Dirang on March 25. About five birds were seen along the river in the Sangti Valley on March 26. One was on the river at Tenga on March 29. A pair was on the river just before Sessa on April 6. Two birds were at a bridge just up from the village of Khonoma on April 13 and 15.

White-tailed Robin*Cinclidium leucurum*

A good look at a female along the Namsang Road on May 2.

Black-backed Forktail*Enicurus immaculatus*

At a concrete bridge along the trail starting on the opposite side of the road to the entrance to the Digboi Oilfields, I found two birds on April 29 and one on the 30th. Common along the first few hundred metres of the Namsang Road where up to three birds were seen daily from May 2-4.

Slaty-backed Forktail*Enicurus schistaceus*

Two were found on the river just before Sessa on April 6.

White-throated (Hodgson's) Bushchat*Saxicola insignis*

A great surprise was finding a female in the grassland on the approach to Kuri Beel in Manas National Park on April 21.

Siberian Stonechat*Saxicola maurus*

Common in open areas in and around Nameri National Park from March 20-24. Three birds were seen in the Sangti Valley on March 26. In Kaziranga National Park, two were found in the central range on April 7 and three in the western range on April 8. Common in and around Manas National Park from April 20-22.

Grey Bushchat*Saxicola ferreus*

On March 27, one was seen about 3 km down the sideroad at Mandala Pass and then one around km 20 on the Mandala Road. One was at km 8 on the Mandala Road on March 28. On March 29, I found two at the crane marsh on the sideroad off the Mandala Road, and then one on the Alubari trail below Lama Camp. One again was seen on the Alubari trail on both the 30th and 31st. One was at Lama Camp on April 5. One was seen around Khonoma on April 12. Common around Khonoma from April 13-15.

TURDIDAE (Thrushes)

Scaly Thrush

Zoothera dauma

While driving back in the direction of Bomphu Camp after visiting Khellong, we came across one bird foraging right on the road a little above Sessni on April 2. It allowed a close approach for good views before it eventually flew off.

Black-breasted Thrush

Turdus dissimilis

Common in the open areas and plantations around Khonoma from April 12-15.

White-collared Blackbird

Turdus albocinctus

Relatively common on the sideroad at Mandala Pass on March 27 where a total of three birds were seen. A female was found along the little road to the crane marsh just off the Mandala Road on March 29. I saw one down at the bottom of Eaglenest Road near Tenga on our drive from Lama Camp to Kaziranga on April 6.

STURNIDAE (Starlings)

Spot-winged Starling

Saraglossa spiloptera

On March 25 we stopped along the roadside after crossing into Arunachal Pradesh but before Sessa at what my driver said was a good birding spot. Not easily visible from the road was a large Indian Coral tree and in it was a male Spot-winged Starling very purposefully checking the blossoms for nectar and perhaps an insect or two. This was to be my only sighting of this species.

Common Hill Myna

Gracula religiosa

Common with up to six birds seen daily in and around the Nameri Ecocamp from March 20-24, with occasional sightings from within the national park as well.

Great Myna

Acridotheres grandis

Common in and around the Nameri Ecocamp from March 20-25. Birds were making nests in the large, dead tree in the parking lot, and competing with Dollarbirds and Indian Rollers for nest sites. On April 7, four birds were observed at Wild Grass Lodge and on the 8th, four were in the tea garden near the lodge.

Jungle Myna

Acridotheres fuscus

Somewhat common, though less so than Common Myna. Relatively common in and around the Nameri Ecocamp from March 21-23. Common in and around Kaziranga National Park from April 7-11. Abundant in and around Manas National Park from April 20-22. A few were at Maguri Beel on April 27. Common in and around the Digboi Oilfields from April 29-May 1 and at the Forest Inspection Bungalow at Joypur from May 2-4.

Common Myna

Acridotheres tristis

Common and widespread.

Asian Pied Starling

Gracupica contra

Common in and around Kaziranga National Park from April 7-11. In the open area around Florican Cottages, two birds were seen on April 20 and one on the 22nd. Two were observed along the Brahmaputra River on April 27.

Chestnut-tailed Starling***Sturnia malabarica***

Common in and around the Nameri Ecocamp and in Nameri National Park from March 22-24. Three birds were seen in the western range of Kaziranga National Park on April 8, and birds were commonly observed in the tea garden near Wild Grass Lodge from April 8-11. Three were found in Manas National Park on both April 20 and 21. One was seen building a nest as I walked the road to the golf course in the Diboil Oilfields on April 30.

