

Goa

5-20 Jan 2001

Participants:

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Leaders:

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Picture: Sri Lankan Frogmouth

Day 1: The early evening flight was nearly two hours late leaving but, at least it was a direct flight without the middle-of-the-night stopover in the Middle East!

Day 2: By the time we arrived in Goa mid-morning, we had caught up half of the delayed time. It took about an hour to be processed through immigration and customs; we were then met by our local representative and the coach to take us on the hour-and-a-quarter journey to Baga. The journey gave us our first insight into Indian life as well as numerous Cattle Egrets and two superb White-bellied Sea Eagles. We arrived at our small, friendly guesthouse in time for lunch and even as we unloaded the coach watched Common Tailorbird, Black-lored Tit and Purple-rumped Sunbird! In the heat of the day, bird activity is low, so we delayed our first birding until 16.00 when Loven, one of our local guides, met us, and we walked out into the Baga Fields, located directly behind our guesthouse. Immediately, we were looking at our first common Indian birds, Common & Jungle Mynas, Little Green Bee-eaters, Black Drongos, White-breasted Kingfishers, Long-tailed Shrikes, Black Kites and the beautifully patterned Brahminy Kite and in amongst the common Chestnut-tailed & Rose-coloured Starlings, up to five Brahminy Starlings. An Indian Roller posed on a bush whilst Common Hoopoes fed in the short grass and two Plum-headed Parakeets were found amongst their commoner Rose-ringed cousins. A nice find was a Eurasian Wryneck, the only one of the tour, found whilst we were watching Little Ringed Plovers, Malabar Larks and Paddyfield Pipits. Careful scrutiny of the pipits also added Blyth's, Richard's & Tree Pipits. The only Lesser Whitethroat of the tour was watched in the same clump of bushes as Bluethroat, Ashy Prinia and Oriental Magpie Robin. Red-wattled Lapwing is to be expected in the Baga Fields but two Yellow-wattled Lapwings were a surprise find. Both male and female Pied Stonechat showed well whilst a male Common Stonechat was present for comparison but, the only bulbul seen was surprisingly a single Red-vented Bulbul. Both Eurasian Collared-dove and Spotted Dove were seen whilst a Greater Coucal skulked in some bushes but, eventually showed to everyone. The numerous swifts and swallows flying overhead were mainly Little Swifts and Red-rumped Swallows but, four Asian Palm-swifts were also present. Whilst watching a Coppersmith Barbet giving its monotonous call from the top of a dead tree, a woodpecker flew over; carefully tracking it down, we were rewarded with good views of a Black-rumped Flameback. Several snipe were flushed and it was relatively straightforward to see the differing flight actions and plumage details of both Common & Pintail Snipe. By now the light was starting to subside so we headed back to the Biera Mar Hotel. From the swimming pool veranda, we were able to

have a panoramic view over the marsh from the comfort of chairs with waiters serving cold drinks! Indian Purple Swamphen, Little Egret, Indian Pond Heron, White-browed Wagtail and Blyth's Reed Warbler all fed in the open just below us whilst White-breasted Waterhen were a little more skulking. A pleasant surprise was a superb Lesser Spotted Eagle perched in a nearby dead tree, being constantly harassed by House Crows. Two Greater Painted Snipe gave intermittent views, as did a couple of Cinnamon Bitterns. Scanning across the open fields, a Black-capped Kingfisher was perched on a post whilst Grey Herons and Intermediate Egrets fed in the drainage channels and a large flock of House Sparrows on the power lines contained four Baya Weavers. Considering that we had been birding only about three hours, the total of 68 species was quite exceptional.

