Birding in West Sikkim  Khangchendzonga National Park | February 2016

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Birding with kids was a real fun for them as well. In just 7 days we listed 118 species altogether.

**Date:** 15th February to 21st February 2016

**Coordinates:** 27.373401, 88.227559 (Within 8 kms radius)

**Habitat:**

- Montane Forest.
- Temperate Coniferous.
- Broadleaf.
- Riverine.
- Alluvial.
- Alpine steppe.
- Sub Alpine Forest.
- High altitude marshes.
- Cultivation Land.
- Human Habitat.

**Temperature Range:** 5°C ~ 20°C

**Altitude Range:** 4900' to 8500' (from MSL)

**Bird Checklist (As per Birds of Indian Subcontinent field guide by Richard Grimmett, Carol Inskipp, Tim Inskipp):**

1. Hill Partridge
2. Satyr Tragopan
3. Crested Serpent Eagle
4. Mountain Hawk Eagle
5. Black-tailed Crane
6. Common Pigeon
7. Barred Cuckoo Dove
8. Oriental Turtle Dove
9. Collared Owlet
10. Asian Barred Owlet
11. Himalayan Swiftlet
12. Great Barbet
13. Yellow-rumped Honeyguide
14. White-browed Piculet
15. Bay Woodpecker
16. Lesser Yellownape
17. Greater Yellownape
18. Grey-headed Woodpecker
19. Scarlet Minivet
20. Long-tailed Shrike
21. Grey-backed Shrike
22. Black Drongo
23. Ashy Drongo
24. Yellow-bellied Fantail
25. White-throated Fantail
26. Common Green Magpie
27. Grey Treepie
28. Large-billed Crow
29. House Crow
30. Green-backed Tit
31. Yellow-cheeked Tit
32. Black-throated Tit
33. Nepal House Martin
34. Barn Swallow
35. Striated Bulbul
36. Himalayan Bulbul
37. Red-vented Bulbul
38. Mountain Bulbul
39. Common Tailorbird
40. Chestnut-headed Tesia
41. Ashy-throated Warbler
42. Mandellie's Leaf Warbler
43. White-spectacled Warbler
44. Whistler's Warbler
45. Grey-hooded Warbler
46. Grey-cheeked Warbler
47. Chestnut-crowned Warbler
48. Pygmy Wren Babbler
49. Rufous-capped babbler
50. Golden Babbler
51. Grey-throated babbler
52. Slender-billed Scimitar babbler
53. White-throated Laughingthrush
54. Striated Laughingthrush
55. Black-faced Laughingthrush
56. Chestnut-crowned Laughingthrush
57. Rusty-fronted Barwing
58. Hoary-throated Barwing
59. Red-billed Leiothrix
60. Himalayan Cutia
61. Red-tailed Minla
62. Blue-winged Siva
63. Bar-throated Minla
64. White-browed Shrike Babbler
65. Green Shrike Babbler
66. Black-eared Shrike Babbler
67. Rufous-winged Fulvetta
68. Rufous Sibia
69. White-naped Yuhina
70. Whiskered Yuhina
71. Strip-throated Yuhina
72. Black-throated Parrotbill
73. White-tailed Nuthatch
74. Chestnut-bellied Nuthatch
75. Hodgson's Treecreeper
76. Rusty-flanked Treecreeper
77. Common Myna
78. Blue-whistling Thrush
79. Alpine Thrush
80. Long-billed Thrush
81. White-collared Blackbird
82. Grey-winged Blackbird
83. Chestnut Thrush
84. White-browed Shortwing
85. Rufous-breasted Bush Robin
86. Himalayan Bluetail
87. Golden Bush Robin
88. Oriental Magpie Robin
89. Plumbeous Water Redstart
90. White-capped Redstart
91. Hodgson's Redstart
92. White-throated Redstart
93. Blue-fronted Redstart
94. Little Forktail
95. Slaty-backed Forktail
96. Spotted Forktail
97. Common Stonechat
98. Grey Bushchat
99. Chestnut-bellied Rock Thrush
100. Grey-headed Canary Flycatcher
101. Large Niltava
102. Small Niltava
103. Orange-bellied Leafbird
104. Fire-breasted Flowerpecker
105. Green-tailed Sunbird
106. Fire-tailed Sunbird
107. Eurasian Treesparrow
108. Russet Sparrow
109. Rufous-breasted Accentor
110. Grey Wagtail
111. Olive-backed Pipit
112. Tibetan Serin
113. Yellow-breasted Greenfinch
114. Dark-breasted Rosefinch
115. Scarlet Finch
116. Spot-winged Grosbeak
117. Golden-naped Finch
118. Little Bunting

Mammal checklist (as per the Indian Mammals | A Field Guide by Vivek Menon):

1. Indian Muntjac
2. Hoary-bellied Squirrel
3. Himalayan Striped Squirrel

Participants:

1. Dibyendu Ash (L)
2. Ten Hang Limboo
3. Sujal Limboo
4. Avinash Limboo
Chestnut Thrush (*Turdus rubrocanus*) is a native breeder to higher altitudes of western Himalayas and that of extreme eastern parts of Himalayas; in central Himalayas, i.e. in Nepal and Sikkim it is a non-native resident. During winter months in Sikkim; these birds can be found alongside forest edges in cultivation fields between 6000 to 8000 ft.