CHLOROPSEIDAE (Leafbirds)**Blue-winged Leafbird*****Chloropsis cochinchinensis***

Along the Namsang Road, one was found on May 2 and three on the 3rd.

Golden-fronted Leafbird***Chloropsis aurifrons***

Two were foraging in one of the large figs at the Umonoi root bridge on March 11. Two birds were found around the Nameri Ecocamp on March 20, three along the riverside trail in Nameri National Park on the 21st and six along the loop trail in the park the next day on the 22nd. Two were at Wild Grass Lodge on April 7. Two were found in the forest at the Digboil Oilfields on April 29.

Orange-bellied Leafbird***Chloropsis hardwickii***

One was found on my walk back from Mawmluh to the Cherrapunjee Holiday Resort on March 12, and two were seen on my hike down to the double decker root bridge the next day on the 13th. Two birds were in the same Indian Coral tree as the Spot-winged Starling on March 25. On April 1, two birds were seen at Bomphu Camp and three more just a little up from Hornbill viewpoint later in the day. Two females were found about 2 km below Bomphu on April 3.

DICAEIDAE (Flowerpeckers)**Plain Flowerpecker*****Dicaeum minullum***

A pair was seen just above eye level as they gorged on mistletoe berries during my walk to the Umkar root bridge on March 10.

Fire-breasted Flowerpecker***Dicaeum ignipectum***

A pair was seen on my hike from Shillong Peak back to the city on March 16. Two were found on the steep trail above Bomphu Camp on April 3.

Scarlet-backed Flowerpecker***Dicaeum cruentatum***

A female was seen on my way back up from the Umonoi root bridge on May 11. In a big tree at the road just a bit outside the entrance to the Nameri Ecocamp, a male was found on March 23 and a female on the 24th. One bird was on the grounds at Wild Grass Lodge on April 7 and 11. A male was found on my walk to the golf course in the Digboil Oilfields on April 30.

NECTARINIIDAE (Sunbirds)

Ruby-cheeked Sunbird

Chalcoparia singalensis

A pair was seen well with the male carrying nesting material along the road from the Nameri Ecocamp towards the river on March 23. One was in the Digboi Oilfields on April 29 and along the road to the golf course on the 30th.

Purple Sunbird

Cinnyris asiaticus

Around the Florican Cottages at Manas National Park, a male was found on April 20 and three birds on the 22nd.

Gould's (Mrs. Gould's) Sunbird

Aethopyga gouldiae

A male was seen 5 km before Se La Pass on March 26. Common along the Mandala Road on March 27 and 28. A male was found during my breakfast break at km 3 on the Mandala Road on March 29. At least three were seen below Lama Camp on March 30, and one while driving from Lama to Bomphu Camp on March 31. One was at Lama Camp on April 6. Up to two birds were found around Khonoma on April 12 and 15.

Green-tailed Sunbird

Aethopyga nipalensis

Four were first seen in a mixed flock on my drive to Dirang on March 25. Common along the Mandala Road on March 27 and 28. A male and two females were seen on the Alubari trail below Lama Camp on March 29. At least two were below Lama Camp on March 30. Quite common from Lama to Chakoo on my drive to Bomphu Camp on March 31. Three were found above Bomphu Camp both on April 3 and 4. Four were seen between Chakoo and Sunderview on April 5. Two were at Lama Camp on April 6.

Black-throated Sunbird

Aethopyga saturata

A male was seen well while I walked along the highway at the river near Sessa on March 25.

Eastern Crimson Sunbird

Aethopyga siparaja

A male was seen well along the road from the Nameri Ecocamp to the Jia Bhorelli River on March 23. On April 10, one was found in the eastern range of Kaziranga National Park and one in the tea garden near Wild Grass Lodge later in the day. On April 30, an immature male was observed on the road to the golf course in the Digboi Oilfields, and later, another male along the trail starting opposite the entrance to the oilfields. One more was found between km 12 and 15 on the highway through the oilfields on May 1. A male was found along the Namsang Road on May 2.

Fire-tailed Sunbird

Aethopyga ignicauda

A non-breeding male was seen briefly at the village of Mawmluh very early in the morning on March 12. Common along the Mandala Road on March 27. A male, not quite in full adult plumage, was spotted near Eaglenest Pass on April 5.