Day 3: Our Normal breakfast time was 06.30, leaving at 07.00 with a packed lunch. As usual, our coach and guide met us on time, today to drive to Carambolin Lake. We arrived at the lake at about 08.00 and were greeted with what initially appeared to be a lake just covered with vegetation. On closer inspection however, there was indeed plenty of vegetation but numerous birds covered most of the open water. In the first few minutes we saw simply hundreds of Lesser Whistling Duck, Cotton Pygmy-geese, Northern Pintail, Common Teal, Garganey, Common Moorhen, Common Coot, Indian Purple Swamphen, Indian Pond Heron, Intermediate & Little Egrets, Gull-billed Terns and Bronze-winged Jacanas; now we had to start working for our birds! A few Little Cormorants and Little Grebes were scattered around the lake together with Grey & Purple Herons and Pheasant-tailed Jacanas but our attention was diverted by more birds on the paddyfields on the opposite side of the road. A large flock of Small Pratincoles were roosting on the bunds amongst a number of other waders including Common Redshank, Common Greenshank, Ruff, Green, Marsh & Wood Sandpipers, Little Stint, Eurasian Curlew, Black-winged Stilts and Black-tailed Godwits. A number of Yellow Wagtails were present and we also managed to find single Citrine & Grey Wagtails amongst them. Pied & Common Kingfishers sat on posts whilst Blue-tailed Bee-eaters alternated between the posts and power lines. We moved on to a small patch of woodland which, was a stakeout for Brown Hawk Owls and we were not disappointed, with everyone getting excellent views of two birds roosting. As a bonus we found our first two Spotted Owlets of the tour as well as Asian Koel, Rufous Treepie, Common Iora, Black-hooded Oriole, Red-whiskered Bulbul, Asian Brown Flycatcher, Asian Paradise-flycatcher and Green & Greenish Warblers, quite a productive stop! Returning towards the lake, we stopped in some agricultural fields to look for Rufous-tailed Lark. Although unsuccessful, we were compensated with Short-toed Eagle, Red-breasted Flycatcher, Chestnut-shouldered Petronia, Streak-throated & Wire-tailed Swallows and Grey-breasted & Plain Prinias as well as more great views of Bluethroat and Malabar Larks. Returning to the lake, we worked the opposite shore looking for the species we had previously missed, Oriental Darter, Comb Duck, Northern Shoveler and Western Marsh-harrier. As by now it was pretty hot, we moved around the lake to the station which, had a covered platform and made an excellent cool view over the entire lake. We ate our lunch in comfort and spent a pleasant couple of hours watching the trains come and go. There was even a café selling food and drink! Mid-afternoon, we visited the nearby Ciba-Geigy factory. Unfortunately, entry is no longer allowed but, by peering through the fence, we were able to see several highly desirable species; Asian Openbill, Lesser Adjutant, Woolly-necked Stork, Black-headed Ibis and Indian Shag. With time in hand, we stopped for half-an-hour at Old Goa on the way back so that everyone had a chance to look at the old Cathedral and Basilica. Returning alongside the river, we stopped at a convenient point to view the shoreline. A number of waders were present and new ones included Terek Sandpiper, Kentish Plover, Lesser Sandplover and a single Greater Sandplover. Herons included Striated and Western Reef as well as Great White Egrets. Returning to the hotel in the late afternoon we still had time to visit the Biera Mar again and enjoy a drink. All the birds seen the previous evening showed again but, in addition, a flock of munias on the power lines contained both White-rumped and Scaly-breasted Munias and careful scanning of the vegetation below rewarded some with brief views of a Ruddy-breasted Crane. Remarkably, we had seen even more new species than the previous day and our two-day total stood at 137 species.