Scarlet Finch (*Haematospiza sipahi*) - Tiny drop of Red against greenery of West Sikkim! Another commoner from KBR and adjacent area. The species name sipahi is funny, isn’t it! On 18th February ‘16’ our visit to Intake listed some other beautiful avian fauna. The path was uneven through forest; actually there was no path! We were saved by Google maps that day. An utter belief in god assisted us to reach our home stay in time before evening.
A 9.5 cm piculet! **White-browed Piculet** (*Sasia ochracea*) I have no answers why tiniest of them all are most beautiful looking. While we (Sujal, Ten Hang, Avinash and me) were returning back from National Park; on our way we saw this spectacular tiny tot; hanging in bamboo thickets. They are so tiny that they make their nests inside bamboo stems and lay their eggs inside pockets. Such a beauty!

Not Blue-fronted Redstart. **White-throated Redstart** (*Phoenicurus schisticeps*) it is - Beautiful bird bunnies are everywhere; you have to have an eye to find them and praise their beauty. This is just another one from West Sikkim. Though not commoner but this fellows are winter visitors there.
Chestnut-headed Tesia (*Cettia castaneocoronata*) A tiny bird with attitude! On 16th Feb, in the afternoon, when we were doing birding behind a khola adjacent to forest of Dubde (/Tupti) we found this skittish bird foraging on stone wall and barbed wire. At last patience paid off!

Hodgson’s Redstart (*Phoenicurus hodgsoni*) - We saw during our birding and bird photography tour to West Sikkim. East or West, Sikkim is the Best! Believe me I’m not bluffing!
Sometimes you have to get dirty to photograph skulkers. I can still smell the place. **Black-tailed Crake** (*Porzana bicolor*)

An warbler from West Sikkim up-close! Uniform grey crown and grayish chin confirms it as a Grey-cheeked Warbler. **Grey-cheeked Warbler** (*Seicercus poliogenys*)
A Bunting, termed as a little one - **Little Bunting** (*Emberiza pusilla*)

An Alpine Thrush from the forests of West Sikkim (**Khangchendzonga National Park**), photographed during the birding trip of February with juniors! **Alpine Thrush** (*Zoothera mollissima*)
Rufous-winged Fulvetta (*Alcippe castaneceps*) - A commoner from central and eastern Himalayas has been photographed during the birding trip in Khangchendzonga Biosphere Reserve. A mixed flock consisting of Green Shrike Babblers, Green-tailed Sunbirds, Yellow-cheeked Tits, Nuthatches was foraging on Ficus religiosa (most likely). Photographed one ingested the flesh of the figus fruit and threw away the seed later.

Golden-naped Finch (*Pyrrhoplectes epauletta*) - A tiny finch with gold in its crown. That is why Gold is considered to be one of the most valuable metal! Today I'm feeling Golden! Jokes apart, during the birding tour in West Sikkim, we (four of us Sujal, Ten Hang, Avinash and me) saw a flock of 7-8 Golden-naped Finch on our way back to home stay. Just after White-browed Piculet we saw them. White-browed Bush Robin was there too.
Golden Bush Robin (*Tarsiger chrysaeus*) males are so brightly colored that, even perched on cluttered background, it was easy to focus on them in low light. Though they are very common throughout Himalayas, but hard to get them in open unless they give a regular visit. This fellow whereas is a regular visitor over a pile of dung; almost every morning we saw this fellow foraging in search of food items.

"Charismatische Vogel" - as they say in dutch. While we moved towards Intaakee; we saw it. This yellow beauty was foraging in a mixed flock around 11 AM in the morning. They are real skulkers! Golden Babbler (*Stachyridopsis chrysea*)
Grey-backed Shrike - A high altitude breeder in Himalayas; who comes down to medium and lower elevation zones in winter months. It is known to devour smaller birds, this time got it with a wasp. **Grey-backed Shrike** (*Lanius tephronotus*)

Male and female of Spot-winged Grosbeak feeding on berries; photographed from KBR West Sikkim. **Spot-winged Grosbeak** (*Mycerobas melanozanthes*)
These 9 cm wren babbler is smallest of all 'Pnoepyga' wrens. On 20th February morning, we saw something moving on thickly vegetated forest floor; though the photographic outcome was not of that quality. **Pygmy Wren Babbler** *(Pnoepyga pussila)*

Yellow-rumped Honeyguide *(Indicator xanthonotus)* - A near threatened species among the honeyguide family. This beauty we saw on 17th February, as well as on 20th February during the birding trip to West Sikkim.

Happy Birding! www.goingwild.in
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