Little Spiderhunter

Arachnothera longirostra

One was found at the Duwan Sing Syiem bridge on March 15 and one on my hike from Shillong Peak back to the city the next day on the 16th.

Streaked Spiderhunter***Arachnothera magna***

My first sighting was of one bird as I walked to the Umkar root bridge on March 10. Another was found on my hike to the double decker root bridge on March 13. Two were seen as I walked along the highway at the river near Sessa on March 25. Singles were found just above and below Khellong on April 2.

PRUNELLIDAE (Accentors)**Robin Accentor*****Prunella rubeculoides***

One was found within about 2 km beyond Se La Pass on March 26.

Rufous-breasted Accentor***Prunella strophiata***

One was found within about 2 km beyond Se La Pass on March 26. A single bird was at the crake marsh by the school just off the Mandala Road on March 27. On March 29, I saw two at the crake marsh and one later in the day along the Alubari trail below Lama Camp in the Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary.

Maroon-backed Accentor***Prunella immaculata***

A nice surprise was finding two birds at km 20 on the Mandala Road on March 27. Two were foraging on the road below Lama Camp on March 30. A pair was also found on the Alubari trail below Lama Camp on April 5.

MOTACILLIDAE (Wagtails and Pipits)**Oriental (Paddyfield) Pipit*****Anthus rufulus***

In Kaziranga National Park, two were seen in the central range on April 7. One was in an open field near Florican Cottages on April 20 and 21.

Rosy Pipit***Anthus roseatus***

I had a hard time distinguishing non-breeding birds of this species from those of Olive-backed Pipit, but two birds near Se La Pass on March 26 showed a hint of red on their underparts, convincing me of the identification. This species was likely seen elsewhere in the Himalayas during my visit, but I was never confident enough in my identification.

Olive-backed Pipit***Anthus hodgsoni***

Quite common around the Cherrapunjee Holiday Resort from March 10-12. Two were seen on the hike from Shillong Peak back to the city on March 16. Single birds were found in and around Nameri National Park on March 21 and 22. On March 29, four birds were seen together halfway between the crake marsh and the junction with the Mandala Road and two later in the day on the Alubari trail below Lama Camp. Two were at Lama Camp on March 30, three in Bomphu Camp on April 4 and two back at Lama on April 5. Two were seen in the central range of Kaziranga National Park on April 9 and one in the tea garden near Wild Grass Lodge on April 10. Commonly seen in open areas around Khonoma from April 13-15. One was in Manas National Park on April 21.

White Wagtail***Motacilla alba***

All sightings were of the subspecies *alboides* which was commonly seen along the Jia Bhorelli River at Manas National Park on March 20, 21 and 23. Eight birds in total were in the Sangti Valley on March 26 and one low on the Mandala Road on the 27th. Singles were seen on two occasions in Kaziranga National Park and once in the tea garden near Wild Grass Lodge.

Western Yellow Wagtail***Motacilla flava***

I finally tracked down one bird at Maguri Beel on April 27. I didn't take note of the subspecies.

Citrine Wagtail***Motacilla flaveola***

All observations appeared to be of the subspecies *calcarata*. Common in all ranges of Kaziranga National Park from April 7-10. Seven birds were observed at Maguri Beel on April 27.

Grey Wagtail***Motacilla cinerea***

One was found at the Duwan Sing Syiem bridge on March 15. Two were seen along the road above Khonoma on April 15. One was in Manas National Park on April 22.

ELACHURIDAE (Spotted Elachura)**Spotted Elachura (Wren-Babbler)*****Elachura formosa***

On April 13, we heard one singing down in a valley from the main road above Khonoma. We scrambled down to the dry riverbed and struggled to get brief glimpses of a very active and noisy bird as it rapidly flew through the undergrowth over a largish area. We briefly played the song and it settled down to give an amazing response in clear view. Stunning bird.

EMBERIZIDAE (Buntings and New World Sparrows)**Little Bunting*****Emberiza pusilla***

One was seen in a field at the bottom of the main forest trail above Khonoma on April 13. A better look at a male along the road up from Khonoma on April 14.

FRINGILLIDAE (Finches, Euphonias and Allies)**Plain Mountain-Finch*****Leucosticte nemoricola***

Two or three birds were seen at a stop about 5 km beyond Se La Pass on March 26. A flock of about 15 birds was found high up on the Mandala Road on March 28.