Day 4: This morning both groups visited the Dona Paula Plateau, an open area of poor cultivation surrounded by development. Firstly, we looked at the Citada de Goa valley where, we started by seeing our only Black-shouldered Kite of the tour. Eurasian Golden-orioles were everywhere in the valley, including five in one tree. White-browed Bulbul, White-throated Fantail and Pale-billed Flowerpecker were all added to our lists and our first Orange-headed Thrush seen, uncharacteristically high up in a tree. Back up to the plateau, we spread out to look for our target birds. In open country like this, more eyes are a positive benefit and we soon succeeded in seeing both Ashy-crowned Sparrow-lark and Oriental Lark, both local and difficult species, together with Tawny Pipits. As we had already seen the other speciality, Yellow-wattled Lapwing, we explored the area further and succeeded in finding several Indian Robins, had excellent prolonged views of a perched Shikra and found our first Jungle Babblers. Moving on down towards Panjim Salt pans, we first made a stop at the river where a flock of plovers flew over. Careful scrutiny showed them to be Pacific Golden Plovers whilst a flock of Small Pratincoles were on the opposite side of the road. By the time we reached the salt pans it was getting hot so we kept our visit relatively short. A small flock of waders firstly defied identification in the heat-haze but when they got up and flew they were obviously Curlew Sandpipers. A single Whimbrel was present together with three Common Ringed Plovers and a large flock of Brown-headed Gulls. A Blue-tailed Bee-eater gave amazing views but, every time I got the camera out, it became camera shy! We ate lunch at the side of a quiet road under the shade of a large tree watching Little Green Bee-eaters, Brahminy Kite and a Spotted Owlet. Returning to the hotel, we took a short break before deciding to climb Baga Hill. It was still rather hot but our effort was rewarded with excellent views of a Crimson Sunbird. The top was rather quiet, but the breeze was refreshing and the view simply stunning. Returning, we experienced two close fly-bys, firstly a point-blank White-bellied Sea-eagle complete with fish then a Booted Eagle. Cold drinks at the bar were calling so we returned back down the hill and ambled the short distance across the Baga Fields.

Day 5: This morning we drove to the Citada de Goa Hotel again, this time to board a boat for a river cruise. Everyone got wet feet getting aboard but no-one fell in completely! The initial voyage across the bay was very relaxed but rather quiet until we started to enter the river mouth. The large poles here were perfect for roosting birds and both Lesser Crested and Crested Terns gave excellent views. Crested terns significantly outnumbered Lesser Crested Terns and gave superb photographic opportunities. After going under the main bridge, the river gradually narrowed and became lined with mangroves. With plenty of eyes, nothing was going to get missed but a Banded Bay Cuckoo was

still a big surprise. A group of fishermen in coracles provided a cultural diversion and Stork-billed Kingfisher showed very well but what we were really after still eluded us. Turning up a small canal, we edged our way through the mangroves and then, there it was, a superb White-collared Kingfisher sitting quietly in the shadows. Clamorous Reed Warbler proved less co-operative on the return journey down the canal but when we reached the main river, a Tawny Eagle put on a good show together with a couple of Lesser Spotted Eagles. As we returned down-river a large flock of Pacific Golden Plovers put on an aerial display, shortly followed by a small flock of Grey Plovers. By the time we got back to the Citada de Goa, it was lunchtime so we headed for Candolim beach, where we spent a pleasant couple of hours watching the world go by. As it was by now getting cooler, we visited Candolim Marsh where a couple of Pale-billed Flowerpeckers put on an excellent display. A Long-tailed Shrike tried to outdo them by allowing photographers to take extremely close pictures and another two Spotted Owlets looked at us inquisitively.

Day 6: Today we visited Maem Lake, leaving at 06.30 with Pramod to catch the 07.00 ferry across to Charao Island. We drove straight to the lake and walked through the forest around the shore. A couple of Orange-breasted Green Pigeons sat at the top of trees on the opposite shore but we pressed on as we were looking for special birds for which we needed to be early. Pramod climbed the hill to look for them at roost but, as expected, the birds flew across our heads and perched in trees on the opposite side of the lake allowing everyone to see them - two wonderful Brown Fish Owls. With these birds 'under our belts' we were able to thoroughly search the forest. Unfortunately, we couldn't track down the calling Blue-bearded Bee-eater but, it wasn't so much a case of searching for other birds, but letting them come to us, which they conveniently did! A White-cheeked Barbet called from the top of a tree, Crested Treeswifts flew high over the lake, and a couple of Yellow-crowned Woodpeckers unobtrusively feed in the trees. Four species of drongo (Ashy, Bronzed, Greater Racket-tailed & White-bellied) were seen, and confusion reigned when someone saw a Common Woodshrike and others saw a Black-headed Cuckooshrike! A brief view of an Indian Pitta caused panic and whilst looking for it again, Brown-capped Pygmy Woodpecker, Blue-winged Leafbird, Plain Flowerpecker, Purple Sunbird, and Nilgiri Blackbird were all seen. By now, we could hear but not see both Changeable Hawk-eagle and Crested Serpent-eagle and it took some perseverance to see both birds. Eventually however, they both gave themselves up and sat obligingly at the tops of trees. Two Small Minivets were found perched in trees on top of the ridge whilst to the other extreme, Puff-throated Babbler fed virtually at our feet. On the way back to the restaurant a phylloscopus warbler was found and despite giving excellent views, defied identification. Whilst having lunch however, we were able to work out the identification, it was a Tytler's Leaf-warbler. Much to everyone's amusement, I was so engrossed in identifying the warbler that I put two spoonfuls of salt in my coffee and proceeded to drink it! On the way back across Charao Island, we stopped at an area of rice paddies and were rewarded with good views of another Bluethroat, Plain Prinia, several Woolly-necked Storks and a huge flock of Little Stints. Heading back to the ferry, we were amazed to see an enormous flock of Northern Pintail roosting on the mudbank in the middle of the river. The return journey through the busy streets of Candolim was an experience never to be forgotten - ask Gillian!