Crimson-browed Finch***Pinicola subhimachala***

While driving up the Mandala Road early in the morning on March 27, we stopped for a flock of White-throated Laughingthrushes. On the other side of the road, a bird popped up to perch in the grass at eye level very close to the vehicle, but it was horribly backlit. I could make out that it was a finch with a red breast with white spots, thus suggesting a male Crimson-browed Finch. A terrible view however as it flew off before I could get a better look.

Common Rosefinch***Carpodacus erythrinus***

About five males and females were found along the short stretch of road from the crake marsh back to the junction with the Mandala Road on March 29.

Dark-rumped Rosefinch***Carpodacus edwardsii***

A flock of about 10 birds was seen about 2 km down the sideroad at Mandala Pass on March 27. One male was found at the crake marsh on the morning of March 29.

Tibetan Serin (Siskin)***Serinus thibetanus***

On March 29, after seeing Black-tailed Crake, I decided to walk back along the road to the junction with the Mandala Road. It was along this short stretch that I saw a flock of about eight Tibetan Serins feeding calmly in the secondary growth.

Red-headed Bullfinch***Pyrrhula erythrocephala***

A female was consorting with a flock of about seven Grey-headed Bullfinches in the thickets just at the lowest buildings at Lama Camp on March 29. Probably the same female was seen the next day in the same area on the 30th.

Grey-headed Bullfinch***Pyrrhula erthaca***

A big flock was feeding in the thickets just at the lowest buildings in Lama Camp on March 29. On March 30, likely the same flock was seen at Lama Camp and another along the Alubari trail. Three birds were around Lama Camp on the 31st.

Gold-naped Finch***Pyrrhoptectes epauletta***

At the Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary, several were seen between Lama Camp and the Alubari trail on March 30, three on the Alubari trail on March 31, two pairs above Sessni on April 2 and one at Lama Camp on April 6.

Scarlet Finch***Haematospiza sipahi***

An amazing flock of six males and four females was seen on the Alubari trail below Lama Camp on March 31. The red of the male is indescribable.

PASSERIDAE (Old World Sparrows)**House Sparrow*****Passer domesticus***

Commonly seen in Shillong and at the Duwan Sing Syiem bridge. Common outside Manas National Park.

Russet Sparrow***Passer rutilans***

Five birds were found on my hike down from Shillong Peak to the city on March 16.

Eurasian Tree Sparrow***Passer montanus***

Two birds were in the trees at the Hotel Pemaling in Dirang on March 25. Two were seen near Florican Cottages on April 22. Several were on the grounds at the Banashree Ecocamp on April 27, including one taking a dust bath. One was seen along the highway at Joypur on May 4.

PLOCEIDAE (Weavers and Allies)

Baya Weaver

Ploceus philippinus

A flock of at least 20 birds was found in scrub along the loop trail in Manas National Park on March 22. A flock of about 10 birds was seen along the sideroad adjacent to the Nameri Ecocamp on March 24. A large flock of about 30 birds, including one breeding male, was seen in grassland at Manas National Park on April 22.

ESTRILDIDAE (Waxbills and Allies)

White-rumped Munia

Lonchura striata

One was found gathering nesting materials along the Namsang Road on May 2.

Nutmeg Mannikin (Scaly-breasted Munia)

Lonchura punctulata

About 10 birds were found in a mixed flock with the following species while feeding on the ground beside the little sideroad adjacent to the Nameri Ecocamp on March 24.

Chestnut Munia

Lonchura atricapilla

About 10 birds were found in a mixed flock with the preceding species while feeding on the ground beside the little sideroad adjacent to the Nameri Ecocamp on March 24.

Mammal List

FELIDAE (Cats)

Indochinese Clouded Leopard

Neofelis nebulosa

On April 1 (this is not an April fool's Day joke!), my driver and I parked at Sessni around mid-day and had a snack. I wandered down the road about 200 metres and spotted a bird which initially captured my attention. Upon re-orienting my body down the road, I saw a curious rustling in the grass on the right-hand side of the road about 25 metres away. Intrigued, I immediately froze and brought up my binoculars, thinking that it might be a pheasant. However, through the grass I saw a spotted coat and a moment later, an Indochinese Clouded Leopard hopped up on to the road. A wave of disbelief passed through my body, and what happened next was very surreal. Luckily, the leopard entered the road at a 45° angle away from me, so it didn't recognize I was there. It turned a bit and moved across the road perpendicular to me and when it reached the other side, it paused, looked up, and sniffed the air as if it was deciding whether to go up into the forest or not. It decided not to and then turned in my direction and walked towards me. All the while, I was frozen in place with my binoculars on the leopard absolutely captivated by what I was experiencing. It walked slowly towards me, and as it approached, I thought I should probably let it know I was there as I stood in the middle of the road. When it got to within about 10 metres, I simply lifted my left elbow slightly. The leopard froze with a look of startled surprise on its face. Then it turned and bolted up into the forest. I stood in place for quite awhile in a kind of daze, not exactly sure how to process what just had happened. Although half not believing what had occurred, a wave of emotion passed over me and I eventually snapped back to reality, realizing how fortunate I had just been. It was absolutely incredible. Easily the most amazing wildlife experience of my life.

MUSTELIDAE (Weasels and Relatives)

Yellow-throated Marten

Martes flavigula

At about 5 km before Se La Pass, there is a curve and a place on the right to park the car. We did so on March 26 on our way up to the pass, and saw two martens actively foraging at the top of a tall tree immediately below us. On April 4, while walking the road below Bomphu Camp in the Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary, I came upon a large fruiting tree in which there were two martens busily foraging. They were so distracted by their feeding that they didn't see me so I was able to patiently watch them for quite some time before they noticed me, grunted a bit in disapproval, and moved off. Later the same day, I saw one more just below Hornbill viewpoint. On April 5 on the Alubari trail, a mysterious mammal - small, about 8 cm in length including tail and black in colour - rushed across the trail in front of me and a few moments later, three martens did the same in fast pursuit.

Small Indian Mongoose

Herpestes auropunctatus

One was found in open areas around the Nameri Ecocamp on March 24. One was on the grounds at the Wild Grass Lodge on April 7.

ELEPHANTIDAE (Elephants)

Asian Elephant

Elephas maximus

On March 22, as we neared the end of the loop trail in Nameri NP, we came across two elephants in the grassland, one of which was close enough to the trail that we had to move along at a quickened pace for safety. There was quite a lot of evidence of elephants at the Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary. They were heard at Khellong on April 2, and on visits to various areas above Bomphu from April 3-5, there was plenty of fresh dung and tracks from about 3 km above Bomphu all the way up almost to Eaglenest Pass which seemed rather high for elephants. Somewhat common in Kaziranga National Park. On April 8 in the western range, three were initially seen at a distance, and then one male quite close as it crossed the road in front of our vehicle to a marsh on the other side of the road. We watched it drink and then spray mud over its body. It then got a bit bolder and determined in its movement and charged the vehicle as we beat a hasty retreat. Four were also found in the central range on April 9 and two in the eastern range on the 10th. Not very common in Manas National Park with just two seen on both April 20 and 22. Just after passing the security gate at the entrance to the forest at the Digboi Oilfields on April 29, I asked the driver to pull over so I could get out and walk. I walked about 150 m up the road to where it made a curve to the left. On the left there was a break in the forest and an opening appeared. In this opening, very close to the road, was an elephant, calmly munching on its breakfast of grasses. I froze in place but continued watching it. Meanwhile, my security guard, who was assigned to me for my protection, walked up behind me, saw the elephant, screamed at the top of his lungs and turned and ran as fast as he could back to the car, leaving me to my own fate. I backed away slowly and when it was clear the elephant was not aggressive, I too went back to the car and we then watched a total of four elephants cross the road before we drove past them. Lots of evidence of elephant activity along the Namsang Road with plenty of dung, vocalizations, pockets of destruction, and the occasional musty odour that belies a recent presence. On May 3, one was seen just off the road, but far enough away and in the open that it was safe to walk by. She was still there when we walked back later in the morning, although we could only hear it. The next day on the 4th, the herd had moved a little further up the road and was in a slightly denser patch of forest. There was much activity and many vocalizations quite close to the road, and since we could not see the elephants, we decided it was not safe to continue walking so we turned back. Nine were also found at a salt lick on the main highway outside of Joypur on the 4th.

RHINOCEROTIDAE (Rhinoceroses)

Greater One-horned Rhinoceros

Rhinoceros unicornis

My first view was of four rhinos at the Kanchenjuri viewpoint along the highway neat the western edge of Kaziranga National Park as we neared the completion of our drive from Lama Camp to the Wild Grass Lodge on April 6. Very common in all ranges of Kaziranga National Park from April 7-10. Many good sightings, with the best photographic possibilities being in the western range in the afternoon, based on proximity of the animals and the position of the setting sun.