Day 7: This morning we visited Saligao, a small patch on woodland not far from the hotel with a spring in a natural bowl in the middle of it. Local people still use it for washing themselves, their clothes and cars, but do it very sympathetically with regard to the environment, and the woodland has been left virtually untouched. Immediately on arrival a Rufous Woodpecker was seen followed by a Jungle Owlet which, was initially heard by Pramod and, with his skill, everyone saw it well. A couple of Spotted Owlets were also found which caused some confusion at first. Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrike and both Crimson-backed & Loten's Sunbirds delayed our progress up to the spring but eventually we got there and were rewarded with wonderful views of a roosting Brown Wood Owl. As we relaxed in the surroundings, Tickell's Blue Flycatcher, Black-naped Monarch-flycatcher and Western Crowned Warbler all showed well. Returning to the coach, one of the group was fortunate to find another Indian Pitta but, it couldn't be relocated despite an extensive search. Heading north, we crossed the ferry to Morji, a wonderful cultural experience as there was a market right next to the terminal, which was absolutely chaotic. Unfortunately, when they open the new bridge, you won't be able to experience this any more. We ate our lunch under palm trees by the beach and then searched through the multitude of gulls and terns. Heuglin's Gull (*tamyrensis*), Caspian Gull (*barabensis*), Great Black-headed Gull, Slender-billed Gull, Black-headed Gull and Sandwich Tern were all additions to our lists with large numbers of Brown-headed Gulls and Lesser Crested Terns. The waders were closely scrutinised and amongst the Kentish Plovers and Lesser Sandplovers, we found Sanderling and Dunlin. Several Brahminy Starlings fed by the side of the road and a Black-crowned Night-heron roosted in a large tree. Still needing Greater Sandplover for a few of the group, we headed north to another beach where, several birds were found. On the return journey, a party of Indian Swiftlets was found with Red-rumped & Streak-throated Swallows and after re-crossing the river, we chanced upon an Indian Elephant outside a temple, it was suitably adorned for tourists and was available to photograph (for a price!). The photographs were somewhat tainted however, with a BMX bike parked against one temple pillar and a dog intimately scratching itself on the steps! At the end of the day we had seen over 200 species by just our fifth full day.

Day 8: As we still need a few species in the Carambolin Lake area, we made a repeat visit today. The agricultural areas were our first stop but as water levels had risen, we had to find an alternative route. This was easily achieved and we were rewarded with good view of a number of species including Baya Weaver, Indian Robin and Oriental Magpie-robin. One of the highlights however, was prolonged close view of all three species of prinias together for comparison. Common Hoopoes were very conspicuous and after a thorough search, we finally found our target bird, Rufous-tailed Lark. Returning to the lake, we carefully scanned the large flocks of duck and eventually found a single Spotbill Duck together with three Mallards. More of a surprise however, was a Fulvous Whistling-duck in with the flock of Lesser Whistling-ducks. More expected was a single Temminck's Stint, the only one of the tour. Several large crocodiles were seen slowly patrolling the deeper areas of the lake and you could always tell their whereabouts by the reactions of the birds! We had sufficient time on our hands now to enjoy the spectacle of all of the birds previously seen and to take a leisurely lunch at the station again. Mid-afternoon, we set off for Fort Aguada to look for Indian Peafowl. Despite an extensive search however, only a couple of people glimpsed a single bird so the rest had to console