SUIDAE (Pigs)

Eurasian Wild Pig

Sus scrofa

Up to five were seen daily in Kaziranga National Park from April 7-10. Most were at a distance, but one was seen particularly well at the edge of Sohola Beel in the eastern range of Kaziranga on April 10. My only sighting in Manas National Park was of one at Kuri Beel on April 21.

CERVIDAE (Deer)

Red Muntjac (Barking Deer)

Muntiacus muntjak

Heard more often than seen as its common name, Barking Deer, would attest. One rushed across the path along the riverside trail in Nameri National Park on March 21. One was seen up close for a few moments in the western range in Kaziranga National Park on April 8, and another was found in the tea garden near Wild Grass Lodge on April 11. Up to two were found daily in Manas National Park from April 20-22. In the Digboi Oilfields on April 29, I saw a total of two individuals, one of which gave a good look before fleeing. The next day on the 30th as I walked to the golf course, I spotted one very curious and tame individual.

Hog Deer

Axis porcinus

On April 3 about 8 km above Bomphu Camp, I caught a glimpse of the white tail of a Hog Deer. Later in the day, about 2 km below Bomphu, one was flushed from the road and it rushed downslope, giving three loud screams as an alarm call. Another was flushed along the road just a little below Bomphu on April 4. A herd of more than 30 was on the grassland at the Kanchenjuri viewpoint along the highway near the western edge of Kaziranga National Park on April 6. Abundant at Kaziranga National Park from April 7-10. Common in Manas National Park from April 20-22.

Sambar

Rusa unicolor

One female was seen on the grassland at the Kanchenjuri viewpoint along the highway near the western edge of Kaziranga National Park during our drive from Lama Camp to Wild Grass Lodge on April 6. A male was spotted in the central range at Kaziranga on April 9.

Barasingha

Rucervus duvaucelii

I located this species in grassland just after entering the central range on both April 7 and 9. A large herd of more than 60 animals seemed to favour this spot. Maybe a lower risk of predation being close to the entrance. Mostly females and young with a couple of males with big antlers. A herd of about 25 was also seen in the western range on April 8.

BOVIDAE (Hollow-horned Ruminants)

Asian Wild Buffalo

Bubalus arnee

On both March 21 and 22, during my two visits to Nameri National Park, a herd of about 12 animals was seen on the far bank of the Jia Bhorelli River as I crossed to the national park side on the dugout boat. Two were observed on the grassland at the Kanchenjuri viewpoint along the highway near the western edge of Kaziranga National Park on April 6. Large numbers were seen daily in Kaziranga National Park from April 7-10. Mostly found in herds at a distance, but two crossed the road close to my vehicle in the western range on April 8.

CERCOPITHECIDAE (Old World Monkeys)

Assamese Macaque

Macaca assamensis

I was surprised to find a troop along the dirt road from Nameri Ecocamp to the Jia Bhorelli River on March 22. They were quite shy, but I saw two individuals very well. A big troop was seen along the Namsang Road on May 3. They were wary, but I had good looks at three individuals.

Arunachal Macaque

Macaca munzala

A large troop was active and making a racket within about 1 km of Eaglenest Pass. They were seen from the road as I looked down into a valley and were not close; I was only able to get a look at four or five individuals.

Rhesus Macaque

Macaca mulatta

A few troops were seen along the highway as we drove from the Nameri Ecolodge to the jumping off point for my rafting trip on March 23. On April 6, there was a large troop by the highway at the turn to Nameri as we drove from Lama Camp in the direction of Wild Grass Lodge, and later in the day, another troop was found on the grassland at the Kanchenjuri viewpoint along the highway near the western edge of Kaziranga National Park. My only sighting within Kaziranga was of eight macaques in the central range on April 7. About five were found at a fruiting tree in Manas National Park on April 21. A troop of about 12 passed through the village of Joypur on May 3 causing much fuss with the local residents.

Golden Langur***Trachypithecus geei***

My visit to the Chakrashila Wildlife Sanctuary near Kokrajhar on April 25 resulted in a group of forest rangers trying to track down a troop for me to see. We had a great sighting of a troop of maybe six or seven in a patch of secondary forest near one of the sanctuary's ranger stations.