themselves with the superb scenic views. Deciding to cut our losses, we returned down the hill to the 'drainage' ditch where an Indian Pitta had wintered for several years. It was not a pleasant area and only about half of the group managed to see the bird. With a little light still left, we drove back up the hill to Fort Aguada and were rewarded for our perseverance with views of up to nine Indian Peafowl roosting in trees.

Day 9: With some people still needing views of the Indian Pitta, we returned to the 'drainage' ditch again and were rewarded very quickly with good views for all. Someone in the group had now seen an Indian Pitta somewhere a remarkable four days in a row! There were a lot of other birds present today the highlights of which were Orange-headed Thrush and highly photogenic Blue-winged Leafbird and Black-headed Cuckooshrike. Saligao was quite close by, so, as we had enjoyed our first visit so much, we made a repeat visit. Most of the birds seen previously showed well again including the Brown Wood Owl but, the undoubted highlight was a Malabar Whistling-thrush, a normally extremely shy bird, which flaunted itself in the streambed, its beautiful plumage glinting in the dappled sunlight; you should see the video! As we relaxed in the shade, we were able to watch Tickell's Blue-flycatcher, Black-naped Monarch-flycatcher and Asian paradise Flycatcher together with western Crowned Warbler and Purple & Crimson Sunbirds at very close range before we found another new bird, Grey-headed Bulbul. On the way back to the coach, a couple of Spotted Owlets performed admirably. As we were travelling inland early next morning the camp, we decided to return to the hotel and have lunch around the pool. Everyone enjoyed a break but some preferred to swim or shop! In the late afternoon, we visited the Biera Mar again for our customary drinks and leisurely viewing from the veranda. Although there was nothing new, Cinnamon Bitterns, Lesser Spotted Eagle, White-breasted Waterhen and Scaly-breasted Munia were all seen well.

Day 10: Early departure for Backwoods Camp, only stopping for a few provisions en-route. Dropping our luggage outside our tents and, after being temporarily distracted by Forest Wagtail, Yellow-browed Bulbul and Jungle Crow, we went straight out to view the rice paddies. After carefully negotiating an interesting stile, we were treated to the amazing spectacle of dozens of birds coming in to eat at a fruiting tree. Pompadour Green Pigeons were the most conspicuous at first but, Malabar Grey Hornbills soon joined them. A steady flow of new birds then took turns to feed including Asian Fairy Bluebird, Black Bulbul and Black-naped Oriole. By scanning the surrounding trees we added Crimson-fronted Barbet, Scarlet Minivet, Chestnut-tailed Starling (white-headed form), Thick-billed Flowerpecker, Vernal Hanging Parrot and Ashy Woodswallow before an Emerald Dove shot across the paddy in front of us. Well satisfied, we returned to the camp for an excellent breakfast of omelette and pancakes. We then moved on to the raptor watchpoint. En-route, we saw Malabar Pied Hornbill briefly and over the next hour, from the shelter of a convenient tree, watched White-eyed Buzzard, Crested Goshawk and Black Eagle soaring over the forested ridge and Black-headed Bunting perched on power lines in front of us. On the return journey to the camp for lunch, we saw a White-rumped Shama by the river and, during the lunch break, a Brown Shrike was seen by a few and Heart Spotted Woodpecker by everyone. In the late afternoon, we took a leisurely walk through the forest adding both Dark-fronted Babbler and Brown-cheeked Fulvetta before reaching the river where the remains of a Brown Fish Owl's meal was found. As we watched the fish, a Mountain Imperial Pigeon flew overhead. With gathering dusk, we tried two locations for Sri Lankan Frogmouth but although we hear a bird at one site, we couldn't find it. As we ate dinner and for most of the night, we were serenaded by Oriental Scops-owls but despite our best efforts, we couldn't see one.

Day 11: With so many good species already seen, we knew that the law of diminishing returns would start to set in. Nevertheless, before breakfast we set out to look for the Spot-bellied Eagle-owl. We couldn't find the male at roost so had to make do with the top of the female's head (ear tufts and occasionally the eyes) as she sat tight on her nest. Forest birding can be frustrating, often areas can appear birdless and then when something does appear it is at the top of a tree. By perseverance however, Velvet-fronted Nuthatch was eventually seen well and then we played cat-and-mouse with two woodpeckers; were they Greater or Common Flamebacks? Eventually it turned out that there was one of each! Finally, we tracked down Malabar Trogon, including a superb male. After breakfast (fried eggs on toast!) we visited a nearby site for Green-billed Malkoa. Unfortunately we couldn't find one and the calling Brown-headed Barbet proved equally elusive. Just as it seemed that the heat had caused all the birds to take cover, a splendid male Verditer Flycatcher flew up onto the powerline in front of us. After another leisurely lunch, we took another forest walk seeing very little until we casually checked the Sri Lankan Frogmouth site. Just as everyone was leaving it was found roosting in a bamboo thicket at head height. By carefully positioning ourselves we all had amazing views of this weird bird from just 10 feet and some superb photographs were taken. In high spirits, we headed out towards Tambdi Surla Temple. En-route however, we stumbled across a flock of bee-eaters and as well as the very common Little Green Bee-eaters, we also found about 20 Chestnut-headed Bee-eaters. At the temple, we checked the river finding a Brown-breasted Flycatcher before having a good look at this magnificent ancient structure. As dusk gathered, we positioned ourselves at a stakeout recommended by Pramod, where grey Nightjars gave an excellent display, both in flight and perched.

Day 12: We left the camp early to drive to Bondla, another nearby forest reserve. The open area we first visited afforded excellent views over the bushes and trees and we soon heard an Indian Scimitar-babbler but it was too far away and gave us no chance of seeing it. The area was alive with birds most of which were previously seen species however; several Spangled Drongos with their exquisitely curled tails were new, as was a Little Spiderhunter, which proved more elusive. Rufous Woodpeckers also played hide and seek with us but a Besra sat in a tree for nearly half an hour and several Common Woodshrikes gave marvellous views. We ate breakfast at the tourist village, a selection of omelettes and pancakes helped down with point blank views of a Malabar Grey Hornbill outside the window! Walking along the forest track after breakfast, we heard another Blue-bearded Bee-eater but again were unable to locate it. A lone birder reported having seen a Pale Thrush but when we re-found it, there was no doubt that it was a female Blue-capped Rock Thrush. Moving down to the river by the zoo, a White-rumped Shama was abnormally showy whilst a Giant Squirrel entertained us overhead. Slightly downstream, a Brown-breasted Flycatcher gave much better views than the previous one. We started to walk around the zoo to look for flycatchers but other birders reported seeing little and the parties of schoolchildren were somewhat noisy. We therefore checked other forest areas and although seeing nothing new, we had wonderful extended views of a stunning male Malabar Trogon. As bird activity was falling, we headed back to camp for lunch and a

siesta. During the lunch break, several of us checked to see if the Sri Lankan Frogmouth was still in the same place but it had moved all of three feet! In the late afternoon, we took a forest walk again, spending some time trying unsuccessfully to track down a White-bellied Woodpecker. As dusk was approaching, we checked the track near the camp for Grey Junglefowl and on the way flushed a Red Spurfowl. Two Grey Junglefowl dashed across the track but failed to put in another appearance before dark. Over dinner and throughout the night, we were again serenaded by Oriental Scops-owls.