Capped Langur (Leaf-Monkey)***Trachypithecus pileatus***

A troop of the subspecies *tenebricus* was spotted on three occasions on the grounds near the Nameri National Park office adjacent to the Nameri Ecocamp. Four individuals were also found in Manas National Park on April 20. I found one troop of the subspecies *pileatus* as I walked along the main highway through the Digboi Oilfields forest between km 12 and 15 on May 1. Another troop was spotted near the village of Joypur on May 4.

HYLOBATIDAE (Gibbons)**Western Hoolock Gibbon*****Hoolock hoolock***

Heard in the Digboi Oilfields on April 29 and May 1. Along the Namsang Road on May 4, I heard their calls from nearby and was treated soon thereafter to a family group of three crossing over the road, showing off their amazing brachiation technique. Fascinating!

PLATANISTIDAE (South Asian River Dolphin)**South Asian River Dolphin*****Platanista gangetica***

While out on the Brahmaputra River on the afternoon of April 27 near the Banashree Ecocamp, I had poor looks at about four in total.

PTEROPODIDAE (Old World Fruit Bats)**Indian Flying Fox*****Pteropus giganteus***

As I was heading back from the western range of Kaziranga National Park to the Wild Grass Lodge at dusk on April 8, one flew over the highway in poor light.

SCIURIDAE (Squirrels)**Orange-bellied Himalayan Squirrel*****Dremomys lokriah***

Common in the forests around the Cherrapunjee Holiday Resort from March 10-13. One was spotted on our drive to Lama Camp on March 29, and a couple below Lama Camp on both March 30 and 31. Singles were found below Bomphu Camp on April 1 and 2. I spotted one on the main forest trail above Khonoma on April 13. Three individuals were found as I walked to the golf course in the Digboi Oilfields on April 30. Along the Namsang Road, one was seen on May 2 and two on the 3rd.

Irrawaddy (Hoary-bellied Himalayan) Squirrel*Callosciurus pygerythrus*

Relatively common around the Nameri Ecocamp where seen on three days during my five-day stay. Singles were found on the grounds at Wild Grass Lodge on April 7 and 8, and in the nearby tea garden on the 10th. Around Khonoma, I saw one on April 13 and two on the 15th. Just one sighting in Manas National Park on April 20.

Black Giant Squirrel*Ratufa bicolor*

Singles were seen on both the riverside trail and loop trail in Nameri National Park on March 21 and 22 respectively. Two individuals were seen just a little down the road from Bomphu Camp in the Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary on April 3. I spotted one eating a silk cotton pod in the western range of Kaziranga National Park on April 8. In Manas National Park, two were seen on April 20 and one that was more reddish in colour on the 21st. One was found in the Digboi Oilfields on April 29 and one along the Namsang Road on May 4.

Himalayan Striped Squirrel*Tamiops maclellandii*

A good look at one at the crake marsh behind the school along a little sideroad just off the Mandala Road on March 29. Several were seen below Lama Camp and along the Alubari trail on March 30 and 31. Singles were found below Bomphu Camp on April 1 and above Bomphu on the 4th. Three individuals were spotted along the main forest trail above Khonoma on April 14.

Reptile List**Yellow Monitor***Varanus flavescens*

One was resting in some reeds near Daphlong in the central range of Kaziranga National Park on April 7.

Bengal Monitor*Varanus bengalensis*

I spotted one in the western range of Kaziranga National Park on April 8 and in the central range on the 9th. I had a great encounter with one monitor that was relaxing, prone on a thick limb virtually at eye level in Manas National Park on April 20.

Red-necked Keelback*Rhabdophis subminiatus*

Nice look at one near my cottage on the grounds of Wild Grass Lodge on April 8. A guide I spoke to said it isn't poisonous, but a search once I returned home revealed that although it was thought to be harmless, it is in fact rather poisonous.

Green Vine Snake*Ahaetulla nasuta*

One was seen by the edge of the Namsang Road on May 4. A couple of locals were rather disturbed by its presence.

Indian Roofed Turtle

Kachuga tecta

About 20 were sunning themselves along a watercourse in the central range of Kaziranga National Park on April 7. Somewhat fewer were seen in the same place on April 9.

Amphibian List

Asian Common Toad

Duttaphrynus melanostictus

Two were spotted over by the ranger office adjacent to the Nameri Ecocamp on March 21.