Day 13: At first light we decided to visit the track again for Grey Junglefowl. Arriving there in the dark an Oriental Scops-owl was calling so we changed plans and half-heartedly played the tape again; to our surprise, a bird landed in the bamboo barely 10 feet above our heads and we were treated to stunning torchlight views. Although we tried for the Grey Junglefowl again, we had no success but everyone was philosophical about it. Heading into the forest we looked for the Spot-bellied Eagle-owl again but once again could only see the top of the female's head. Whilst trying to locate a White-bellied Woodpecker, a White-bellied Blue-flycatcher was a good find. We checked to see if the Sri Lankan Frogmouth was still present so the other group could come back for it but unfortunately it had moved. Three species of Flameback were seen "Black-rumped, Common & Greater" and Velvet-fronted Nuthatches put on a good display. Two more Malabar Trogon were seen and, on our way back for breakfast, a party of Large Woodshrikes was found. After breakfast we re-visited the raptor watchpoint and watched up to three Black Eagles performing over the ridge together with four Oriental Honey-buzzards and a Changeable Hawk-eagle. There were obviously a lot more hirundines and swifts about today and careful scrutiny gave us our only White-rumped Needletail of the tour along with numerous Little Swifts and about 30 Indian Swiftlets. In amongst the numerous Red-rumped Swallows a couple of House Martins were also found. After our lunch siesta, we headed back to the river again where Crested Treeswifts put on a good performance taking water from the river in front of us. Walking down a track to another section of the river, we flushed a Brown Fish Owl which, "conveniently" sat up in a tree. Once again, a Brown-headed Barbet was calling but this time we persevered and eventually located it in a distant tree. At 60x magnification however, they were good views!

Day 14: Today was our last day at the camp and we spent all of the morning in the forest again. Before breakfast we went to look for the Spot-bellied Eagle-owl and this time some of the group were successful with views of the male perched. The rest had to make do with the top of the female's head again! Another White-bellied Blue-flycatcher showed well and two Red Spurfowl were seen by some. Several Brown-capped Pygmy-woodpeckers performed an aerial spectacle and on the way back to the camp for breakfast, a superb male Blue-capped Rock Thrush was found. The rest of the morning was spent wandering around the forest seeing some of the common species. After lunch, we sadly said our farewells to the camp staff and drove back towards the coast. En-route, we stopped to have another look for Blue-faced Malkoha but without success. A family group of Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrikes showed well however, and the real bonus was a single Malabar Parakeet seen briefly at the top of a tree by a few people. The return journey was uneventful although the roads were far more chaotic at this time of day, and we arrived back at the coast in time for a shower before dinner.

Day 15: We decided to visit a new site inland from Baga Hill after breakfast. This proved a good move as the forest was absolutely crawling with birds. Although most of them we had seen before, it was a marvellous spectacle on our last full day and we spent several hours enjoying it. The highlights were a co-operative Common Hawk-cuckoo followed by amazing views of two Brown Fish Owls. A Yellow-crowned Woodpecker showed well and two Grey-headed Bulbuls were seen. Returning back down the track towards the coach, a Shikra sat unperturbed by our presence whilst other raptors soared overhead. These included Common Buzzard, Oriental Honey-buzzard, Short-toed Eagle, Crested Serpent-eagle, Black Eagle, Changeable Hawk-eagle and two White-bellied Sea-eagles, including one on the nest - what a finale! As we rested under a tree, a Banded Bay Cuckoo and an Asian Brown Flycatcher both showed well and on the return journey to the hotel, five Woolly-necked Storks were found. Back at the hotel at lunchtime, we were told that both Jerdon's & Savannah Nightjars had been seen on Baga Hill that morning. There was nothing for it; after lunch, some of us decided to climb back up the hill in the heat of the day! We were well rewarded however, with good views of several Savannah Nightjars showing their white outer tail feathers and amazing views of a Jerdon's Nightjar, allowing itself to be photographed down to six feet. By the time we got back down to the hotel, it was the appointed time for our last visit to the Biera Mar Hotel (no peace for the wicked!). This was a very relaxing end to the tour with Cinnamon Bittern, Greater Painted-snipe and Lesser Spotted Eagle (our sixth eagle of the day!) seen well again. We had not totally finished however, as an Alexandrine Parakeet flew in front of us then, just as it was getting dark, a Brown Shrike was spotted on the power lines, enabling those who missed the bird at the camp to catch up with it.

Day 16: An 07.00 departure for the airport followed by an uneventful flight home, arriving back at Gatwick late afternoon at the end of the tour. We had seen the excellent total of 266 species.